Toward a Comparative Sociology of Valuation and Evaluation

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Abstract

This review discusses North American and European research from the sociology of valuation and evaluation (SVE), a research topic that has attracted considerable attention in recent years. The goal is to bring various bodies of work into conversation with one another in order to stimulate more cumulative theory building. This is accomplished by focusing on (*a*) subprocesses such as categorization and legitimation, (*b*) the conditions that sustain heterarchies, and (*c*) valuation and evaluative practices. The article reviews these literatures and provides directions for a future research agenda.

Be all you can be.

—Recruitment slogan, US Army

1. INTRODUCTION

Social Significance

Questions of performance and its evaluation have gained greater social and scholarly prominence in recent years. With neoliberalism and the spread of market fundamentalism (Somers & Block 2005), governments have turned to new public management tools to ensure greater efficacy, with the result that quantitative measures of performance and benchmarking are diffusing rapidly and are having important structuring effects on a range of institutions and domains of human activity (Espeland & Stevens 2008, Lascoumes & Le Galès 2005, Power 1997). In the realms of governance and higher education, for instance, in the wake of an influential World Bank report published on "world-class universities" (Salmi 2009) and the creation of academic "excellence initiatives" across EU countries, European and Asian experts have held a host of conferences concerning best practices in peer review, which is regarded as a touchstone of research excellence. This focus goes hand in hand with greater internationalization and standardization of practice in science and higher education (Meyer et al. 2007).

The growing interest in evaluation also manifests itself in the study of inequality and meritocracy: In advanced industrial societies, anxious middle-class parents appear to be ever more eager to prepare their children for a world of increased competition, and they invest important resources in supplemental education and extracurricular activities that they view as essential to ensuring reproduction of their class positions (Dierkes & Bray 2011, Lareau 2003). These investments are increasingly tied to life chances (Rivera 2011).

With growing income inequality and the trend toward a "winner-take-all society" (Frank 1995), understanding the dynamics that work in favor of, and against, the existence of multiple hierarchies of worth or systems of evaluation (i.e., heterarchies or plurarchies) is more urgent than ever. Indeed, the coexistence of multiple matrices of evaluation is one significant condition for greater social resilience (along with a better distribution of resources), especially in a context such as the United States where a decreasing number of individuals can hope to live up to the standards of socioeconomic success that are associated with the dominant national myth, the American Dream (Hall & Lamont 2013).

Against this background, it is urgent that we address several questions. What can be done to ensure that a larger proportion of the members of our society can be defined as valuable? What kinds of institutions and cultural repertoires can be put in place to sustain heterarchies? Under what conditions can cultural inclusion (being defined as worthy) influence access to material and symbolic resources? Addressing these questions will help us understand the impact of dominant definitions of worth on cultural citizenship, as well as their implications for xenophobia, racism, solidarity toward the poor, and attitudes toward welfare redistribution. Although the sociology of valuation and evaluation (SVE) is typically loosely connected to these burning topics, it can be useful for understanding the cultural or organizational dimensions of all forms of sorting processes and for connecting microdynamics of exclusion to macrodefinitions of symbolic community and patterns of boundary work. Indeed, differential valuation of collective identities often involves privileging shared matrices of worth [e.g., moral character over economic success (Lamont 2000)]. It also involves negotiating in daily interactions the negative meanings associated with one's group (Lamont & Mizrachi 2012). This grounds the social significance of gaining a better understanding of the processes that sustain heterarchies.

Thus, work in SVE is highly relevant to some of the main social problems facing contemporary societies. Finding answers to these crucial questions requires looking closely at ways to diffuse models of social organization that support broader social recognition and

pluralistic definitions of social worth. But first of all, it requires a better understanding of valuation and evaluative processes and practices—i.e., clearing the brush around a complex, slippery, and often elusive sociological object. This is the task that this review takes on.

Theoretical Significance

In recent years, social scientists have also shown growing interest in the study of basic social processes (e.g., Tilly 2008).[1] Valuation and evaluation are certainly among these basic processes, together with boundary work, standardization, commensuration, differentiation, closure, and exploitation. Although we have no recognized subfield labeled SVE, a remarkable number of recent North American and European works are concerned with how value is produced, diffused, assessed, and institutionalized across a range of settings. Indeed, one can easily identify more than half a dozen literatures that consider valuation and evaluation from different angles, to wit:

1. Under Bourdieu's (1993) influence, cultural sociologists have conducted studies of the cultural valuation of symbolic goods and social practices—e.g., performing arts (Shrum 1991), film (Baumann 2007), literature (Corse & Griffin 1997, Griswold 1987), music (Dowd et al. 2002, Regev & Seroussi 2004, Santoro 2010), popular culture (Illouz 2003), and sport (Allen & Parsons 2006; also DiMaggio 1987).
2. Economic sociologists have analyzed the workings of markets for the production of value (e.g., Zuckerman 1999), as well as the commodification process by which objects become amenable to valuation and trade through the market (e.g., Carruthers & Stinchcombe 1999; Zelizer 1979, 2011).
3. Sociologists of knowledge and science have considered the growth and decline of intellectual reputations and ideas (e.g., Collins 1998, Gross 2008, Lamont 1987, Latour 1988, Wuthnow 1989) and bandwagon effects in scientific fields (Fujimura 1988), as well as the institutionalization of academic fields.
4. Students of inequality have researched the distribution of status and social honor (Abbott 1981, Collins 2004, Ridgeway 2006, Sauder 2006, Zhou 2005) and various definitions of worth across social groups (Lamont 1992, 2000; Prasad et al. 2009).
5. Social psychologists have studied how social identity is given value and meaning through comparison (see Ashmore et al. 2004 for a review).
6. Sociologists of organizations have studied how novelty (e.g., in governance) appears and how it generalizes (Campbell 1997), and how measuring rods and entities get selected out, who survives, and how order stabilizes. They have also studied declines in popularity (e.g., Rao 1996, Salganik et al. 2006, Strang & Macy 2001), categorization (see Negro et al. 2010 for a review), and newness and worth (Hutter & Throsby 2008, Muetzel 2011, Stark 2009).
7. A growing number of European social scientists have studied plurality of regimes of worth, including transition between regimes (Beckert 2008, Beckert & Aspers 2011, Boltanski & Thévenot 2006 [1991]).[2]

[1] Processes are different from mechanisms in that they do not concern the causal relationship between two discrete phenomena (A causes B) but are part of a sequence that contributes to a causal path. On mechanisms, see Gross (2009, p. 364); on processes, see Tilly (1995), Hall (2012). Our concern with processes parallels Lamont & Molnar (2002) regarding properties and mechanisms for the production and reproduction of boundaries (see also Pachucki et al. 2007).

[2] Although also relevant, this review does not cover the sociology of values, defined in the Parsonian tradition as normative beliefs and ideals and ultimate rationales for action (see Hitlin & Vaisey 2010, Spates 1983). Nor does it cover the literature on status and worth (e.g., Lamont 1992, Ridgeway 2006).

8. In parallel, a growing number of North American social scientists have studied institutional logics in organizational studies (Friedland & Alford 1991; also Lounsbury 2007, Thornton & Ocasio 1999, Thornton et al. 2012).

These various literatures have not been in systematic dialogue with one another and function largely as independent silos defined by different substantive or institutional cores and networks of social interaction. From the perspective of the sociology of social processes, the main challenges ahead are those of comparing individual studies that concern similar processes in order to specify exactly whether and how each study may contribute to a cumulative SVE, and alternatively, whether they simply provide one more instantiation of previously identified processes (e.g., of heterarchy). This will require moving to a higher degree of abstraction so as to identify similarities and differences across studies. Much is to be gained from developing such a comparative SVE. Indeed, it should empower a better understanding of (*a*) what each case is an instance of, as comparisons should lead us to consider each case more systematically and from more angles; (*b*) how subprocesses of evaluation (the pieces of the puzzle) fit together; and (*c*) how questions fully explored in one literature may suggest new questions in another. This should lead to refinement of our current theoretical understanding about subprocesses (Snow et al. 2003). Although it is premature to deliver on these promises, this review is a first and partial attempt at untangling a complex theoretical landscape, circumscribing the questions, identifying problems, and providing elements for a future agenda for SVE. More space would be needed to fully do justice to the multifarious and booming literature.

Developing comparisons is particularly urgent because of the fast pace at which this literature is growing. But how is this goal reached? Our approach is to break the task into smaller steps by focusing on empirically identifiable stages or subprocesses studied in SVE, as well as on valuation and evaluative practices [(e)valuative practices].

Scope and Definitions

In the SVE literature, quantification is often considered the dominant mold for understanding other grammars of evaluation (e.g., Espeland & Stevens 1998). In other cases, authors are concerned with the monetary valuation of cultural goods about which there is considerable uncertainty and with the social intermediaries that are put in place to build trust around the valuation of such goods (Karpik 2010, Moerand & Pederson 2011). This is particularly characteristic of research on the valuation of art work, cultural practices, and other similarly incommensurable goods (e.g., Smith 1990, Velthuis 2005). This review turns attention toward (e)valuative practices shaped by different types of constraints, whether they come from expertise and connoisseurship (e.g., for jazz amateurs), the law (e.g., for those who engage in unusual sexual practices), the body (e.g., for residents of noisy neighborhoods), or notions of fairness (e.g., for conservatives, xenophobes, human rights advocates, etc.). My analysis of (e)valuative practices also points to the limits of numerical forms of evaluation even in a highly economistic and neoliberal environment, and to the necessary reliance on forms of human judgments such as those used in peer review. However, many of the subprocesses described also apply to valuation and evaluation shaped by quantification—for instance, financial markets. This review should not be read as endorsing a misleading dichotomy between objective evaluation resulting from exchange and market sorting, and subjective factors (e.g., morality), a dichotomy that has already been challenged by a growing literature (Fourcade & Healy 2007, Shapin 2012). However, space limitations prevent a systematic comparison across these realms (see Zuckerman 2012 for a complementary perspective).

Widely studied subprocesses of (e)valuation include categorization dynamics, such as classification, commensuration, equivalence,

signaling, and standardization (e.g., Timmermans & Epstein 2010), and legitimation dynamics, which includes the contestation and negotiation of value as well as its diffusion, stabilization, ritualization, consecration, and institutionalization. Schudson (1989) specifies what enables some of these subprocesses in his analysis of cultural power, singling out retrievability, rhetorical force, resonance, institutional retention, and resolution. These subprocesses are not all necessarily present in all instances of valuation and evaluation. Instead, they are best described as likely contributors or possible steps in valuation and evaluation processes. This review considers some of the most salient subprocesses at the center of the recent literature, with a focus on both categorization and legitimation dynamics.

I consider both selected valuation practices (giving worth or value) and evaluative practices (assessing how an entity attains a certain type of worth).[3] Valuation and evaluation practices are often conflated in the literature, and intertwined in reality (Vatin 2009). Indeed, evaluators often valorize the entity they are to assess as they justify to others their assessment. For instance, art critics attribute value to an artwork ("this is path-breaking," "this is crap") at the very same time as they may attempt to convince their peers to agree on their evaluation of a particular work.

SVE focuses on (e)valuation as it happens not inside the mind of an individual (the primary concern of cognitive psychology), but in practices and experiences, in what people spend their time doing, through latent or explicit dialogues with specific or generalized others (often made available through cultural repertoires) (Camic et al. 2011) (this focus on practices incorporates elements from new American and European research in pragmatism, e.g., Blokker 2011, Gross 2007, Silber 2003, and especially Cefai 2009). What makes (e)valuation a social and cultural process is that establishing value generally requires (*a*) intersubjective agreement/disagreement on a matrix or a set of referents against which the entity (a good, a reputation, an artistic achievement, etc.) is compared, (*b*) negotiation about proper criteria and about who is a legitimate judge [often involving conflicts and power struggle (Bourdieu 1993)], and (*c*) establishing value in a relational (or indexical) process involving distinguishing and comparing entities—as argued by many who have written on the topic, ranging from Ferdinand de Saussure and Karl Marx to Georg Simmel, Roland Barthes, and Pierre Bourdieu. Hence, our focus is quite different from that of cognitive psychologists (Fiske & Taylor 1991) and behavioral economists (Kahneman & Tversky 1979) who are writing on evaluation, categorization, the salience of schemas, preference biases, and risk.[4]

The structure of the review is as follows: Section 2 discusses evaluation by focusing on (*a*) the subprocesses of categorization and legitimation, (*b*) heterarchies, and (*c*) (e)valuative practices. Section 3 concludes by drawing out further implications and tackles more fully the

[3]There is a large literature defining worth, value, valuation, evaluation, and judgment, which cannot be discussed here. Note that the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines value as "a standard of estimation or exchange; an amount or sum reckoned in terms of this; a thing regarded as worth having" and worth as "the relative value of a thing in respect of its qualities or of the estimation in which it is held." Valuating is defined as the "action of valuing or the process of assessing or fixing the value of a thing." Evaluate means "to 'reckon up', ascertain the amount of; to express in terms of something already known." Finally, judgment can be defined as the assignment, attribution, or distribution of worth.

[4]While some authors emphasize the role played by third parties as stabilizers of value and hierarchies (e.g., Barbot & Dodier 2011 on evaluation of medical damage; also Correll & Ridgeway 2003), others have analyzed attachments (Hennion 2011) and demonstration (Rosental 2005) to capture intersubjective and material dimensions of valuation and evaluation. This literature draws in part on the analytical tools of cultural sociology [e.g., frames, narratives, boundaries, institutions, conventions, and so forth (DiMaggio 1997, Lamont & Small 2008)], paying particular attention to the supply side of culture (what tools are made available to individuals in situations through cultural repertoires). [See Lahire & Rosental (2008) for a critical comparison with a cognitive psychology approach to meaning making.] However, some note a convergence between cultural sociology and cognitive psychology (for instance, Vaisey 2009, DiMaggio & Markus 2010). Space limitations prevent full consideration of this complex question.

question "How can we move forward in developing a comparative SVE?"

2. UNDERSTANDING (E)VALUATION

Categorization and Legitimation

SVE considers a number of subprocesses that contribute to the (e)valuation processes. These are often entangled and thus difficult to differentiate. For heuristic purposes, I distinguish between those that are relevant to categorization and those that are relevant to legitimation, and I discuss each of these in turn.

Categorization. At a minimum, (e)valuation requires categorization (or typification), i.e., determining in which group the entity (e.g., object or person) under consideration belongs (e.g., Zuckerman 1999; also Hannan et al. 2007, Navis & Glynn 2010, Rao et al. 2005). Once the entity's broader characteristics or properties have been examined and assessed, it becomes possible to locate it in one or several categories and to consider whether and how these categories fit in one or several hierarchies. Thus, in the past, the institutionalization of the American racial order has required determining whether Italians and Jews are black or white, and from this followed their relative positioning (Guglielmo & Salerno 2003). Similarly, Ritvo (1989) describes the detailed expertise needed for the categorization of breeds of dog in Victorian England and their use in the creation of social status. Species that fell between two categories are shown to have often been more difficult to assess and therefore to have been given lower value and conferred lower status.

Given the centrality of categorization in SVE, it is not surprising that cultural sociologists and anthropologists have also spent considerable time analyzing symbolic boundaries and classification systems, whereas economic sociologists and some economists have become increasingly interested in conventions mobilized in ranking systems (e.g., Carruthers & Halliday 1998). Both groups of scholars have studied technologies for stabilization and institutionalization of value and underlying criteria [quantification and the use of systems of equivalence for the purpose of coordinating action for instance (see Salais et al. 1998; also Strathern 2000 on what is involved in "making things transparent")]. They have studied consensus building and how the definition of value is made uncontroversial or transportable across contexts ("black-boxed" in the language of Latour 1988). The presence of third parties and/or arbitrators is essential to this consolidation and stabilization (e.g., Sauder 2006; also Espeland & Sauder 2007, Lahire & Rosental 2008). Others have considered the consolidation of value by nonsubjective factors, that is, by economic, organizational, network, and other resources, as well as by their interrelations with symbolic resources (e.g., DiMaggio 1982).

Legitimation. How does an art object, a literary work, or a scientific theory gain value to the point at which it is consecrated and integrated into the canon? Many researchers have tackled this question through case studies, such as Bortolini (2012) on Bellah's civil religion debate, Heinich (1997) on the making of Van Gogh's reputation, and Illouz (2003) on the self-fashioning of Oprah Winfrey. But a more cumulative approach to knowledge production is needed if we are to go beyond an accumulation of finite case studies to capture general subprocesses at work. (Parallel efforts in this direction have been made by Frickel & Gross 2005 on the case of intellectual movements.)

Legitimation/consecration refers to recognition by oneself and others of the value of an entity (whether a person, an action, or a situation). Although our account could consider the classical and more familiar Weberian approach to legitimation and its contemporary legacy (e.g., Johnson et al. 2006), I privilege instead Bourdieu's writings on the accumulation of symbolic capital because its influence on the contemporary study of (e)valuative processes has been massive, as evidenced by the extraordinarily large number of studies that have applied his framework to new empirical objects.

Bourdieu's (1993) theory of symbolic fields emphasizes the role of critics and evaluators as gatekeepers in the production of symbolic capital for specific cultural goods (for details, see Schwartz 1997). Studying the production and consumption of nineteenth-century French literature and art, he analyzes cultural practice and aesthetic competence and perception. As in his more general theory of fields, he focuses on social actors in different positions in fields of cultural production, struggling to impose competing definitions of legitimate literary or artistic work—or to accumulate symbolic capital, defined as a profit or payoff that is associated with high recognition or consecration. For Bourdieu (1993, pp. 78–79), the ability to impose criteria of evaluation, or the power to consecrate, is the major stake in symbolic fields, as it allows actors to reproduce their own positions. Symbolic fields typically contain, on the one hand, actors whose structure of capital predisposes them to maximize the autonomy of the field and the criteria of evaluation favorable to it, and, on the other hand, actors whose structure of capital typically ties them to other fields (political, journalistic, etc.) and to a general audience. The first group values disinterestedness, or "art for art's sake," or adopts an inverted economic logic of valuation (p. 75). In Bourdieu's words, "the literary field is the economic world reversed; that is, the fundamental law . . . of disinterestedness . . . is the inverse of the law of economic exchange" (p. 164).

This model has been borrowed, widely applied, and at times specified and theoretically extended through case studies (e.g., Boschetti 1985 on Sartre). Recently, researchers have tackled, with inductive methods, the questions of the role of critics and of the criteria of evaluation they mobilize. By specifying steps in a legitimation process, one engages in theory building. For instance, Allen & Parsons (2006) study the reputations of pitchers and hitters in US major league baseball to propose a theory of cumulative recognition that leads to induction in the Baseball Hall of Fame. They break down the process that leads to the final stage of valorization in the sport, distinguishing between achievement, recognition, and consecration. Baumann (2007) details how American film critics redefined the meaning of film genre to legitimate film as art. This involved the diffusion, adaptation, and co-optation of French film theory and criticism, elevating the importance of the autonomous director, and an alignment of Hollywood film with artistically legitimate foreign films (p. 152). Baumann (2007) specifies the existence of "opportunity," "institutionalization of resources," and "the intellectualization of films through discourse" as the three essential causal dynamics behind the shift in perception of film from commercial product to high status art in the United States. Lang & Lang's (1988) study of painter-etchers in the earlier part of the twentieth century considers how goods are transmitted across generations through collective memory, which in their case study of the reproduction of artistic reputations required conditions such as the self-advocacy of artists, the production of a critical mass of work, the existence of survivors with a stake (symbolic or financial) in the perpetuation of the reputation, and a connection to artistic or political networks. Greenfeld (1988) studies gatekeeping in art galleries in Israel and analyzes the pressures toward conformity in criteria of evaluation in a context of ideology of absolute openness to new work.

Beyond the Bourdieuian legacy, and often in opposition to it, several alternative approaches to legitimation/consecration have received considerable attention, including the notions of mediation in Latour (2005), justification in Boltanski & Thévenot (2006 [1991]), and engagement in Thévenot (2006). Some are discussed below.

Identifying and Producing Heterarchies

Also central to SVE is the notion of an actual or potential heterarchy, multidimensionality, or plurality of criteria/grammars of valuation and evaluation. This insight builds on Weber's (1978) writing on types of rationality and on related studies of distributive criteria (e.g.,

Walzer 1983).[5] Accordingly, much of SVE research consists of unveiling evaluation criteria and bringing to light the devices, institutions, or cultural and social structures that support or enable them (e.g., Lamont & Thévenot 2000). Alternatively, recent organizational studies (e.g., Stark 2009) and broader macrostudies (Hall & Lamont 2013) consider the process by which heterarchies or plurarchies are produced, reproduced, or flattened out (for instance, by neoliberalism), and the impact of such flattening out for social life [e.g., on people's conception of self-worth (Lamont 2000); see also Carter (2012) on the impact of educational systems on shaping definitions of collective membership].

The American and European literatures have taken different paths and have privileged different sets of references in their study of the multidimensionality of social hierarchies. In particular, French sociologists have focused on grammars or orders of worth used in constructions of community that support alternative definitions of worth [e.g., the liberal grammar that favors evaluation centered on market performance versus the civic grammar that values community (Boltanski & Thévenot 2006 [1991])]. Due to delays in translation, their writings have had limited resonance in the United States but are quickly gaining attention (e.g., Eliasoph 2011, Perrin 2006). In the United States and Canada, a concomitant development inspired by Friedland & Alford (1991) has generated an important literature on institutional logics, largely within the field of organizational studies (see Thornton & Ocasio 2008 for a review). Now examined in a range of settings, these logics are defined as "supraorganizational patterns of activity by which individuals and organizations produce and reproduce their material subsistence and organize time and space.... They are also symbolic systems, ways of ordering reality, thereby rendering experience of time and space meaningful" (Friedland & Alford 1991, p. 243; see also Djelic 2001, Dobbin 1997). The differences between the North American and the continental approaches are such that it is worth discussing some of them in some greater depth.

In a seminal paper, Boltanski & Thévenot (1983) were concerned with a plurality of criteria of evaluation, which they studied inductively by asking ordinary people to create classification systems through sorting occupations (described on cards) into categories. Contra Bourdieu, they identified a plurality of grammars of evaluation by looking at shifts in the underlying principle of sorting. In their landmark book *De la Justification* (2006 [1991]), the authors tied such logics to orders adduced from classical positions in political theory tradition because this work was concerned with the construction of political communities for which justification in terms of collective interest is tantamount. The book considered how actors demonstrate the universality of their positions by appealing to different logics, and how the actors accomplish this by qualifying (or differentiating) various objects, actors, and instruments in their environment in ways that are consistent with these logics. For instance, if market logic prevails, the object of evaluation will be considered from the angle of profit maximization. The authors detailed such qualifications as they pertain to other orders of worth: industrial logic (which emphasizes productivity), domestic logic (which emphasizes interpersonal relationships), civic logic (which emphasizes civic solidarity within the polity), inspired logic (which concerns charisma), and fame (see also Wagner 1999). Under the influence of ethnomethodology, Boltanski & Thévenot (2006 [1991]) viewed the definition of worth as a site of tensions, risk, and uncertainty, which requires continuing reconstruction and reenactment of agreements. From a pragmatist perspective, they also considered how actors create compromises between these orders of worth in the unfolding of everyday life so as to coordinate their actions.

Working together with a large team of researchers participating in the Groupe de

[5] In this plurality of spheres of justice, each sphere is dedicated to the distribution of a specific social good (merit, desert, etc.). Walzer (1983) associates each order with specific institutions and a community of shared understanding.

sociologie politique et morale (GSPM) (see Boltanski 2008 for details), in multiple publications, Boltanski and Thévenot expanded their research agenda to consider a large range of justifications, frames for action, and orders of worth. The group analyzed other types of structured action and how they are put to the test, focusing on regimes of action that are driven not by a political logic tied to the realization of the common good, but to other frames pertaining to unconditional love, justice, altruism (or witnessing suffering), community, etc. In recent years, Thévenot (2006) has embarked on a program focused on engagement. This term refers to different ways of relating to a context, the frame through which one understand one's relation to it—e.g., through familiarity, or proximity (what Thévenot calls "*régime du proche*"). Others connected to the GSPM use a perspective inspired by Goffman and which converges with American cultural sociology to study the mobilization of various frames (or grammars) across a range of contexts, and the capacity to extend, stabilize, and institutionalize modes of evaluation. For instance, Lemieux (2000) has studied the frames of actions of journalists concerning how they manage the boundary between private relationships and the public sphere of journalism; Lemieux (2009) has also studied the embeddedness of human action within variously constraining grammars (pertaining to detachment, self-control, gift giving, and others).[6]

Again, parallel developments occurred roughly at the same time in the United States, with Friedland & Alford (1991) pointing to the relative autonomy of potentially competing institutional logics, and Elster (1992) empirically studying allocation criteria across such critical areas as college admissions, kidney transplants, employee layoffs, and legalized immigration. Like Walzer (1983), Elster (1992) focuses on contradictory criteria of justice such as need and merit. Although Friedland & Alford (1991) are often cited with respect to institutional logics, their approach is less theoretically developed than that of Boltanski & Thévenot (2006 [1991]). However, it has stimulated empirically based theory building through a growing number of case studies that consider (among other topics) hybrid institutional logics (Murray 2010) and the micro-macro link in the implementation of institutional logics in drug courts (McPherson & Sauder 2012).

In American economic sociology, others draw direct inspiration from the work of Boltanski and Thévenot and their colleagues with a clear focus on heterarchy. Most recently, Stark (2009) has provided an extension by applying the concept to the study of organizations and innovation, particularly in the high-tech sector. He defines heterarchy as an organizational form that combines lateral accountability and organizational heterogeneity and is characterized by distributed intelligence and the organization of diversity—the prototype being high-tech firms focused on innovation, which have adopted a flexible and nonhierarchical mode of operation. Stark (2009) considers how orders of worth influence values, calculation, and rationality, and how they transform uncertainty into risk—how they produce bounded rationalities through social technologies. This represents a useful approach to bridging the gap between European and American lines of work on worth through detailed empirical work (see also Beckert & Aspers 2011, Eliasoph 2011).

My own research has also considered multiple grammars of worth. My books (Lamont 1992, 2000) are akin to those of Boltanski & Thévenot (1983, 2006 [1991]), but more

[6]Heinich (1997, 1998, 2009) has also pursued research on evaluation by focusing on evaluation by laypeople (for contemporary art) and by expert committees (for literature, contemporary art, and national heritage). For instance, Heinich (1997, p. 26) considered the steps in the consecration of Van Gogh, which she analyzed through the prism of beatification and the demonstration of the artist's authentic genius (demonstrated by the consistency of his creativity, the universality of his work, and the interiority of his creative aspiration, etc.). She has also studied the devalorization of art through negative reactions to contemporary art, in which individuals deploy arguments for alternative positions. While she has not engaged North American SVE and spelled out the theoretical added value of her work, her research offers a terrain for exploration.

inductive and focused on emergent criteria (and closer to Boltanski & Thévenot 1983 in spirit than to their 1991 book). Challenging Bourdieu [1984 (1979)], I explored the salience of diverse definitions of personal worth across class and racial groups in France and the United States, revealing novel patterns of evaluation, based on money, morals, and manners (Lamont 1992, 2000). I approached valuation through the device of boundary work and raised the question of the properties of group boundaries (e.g., their permeability) and the mechanisms generating them, which Bourdieu and Boltanski & Thévenot (2006 [1991]) ignored (see also Lamont & Molnar 2002, Pachucki et al. 2007). This stimulated or fed a growing interest in the study of omnivorousness, indifference, and dislike (e.g., Bryson 1996), as well as a booming literature on boundary work, for instance in the field of ethnicity and migration (e.g., Bail 2008, Wimmer 2013), which moved the agenda in a new direction (compared with literatures on categorization, legitimation, and institutional logics). Indeed, this literature analyzes how valuation shapes group boundaries through social closure, cultural differentiation, or political salience (e.g., Wimmer 2008).

Despite these divergences in conceptualization between North American and European scholarship, one also finds transcontinental intellectual convergence in studies of the multidimensionality of evaluation and of how equivalence between different types of value is socially constructed—especially between ambiguous, intangible, or singular entities. Often coming out of economic sociology, much of this generative line of work has considered the relationship between market processes and non-economic aspects of social life—whether morality, status, identity, signaling, networks, or other related dimensions (e.g., Podolny 2008, Zelizer 1979 on categories; Fourcade & Healy 2007 for a review).[7] It has also tackled the embeddedness of economic relationship in non-economic relationships (most recently, see Zelizer's 2012 relational perspective). Authors have shown variations in economic rationality to highlight the embedded character of economic thinking (Dobbin 1994) and have considered the relationship between price and value and how regulation may mediate both (see especially Zuckerman 2010; also Hutter & Throsby 2008 on the difference between economic and cultural value). In addition to Zelizer's (1994) classic analysis of the changing economic and emotional value of children, particularly noteworthy is Espeland's (1998) study of divergent conceptions of rationality and commensuration among two groups of federal agents and Yavapai Native Americans in a conflict brought about by the construction of dam on the Yavapais's native land. More recently, Fourcade (2011) compared compensation for ecological disasters in France and the United States, showing that different meanings associated with money and nature lead to very different evaluations. Although in the United States the process of evaluation increased emotional value given to the loss, in France it did the opposite, with the assumption that the loss could not be measured in economic terms. On the French side, we have parallel research by Barbot & Dodier (2011) on victims of medical errors and the criteria by which harm is assessed by various involved parties.

This review opened with a call for a better understanding of the conditions that sustain heterarchies under neoliberalism, a context in which definitions of worth that are not based on market performance tend to lose their relevance and in which market fundamentalism is exercising strong homogenizing pressures on collective identities and on shared definitions of what defines a worthy life (Hall & Lamont 2013). This task requires moving forward in developing a comparative SVE that attends to the types of institutional mechanisms that sustain diverse views of who belongs [for

[7] For instance, Aspers's (2010, p. 9) study of branded garment retailers (e.g., The Gap) argues that "markets are economic partial orders that are ordered by other markets, but also by non-economic partial orders." This trend is also exemplified in recent books taking stock of the literature on evaluation (e.g., Beckert & Aspers 2011, Hutter & Throsby 2008).

instance, more inclusive (or universal) immigration, linguistic, distributional, and diversity policies], as well as to cultural repertoires that downplay differences between groups and encourage broader recognition (e.g., Kymlicka & Banting's Multiculturalism Policy Index, **http://www.queensu.ca/mcp**). It also requires analyzing the role of institutions that sustain heterarchies by providing and diffusing alternative definitions of worth, such as those grounded in group identity, morality, religion, aesthetic performance, or self-actualization (e.g., Lamont et al. 2013). Such institutions include spiritual and religious organizations, ethnic organizations, and oppositional social movements.

(E)valuative Practices

My examination of the (e)valuative practice literature points to more micropractices that also support heterarchies. A review of this literature also suggests numerous paths for the development of SVE. Below I focus on selected constraints and conditions that frame evaluative practices. These include technologies of evaluation, criteria of evaluation, the customary rules or conventions of the field, the self-concept of evaluators, and the role of nonhumans and instruments of evaluation. I discuss them as elements that may feed the future research agenda of SVE.

To understand nonmonetary evaluative practices, it is convenient to use the case of peer review, given that scholarly outputs are an instance in which valuation is not based on pricing and economic mechanisms—although I acknowledge that high evaluation may be associated with awards and other rewards that may have monetary value. Instead, peer review is constrained by norms of fairness and by expertise. Of all forms of academic evaluation, it is the most widely used. Although other methods (such as bibliometric measures) of evaluation are gaining in popularity, they indirectly rely on peer evaluations and are typically considered less credible than peer review, especially in the humanities and the social sciences.

In her study of molecular biology and high energy physics, Knorr-Cetina (1999) shows how epistemic cultures, which she calls "machineries" or "technologies of knowledge," structure knowledge production and evaluation. These terms refer to the social and cultural structures that channel, constrain, define, and enable the production and evaluation of knowledge—indeed, such structures are both preconditions and constraints for the latter. Knorr-Cetina's (1999) work provides important insights about how to study evaluative practices, and particularly the customary rules that shape evaluation. It suggests that analyzing the types of constraints put on evaluation is a useful approach. These include method of comparison, criteria, conventions (or customary rules), self-concepts, and other types of nonhuman supports, as detailed below. Focusing on these constraints generates a range of questions that are rarely considered in the current SVE.

A prime example of a technology of knowledge in the field of peer review is that of the method for comparing the items to be evaluated, which can be rated or ranked (the preferred approached is generally spelled out by those requesting the evaluation, whether a journal, a publisher, or a funding agency). Rating requires that all items under consideration be compared against an external set of criteria (e.g., originality, significance) and not against one another. Ranking consists of comparing each item with one another in terms of how well they fare on specific preestablished dimensions. All items can potentially receive a top grade when they are rated; in contrast, ranking creates a zero-sum situation. This has important consequences for the evaluative practices, including the prevalence of horse trading among evaluators and how pluralistic evaluators are likely to be in their choice of standards, including epistemological preferences, and in their appreciation for a range of methodological approaches (Lamont & Huutoniemi 2011, Mallard et al. 2009). Thus, technologies of evaluation have a direct impact on the likelihood that plurarchies as opposed to a single hierarchy prevail, on the flattening out of criteria of comparison, and on

the likelihood that items under consideration can shine under different lights. Pluralistic evaluative cultures may be more likely to prevail in areas that are not highly formalized or that are newly emergent, as in the cases of new culinary practices and new sports. A comparative SVE would need to ponder such questions.

Another constraint on evaluation is the definition of criteria, and the extent to which they are formalized and consistent. In peer review, evaluators are easily led to privilege different elements of comparison at different times, as they are primed by the features of what they are comparing. Items are evaluated in succession (based on a range of criteria that could include genre, preestablished rank, alphabetical order, topic, etc.), and evaluators often become aware of new dimensions for comparison in the process of assessing. Whether evaluators are formally asked to systematically revisit their evaluation after all possible criteria have emerged can affect the outcome and the sense of legitimacy of the process. It can also lead to explicitly separate judgments of taste and judgments of expertise, and can thus sustain heterarchies (Lamont 2009). A comparative SVE would more systematically consider the place of idiosyncratic preferences, as well as the unavoidable roles of cognition, emotions, and interaction in evaluations. It is quite possible that emotions and idiosyncratic tastes are more often recognized as legitimate contributors to evaluation in artistic fields than they are in scientific fields, for instance.

Evaluative practices are also constrained by conventions (Becker 1982).[8] For instance, reviewers' assessments of the writings of fiction authors are constrained by previous evaluations (Janssen 1997, p. 277). Moreover, public evaluation imposes standards of legitimacy and accountability that profoundly shape evaluative practices: In liberal democratic societies, for instance, public evaluation often requires deliberating about relevant criteria and making these criteria public. Other frequent rules include disclosure of conflict of interest, bracketing personal interest, and some measure of accountability about the appropriateness of the final ranking (Lamont 2009). Such customary rules of evaluation may not be easily diffused to societies in which personal loyalty and clientelism, as opposed to meritocratic criteria, prevail as unique and widely acknowledged distributive mechanisms—consider Chinese academia (Fang et al. 2008). This also holds for customary rules of evaluation such as deliberative turn taking and the absence of intimidation. A comparative SVE should consider how evaluative practices are molded by radically different political institutions and cultures (see Musselin 2009 for a comparative view of French, German, and American academic hiring, in which personal ties and considerations are dealt with differently).

Whether evaluators follow customary rules is likely to depend on how strongly they are invested in what defines a proper evaluation and, ultimately, on their self-concept as an evaluator, which is necessarily implicated in the act of evaluation. This would be equally true of astrophysicists, jazz amateurs, or professional chefs. These selves are produced by organizational fields that foster adherence to such rules and cannot be taken for granted: A less highly institutionalized field will be less consistent in providing clear rules and in socializing newcomers (as compared with, say, a higher education system that trains newcomers for several years). This clearly suggests the importance of considering the formation of the self as a crucial topic for the study of evaluation—this topic is not typically included in the cultural or economic sociology of evaluation. The history and sociology of science—more specifically, studies of objectivity (Daston & Galison 2007) and authority and expertise (Shapin 1994) that consider how the formation of the subject and the signaling of its virtues are essential to evaluative practices—provide guidance on this point. Also particularly useful here are Hennion's (2004, 2007) studies of amateurs (of wine, music, rock climbing, etc.) and their attachment, through

[8] Another important line of work not discussed here considers how convention is necessary for the coordination of action (Salais et al. 1998).

their bodies, for instance (e.g., how taste buds are taught to appreciate) (see also Callon et al. 2002). This concept of attachment refers to "collective and material equipment" (Hennion 2007, p. 109) used to deploy taste—or dispositions needed for actors to appreciate their object of predilection and how they connect to it, and for them to learn to invest in it and be attentive to it. Hennion (2004, 2011) contrasts Bourdieu's critical approach to taste (focused on the hidden determinants of taste) with his own performative approach to taste, which takes into consideration what is needed to be attached to something (your favorite desk), the dispositions one needs in order to appreciate the object, and the performative capacity of the actor in the coproduction of the object of his appreciation (and vice versa). All these questions require a consideration of subject formation (how individuals learn to be evaluators and think of themselves as such, and how they learn to perform appropriate evaluations—with their bodies, tools, ideas, etc.) Considering these issues brings a fresh dimension to SVE and represents a fairly radical shift from the current literature on quantification and evaluation.

Also relevant here are Rosental's (2011a,b) studies of nonhuman supports, and more specifically of public demonstrations of technology or demos that, he argues, are becoming more central to evaluative practices. Demos (e.g., PowerPoint presentations, presentations of the workings of robots, and other visual aids) are increasingly common in evaluation processes. They are deployed for effectiveness and as evidence of competence and have come to define parameters of evaluation in a range of sites. For instance, in his study of the use of demos in the development of the field of advanced technology at the European Commission, Rosental (2005) shows how demos are used to create buy in and build political consensus. In academia and elsewhere, the use of demos has rapidly redefined the role of the competent professional, and the formatting of the self that accompanies it, in response to newly emergent standards of evaluation that privilege transparency, clarity, and simplicity [as opposed to more classical academic virtues such as erudition, depth of understanding, and sophistication (Lamont 2009)].

Instruments or tools that are used for evaluation are also constitutive of evaluative cultures—just as is the case for demos. As shown by Karpik (2010), devices are crucial for understanding the construction of value, particularly in the case of unique objects (e.g., works of art), which, for lack of comparables, cannot easily be valued. Devices are tools for gathering information from multiple parties. Karpik (2010, p. 45) describes in detail devices such as "networks, appellations, 'cicerones,' rankings, and 'confluences.'" From a heuristic perspective, such devices are even more useful for non-economic evaluation, i.e., for cases for which pricing is irrelevant.

Another methodological approach often used to make multiple matrices or criteria visible—or to document tensions between competing grammars of worth—is to focus on *épreuves* (tests, "hot moments," or trials). Indeed, inspired by Garfinkel's (1967) breaching experiments, social scientists have studied evaluation by considering *épreuves* or tests. This refers to contests in which different constructions of the value of an entity conflict and are measured against one another by social actors—situations in which various parties deliberate or attempt to establish the rightfulness of their contradictory view (see especially the original perspective of Heinich 2007 on recipients of literary prizes). In so doing, actors (and sociologists!) make visible and explicit their preferred criteria of evaluation (whether or not they are aware of them). Similarly, focusing on boundary work is a convenient heuristic tool for bringing taken-for-granted criteria of evaluation to light, by exploring what individuals value (Lamont & Molnar 2002). These various instruments of evaluation are particularly well suited to rendering visible the multiplicity of criteria of evaluation.

These topics—criteria, conventions (or customary rules), self-concepts, nonhuman supports, and instruments—are only the tip of the iceberg in a program for a systematic comparative SVE. Although this section offers only a

partial view of (e)valuative cultures, it also underscores the need for greater integration of current knowledge. To develop one particular example, one objective could be to compare processes of valuation across realms of activity, in terms of rules of evaluation, definition of the comparables, the role of instances of consecration, etc. For instance, Baumann's (2007) work on movies and Chong's (2011) work on fiction reviews might be compared with evaluations in other realms, so as to capture differences across domains of cultural and intellectual production: science, art, humanities, sports, and so forth. In particular, we should consider variations in legitimation processes (reputational blackboxing and resources), and their influence on evaluation processes. To take another example, if we find that pure scientists are less critical of one another than social scientists, is it because their status hierarchies are less contested as a result of better backing by material resources (e.g., larger grants)? Variations in status systems are likely to influence evaluative practices—e.g., whether norms of cognitive and methodological pluralism prevail, whether evaluators are more likely to defer to experts, etc.

3. THE ROAD AHEAD

This review has surveyed SVE with the goal of putting various bodies of work in conversation with one another in order to stimulate more cumulative theory building. This was accomplished by focusing on subprocesses such as categorization and legitimation, as well as on (e)valuative practices. Although it is premature to try to integrate the relevant literatures, giving shape to a largely disorganized terrain is certainly a first step in the process.

The review has also considered heterarchies and the conditions that sustain them. Some of these conditions are suggested by the literature on (e)valuative practices—for instance, the findings that rating is more conducive to heterarchies than ranking, which is zero sum; that less institutionalized fields may be more likely to use a range of criteria of evaluation; and that maintaining a distinction between judgment of taste and judgment of expertise, as well as being attentive to consistency in criteria, may also work against heterarchies. I also alluded to the institutional and cultural conditions that can sustain a broader range of definitions of a worthy self and broader symbolic communities and cultural membership. More research will be needed to document specifically how such definitions are maintained, with the support of inclusive policies and cultural repertoires (Hall & Lamont 2013).

The organization of this article around subprocesses and practices led me to neglect important crosscutting themes. I have not spelled out the relationship between the subprocesses of categorization and legitimation on the one hand and (e)valuation practices on the other. One would want to conceptualize more fully the relationship between process and practice and how various types of constraints operate in shaping both (see Beljean 2012 for very useful directions for future research).

Again, there is an urgent need for more systematically cumulative work along such dimensions if the SVE literature is to continue to develop. Potential driving questions that are currently attracting interest include (*a*) how shared tastes are formed through networks (Pachucki & Breiger 2010) and the impact of previous network contacts on evaluative process and outcomes, (*b*) how representations of the value of symbolic goods are transmitted across generations through textbooks and other mechanisms of diffusion so as to become part of a group's collective memory (Lang & Lang 1988; see Santana-Acuña 2012 on the classicization of García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*), and (*c*) how the construction of publics may operate as an intermediary step in the evaluation process (e.g., Ikegami 2005, Muetzel 2011). Other relevant questions include how comparables are selected and who selects them, the impact on the evaluation process of the scarcity of resources to be distributed, the characteristics of the classificatory order within which the items are being sorted [i.e., whether or not it is widely consensual or contested, strongly hierarchical,

stable, or presenting porous boundaries (e.g., DiMaggio 1987 for the arts)]. Although some of these features are considered in the current literature, they need to be examined in more detail in future work across fields of activities. This also means developing a comparative SVE that is more general in its implications and aspirations and more concerned with fundamental social processes and mechanisms.

Beyond these selected topics, many new paths of research are just emerging. For instance, we need to better understand the impact of information and information technology on evaluation and expertise (e.g., Heimer 2001). Real estate searches have been radically modified by the Internet as it is now possible to sort through multiple listing without the help of realtors and to seek their assistance only when it comes time to make fine distinctions (Rivera & Lamont 2012). The same holds for dating, with a more radical separation between coarse sorting and fine distinction (Stevens 2007) with the help of dating Web sites. Through comparative analysis, we need to explore more closely the relationship between information that depends on proximal contacts and information that depends on distal communication (Rosental 2005). That considerable information is now universally retrievable at low cost is likely to reconfigure (e)valuative practices, including the role of nonexperts and of interactional expertise in the process (Collins & Evans 2007). Timeless human practices such as the job search are being drastically altered by the Internet. The same is true for all forms of ranking (e.g., Jeacle & Carter 2011 on TripAdvisor). We are now able to evaluate faster and more comprehensively than ever before, although generally in a highly scripted fashion. But this requires a formatting of the self and a democratization of procedures that also lead to greater standardization (is Herbert Marcuse's one-dimensional man lurking in the background?).

Although answering many of the above questions will be challenging because they speak to very basic processes shared across many essential domains of social life, the payoff could be considerable and the effort quite worthwhile.

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