

FORTHCOMING

UNDERSTANDING CULTURAL SOCIOLOGY

Dick Houtman, KU Leuven, Belgium

'Professor Houtman's book constitutes a powerful argument in favour of sociologists recognising the central importance of culture as a distinct dimension of social life. Rejecting those perspectives that would redefine culture in terms of something "more fundamental", Professor Houtman invokes the sociology of religion and, specifically, the contributions of Durkheim and Weber, as evidence in favour of the adoption of a truly vibrant non-reductionist cultural sociology. This work should interest all those who care about the current state and possible future direction of the discipline, no matter what their theoretical inclination.'

– Colin Campbell, Professor Emeritus, University of York, UK

'Cultural sociology has become central to the modern discipline, Houtman suggests, because it has become increasingly evident that modern institutions continue to be anchored in non-rational, metaphysical beliefs. To understand this seeming paradox, Houtman offers us an essay in the classical sense, an elegant argument deeply inflected by acute personal sensibility and sharp social observation.'

– Jeffery C. Alexander, Yale University, USA

'A crisply written overview for newcomers of major dimensions of the field of cultural sociology. Houtman's book shows you not only how to do cultural sociology yourself, but also how to do it really well.'

– David Inglis, University of Helsinki, Finland

This fascinating book discusses the particularities, pleasures and promises of a sociology that underscores the significance of culture as a vital dimension of social life. It advocates an intellectually open-minded cultural sociology that acknowledges how culture influences sociologists' own work and urges a field traditionally dominated by qualitative methods to open up to experimental and survey research.

Understanding Cultural Sociology explains how the crisis of sociology in the 1960s resulted in a cultural turn away from positivism, due to discontent over positivist pretensions of strict objectivity and neutrality. Yet, the book also critiques how this shift gave rise to theoretical reductions of culture to structures of power and inequality, resulting in awkward resemblances to conspiracy theories. Dick Houtman advocates Emile Durkheim's and Max Weber's classical sociologies of culture and religion as promising blueprints for a cultural sociology that counters such reductionist tendencies.

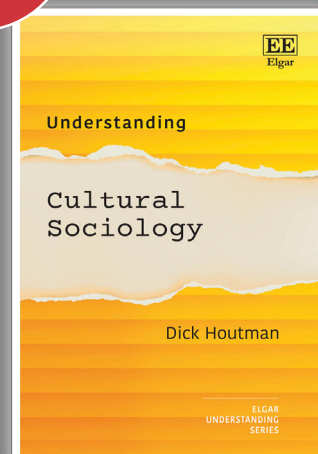
Staying away from mere theoretical exegesis, this illuminating book is a vital resource for students and scholars of sociology with an interest in what classical cultural-sociological theorizing has to offer to the empirical study of today's major social and political conflicts.

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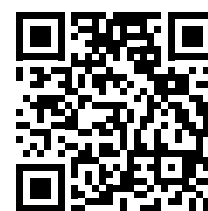
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