

any definition of culture as is conformity within reference groups, e. g., ethnic groups (cf. Lang 1998).

As is obvious from these remarks, there is a considerable convergence of themes, assumptions, data, and debated issues in the books reviewed. Nevertheless, the breadth of disciplines involved and the variety of perspectives presented is very wide. Thus, we see parallel terminologies, a divergence between empirically and theoretically oriented approaches, and lacunae in understanding. There is no coherent body of research. An indication for this is the relatively small overlap in the literature cited in these works. We should not canonize research approaches, but it is important to have an integrated discussion. This holds especially in such a currently marginal or marginalized field as social evolutionism and that was my motive for this combined review. In Table 1 I try to sum up some of the main issues of social evolutionism. As a general ordering principle I generally use insights of the "structural" approach to the logical architecture (e. g., core of theory, intended applications) of scientific theories.⁵ Specifically, as regards evolutionary phenomena and evolutionistic approaches, I use elements of Darwinian approaches – and their critics. The result shows crosscutting lines of interests in current evolutionistic theorizing but also a welter of proposed alternatives as regards patterns and mechanisms involved and other disputed issues.

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⁵ Stegmüller 1979: 131–176; Balzer, Moulines, and Sneed 1987; Bierstedt 1997: 41–68.

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