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Author(s): Tim Hallett

Reviewed work(s):

Source: *Sociological Theory*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Jun., 2003), pp. 128-149

Published by: [American Sociological Association](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3108622>

Accessed: 13/06/2012 09:11

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Symbolic Power and Organizational Culture*

TIM HALLETT

Indiana University

With the recent wave of corporate scandals, organizational culture has regained relevance in politics and the media. However, to acquire enduring utility, the concept needs an overhaul to overcome the weaknesses of earlier approaches. As such, this paper reconceptualizes organizational culture as a negotiated order (Strauss 1978) that emerges through interactions between participants, an order influenced by those with the symbolic power to define the situation. I stress the complementary contributions of theorists of practice (Bourdieu and Swidler) and theorists of interaction (Goffman and Strauss), building upward from practice into interaction, symbolic power, and the negotiated order. Using data from initial reports on the fall of Arthur Andersen and Co., I compare this symbolic power approach to other approaches (culture as subjective beliefs and values or as context/public meaning). The symbolic power model has five virtues: an empirically observable object of study; the capacity to explain conflict and integration; the ability to explain stability and change; causal efficacy; and links between the micro-, meso-, and macrolevels of analysis. Though this paper focuses on organizational culture, the symbolic power model provides theoretical leverage for understanding many situated contexts.

INTRODUCTION

In the late 1970s, organizational culture became a hot topic. Fueled by management schools, the concept offered a link between workplace culture and outcomes such as worker satisfaction, commitment, and productivity (Fine 1984; Frost et al. 1991; Martin and Meyerson 1988). The fire of enthusiasm was soon tempered by arguments over the “variability” and “manageability” of organizational culture (Smirchich and Morgan 1982; Nord 1985; Ouchi and Wilkins 1985), its malleability versus its stability as a “root metaphor” for the production of meaning (Smirchich 1983; Gabriel 1995).

Perhaps the victim of this fray is the concept itself: as a management fad, studies of organizational culture have gone from popular to passé in the span of 25 years (Hill and Carley 1999). Left behind are two approaches that grow from previous sociological traditions (Ouchi and Wilkins 1985:469). One envisions culture as beliefs and values held by subjects in the organization. This approach is of special interest to those who want to “manage” culture, as these beliefs are the ends toward which action is oriented (Gagliardi 1986; Schein 1991a, 1991b, 1997). However, analyzing culture in terms of subjective beliefs is empirically problematic (Wuthnow 1987:17), and this first

* I wish to thank Gary Alan Fine, Marc Ventresca, Orville Lee, James Spillane, Ryon Lancaster, Michael Sauder, Jessica Thurk, Peer Fiss, and the participants in the Northwestern University Culture and Society Workshop. Work on this paper was supported by the Distributed Leadership Study funded by research grants from the National Science Foundation (REC-9873583) and the Spencer Foundation, Northwestern University’s Dispute Resolution Research Center, and a Northwestern University Saul Mackoff Dissertation Year Fellowship. All opinions and conclusions expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of any funding agency. Address correspondence to: Tim Hallett, Department of Sociology, Northwestern University, 1810 Chicago Ave., Evanston, IL 60208-1330; e-mail: t-hallett@northwestern.edu.

approach tends to view culture as monolithic, ignoring conflict (Meyerson and Martin 1987).

In contrast, the second approach removes organizational culture from the subjective minds of actors and places it in public by emphasizing espoused beliefs, ideologies, stories, myths, rituals, ceremonies, and artifacts (Geertz 1973; Pettigrew 1979; Trice and Beyer 1984). This approach views culture as a public context that articulates meaning to participants. By emphasizing stable public meaning, this approach renders culture empirically observable and considers both the functions and the dysfunctions of organizational culture. The thick descriptions that accompany these studies emphasize how culture communicates what it means to be a part of the organization. However, in the focus on stability, change becomes difficult to explain, and the thick descriptions do not generate causal propositions. While this “public” culture provides the context for action, it “does not exert a causal influence on social agents” (Lee 2000:34), leaving some to wonder, if it cannot be used and manipulated in a desirable way, why bother?

Ironically, in the time that academic interest in organizational culture has sunk into the bog of debate, the issue has regained topical relevance in politics and the media. The recent spate of corporate scandals has been accompanied by outcries for cultures of responsibility within organizations. If sociologists are to weigh in on these scandals, we need an approach that overcomes the deficiencies of earlier work. Though poised for a comeback, organizational culture needs an overhaul. As such, this paper has two goals, the first conceptual and the second analytical. The first goal is to reconceptualize organizational culture as a negotiated order (Strauss 1978; Fine 1984) that emerges through the interactions between organizational actors, an order influenced particularly by people with symbolic power (the power to define the situation). Second—and more importantly—I theorize the operation of symbolic power in organizations, and, in doing so, demystify the origins and outcomes of organizational culture.

To accomplish these goals, I build from a third sociological approach to culture—the “practice” approach—that is just beginning to make its way into organizational studies. I move from practice into interaction, symbolic power, and the emergent negotiated order, stressing the complementary contributions of theorists of practice (Bourdieu and Swidler) and theorists of interaction (Goffman and Strauss). Theories of interaction enable us to move from practice to the mesolevel of “organizational culture,” and theories of practice provide a micro-macro link that bounds interaction, symbolic power, and the emergent negotiated order. The model of symbolic power and organizational culture that I develop has five virtues: an empirically observable object of study; the capacity to explain conflict and integration; the ability to explain stability and change; causal efficacy; and links between the micro-, meso-, and macrolevels of analysis.

To demonstrate the virtues of the symbolic power approach, I apply the different models—subjective, context/public meaning, symbolic power—to initial reports on the fall of Arthur Andersen and Co. At one time upheld as a pillar of corporate responsibility, Andersen went from “self-righteous preacher of the profession to auditor who couldn’t say no” (Alexander et al. 2002a:3). This shift in organizational culture has had dire consequences for Andersen employees, investors, and the public trust of corporations.

DEFINITIONS

Following Stinchcombe, I define organizations loosely as sets of “social relations deliberately created, with the explicit intention of continuously accomplishing some

specific goals or purposes” (Stinchcombe 1965:142). While organizations are directed toward stated tasks, the pathways to completing tasks are ambiguous, and the links between broader social structures, the structure of the organization, and practices are often loosely coupled (Meyer and Rowan 1977; Weick 1976). While organizations have deliberate components, formal interactions are joined by a “shadow land of informal interaction” (Selznick 1949:260) that bears on formal tasks. Water-cooler conversations matter for formal tasks, not only in the time taken away from working on these tasks, but also by flavoring relations between coworkers who cooperate on completing such tasks.

Both forms of interaction, formal and informal, generate organizational culture. More specifically, I define organizational culture as a negotiated order that emerges through the interactions between actors, a negotiated order influenced in particular by people with symbolic power—the power to define the situation in which interactions take place. The implications of this definition become clearer as we move from practices in the organization to interactions, the negotiated order, and symbolic power.

CULTURE AND PRACTICE IN ORGANIZATIONS

Bourdieu’s concept of practice is tied to his view of the broader social order, providing a link between micro actions within organizations and macro social structures. Bourdieu conceives of society as a social space where people exist in relation to one another (primarily) based on their economic capital, cultural capital (credentials, titles, tastes, dispositions), and social capital (networks) (Bourdieu 1986, 1989, 1990). This social space is an objective social structure existing “independent of the conscious will of agents,” while “guiding and constraining their practices or their representations” (Bourdieu 1990:122). However, Bourdieu believes that people are able to move through this social structure. These movements are manifestations of the “habitus,” defined as “systems of durable, transposable *dispositions*, structured structures pre-disposed to function as structuring structures” (Bourdieu 1977:72). The habitus is *structured* by the *objective* conditions in which the individual develops (their position in social space). These objective conditions inculcate dispositions and tastes that reflect the individual’s position in objective social space. These tastes and dispositions *structure* the individual’s subjective actions and experiences. The habitus is structured, but the individual has an agentive role, acting on the dispositions of the habitus. These subjective actions have a *structuring* affect, normally reproducing the “objective” conditions from which the habitus is born.

According to Bourdieu, we can understand the operation of the habitus by observing the enactment of dispositions *in practice*. A person’s practice—their “corporeal hexis,” their “style of expression” (Bourdieu 1988:56)—is the empirical manifestation of the dispositions located in the habitus (Bourdieu 1984). When people enter organizations, they bring their habitus—and their relation to the broader social order—with them, and individual practices within organizations are informed (but not determined) by the habitus (linked to a position in the broader social order). In completing organizational tasks, people act on the basis not only of formal organizational rules, but also of the habitus.

Swidler’s discussion of culture resembles Bourdieu’s. Where Bourdieu stresses how practice is formulated from dispositions, Swidler discusses how people draw from “cultural toolkits” to generate action (Swidler 1986). Toolkits are filled with “habits,

skills, and styles” that people draw from to solve problems (Swidler 1986:273). In this view, the causal logic of culture rests not in the ends toward which action is oriented, but in the means (tools) used to formulate “strategies of action” (Swidler 1986:273).

The relevance of the practice approach for organizational analysis can be found in an example from Hargadon and Sutton’s (1997) study of technology-brokering. One of the designers studied had a particularly interesting set of dispositions (or cultural tools) based on his experiences as a youth: “One designer grew up on a farm and, in two brainstorming sessions we attended...he offered potentially useful solutions based on technologies from tractors and combines” (Hargadon and Sutton 1997:735). As a means to complete an organizational task, this designer acts on a set of dispositions acquired in his relation to social structures external to the organization, dispositions reflected in his practice.

To summarize, the practice approach aids organizational analysis by locating the recursive link between micro actions within organizations and broader social structures (Giddens 1979, 1984). People bring their culturally inscribed dispositions and toolkits with them into an organization, linking organizational culture to the broader social order, a connection the organizational-culture literature typically fails to make (Whittington 1992) (see Figure 1). The practice approach also possesses a causal logic, but instead of emphasizing the ends toward which action is oriented, this approach stresses the means (dispositions/toolkits) through which people in organizations formulate action.

However, organizational culture is more than the sum of individual practices. While these micro practices are linked to macro-social structures, approaching the mesolevel of “organizational culture” requires that we move from individual practices to the social interactions informed by those practices. Returning to the example cited earlier, the designer is not only engaging in a practice informed by dispositions, he is also interacting with his coworkers. The organizational culture that emerges is negotiated in these interactions, and the interactions that occur are shaped in particular by those who have acquired the symbolic power to define the situation.

FROM PRACTICE TO INTERACTION, NEGOTIATION, AND SYMBOLIC POWER

In making the step from practice into interaction, it is tempting to view the habitus as a kind of “self” that motivates actors and shapes interactions with others. As such,

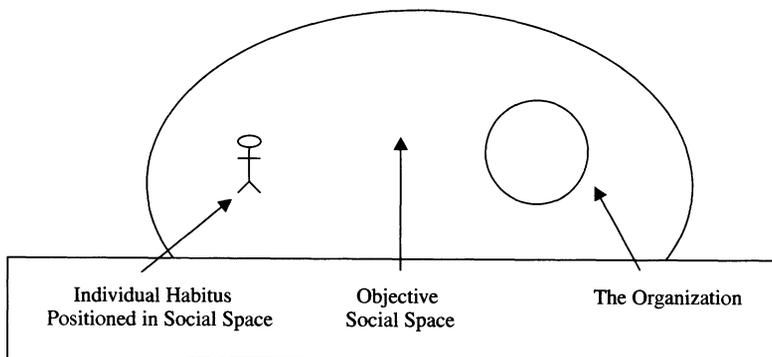


Figure 1. Dispositions reflecting a positioning in border social space carried into the organization.

wedding Bourdieu and Goffman may seem antithetical.¹ After all, Goffman is famous for stating that the self “is not an organic thing that has a specific location, whose fundamental fate is to be born, to mature, and to die; it is a dramatic effect arising diffusely from a scene that is presented” (Goffman 1959:252–53). The body is simply an empty “peg” upon which performed selves are “hung” depending on the needs of the situation. Yet Goffman takes the time to distinguish between the conscious, intentional “signs given” during interaction and the unconscious, unintended “signs given off” that can undermine impression management. As I see it, these unintended “signs given off” are manifestations of the unconscious tastes and dispositions of the habitus.

The habitus plays an important role in interaction because it is so unconscious. Upon presenting a certain self, it is too difficult for the actor to monitor every movement he or she performs, even a highly conscious, manipulative actor. Therefore, the actor unwittingly interacts in ways consistent with the habitus (dispositions). This way, the actor does not risk betraying his/her performance, because the unconscious signs given off (reflective of the dispositions of the habitus) are consistent with the act. Hence, not “just anybody” can become a movie star. The process of becoming a movie star involves not just learning how to “act,” but also an inculcation of the dispositions that make the act credible.² The same can be said for Goffman’s (1952) con men. Con men are successful, not simply because of their impression management, but also because, through their positioning in social space and experiences in the life course, they have acquired the dispositions needed to be a good faker. For a typical person to disregard the dispositions of the habitus—to engage in practices that are totally foreign—is to risk humiliation on the part of signs given off, manifestations of the habitus that is rejected. As such, the habitus shapes impression management, but the self-presented remains situated. The habitus enables and constrains impression management, but the self remains a characteristic of the situation. The habitus is not a “self,” so to speak, nor is the body an “empty peg.”

In this way, theories of practice, linked as they are to broader social structures,³ bound interactions and place limits on impression management within organizations. For the designer mentioned earlier, his interactions with coworkers are bounded by the structure of the organization, but also the dispositions of his habitus. Though bounded, interactions in organizations—especially informal interactions—retain a level of spontaneity. The outcome is social, but not oversocialized (Wrong 1961).⁴ Symbolic power and the negotiated order emerge from these types of interactions.

Symbolic Power and the Negotiated Order

In observing organizations from a distance, we may believe we see a stable, unchanging system of relationships. Yet the negotiated order approach has

¹This is especially true since Bourdieu’s work is typically associated with a more behaviorist tradition in which action is well conditioned, while Goffman’s work is more often associated with cognitive explanations involving more spontaneous interactions. However, both men drew heavily from Durkheim, and Randall Collins (1986:106) argues that Goffman is more of a Durkheimian ritualist than a traditional symbolic interactionist. Moreover, the two men deeply respected each other. Bourdieu applauds Goffman’s efforts to “grasp the most fleeting and elusive, and very often the most decisive, aspects of social existence” (Bourdieu 1983:112). Bourdieu edited all of the French translations of Goffman’s work and is largely responsible for introducing French sociology to Goffman’s thought. Likewise, Goffman was planning a major presentation of Bourdieu’s work for the American Sociological Association meetings before he fell ill (Winkin 1983).

²Evidence can be found in the horrendous movies that often mark the early careers of stars.

³A frequent criticism of Goffman’s work concerns his lack of engagement with broader social structures (see Waksler 1989).

⁴A frequent criticism of Bourdieu’s work (Jenkins 1982, 1989; King 2000; Sewell 1992).

sensitized researchers to the fact that these relations are ultimately dependent upon the agreement of their parties and that they are constructed through a social, rather than entirely policy-driven, process. (Fine 1984:243)

As Fine indicates, organizational culture flows from action. Regardless of how stable this culture may appear, the individuals in the organization must re-enact it, and the meanings associated with the culture are dependent on agreement—it is a type of negotiation. In this sense, organizational culture *is* a “negotiated order” (Strauss 1978).

To state that organizational culture is a negotiated order does not imply equality in the negotiation. Instead, certain negotiators come to have disproportionate power over the negotiated order. Though there are instances of clear coercion, more often this power is subtle, an “invisible power” (Bourdieu 1991a:164) abstracted from the relations between people,⁵ not a manifestation of formal rules and authority.

Bourdieu labels this hidden form of power “symbolic power” (Bourdieu 1991:166). As I am using the concept to inform a model of organizational culture, symbolic power is the *power to define the situation* in which the interactions that comprise the negotiated order take place. Returning the example from Hargadon and Sutton’s (1997) study of technology-brokering, the designer’s practices are a manifestation of a set of dispositions reflective of his habitus. However, not only is he working on a task, but he is also interacting with coworkers. Through these interactions, his coworkers witness his practices, and if they find his practices of value they will convey deference to him (a process that likewise occurs in interaction). Goffman defines “deference” as “that component of activity which functions as a symbolic means by which appreciation is regularly conveyed *to* a recipient *of* this recipient” (Goffman 1967:56). Examples include the “little salutations, compliments, and apologies which punctuate social intercourse” (Goffman 1967:57)—for example, a compliment such as “[Y]ou always have these creative solutions from growing up on a farm.” Through such interactions, not only do the coworkers convey deference to the designer, but they are also *imbuing him with legitimacy*. Once acquired, legitimacy can be deployed as the symbolic power to define the situation—to say, in essence, “This is what a good solution looks like,” thereby influencing future interactions and the ongoing negotiated order.⁶ Likewise, someone whose informal practices at the water cooler are valued by others in the organization may acquire the legitimacy and symbolic power to define sports-talk as appropriate, but not politics.

The manner in which I use symbolic power and the negotiated order can be summarized as follows: Negotiators, who engage in various practices within the organization (from design solutions to water-cooler conversation), are imbued with legitimacy by those who value the practices in which the negotiators engage. This legitimacy can be deployed as symbolic power, the power to define the situation (see Figure 2). Symbolic power is typically deployed to further entrench the reality that defines as valuable the practices that are the basis of legitimacy.

⁵For the most part, Bourdieu analyzes symbolic power either at the microlevel of the habitus (Bourdieu 1984, 1988), or at the macrolevel of fields (Bourdieu 1988, 1991a, 1991b, 1993, 1998a, 1998b). Other sociologists working in the Bourdieuan tradition likewise stress symbolic power at the level of fields (Escoffier 1995; Klinenberg 1999; Lee 1998). My departures from this tradition are an effort to theorize symbolic power at the mesolevel of organizational culture.

⁶In his discussion of deference, demeanor, and impression management, Goffman’s goal is to explain the ritual maintenance of an “interaction order” (Glaser and Strauss 1964:675; Goffman 1983). I argue that there is more at stake: through interaction comes the *symbolic power to define an interaction order*, to create and recreate an order.

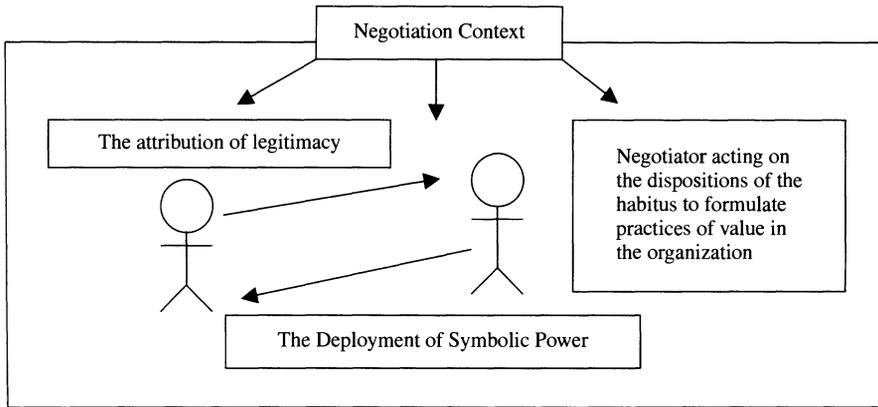


Figure 2. The attribution and deployment of symbolic power within the negotiation context.

Oftentimes this process goes unnoticed. That is, people do not realize they are imbuing a negotiator with legitimacy and symbolic power. Likewise, those who have acquired symbolic power may not realize that their valued practices have become a source of legitimacy, or that their continued actions define the organizational culture. In other words, this approach does not presume intent. However, should an organizational actor become cognizant of this process and seek symbolic power, he/she can engage in impression management to shape their own practices such that they will be valued by others. Yet such efforts are bounded by the unconscious dispositions of the habitus, the hidden tools used to formulate practice and interaction.

This process is further conditioned by the “structural” and “negotiation” contexts (Maines 1977; Strauss 1978, 1982).⁷ The structural context relates to the broader social order—for example, the population in which an organization is embedded (Stinchcombe 1965), institutions that create competing organizational demands (Heimer 1995, 1999), and the corresponding institutional logics that permeate organizations (DiMaggio 1987; DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Jepperson 1991) and condition negotiations.

The structural context bears directly on the “negotiation context,” the “structural properties entering very directly as conditions into the course of the negotiation itself” (Strauss 1978:99). Examples include the labor processes (Burawoy 1979), as well as bureaucratic structures and rational-legal authority (Gouldner 1954). Thus, social structure influences symbolic power and organizational culture through the “front door” of the structural and negotiation contexts, but also through the “back door” of the habitus, as participants act on dispositions linked to their own position in social space.

The above list is not exhaustive, and an organization may contain other relevant features. Three features are of particular theoretical interest. The first is *previous deployments of symbolic power*: while actors attribute legitimacy to various negotiators, they do so in organizational cultures in which particular practices and interactions have been predefined as “valid.” Actors have the agency to attribute legitimacy,

⁷I use Strauss’s “structural context” and “negotiation context” rather than Bourdieu’s “field” because the structural and negotiation context are better articulated for understanding specifically situated contexts such as organizational culture.

but this agency is both the “medium and the outcome” of the existing order (Giddens 1979, 1984).

The second is *multiple legitimate practices*: the practices that matter as a basis of legitimacy and symbolic power often vary within the organization. In one part of an organization, the legitimate practice may be related to a formal task (e.g., the designer’s creativity), but in another part of the organization, the legitimate practice may be informal (e.g., aptitude in small talk). The key is that “the particular claim to legitimacy is to a significant degree and according to its type treated as ‘valid’” (Weber 1968:214).

Third, since there are multiple legitimate practices, it is difficult for any one negotiator to monopolize symbolic power (Earle 1997:204). Moreover, organizations often contain *multiple audiences* (groups of people witness to a relevant practice), audiences who value different practices as a basis of legitimacy. As such, there are often competing pockets of symbolic power involving negotiators tied to different audiences who draw from different sources of legitimacy (valued practices).

Considering the audiences within organizations enables researchers to account for both integration and conflict within organizational cultures. The presence of fewer audiences creates greater homogeneity in legitimate practices and representative negotiators with symbolic power who define the organizational culture. The following proposition summarizes:

The likelihood that conflict replaces integration in the organizational culture (negotiated order) increases as the number of internal audiences increases.

This model can also explain stability and change in organizational cultures. Stability in the structural and negotiation contexts reproduces the conditions of possibility for the attribution and deployment of symbolic power, favoring reproduction. Changes in the structural and negotiation contexts create conditions in which different practices are valued, enabling the attribution of symbolic power to new and different negotiators, creating change. The following proposition summarizes:

The likelihood that organizational culture (negotiation order) is reproduced increases with the increasing stability of the structural and negotiation contexts.

While the features of the structural and negotiation context generate propositions around integration/conflict and stability/change, to grasp the content of organizational culture, we must not lose sight of practice and interaction. Practice and interaction are not simply the carriers of social structure (DiMaggio 1988; Scott 2001:77). Rather, *practice and interaction have a constitutive role*, propelling structure forward but also modifying structures in the process (Barley 1996; Creed and Scully 2001; Fligstein 2001:211). Social structure enables and constrains, but organizational life—even in total institutions—remains ambiguous (Goffman 1961; Jackall 1988; Meyerson 1991). Organizational culture is not interpellated from structure (Althusser 1971). Rather, it is born of the symbolic power that emerges from practice and interaction.

In summary, I define organizational culture as a negotiated order that emerges through interactions between participants, a negotiated order influenced by people with symbolic power—the power to define the situation. Where other work emphasizes subjective beliefs and values or public meaning, to build a model of symbolic power and organizational culture I begin from a third approach that starts with practice. I stress the complementary contributions of theorists of practice (Bourdieu and Swidler) and theorists of interaction (Goffman and Strauss). Theories of

interaction enable us to move from practice to the mesolevel of “organizational culture,” and theories of practice provide a micro-macro link that bounds interaction, symbolic power, and the emergent organizational culture. In moving from practice into interaction, symbolic power, and the negotiated order, I argue that, embedded in context, valued practices become the basis of legitimacy, legitimacy that negotiators deploy as the symbolic power to define the situation and influence future practices, interactions, and the ongoing negotiated order.

Having constructed a theory of symbolic power and organizational culture, I now apply the different models (subjective, context/public meaning, symbolic power) to preliminary reports on the fall of Arthur Andersen and Co. In comparing the utility of these different approaches for understanding culture at Andersen, the strengths of the symbolic power approach become clear: an empirically observable object of study, the capacity to explain conflict and integration, the ability to explain stability and change, causal efficacy, and links between micro-, meso-, and macrolevels of analysis.

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AT ARTHUR ANDERSEN AND COMPANY

The three accounts of organizational culture at Andersen developed here are based on the following sources: a four-day *Chicago Tribune* special report drawn from internal documents, sworn testimony and congressional hearings, and an undisclosed number of interviews with employees (Alexander et al. 2002a, 2002b, 2002c, 2002d; Measelle 2002); two in-house histories (Arthur Andersen and Co. 1963; Spacek 1985); and three collections of speeches and papers by executives (Andersen 1970; Glickauf 1971; Spacek 1969). The purpose of this section is *not* to create a definitive report on Andersen culture. Doing so would require the kind of exhaustive analysis conducted by Vaughan in her 1996 study of NASA culture and the Challenger disaster. The data used here is insufficient for such an analysis. However, the Andersen example sufficiently demonstrates the virtues of the symbolic power approach to organizational culture.

Before proceeding, it is pertinent to juxtapose two pieces of data relevant for all three accounts. The first piece of data is a story prominent in the company lore about Arthur Andersen’s relationship with an early client:

About 1915, Mr. Andersen was confronted with a difficult situation with respect to the financial statements of a midwestern interurban railway company. The company distorted its earnings by deferring relatively large charges that should have been absorbed in current operating expenses. Mr. Andersen was insistent that the financial statements to which he attached his report should disclose the facts. The president of the company, an autocratic man, accustomed to having his own way, came to Chicago and demanded that Mr. Andersen issue a report approving the company’s procedure in deferring operating charges. *Mr. Andersen informed the president that there was not enough money in the city of Chicago to induce him to change his report.* We lost the client, of course, at a time when the small firm was not having easy sailing, and the loss of a client was almost a life and death matter. (Arthur Andersen and Co. 1963:19–20, emphasis added)

The second piece of data comes from a 1995 essay by Dick Measelle, at the time the chief executive of Andersen’s audit and tax practice, in a newsletter to Andersen partners:

Last month, while I was in Japan, I had occasion to discuss the relationship between our business units with Matsutarō Morita. In this conversation, Morita-san

observed that there is a fundamental difference between the partners in the two business units. *Andersen Consulting partners tend to be "Merchants," while Arthur Andersen partners are more like "Samurais."* Morita went on to define that the *Samurai Spirit* (bushi-dou) involved not only skills with martial arts, but also *absolute loyalty*, a strong sense of *personal honor* (mei-yo), *devotion to duty*, and *courage*, if required, to sacrifice one's own life in battle. A Samurai highly values a sense of shame (*haji*). *The Samurai does not always pursue profits*, which are necessary in one's life but are only secondary in the life of a Samurai. By the way, this *sounds much like Arthur Andersen's words* of October 27, 1936: "*We want to . . . measure our contribution more by the quality of service rendered than by whether we are making a good living out of it.*"

As in all matters, there are few absolutes and universal truths. Those who are concerned with the possibility that we may be losing some ground on the professional side, and becoming Merchants, may well have some basis for this concern. At the same time, the market is changing rapidly and what worked 20 years ago doesn't necessarily work today. *I believe that we must find a way to be both Merchant and Samurai.* (Measelle 2002:1, emphasis added)

Using materials such as these, I paint three portraits of Andersen culture: as subjective beliefs and values, as context/public meaning, and as symbolic power. I start each portrait with a background intellectual lineage, apply the appropriate concepts, and compare the portraits to reveal the beauty of the symbolic power model.

Culture and Organizational Culture as Subjective Beliefs and Values

The first place sociologists "looked" to understand culture was the minds of subjects. Beginning with Marx (1972), Weber (1964), and Durkheim (1973), "culture"—whether "ideology" or "religion" or "morals"—results from objective conditions (the mode of production, rationalization processes, or social change), but is experienced subjectively. Hence, for classical theorists, "culture" involves beliefs and values that exist in the minds of subjects and are understood by interpreting subjective experience.

Despite their differences, the phenomenological and symbolic interactionist traditions share a hermeneutic conception of culture with classical theory. For example, Schutz speaks of cultural "stocks of knowledge" providing a "scheme of interpretation" and corresponding "recipes" for action (Schutz 1970:81). As with the classical theorists, Schutz's "stocks of knowledge" are "knowable" through the interpretation of subjective experience. Similarly, Goffman speaks of "primary frameworks" as providing common ways of seeing (Goffman 1974:27). With shifting frames come shifting interpretations.

In the study of organizational culture, Schein likewise locates culture in the minds of subjects (Schein 1991a, 1991b, 1997), and defines organizational culture as "A pattern of shared basic assumptions" (Schein 1997:12). Similarly, Gagliardi defines organizational culture as "a coherent system of assumptions and basic values" (Gagliardi 1986:119).

In applying this approach to Andersen and Co., one stresses the subjective beliefs and values shared by members of the organization. The story of Arthur Andersen's relationship with the railway company and Measelle's essay are indicative of beliefs that hold integrity over profit: "The Samurai does not always pursue profits, which

are necessary in one's life but are only secondary in the life of a Samurai" and "We want to measure our contribution more by the quality of service rendered than by whether we are making a good living out of it" (Measelle 2002:1).

The subjective approach holds that the subjective beliefs and values shared throughout the organizational are variable and provide the ends toward which action is oriented, a key part of a causal chain that can be manipulated to produce certain outcomes (Smirchich 1983). While Measelle's essay in part lauds "Samurai" beliefs in "loyalty," "personal honor," "duty and courage," he is also trying to manage beliefs to generate "Merchant" profits without expense to "Samurai" integrity: "I believe that we must find a way to be both Merchant and Samurai" (Measelle 2002:1).

Although this approach is "manageable" and has causal efficacy, in its focus on subjective beliefs and values work in this tradition typically ignores the broader context in which the organizational culture is embedded. By failing to consider these broader social processes, all too often work in this tradition cannot adequately explain culture, because there are external causal factors unaccounted for (Habermas 1988:178) (for example Measelle's comment that "the market is changing rapidly and what worked 20 years ago doesn't necessarily work today").

Research in this vein is problematic for two additional reasons. First, this research tends to define organizational culture as *shared* beliefs and values, creating a notion of organizational culture that is "monolithic" and void of conflict, a point of frequent criticism (Martin and Meyerson 1988; Meyerson 1991; Meyerson and Martin 1987). A closer look at Measelle's essay reveals a culture in conflict, a tension between the Merchant beliefs of the consulting partners and the Samurai beliefs of the tax and auditing partners. Second, studying culture as subjective beliefs and values is empirically problematic: if "culture" exists in the minds of individuals, then culture is highly idiosyncratic and interpretations are difficult to validate (Wuthnow 1987:17).

In sum, the subjective approach locates culture in the minds of individuals and places its empirical gaze on subjective beliefs and values. These beliefs and values are held in common, creating a view of culture that is integrated but fails to address conflict in organizational cultures. Change is conceived as a shift in beliefs and values, but this approach often ignores the broader context in which cultural change is embedded. The model has a causal logic, as subjective beliefs and values provide the ends toward which action is oriented. The emphasis on subjective beliefs and values held in common by individuals in the organization involves a primarily microlevel of analysis (see Table 1).

Culture and Organizational Culture as Context

Perhaps as a result of the problems inherent in the subjective approach, most work on organizational culture does not emphasize what is "in people's heads," but rather follows a second intellectual tradition founded by Geertz. Geertz defines culture as "interworked systems of construable signs . . . [C]ulture is not a power, something to which social events, behaviors, institutions, or processes can be causally attributed; *it is a context*" (Geertz 1973:14, emphasis added). In this view, culture exists *in public* and functions to *articulate meaning*. Because culture is public and has a communicative purpose (such as the Balinese cockfight), the ethnographer can inscribe culture by writing it down, using thick description to create a text that can then be "read," to interpret the cultural meaning (Geertz 1973:9). By locating culture outside of the minds of individuals, Geertz renders culture more empirically observable.

Table 1. Approaches to Organizational Culture

	Subjective	Contextual	Symbolic Power
Cultural location	Minds of individuals	Social context	Negotiated order
Empirical focus	Subjective beliefs and values	Public meaning	Practice and interaction
View of culture	Integrated	Integration and conflict	Integration and conflict
Sources of conflict	————	Functions and dysfunctions	Competing audiences
Basis of change	New values	————	Changes in structural and negotiation contexts, changes in audiences within organizations
Nature of causality	Beliefs and values provide ends for action	Communicative, not causal	Both means of action and the ends toward which action is directed
Levels of analysis	Micro	Meso	Micro, meso, macro

Geertz’s context/public-meaning approach is shared by numerous organizational culture researchers. This publicly available culture includes espoused beliefs and ideology (Hochschild 1990; Linstead and Grafton-Small 1992; Pettigrew 1979), stories (Feldman 1990; Martin 1982; Tommerup 1990; Wilkins 1983), myths (Abravanel 1983; Dandridge, Mitroff, and Joyce 1980), and rituals (Deal and Kennedy 1982; Trice and Beyer 1984). These different systems of “terms, forms, categories, and images interprets a people’s own situation to themselves” (Pettigrew 1979:574). Public meaning can even articulate appropriate organizational “selves” (Kunda 1992:13–14) and feelings (Van Maanen 1991; Van Maanen and Kunda 1989).

Returning to the case of Arthur Andersen and Co., the data cited earlier are not merely exemplars of subjective beliefs and values. Rather, these examples exist in public, as a part of the organizational context: The story of Andersen’s rejection of the railway president is replayed in company publications and training. Likewise, Measelle’s essay publicly espouses beliefs in the company newsletter, extracting them from his head. Just as the cockfight studied by Geertz communicates what it is to be Balinese (Geertz 1973), these items communicate what it is to be an employee of Andersen and Co. Another example of the Andersen and Co. iconography is the sturdy mahogany doors that grace every company office and articulate “confidentiality, privacy, security, and orderliness” (Alexander et al. 2002a:4). These public meanings function to direct individual behaviors toward common goals (Dandridge, Mitroff, and Joyce 1980).

In most cases, public meaning operates toward the purposeful functioning of the organization. Yet it can also be dysfunctional (Kunda 1992). For example, when Arthur Andersen founded his company, he sought to push accounting services beyond the reporting of surface figures and toward the business facts “behind the figures”:

In filling the function of advisor or consultant to management the accountant is thus entering fields of investigative work which mark a distinct advance over the

earlier conceptions of the scope of his service, and which deal with the broad aspects of business as a whole. (Andersen 1970:53)

However, there is a contradiction in Andersen's vision: the independent act of auditing is at odds with the impulse to sell consulting services, especially when this relationship may compromise audit reports. This, in fact, was the end result in Andersen and Co.'s dealings with Worldcom, Waste Management, Global Crossing Ltd., Quest Communication, and especially Enron (Alexander et al. 2002a, 2002b, 2002c, 2002d). This contradiction is communicated in Measelle's essay. To a certain extent, to be an accountant is to be a Samurai, and to be a consultant is to be a Merchant. To be an Andersen employee is to somehow balance these conflicting meanings.

Through a consideration of such dysfunctions, research in this tradition can account for conflict in organizational cultures. However, an understanding of change is problematic. Because the organizational culture is itself a complex system of public meaning, it is not easily altered (Gabriel 1995). While there is a tension in the public meanings communicated through the Samurai and Merchant images, for years the Samurai dominated public meaning in the company. In his public speeches and papers, Arthur Andersen himself put integrity before profit (Alexander et al. 2002a, 2002b; Andersen 1970). Even when the consulting branch of the company expanded under Leonard Spacek (who replaced Andersen as chief executive and managing partner) and Joseph Glickauf (who headed consulting under Spacek), the Samurai dominated public meaning. For example, when Glickauf addressed fresh graduates of Andersen's consulting school in 1965, he gave a speech on the "Golden Rope" to success that would become famous in company lore. Commenting on each strand of the rope, he closed:

Integrity is, perhaps, the most important of all personal qualities, the true golden strand, and irrespective of how well-educated you are, how confident you are of your abilities, or how high you set your goals, you will not realize your potentialities for success without simple, basic honesty. (Glickauf 1971:113)

Even in an address by the head of consulting to new consultants, Samurai integrity dominated the Merchant in the public meaning communicated to new employees. However, in time Andersen culture would shift to the Merchant side. Without an infrastructure to explain stability *and* change, the public-meaning approach cannot explain the shift in Andersen's culture that has had painful outcomes for Andersen employees, investors, and the public trust of financial institutions.

While the public-meaning approach has difficulty explaining change, it also struggles with causality. Although Geertz does not view culture as a causal force—recall his statement that “[C]ulture is not a power, something to which social events, behaviors, institutions, or processes can be causally attributed”—research in this tradition is split over the location of organizational culture in a causal chain tied to outcomes and whether it can be manipulated to produce outcomes. While some hold that public meaning can be created and managed in effective ways (Feldman 1990; Smircich and Morgan 1982; Trice and Beyer 1984), others believe public meaning is unmanageable because of the multidimensional habitat of subjectivity existing in organizations (Gabriel 1995). In any case, a clear understanding of causal outcomes is blurred, and causal mechanisms and propositions are not made evident.

In sum, this approach locates culture in the social context while putting empirical focus on public meaning. Though problems of interpretation and observer bias

remain, this approach renders culture visible in a way that the subjective-beliefs approach does not. Through a discussion of functions and dysfunctions in public meaning, the contextual approach also provides for conflict and integration in organizational culture. However, the emphasis on systems of meaning stresses stability in organizational culture. Change is difficult to explain, and the nature of causality is also ambiguous: culture's function is largely communicative, not causal. With its emphasis on public meaning, the primary level of analysis in the context approach is meso (see Table 1).

Symbolic Power and Organizational Culture

The subjective values and culture as context approaches leave us in a quandary: How are we to analyze organizational culture empirically while explaining conflict and integration as well as stability and change, and retaining the causal efficacy (see Table 1)? The appropriate theoretical apparatus exists in the symbolic power approach.

The symbolic power approach locates organizational culture in the negotiated order. Like the context approach, it stresses the public existence of culture. The empirical focus is placed on observable practices and interactions, decreasing the validation problems of the subjective approach. Nor is interpretive bias as large a problem as it is if one stresses public meaning. After all, locating organizational culture in public meanings does not rule out alternative interpretations (Gamson 1995:87; Van Maanen and Kunda 1989:91). However, by focusing on practice and interaction, the symbolic power approach *temporarily brackets meaning* to observe first how audiences value certain practices and imbue negotiators with legitimacy, and then how legitimacy is deployed as the symbolic power to define the situation (and relevant meanings). Thus "meaning is located neither at the level of internal psychological processes nor within the confines of culture defined as an autonomous text, but rather is construed as the product of social interactions and institutional processes" (Lee 2000:57). As is always the case in the study of culture, some interpretation remains (Wuthnow 1987:17), but bias can be reduced by triangulating fieldwork with interview and archival data.

Returning to the Andersen case, when Arthur Andersen told the railway president that "there was not enough money in the city of Chicago to induce him to change his report," he was not concerned with public meaning, nor was he simply espousing his subjective beliefs. Rather, he was engaging in a *practice*, one that did not fit his immediate economic interests (he lost the client), but more likely fit the dispositions of his habitus inscribed in his strict Scandinavian upbringing, during which he was taught to "Think straight, talk straight" (Alexander et al. 2002a:3). Andersen was so uncompromising in his practices that he frequently used his rational legal authority as founder to "ship out" partners who chafed at his actions (Spacek 1985:297). To quote Leonard Spacek, Andersen's successor, Andersen "was very tough on people that violated his principles" (Spacek 1985:13). Andersen's tough actions are not unobservable beliefs. Rather they are observable practices that included a conflict with his own brother: when Walter Andersen married another partner's secretary, Arthur Andersen ordered Walter out of the office, and the two never spoke again (Spacek 1985:31).

While these practices may communicate public meaning, they are also the means through which Andersen consolidated a homogeneous audience within his organization: the people who remained were ones who had an appreciation for his practices. Purposefully or not, through Andersen's interactions with employees, a negotiated order developed in which the present audience would value his practices. To quote Spacek: "He was a great promoter and a very egotistical individual. I don't say that in

criticism; I say that's an ingredient that has to be present in anyone who wants to get things done" (Spacek 1985:205). In comments like these, employees are not simply paying deference (Goffman 1967); they are imbuing Andersen with legitimacy based on practices they witnessed and valued. With this legitimacy, Andersen had the symbolic power to further define the situation and shape the negotiated order (Figure 2), creating a culture that placed integrity over profits.

However, Andersen was not the only negotiator with symbolic power. Through his practices and interactions in the organization, Spacek also acquired symbolic power. Spacek recalled that Andersen liked to argue, and with Spacek in particular:

I used to argue with him a lot and I believe that one of the reasons why he liked me was that we did argue. But we never argued on a personal basis. The only phrase that I used to use on him was, when we got to the point of disagreeing, I used to tell him, "I'm from Iowa and I can always go back there and plow corn." That sort of ended the argument. (Spacek 1985:9)

I had a special relationship with Arthur Andersen that no other partner had and probably one of the reasons I had it was because if we got into an argument, I always said I could go back to Iowa and plow corn. We never got mad but we did a lot of shouting at each other. (Spacek 1985:168)

In reading Spacek's history of Andersen and Co., things that stick out include Spacek's fond recollection of contentious interactions with Andersen and his "go back to Iowa and plow corn" bit (these are just two of many examples in the history). These interactions are representative of a set of dispositions or cultural tools that informed Spacek's practices and his impression management with Andersen. The two men both had scrappy dispositions born of common experiences outside of the organization,⁸ and just as Spacek imbued Andersen with legitimacy and symbolic power, Andersen imbued Spacek with legitimacy and symbolic power.

Andersen was not the only one who valued Spacek's practices. During new-employee training, Charles W. Jones (partner) addressed the students:

In Leonard Spacek, the managing partner, this firm has a leader who, I think, is second to none. I wouldn't trade him for any two other men in the public accounting profession. He is aggressive; he has a very unusual intellect; he has an enormous capacity for work; he has an abiding interest in the firm of Arthur Andersen and Co. and in the young men composing it. This should mean a lot to every one of you men. I am positive that under his leadership the firm will continue to grow and develop. (Arthur Andersen and Co. 1963:70)

Here, Jones publicly imbues Spacek with legitimacy and encourages others to follow suit.

When Spacek succeeded Andersen, he used his symbolic power to complement the definition of the situation established by Andersen. Spacek established a Professional Standards Group, an in-house group of ethics watchdogs. The group was headed by George Catlett, whose office was never more than 50 feet away from Spacek's, reproducing the table-pounding interactions that characterized the negotiated order

⁸Both came from rather humble backgrounds and worked while putting themselves through high school and college.

during Andersen's tenure (Alexander et al. 2002a:5). Spacek endowed the Standards Group with symbolic power to define ethical accounting practices within the company, and the Samurai continued to eclipse the Merchant. Aligned with this organizational culture, employees continued to engage in practices that echoed Andersen's legendary interaction with the railway president.⁹

However, the culture eventually began to shift toward a greater conflict between Samurai and Merchant. The 1970s computer boom changed the structural context and expanded opportunities in consulting. In the early 1970s, consulting made up one-third of revenue. However, consulting revenue grew to 42 percent in 1979, 50 percent in 1990, and two-thirds of revenue in 1994 (Alexander et al. 2002a). Where the lion's share of profits once came from auditing and tax services, they now came from consulting. When Duane Kullberg took over in the 1980s, he reorganized the company to give more representation to consulting partners. The firm was increasingly falling into two audiences, accounting and consulting. The reorganization also placed seven layers between the upper management and the Standards Group that had been 50 feet from Spacek's door. When Larry Weinbach took over as managing partner in 1989, he worked out of New York, leaving the Standards Group in Chicago. These changes in the structural and negotiation contexts enabled change in the negotiated order and the emergent organizational culture.

As the audience of consultants in the organization grew and profits from consulting increased, Merchant practices became of greater value within Andersen and Co., even within the accounting branch of the company. The shift took hold at the dawn of another change in the structural context: the 1990s market boom. The pertinent accounting question was whether companies should count stock options as an expense. The Standards Group had determined years earlier that stock options, like any other form of compensation, had to be counted against profits. But for the first time, top management rejected the group's ruling (Alexander et al. 2002a:9). In contrast to Arthur Andersen's historic stand with the railway president, accounting management did not want to risk severing profitable relationships with companies. The Standards Group's symbolic power to define proper accounting practices had disappeared.

To compete with the revenue generated by their consulting siblings, the accounting partners began to adopt the Merchant practices, a move exemplified by Measelle's essay. With the changes in the structural context and the emergence of competing audiences, the practices of value shifted from dogmatic, Samurai-like accounting principles to selling clients on a range of services beyond traditional accounting. Measelle himself embodied the Merchant shift. "More marketer than technical geek, more entrepreneur than bookkeeper," Kullberg, one of Measelle's supporters, said of him: "His strong suit was probably developing revenue as opposed to dealing with the tough, scrappy questions that come up in the course of auditing work" (Alexander et al. 2002b:3). However, with the changes in the negotiated order at Andersen, these practices (even within the accounting branch) were increasingly of value and were a basis of legitimacy for Measelle.

As Measelle gained symbolic power, he climbed the corporate ladder to become chief executive of Andersen's audit and tax practice under Weinbach. Under Weinbach and Measelle, accounting offices were expected to meet higher revenue goals by selling additional services to clients (Alexander et al. 2002a:10). Yet the shift from Samurai to

⁹For example, when IBM 360 mainframes became popular in the later 1970s, Andersen and Co. demanded that companies deduct the cost of the machines over a five-year period instead of a 10-year period, cutting into profits. This practice cost the company some wealthy clients, but in time it set the accounting standard (Alexander et al. 2002a:6).

Merchant did not come without conflict. An audience of old-school accountants remained. This group chafed at the changes and held on to their old practices. However, they were neutered through forced retirement and staff cuts aimed at increasing profits. Two competing audiences were reduced to one homogeneous audience that increasingly valued Merchant practices as a basis of legitimacy.

In this way, Measelle and his successors consolidated symbolic power and deployed it to define the situation and further validate the Merchant practices that now characterized the negotiated order. The Merchant had defeated the Samurai, and had become so entrenched that even when the consulting branch (the original Merchants) broke from the firm to establish their own company (Accenture), the accountants continued their Merchant practices instead of returning to Samurai ones.

Chief among the Merchant practices was generating revenue by selling additional services to clients—for example, internal auditing to go with external audits. These practices yielded an additional five-year, U.S.\$18 million contract with Enron, and dozens of Andersen employees started to work out of the Enron tower on internal audits (Alexander et al. 2002c:3). However, this created a situation in which Andersen was, in essence, auditing its own work and lost its independence as an external auditor.

Ever the Merchant, Andersen willingly accommodated its customers, even allowing Enron executives to select their auditor. In particular, Enron was displeased with Carl Bass, a member of the Standards Group that had once wielded so much symbolic power within Andersen. When Bass engaged in the old Samurai practices by questioning a number of Enron's business transactions, Enron claimed that Bass had blocked their deal-making and demanded that he be taken off the account. Fearing the loss of a customer, the Merchant complied (Alexander et al. 2002c:6).

To keep the customer happy, Andersen practiced funky accounting, ignoring some losses and hiding others in partnerships that were off-balance-sheet. But eventually Enron buckled under its losses and debt. On 16 October 2001, Enron and Andersen reported Enron's first quarterly loss in four years, an incredible \$618 million (Alexander et al. 2002c:9). Eventually, the Merchant would fall with its client: Andersen was indicted for obstruction of justice and found guilty, and it closed shop on 31 August 2002.

In sum, Andersen culture was a negotiated order that originated in the practices and interactions of organizational actors. Bound by the dispositions of the habitus, Arthur Andersen and Leonard Spacek engaged in practices that were valued by audiences within the organization. Through interaction, the audiences imbued Andersen and Spacek with legitimacy, legitimacy they deployed as the symbolic power to define the situation and the ongoing negotiated order. Andersen and Spacek defined the organizational culture in terms of high ethical standards that put professional integrity before increasing revenue. This negotiated order continued through the symbolic power of the Professional Standards Group created by Spacek.

However, changes in the structural context and the growth of competing audiences within the firm created opportunities for change and conflict in the negotiated order. The 1970s computer boom expanded the consulting audience within the firm. As consulting revenue soared, Merchant practices became valued over the old Samurai practices, even within the accounting branch. With this change in valued practices came a change in negotiators with legitimacy and symbolic power. These negotiators overruled the conservative practices of the Standards Group and used their symbolic power to redefine the situation, spawning accounting practices that increased revenue through relations with companies like Enron and Worldcom. Ultimately, these

Merchant practices led to the demise of Andersen and Co. The outcomes extend beyond the organizational culture and can be measured in lost jobs, stock losses, a decline in the public trust of corporations, and a sweeping corporate-reform bill.

CONCLUSION

I have now painted three portraits of culture at Andersen and Co., one from the canvas of subjective beliefs and values, one from the canvas of context/public meaning, and one from the canvas of symbolic power (Table 1). The portraits of Andersen culture painted here are not empirically definitive, nor are they meant to be. The preliminary data is put to the use of developing theory, not vice versa.

Compared to the other portraits, the beauty of the symbolic power model is revealed in five features. First, in stressing practice and interaction, the object of study is empirically observable. Interpretation is still a problem, but bias is minimized compared to the other approaches. Second, through a consideration of different audiences in an organization, the symbolic power approach accounts for integration *and* conflict in organizational culture: the likelihood that conflict replaces integration increases as the number of audiences increases. Third, by considering the broader structural and negotiation contexts in which an organization is embedded, the symbolic power approach accounts for stability and change in organizational culture: the likelihood that the culture is reproduced increases with the stability of the structural and negotiation contexts.

Fourth, the symbolic power approach has causal efficacy. The causal logic is twofold. First, at a microlevel, the dispositions of the habitus are the cultural tools from which practices are formed. Second, at a mesolevel, symbolic power defines what types of practices are appropriate in the organization. Thus, the symbolic power approach addresses both the means of action and the ends toward which action is directed.

Fifth, the symbolic power approach enables the analyst to glide between levels of analysis. The approach starts from microlevel practices, practices that are linked to a position in macro-social space via the habitus (see Figure 1). From practice, we build upward to interaction and the negotiated order, addressing the mesolevel typically associated with organizational culture. However, the negotiated order is embedded in the negotiation and structural contexts, providing another link to macro structure.

The symbolic power approach developed here gives organizational culture a much-needed overhaul. Though corporate scandals led to the reemergence of organizational culture in media and political discourse, this comeback threatens to be temporary if analysts are not provided with a theoretical lens that can adequately explain the complex origins and outcomes of organizational culture. The symbolic power approach can also provide insight into how the corporate-reform bills that have risen from the ashes of Andersen, Enron, Worldcom, and others might affect organizational culture. In the political and media discourse the arguments are structural (legislation will lead directly to changes) or agentic (executives will act as they will, "you can't legislate morality"). The symbolic power interpretation is more complex. Corporate reforms are an important part of the structural context within which organizations are embedded, and the reforms enable and constrain practices and interactions within organizations. However, a whole range of practices and interactions remain viable, and negotiators come to have the symbolic power to define the situation in a social process in which audiences value any number of practices as a basis of legitimacy. Reforms are social structures that impinge on organizational culture, but the effects of

the structure are carried out and modified in complex practices, interactions, and relations of symbolic power. The reforms will affect organizational culture, but the affect will not be reducible to the structural change, nor will the change create movements that are restricted to the intended range of the reforms.

Thus, any changes in organizational culture will ultimately occur through the practices and interactions that take place within the organization. While the symbolic power model is complex, it leaves some room for the management of organizational culture: given the appropriate dispositions, an actor can enter an organization, become aware of the negotiation context and the types practices valued by relevant audiences, use impression management to enact these practices and gain legitimacy, and then deploy their legitimacy as the symbolic power to define the situation. The complexity of this model limits the number of negotiators who can acquire symbolic power: you have to have the right dispositions and the right practices and be skilled in impression management. Admittedly, such people are rare and exceptional. As unlikely as this case may seem, surely it can—and does—happen.

Understanding symbolic power also empowers those who do not have power. As important as the features of the structural and negotiation contexts are, in the end it is *people* who imbue negotiators with legitimacy and symbolic power, and, when facing detrimental situations, people can—and do—*stop* imbuing negotiators with symbolic power.

While this paper focuses on organizational culture, the symbolic power model provides theoretical leverage for understanding any situated context. Organizations are not the only locale in which people imbue others with legitimacy and symbolic power based on valued practices and interactions. Organizations are not the only place in which negotiators deploy their legitimacy as the symbolic power to define the situation and shape the ongoing negotiated order. While practices of value are unique to the situation in question (for example, Samurai or Merchant practices at Andersen), the general process in which symbolic power is created in the valuation of practice and deployed to define the situation and the ongoing negotiated order is a more general one.

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