

Durkheim and Organizational Culture

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*“The degree of consensus over, and intensity of, cognitive orientations and regulative cultural codes among the members of a population is an inverse function of the degree of structural differentiation among actors in this population and a positive, multiplicative function of their (a) rate of interpersonal interaction, (b) level of emotional arousal, and (c) rate of ritual performance.”*

Durkheim’s theory of culture as rendered axiomatically by Jonathan Turner (1990)

### Introduction

This paper examines the significance of Emile Durkheim’s thought for organization theory, particular attention being given to the concept of organizational culture. We are not the first to take the project on—a number of scholars have usefully addressed the extent and relevance of this giant of Western social science for the study of organization and work. Even so, there is no denying that Durkheim’s name appears with vastly less frequency in the literature on these topics than is true of Marx and Weber, sociology’s other founding fathers. Some intriguing sociology of knowledge reasons exist for this neglect to which we give attention in the pages to follow. It is also true that matters of organization and employment per se were less central to Durkheim’s concerns than to those of Marx and Weber. Little of his writing directly engages the problem of the private sector firm and the employment relationship. Yet the indirect significance of Durkheim’s ideas for organizational study is substantial.

The paper is organized as follows. We begin with a review of Durkheim’s theory of culture and its position in the social sciences. We then consider the implications of Durkheim’s perspectives for the following problems in organizational culture research: (1) whether organizations may genuinely be said to have *cultures* as opposed to *ideologies*; (2) the role of culture as a force in social solidarity; (3) the relevance of Durkheim’s concept of *anomie* to the timely problem of corporate malfeasance; (4) whether culture drives from social structure or vice versa; (5) the role of ritual and ceremony in organizational life; (6) whether culture gestates slowly or explodes into being in a “big bang;” and (7) culture and cultural effects as emergent from and channeled through social networks.

### Durkheim and social science

Durkheim is the classical social theorist of culture (Emirbayer, 1996), celebrated, in particular, for his analyses of how “collective representations” derive from and, in turn, support social structures. His profile in social anthropology has remained high across the near-century since his death (Peacock, 1982). Yet in sociology, his founding father status notwithstanding, his reputation and the use of his writings in contemporary work has waxed and waned with the times. One reason is the early refraction of his thought through the prism of Talcott Parsons’

(1949) social action theory. In recent years, various scholars have argued that Durkheim's ideas were distorted, not only by Parsons, but also by Merton (1968) and others in the structural-functional tradition (see, *inter alia*, Mestrovic, 1987; Pope, 1973). Beyond his association with functionalism, Durkheim's fortunes rose and fell with the prominence in Western social science of cultural themes and concepts. Both sociology and anthropology moved away from cultural analysis in the 1960's. In the first case, the shift was to Marxist and more generally materialist or structuralist construals of social reality. In the second, the shift was also to structuralism, but of a markedly different sort: the "cultural" or ideational structuralism of Claude Levi-Strauss (Lemert 1994). Yet in reducing linguistic patterns and other cultural forms to societally-invariant structures, Levi-Strauss abandoned the Durkheimian conception of culture as a system of representations rooted in and reflective of concrete social groups.

Post-60's sociology also stayed clear of Durkheim because, beyond the taint of functionalism, he was portrayed by Nisbet (1967) and others as "conservative," committed to an intellectual and public agenda of preserving moral community before the rationalizing and individuating forces transforming 19<sup>th</sup> Century Western society (Giddens, 1976). Weber, too, was troubled by the disintegrative pressures of capitalism, bureaucratization, and democracy. But Durkheim's more explicit concern with moral order and cohesion, combined with his strong claims for culture's part in fostering them, made it easy to label him a nostalgist for the past.

Yet as new cultural frames of reference and modes of inquiry arose, Durkheim's work drew renewed attention. "Most responsible for this development," Emirbayer (1996:110) writes, "was ...a heightened interest in cultural theory and in the systematic analysis of symbolic structures and discourses. ...Other developments fed as well into this turn back to Durkheim: a new concern with mechanisms of social solidarity, inspired partly by the emergence of a new (micro) sociology of the emotions; a keen new interest in the substantive topic of civil society; and a growing tendency to see social life as networks of relations and transactions, rather than as either 'a substantial entity having corporate existence'..or a mere aggregation of individuals."

Moreover, the critical twist on cultural themes found in humanistic Marxism and postmodernism mostly disposed of any residual scholarly concern that to invoke Durkheim was to embrace conformity and tradition (Archer, 1985:335). Traces of Durkheim are readily apparent in postmodernist/ poststructuralist writing. Bourdieu cites Durkheim in portraying the economy as a symbolic order, integral to the cultural sphere of sentiments, constructions, and beliefs, and so in no way abstracted or decoupled from society (LeBaron 2001:24). Foucault's (1972:20) discussion of how ritual and taboo constrain discourse creation draws heavily on Durkheim's classic treatment of how "the categories of the understanding" spring from the passionate totemic rites of tribal society.

It is the privilege and pleasure of each new generation of scholars to reappraise the classics and thus to demolish the interpretations of prior generations. Marx and Weber, it goes without saying, have inspired a myriad dissertations and other academic tracts, but Durkheim's work lends itself uniquely to endless rounds of critical assessment because of his oblique and polemical style. Durkheim seemed to revel in cryptic prose, particularly in his investigation of such thorny topics as the objective reality of social facts, the exteriority and unity of culture, and the causal standing of culture vis-à-vis society (Lukes, 1972). He also incensed readers with provocative assertions,

as, for example in *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* that “..god and society are one.” Yet a detailed reading of Durkheim also reveals many passages that are utterly clear and tightly reasoned on the mechanisms whereby culture flows from social structure and process, how it is constituted and sustained, and how it feeds back to motivate and channel individual and collective action.

### Durkheim on culture

Culture in Durkheim’s sense is an emergent web of representations, holistically encompassing the deep-set value, belief, and symbolic systems of a natural collectivity, such as the tribal societies to which he gave such close attention. Society binds individuals inextricably to it, and (most clearly in the primitive case) it represents the whole of their reality. Culture is the sum total of human beings’ collective efforts to come to grips symbolically with a complex and uncertain world.

Durkheim’s portrait of culture is often criticized as: (a) holistic, seamless, and homogenous—admitting to no divisions or conflicts; (b) reified or hypostasized—positioned outside people and society; (c) deterministic—allowing little room for human agency. As we later discuss, these attributions sometimes mischaracterize his work. Still, the Durkheimian model contrasts sharply with Archer’s (1985), Swidler’s (1986), and other recent views of culture as a loosely-knit, semi-coherent “tool kit” that people apply selectively and adaptively as coping strategies in navigating social life (DiMaggio, 1997). In the latter framework, culture is neither Parsonsian programming stamped on individuals by the socialization mechanism, nor is it an exterior, enveloping, and constraining collective force possessed of a “life of its own.” Instead, publicly available meanings and preferences are selectively and proactively assembled and adopted by individuals and groups in pursuing distinct courses of action.

### Do organizations have “cultures?”

Given Durkheim’s profile in culture studies generally, it behooves students of the organizational culture phenomenon to give some serious consideration to how this interesting problem of relatively recent vintage might be viewed through a Durkheimian lens.

The concept of organizational—often “corporate”—culture, has an odd history and standing in organization research. While a handful of scholars had earlier applied the term to the values, beliefs, and sentiments peculiar to a single organization (Pettigrew, 1979), what gave the topic real impetus was a slew of practitioner-oriented books appearing in the late 70’s to early 80’s.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, as Barley and Kunda (1992:381) observe, much of the inspiration for those writings was the discovery of and infatuation with Japanese styles of management and organization. By the late 70’s, Japan’s burgeoning global competitiveness was sparking admiration and alarm among business researchers, journalists, and practitioners, yet the organization of the Japanese firm seemed to fly in the face of Western views of economic and administrative modernity, rationality, and efficiency.

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<sup>14</sup> See, in particular, Ouchi (1981); Pascale and Athos (1982), and Peters and Waterman (1982).

Culture is arguably the most pervasive buzzword in the popular management lexicon, routinely invoked in business discourse to sum up all that is distinctive in a company. Eminent Japanologist Chalmers Johnson is not alone among scholars in dismissing it as a “weasel word,” devoid of academic legitimacy.<sup>15</sup> Many in organization studies and more in social science at large have resisted its use. This is truer of the sociological or macro-organization side of the field than the micro- or psychology side, where the bulk of self-described organization culture research is concentrated (e.g., Schein, 1996). Still, an abundance of work in organizational sociology concerns the substance of what the culture concept seems to comprise, even if it takes pains to skirt the label. The institutional school (both classical and neo- variants) addresses, implicitly or explicitly, such cultural elements as symbols, myth, and ceremony (Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Perrow 1986). The same could be said of certain strains in organizational economics. The mystical-sounding routines of Nelson and Winter’s (1982) evolutionary economics smack of cultural codes as does Oliver Williamson’s (1975) sometime contemplation of the role of “atmosphere” in mitigating the firm’s transaction costs.

It is also true that the concept of ideology has absorbed some of the content that in organization theory might otherwise fall to culture. Selznick (1949) alludes to the grass-roots ideology of the Tennessee Valley Authority in his study of the New Deal agency’s efforts to establish itself as a force in the region. A comparable sociological classic is Bendix’s (1956) analysis of the historical evolution of managerial ideology in England, Russia, and the United States as a device for reconciling systems of hierarchy and domination with national ideals of democracy and equality. Rohlen’s (1974) rich ethnography of *Uedagin*, his pseudonym for a Japanese bank, is a rich assessment of how cultural patterns shape management action and employee motivation and behavior. Yet Rohlen favors the term ideology as a label for the doctrines, symbols, rules, and rituals whereby the bank conducted its business and molded its people. More recently, Kunda (1992:228-29) describes the culture of the high-tech firm in his own observational study as ideology.

“Underlying all the verbiage of managerially mandated texts is an elaborate and highly articulated managerial ideology that portrays the company as a nonhierarchical, humanistically inclined, moral collective. More crucially, the ideology constructs a distinct view of employees... that prescribes not only their behavior but runs much deeper, offering elaborate scripts for their cognitive and emotional life.”

How does ideology differ from culture as a label for the ideational superstructure of a work organization (Morgan, 1986: 139)? Ideology implies the crafting of ideas and values for the purpose of advancing a specific agenda. As long as such ideas and values are clearly identified with a “special cadre within a society,” Swidler (1989) writes, they “will resist being absorbed into common sense,” i.e., transformed into culture. Common sense approximates the Durkheimian conception of culture as an internally consistent and taken-for-granted system of

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<sup>15</sup> Lecture given at Berkeley *ca* 1993.

understandings and sentiments whereby people render reality meaningful. Unlike the writers just surveyed whose choice of the term, ideology, conveys their view of organization-specific value and symbol systems as tools deployed by higher-ups to control the lower-downs and the impressions of outside constituencies, much organizational culture writing embraces an essentially Durkheimian image of culture as an encompassing and coherent sphere of cognitive representations, normative codes, and value orientations that is emergent, not imposed, and widely shared. Yet while Durkheim saw culture forming in such natural social groups as families or communities and in homogeneous common-interest associations such as guilds or unions, he did not see it taking root in business enterprise. He may have felt that such functionally specialized and internally differentiated systems lacked the deep commonalities of membership on which the mechanical solidarity of culture depends. It is as true or truer today than it was in Durkheim's time that corporate membership in any meaningful sense is mostly confined to owners and executives, front- and middle-line support and production people serving as substitutable factors of production (Kunda, 1992; Linstead and Grafton-Small, 1995). The employment relation in advanced societies, perhaps the U. S. most of all, has become a tenuous one, which neither party expects to last and either can readily walk away from. Yet this is precisely the problem that the managers and consultants who seek to implant strong cultures in corporate environments wish to address. Weak employment ties and uncommitted people need not, they contend, be the rule. To reach peak performance, organizations can and must develop collective purpose, motivating and directing employees, not merely with the carrot and stick of compensation and authority, but with the intrinsic rewards gleaned from immersion in an enterprise community that is bound together by informal rules, transcendent values, and consistent beliefs.

#### What culture does: build cohesion

The remainder of this paper assumes that modern organizations do in varying degrees develop cultures and asks how Durkheim's writings help to understand that process. We first take up the question of just what culture does, what functions it performs in organizations. Rosabeth Kanter (1983:119) provides a succinct answer. Where organizational culture is strong, she writes, employees: "...gain an experience of ...communitas.. which lifts them out of the humdrum...of their ..place. (It) may be the closest to an experience of community."

Durkheim's overarching intellectual, as well as moral and political, interest was in fact the problem of community, which he saw reflected in and enhanced by cultural forms. Marx, too, grasped the cohesion-building role of ideas, religion in particular, which he cast as an opiate contrived by a ruling class to blind ordinary people to the reality of their oppression and shift their aspirations for a better life to the heavenly hereafter. The view of culture as ideological tool of exploitation—the imposition on the powerless of the discourse of an elite—is key to postmodernist thought. Yet Durkheim's cultural representations, in contrast not only with Marx but also with Weber, do not generally mirror interests and domination (Bottomore, 1981). If not the conservative some claimed, Durkheim was no radical, and he was troubled by the deterioration of moral consensus and social cohesion he saw progressing in the advanced societies of his day. Class conflict, glorified by Marxists as liberating and progressive,

was for Durkheim merely one more disintegrative tendency in social life.

Durkheim specifically believed that the atomizing thrust of modernization might be blunted with a number of cohesion-building mechanisms, among them: ceremonial activity; new moral ideology (e.g., of individualistic humanism: the “cult of man”); and participation in membership organizations, occupation-based groups, in particular, such as guilds, unions, or professional associations. “A nation can be maintained,” he wrote, “only if, between the State and the individual, there is intercalated a whole series of secondary groups near enough to the individuals to attract them strongly in their sphere of action and drag them, in this way, into the general torrent of social life...occupational groups are suited to fill this role, and that is their destiny” (Durkheim, 1961: 23).

As noted, Durkheim seems not to have entertained the possibility that the firm might similarly function as intervening locus of community. Yet historical cases of companies taking on the integration role are readily found. The postwar Japanese corporation and the Chinese state-owned enterprise (the “iron rice bowl”) are familiar examples of the workplace as encompassing community, functioning as Durkheim envisioned to bridge the gulf between individual and state. The United States, as Tocqueville observed, may be the clearest realization of the Durkheimian thesis that membership organizations anchor people to society, while the American private sector firm with notable exceptions (e.g., the “company town;” the AT&T and IBM of the 50’s), has played this part to a comparatively small degree (Dore, 2000; Jacoby, 1997).

Like Marx and Weber, Durkheim saw cultural forms reflecting and sustaining social structure (*The Protestant Ethic*’s suggestion that cultural ideas independently shape social action was Weber’s exploration of an exceptional case). We later suggest that there is room in the Durkheimian canon for a view that cultures form and grow within short spans of time, such that a visionary corporate leader bent on sweeping change might deliberately and expeditiously engineer one.

Durkheim’s focus on the challenges posed by division of labor for cohesion and community finds a parallel in contemporary organizational research. The more segmented the organization, the weaker is apt to be its culture and the greater are the problems of integration and coordination. Organization designs that splinter activities into functional subunits have drawn much attention from scholars and practitioners for the barriers to communication and cooperation they erect. Such walls are best understood as competing cognitive frames, each group seeing the company through its own narrow technical and professional lens (Fligstein, 1985; Martin, 1992:103). This, as Wuthnow and Witten (1998) suggest, is the chief source of subculture in work organizations:

“While subcultures may reinforce integration with the overall organization, they may also provide centers of dissent. Cultural cleavages are likely to occur on occupational, status, or divisional lines. Evidence for the existence of subcultures is found in different discursive practices in organizations: in the divergent accounts workers on different organizational levels give of organizational events...; in specialized language that professionals in some organizations share more fully with colleagues outside the organization than those within it; and in different

expressive symbols around which subgroups converge in the production of their collective sense of mission.”

The differentiation/integration model of Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) and others in the structural contingency tradition is usefully reexamined in this context. In their view, differentiation fosters interdependence, but in so doing it *diminishes* firm-wide solidarity. While the specialized subunits are in Durkheimian fashion “joined at the hip” by functional complementarity, lack of common working culture—goals, values, language—renders boundary-spanning communication and cooperation difficult and conflict-prone. The typical managerial solution is to reduce the interdependence by arranging the units into quasi-independent and self-contained divisions (e.g., along product or regional lines). Yet this does little for corporate-wide cohesion, as the divisions then go their own way, losing sight of common purpose and identity. As Freeland (1996: 484) writes of General Motors: “Because division managers have partisan interests in specific operations, they tend to promote policies that benefit those units rather than the corporation as a whole.” One Durkheimian solution (for which the Japanese company is renowned) is the creation of mediating structures such as cross-functional teams (Galbraith, 1973). Still another is the deployment of the cultural devices of myth, symbols, and ceremony to build common understanding and sentiment across disparate units (Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1989).

#### The structural foundations of culture

For all his interest in the structure, content, and consequences of culture, Durkheim was no cultural determinist. “Durkheim,” Rawls (1996) observes, “is interpreted as arguing that ideas and representations are the real social facts, when actually he argued the reverse: that social processes generate both the social person and their basic categories of thought.” Similarly, Giddens (1976:290) writes that Durkheim was “...always careful to insist that such propositions as ‘society is the ideal’ must be interpreted to mean that ideals are *creations* of human society, not ‘given’ forces which determine social conduct.”

In holding that society drives culture, not vice versa, Durkheim advanced a view quite different in substance from that of Parsons and most mainstream sociological and anthropological thought. The latter, according to Peterson (1979), asserts that: “..culture is to social structure roughly what the genetic code is to a species of living organisms.” But for Durkheim (1966:387) the social is the core and culture is derivative or emergent:

“...(A) people’s mental system ...depends really on the grouping and organization of social elements. Given a people composed of a certain number of individuals arranged in a certain way, we obtain a definite total of collective ideas and practices which remain constant so long as the conditions on which they depend are themselves the same...”

To make sense of culture, then, one must first attend to the social structural configurations that beget and sustain it. Organizational research has, on the whole, directed scant attention to these. More has been paid to



attributes of the membership and styles of leadership thought to be conducive to a culture's growth and strength (Chatman et al., 1998; Carroll and Harrison, 1998). The Japanese firm is again an instructive case in how a mix of concrete human resource practices (permanent employment, wage compression, job rotation, broad training) and organization structures (job rotation, teams, and consensus decision-making) provided the skeleton on which the flesh of culture could be hung (Lincoln and McBride, 1987).

Yet Durkheim (1966:130) also acknowledged that "...once (cultural representations) exist, they are, by that very fact, realities *sui generis*, autonomous and capable of producing new phenomena." Culture may originate with social structure, but people experience structure through cultural frames and filters (Fine, 1984:245; Martin, 1992: 34-35). Culture is: "the way in which the group thinks of itself in its relationships with the objects that affect it" (Durkheim, 1982:40). "Durkheim asserts that concrete symbols, such as myths, are necessary for solidarity," Ouchi and Wilkins (1985) write, "because (quoting Durkheim): '...the clan is too complex a reality to be represented clearly in all its complex unity.'" That culture, typically through myth, legend, and metaphor, imbues organizational life with meaning is a core theme in organizational culture research. Morrill (1991:586) puts it well:

"In this sense, 'structure' and 'symbolic systems' interact and persist as overlapping social phenomena: social structure cannot exist without symbolic systems, which individuals use to make sense of, maintain, and change social structure, while symbolic systems cannot exist for long without 'plausibility structures, which root symbols in behavioral patterns.'"

An implication is that the effects of structural change are conditioned on cultural patterns. CEO Carly Fiorina's aggressive restructuring of Hewlett Packard in a functionally centralized format was reportedly wrenching for HP managers (Hamilton, 2000), as the technology firm's long-time configuration as a loose network of business divisions-- each run by an entrepreneur-executive-- was a pillar of HP's oft-touted culture ("The HP Way").<sup>16</sup> Even the hard incentives of making money and keeping a job have meaning for people largely in the symbolism they convey--sky-high executive pay is not mere money but a signal that the company loves its leader; a layoff is not mere loss of income and security but humiliating loss of face for a Japanese salaryman.

#### Ritual and ceremony in the creation and sustaining of culture

One of Durkheim's best known scholarly contributions is his treatment of the role of rite and ceremony in creating and sustaining culture and community. It is a much-noted paradox of organizational life that formal structures and processes quickly take on ceremonial significance. Further paradoxical is the Durkheimian inference that ceremonial activity, seemingly so at odds with Weber's legal-rational model, could, by fostering community

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<sup>16</sup> More rigorous testimony for the same is Lincoln, Hanada, and Olson's (1981) finding that the job attitudes and social integration of Japanese and American employees of a sample of 28 Japanese-owned firms reacted differently to the same organizational structures. Specifically, the Japanese' job satisfaction and social integration rose with structures typical of Japanese-style organization (higher vertical differentiation combined with lower functional

and energizing the membership, render the organization *more* effective in competitive market terms than were it entirely true to the tenets of technical rationality.

Ritual, in Durkheim's view, is also key to the creation of knowledge and thought. The study of culture generally and the organization-specific sort in particular is marked by a debate over content: are the cathectic (emotive) and valuative components more or less important than the cognitive/symbolic/ belief elements? Drawing on the ethnographic literature of his time, Durkheim sought the origins of religious ideas—which he took to be the root of all ideas-- in the social “effervescence” of ritual. In dancing, chanting, and other heated celebration, individual identities dissolve into the group, and the collective passions so aroused then transfer to objects, anointing them dichotomously as sacred or profane. Thus, it is not that charismatic religion inspires social emotion that the vehicle of ceremony then conveys. For Durkheim, the process is reversed—ritual both binds individuals to the community and forges the cognitive categories whereby the world is made symbolically meaningful.<sup>17</sup>

The neo-institutionalist school of organizational sociology has sought to distinguish the cognitive face of culture from the cathectic systems that absorbed an earlier generation of (chiefly structural-functional) institutionalists (Powell and DiMaggio, 1991). While cathexis and values were indeed central to Parsons' view of culture's role in ordering and stabilizing society, culture for Durkheim is mostly cognitive-- classification systems, ontological and etiological myths, and the symbolic forms that represent them. Yet the cognitive is sculpted on the template of the cathectic: collective thought originates in the ceremonial assignment of positive and negative emotions to objects and events.<sup>18</sup>

Also an issue for organizational research is the intensity, complexity, and formality that organizational rituals attain and whether they play the salutary role in cohesion and performance often claimed. Early work on the problem—the studies of the ceremonial qualities of the Japanese firm by Rohlen (1974) and Dore (1973) or the attention to the cult-like qualities of strong culture corporations in the popular management writings of Peters and Waterman (1982) or Deal and Kennedy (1982)—paint a picture of ceremonial activity as vibrant and gripping, infusing organizational routines with charisma, and transporting people, as Kanter suggests, out of their fragmented workaday roles into cohesive and committed communities.

Ornate tapestries of ritual are indeed on conspicuous display in many Japanese companies. To be sure,

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differentiation).

<sup>17</sup> Durkheim's (1933:180) analysis of contract also highlights emotion-charged ritual. Blood covenants allowed “..two different individuals or groups, between whom no natural ties exist, (to) agree to be associated in some common aim: in order that this covenant should be binding, they bring about the physical blood relationship considered to be the source of all obligations. They mingle their blood.”

<sup>18</sup> This attribution, while accurate on the role of culture in Parsons' social action scheme, is largely off the mark when applied to the rich case studies for which the latter tradition is justly renowned (see, *inter alia*, Blau, 1956; Crozier, 1964; Gouldner, 1954; Selznick, 1949, 1996). In a way that far too little qualitative research in the interim has matched, the “old” institutionalists scrutinized the processes whereby whole organizations and the occupational and status groups within them cognitively structured their worlds.

Japanese society is itself more laden with ceremonial baggage than is, say, the U. S. (Dore, 2000). Whether it is the checkout clerks chanting their sing-song customer service refrains; the salutes and calisthenics of construction workers about to begin the day's job; the *shintō* ceremonies sanctifying the opening of a new branch; or the symbolically consensual *ringi* system of decision-making; Japan is the "*shikata*" society—much is done in a ceremonial way.<sup>19</sup>

The Japanese describe their culture in general and business culture in particular as *uetto* – wet with emotion—as against the "*dorai*" rationality of Western ways. The teaching of organizational culture in U. S. business schools is taken seriously by MBA students if only because the language of culture so pervades American business discourse. But cynicism toward the topic abounds, and the published pretensions of companies to transcendent values and lofty visions easily draw sneers and laughter (Martin, 1992:70). That cynicism, if on the rise in recent years, is much less prevalent in Japan. That again says something about the larger culture. Yet it also speaks to the social construction of the Japanese firm as a stable institution wherein employees-- not only executives and stockholders—see themselves and are seen by others as the real stakeholders. Thus, ritual in the Japanese company—as in the weepy entrance ceremony at *Uedagin* described by Rohlen—has the emotion-charged character Durkheim saw engendering culture and cohesion in tribal "clans."<sup>20</sup>

Most research on rite and ceremony in organizational life, however, conveys an image rather different from Rohlen's portrait of *Uedagin*. An important body of organizational theory highlights the looseness of organizations—the randomness of action, the inconsequentiality of leadership, the decoupling of cause and effect (Cohen, March, and Olsen, 1972; Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Weick, 1976). Such images – so at odds with the classical model of bureaucracy as tightly-wound machine—comport with a view of organizational structure and process as symbolic and ceremonial versus instrumental and utilitarian (Starkey, 1998). Ritualized activity in this sense engenders dry, cool, cognitive legitimacy, acceptance, whether by members or external constituencies, of the organization's purposes and practices (Morgan, 1986:123; Powell and DiMaggio, 1991). These become taken-for-

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<sup>19</sup> There is also an impersonal quality to the super-polite demeanor of clerks and other service personnel in Japanese enterprise. The melodic recitation of polite, indeed obsequious, phrases substitutes for real conversation. Some of this stems from the Japanese obsession with order and efficiency. Another part is conflict avoidance. Real interaction with customers introduces the risk that the encounter might prove awkward or embarrassing.

<sup>20</sup> Rohlen's (1974) description of a *nyusha-shiki*—an employee entrance ceremony-- dramatizes the thick ritual and sentiment-laden character of much Japanese corporate practice. In attendance, he writes, are the top officers of the corporation, the new employees, and the parents of the recruits. Corporate and Japanese flags are unfurled. Everyone stands and sings the company song. The principles of the bank are recalled—service to small and medium enterprises, contribution to public welfare and prosperity, emphasis on trust and enterprising spirit—and the president's teachings—harmony, sincerity, kindness, spirit, unity, responsibility, purity. The new employees are introduced in turn. The president recalls the blood and sweat of prior generations whose labors elevated the bank to its present strength. The assembled parents are promised that their offspring will be educated and nurtured. The president breaks down and cries, despite, Rohlen observes, having given the speech many times before. A spokesperson for the parents asks that the bank discipline and guide their children. The ceremony ends with the president leading everyone in *banzai* cheers for the survival and success of the company.

granted as normal and proper patterns of action. People cannot imagine the organization configured another way.

The model of organizational ritual as hotly emotional is quintessentially Durkheimian. The alternative of cool cognitive legitimacy, by contrast, is Weberian. The antimony is thoughtfully explored by Pope and his colleagues:

“In Durkheim’s framework, moral obligation stems from an awe of the sacred and of society writ large. Moral sentiment, often awakened by ritual ceremonies, commands dutiful obedience. For Weber, on the other hand, a legitimate order has no more than equal footing with self interest in fostering behavioral regularities. Since legitimate orders are not necessarily ethical in nature and not common to society as a whole, they generally lack the power of Durkheim’s collective sentiments and moral rules (Pope, Cohen, and Hazelrigg, 1975:421-22).

Of Weber’s three types of legitimate domination, “charismatic” best corresponds to Durkheim’s moral obligation. Yet even this does not convey the moral and emotional force of the sacred in Durkheim’s theory.

Thus, different rites have different functions. Some are socially turbulent (Durkheim’s collective effervescence) and infused with moral significance and emotional resonance. Others are routinized and cerebral. They build solidarity, not by arousing collective passion, but by cultivating in members and external constituents an incapacity to contemplate alternative states of the world.<sup>21</sup>

#### Durkheim’s anomie: corporate greed as culture breakdown

Durkheim’s concept of anomie once informed an abundance of sociological research on work and organization, but applications to the problem of organizational culture are yet to be made. Anomie in this literature is tied to alienation, a mainstay concern of the industrial and cultural sociology of the 50’s and 60’s. In the writings of Parsons (1949), Merton (1968) and Srole (1956), anomie became “normlessness”—a term evocative of the structural-functional framework within which Durkheim’s thought was situated at the time. Most uses of the anomie concept had structural as well as cultural overtones: isolation and detachment in the first instance and meaninglessness and purposelessness in the second. For Durkheim, however, anomie—a state of *dereglement*—

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<sup>21</sup> A related distinction is anthropologist Mary Douglas’ (1968: 369) assessment of spontaneous and standard or routinized rites in simple societies. Standard rites, she says, like the feast days of the Australian aborigines studied by Durkheim, have strong moral content: “The rite imposes order and harmony...Great rituals create unity in experience. They assert hierarchy and order. In doing so, they affirm the value of the symbolic patterning of the universe. Each level of patterning is validated and enriched by association with the rest. But jokes have the opposite effect.. they destroy hierarchy and order. They do not affirm the dominant values, but denigrate and devalue. Essentially a joke is an anti-rite.” Douglas suggests that “Dionysian” ritual, wherein laughter, jokes, and other ribaldry ridicule and thereby weaken hierarchy and classification, supports commitment to “community” or “network,” defined by Barnes (1954) as “an undifferentiated field of friendship and acquaintance.” Casual observation of Silicon Valley corporate culture regularly alludes to the ceremonial flavor of casual dress, disheveled offices, beer busts, basketball matches, and the like. From Durkheim’s perspective, the loose structure of high-technology enterprise, combined with the network character of the Northern California industry, is aligned with the pattern of organizational ritual there.

disorganization or derangement—is an attribute of collectivities, not individuals. Orru (1983) writes:

“Although Durkheim’s concept of anomie underwent modifications from the earlier *Division of Labor*... to his later writings, his overriding concern was the inadequacy of socially generated goals and values in industrial societies. In *Suicide*, Durkheim (1966:254-257) viewed anomie as a condition that occurs when economic materialism becomes an end transcending itself...the supreme end of individuals and societies alike’ ...Durkheim declared “It is not true then that activity can be released from all restraint. Nothing in the world can enjoy such privilege.”

Besnard (1988) adds:

“Anomie is a situation characterized by indeterminate goals and unlimited aspirations, the disorientation or vertigo created by confrontation with an excessive widening of the horizons of the possible, in a context of expansion or increasing upward mobility. It is lost in the infinity of desires.”

Durkheim thus saw anomie as the erosion of moral restraint, releasing in persons restless, insatiable cravings—unbridled acquisitiveness—whose inevitable consequence is frustration, stress, and depression. “One does not advance when one proceeds towards no goal,” he wrote, “or—which is the same thing—when the goal is infinity. To pursue a goal which is by definition unattainable is to condemn oneself to a state of perpetual unhappiness” (from *Suicide*).

The theory of anomie as decay or abandonment of moral stricture is usefully applied to the timely problem of corporate malfeasance, placed in high relief by the American corporate governance and accounting scandals of 2001-02 (Enron, WorldCom, Adelphia, and so on). A common interpretation of the ethical/legal lapses that proliferated in this period is that the implicated firms were imbued with a gunslinging “cowboy culture,” or worse, a “culture of corruption” (Raghavan, Kranhold, and Barrionuevo, 2002). The implicit subtext is that, had they not been immersed in such strong but errant cultures, the managers of those companies might have behaved less badly.

The corporate culture concept has become so assimilated into contemporary business discourse that journalists, consultants, and practitioners apply it indiscriminately to a very wide range of organizational behaviors. But for culture to be a useful conceptual tool, it cannot be wielded with such abandon. If strong culture is why some companies appear tight-knit communities pursuing transcendent (i.e., nonfinancial) values (creativity, customer service, people), it is spreading the concept too thin, we think, to apply it again to the obsessive money-making that drove Enron executives to the phony deals and balance sheet fraud that brought down the firm and with it the fortunes of a legion of employees and shareholders.

Culture analysis should give explicit attention, not only to the processes whereby cultures form, coalesce, and diffuse, but also to their decay and demise; *dereglement* and *anomie* in Durkheim’s terms. His treatment thus

appears a step ahead of contemporary organization culture theory, which often seems hard pressed to contemplate the absence or demise of culture. The overlapping concept of *institutionalization* does better. Work in this vein deals directly with how organizations vary along a continuum from full-blown “institution” to bare-bones instrument for the attainment of technical or economic ends (Meyer and Rowan, 1977). A cross-national perspective brings the distinction into sharp focus. The social construction of the corporation as deep-rooted institution, committed to core societal values and beholden to a diverse community of stakeholders, has proceeded farther in Europe and Asia than in the U. S., where companies display less commitment to transcendent values and suffer fewer normative constraints on strategy and tactics. Indeed, the image of the corporation in American economic theories of the firm—as efficient tool of profit and value maximization—may have contributed to the end-of-millennium business climate in which aggressive, even rapacious, wealth-seeking was widely rationalized as an unalloyed social good (Dore, 2000; Ghoshal, 2003; Lincoln and Gerlach, 2004; Selznick, 1996:272).

#### Can culture be created overnight? Durkheim’s “big bang”

A high-profile theme in the popular management literature is that cultures are designed and constructed by charismatic CEO’s or visionary executive teams. The proposition that culture may be “engineered” seems most compatible with the writings of Weber who was more open than Durkheim to a conception of social structure and culture as shaped by rational individual action (Pope, Cohen, and Hazelrigg, 1975). For Weber, the charismatic authority of the prophet institutionalizes into *traditional* authority (thus transferring the charisma of the prophet to the bureaucracy of the church). For Durkheim, institutionalization—the infusion of social structures with emotion and meaning—springs from the collective effervescence of ritual. Durkheim, again, was strenuously opposed to reductionism. In his view, the causes of social facts are other social facts, not the motives, abilities, or behaviors of individuals.

Yet one can imagine from a Durkheimian standpoint that the mix of classifications, symbols, and sentiments peculiar to a group derives from the legendary myths that surround a charismatic leader. This is particularly likely in an entrepreneurial organization whose success hinges on the personal talents and heroic efforts of the founder. The persona of founder is a powerful symbol – a sacred totem—imparting to the group a concrete object on which to center its representations of itself. Moreover, in a fledgling undertaking, the charisma of the founder and the culture of the organization are often so intertwined that the one is not distinguishable from the other.

Those who believe that organizational cultures can be designed and assembled by a committed leader will generally concede that culture formation takes time; that the planting and cultivating of a rich field of values and beliefs is a slow, evolutionary process. At the onset of the corporate culture boom, *Business Week* (1980) eavesdropped on the conversation of a CEO and his subordinate as the two departed an executive seminar on the topic: “This culture stuff is great,” the CEO reportedly said. “Get me a culture by Monday!” Whatever culture’s significance for corporate performance, impatient, results-oriented executives are notoriously reluctant to make the

investments necessary to prepare the ground, sew the seeds, and allow the culture to grow.

Yet it was Durkheim's insight that cultural systems may arise or undergo radical transformation in short order: a sociological "big bang," as it were. In his discussion of how intense ritual activity spawns religious ideas in aboriginal society, culture balloons into being:

"On feast days . . . their thoughts are centered upon their common beliefs, their common traditions, the memory of their great ancestors, the collective ideal of which they are the incarnation; in a word, upon social things. . . . So it is society that is in the foreground of every consciousness; it dominates and directs all conduct; this is equivalent to saying that it is more living and active, and consequently more real, than in profane times. . . . The individual soul is regenerated too, by being dipped again in the source from which its life comes; consequently it feels itself stronger, more fully master of itself, less dependent upon physical necessities" (1961:390-91).

Furthermore, convulsive social change may ignite sufficient "social effervescence" that large cultural shifts occur quickly. "Under the influence of some great collective shock in certain historical periods social interactions become much more frequent and active," Durkheim believed. "Individuals seek out one another and come together more. The result is the general effervescence that is characteristic of revolutionary or creative epochs" (quote taken from Emirbayer, 1996: 122). He cites as an example the vast transformation of French culture occasioned by the Revolution.

Durkheim also wrote that culture must be regularly reinvented in order to counter the disintegrative tendencies endemic to secular modern life (Etzioni, 2000: 45). He felt it his responsibility as public intellectual to identify ritual activities and binding philosophies that would serve this end. Thus, culture not only can but must be (re)engineered in order to sustain social solidarity.

Often overlooked in discussions of the ritualized solidarity of the Japanese firm is that much corporate ideology in that country, along with the management systems that support it, were in substantial part wartime and postwar creations, whatever the legitimacy they may have drawn from long-standing tradition (Cole, 1971; Gordon, 1985). Prewar labor markets and industrial relations resembled the West. To a notable degree the structures, processes, and cultures of postwar Japanese enterprise were deliberately configured by management and labor with an eye to averting industrial strife and building enterprise community.

#### Culture as *sui generis* social fact: the emergence problem

Culture is at times equated with aggregate psychology, as in Ruth Benedict's (1932:24) remark that "cultures are individual psychology thrown large upon the screen, given gigantic proportions, and a long time span." The psychological view of culture is one of individuals sharing representations, values, and sentiments. Few scholars in this vein, however, are explicit on just what sharing means and how much is requisite for culture to be

said to exist (Morgan, 1986:135). At the limit, sharing implies that every member of an organization, through the individual-level processes of selection and socialization, personally embraces the values and belief systems peculiar to that organization.

For Durkheim, however, culture is an emergent and externally constraining property of collectivities, a *sui generis* social fact that is irreducible to individual-level attributes and processes.

“Collective tendencies have an existence of their own-- they are forces as real as cosmic forces, though of another sort... The ... reality of collective tendencies is not less than that of cosmic forces .... (They) cause us to act from without, like physico-chemical forces to which we react... They may be measured, their relative sizes compared, as is done with the intensity of electric currents or luminous foci” (quoted in Takla and Pope, 1985:75).

It is fundamental to Durkheim’s concept of culture that individuals experience it as external constraint. People act in conformity with the culture not voluntaristically—i.e., impelled by the values and norms that socialization has imprinted on their psyches-- but in response to the social pressures to which they are made subject by others. Hilbert (1986:2) aptly summarizes Durkheim’s views:

“That modern society displays the famous twin features of exteriority and constraint no less so than elementary societies is no happenstance of history. Moral constraint is indeed the essence of collective life. When individuals confront moral reality, they are confronting society; society and morality are one... Thus, a society lacking these twin features is inconceivable, as is a legal contract without a commitment to follow it ... Yet as it happens, societies can vary with respect to the extent to which they display these twin features. Abrupt social changes, for example, can limit a society’s regulating power, as can rapid evolutionary changes that outstrip the development of appropriate regulative morality”

Durkheim’s often cryptic and provocative pronouncements on these themes earned him sharp attacks both from his contemporaries and from later generations of scholars who accused him of practicing social metaphysics--reifying culture as a platonic ideal, outside, seemingly suspended above, people and society. The criticism grew as his intellectual orientation shifted over his career from the *The Division of Labor*’s preoccupation with social morphology (density and solidarity) to the *The Elementary Forms*’ ideational focus on how societies cognitively classify and order the world.

Stinchcombe’s (1997:2) attack on the “new institutionalism” in organizational sociology exemplifies the kind of caricaturing to which Durkheim’s thought has long been subjected.

“(The new institutionalism is)..Durkheimian in the sense that collective representations manufacture themselves by opaque processes, are implemented by diffusion, are exterior and constraining without



exterior people doing the creation or the constraining....(It is a)...contrast with the old institutionalism in which people built and ran institutions.”

Whatever its merits as a critique of the new institutionalism, this and other indictments of Durkheim as idealist and determinist distort his views and ignore substantial and important segments of his writing. An early detractor attributed to him the position that, since culture is exterior to individuals, networks of human relations, like those of atoms in a compound, cannot be construed as social facts (Tosti, 1898). To the contrary, as Archer writes in the passage below (1982:475), for Durkheim the social network is the source and foundation of culture (see also Sawyer, 2002: 233-34):

“...emergent properties are therefore relational: they are not contained in the elements themselves, but could not exist apart from them. (They) ..arise at all levels from small scale interaction upwards, although as the scope grows they are increasingly distanced from everyday psychological dispositions but never ultimately detached from interaction. The highest orders of emergence are nothing more than the relations between the results of interaction. Nevertheless these ‘feed back’ to condition subsequent interaction at lower levels.”

Durkheim (1966:124) himself was explicit on how collective consciousness arises from the convergence of individual minds through reciprocated influence:

“In the midst of the same social group, all the elements of which undergo the action of a single cause or number of similar causes, a sort of leveling occurs in the consciousness of different individuals which leads everyone to think or feel in unison. The name of imitation has very often been given the whole number of operations resulting in this harmony. It then designates the quality of the states of consciousness simultaneously felt by a given number of different persons leading them so to act upon one another or combine among themselves as to produce a new state. Using the word in this sense, we mean that this combination results from reciprocal imitation of each of them by all and of all by each. ‘In the noisy gatherings of our cities, in the great scenes of our revolutions,’ it has been said, best appears the nature of imitation thus defined. There one sees best how men in union can mutually transform one another by their reciprocal influence.”

Thus, culture is grounded in social network processes. Individuals’ representations of objects or events are of necessity interdependent. Each through his or her interactions with others conditions how those others’ think, feel, and behave.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, the larger and denser the network, the more rapid the chain reaction of relational

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<sup>22</sup> This imagery of the micro-social origins of culture in interpersonal interaction is extensively developed in the sociological traditions of symbolic interactionist and phenomenological sociology. Consider Berger and Luckmann’s (1966:109) definition of institutionalization: “Institutionalization occurs whenever there is reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors. Put differently, any such typification is an institution. What

effects, and the stronger is the resulting culture.<sup>23</sup>

“Where collective sentiments are strong, it is because the force with which they affect each individual conscience is echoed in all the others, and reciprocally. The intensity they attain therefore depends on the number of consciences which react to them in common. For the same reason, the larger a crowd, the more capable of violence the passions vented by it. Consequently, in a family of small numbers, common sentiments and memories cannot be very intense; for there are not enough consciences in which they can be represented and reinforced by sharing them. In a sufficiently dense society, (the) circulation...of views and impressions from one person to another...is uninterrupted; for some social units are always in contact, whereas if there are few their relations can only be intermittent and there will be moments when the common life is suspended” (Durkheim, 1966:201).

The concept of culture as collective consciousness bears a strong resemblance to that of “group mind” that latter-day cognitive psychologists sometimes entertain. Solomon Asch, famous for his studies of conformity pressures in groups, saw collective action occurring only when individuals acquire similar cognitive representations of one another.

“There are group actions that are possible only when each participant has a representation that includes the actions of others and their relations. The respective actions converge relevantly, assist and supplement each other only when the joint situation is represented in each and when the representations are structurally similar. Only when these conditions are given can individuals subordinate themselves to the requirements of group action. These representations and the actions they initiate bring group facts into existence and produce the phenomenal solidity of group process (quote taken from Weick and Roberts, 1993).<sup>24</sup>

The following passage from Durkheim nicely complements Asch’s in showing how those representations

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must be stressed is the reciprocity of institutional typifications and the typicality of not only the actions but also the actors in institutions. The typifications of habitualized actions that constitute institutions are always shared ones.”

<sup>23</sup> Whether culture is a *sui generis* reality responsive only to macro-level forces is an intellectual problem that has plagued anthropology as well. Kroeber (1948:409) writes that Simmel grasped the conundrum in asserting that culture is: “a ‘structure of independent reality, which leads its life after peculiar laws and by virtue of peculiar forces, independent of all its individual components...yet in the last analysis only individuals exist,’ and the ‘spiritual structures’ of culture ‘have their existence only in personal minds’ so that ‘to think of them outside of persons is a mysticism.’ (Thus) (c) ulture is credited with having a reality with laws and forces of its own, but also with existing only in persons. It is no wonder that nonphilosophers have floundered a bit in this area.”

<sup>24</sup> Frank and Fahrback (1999) offer an interesting and credible complex system simulation of organization culture generation that draws on these ideas. In their mathematical model, culture emerges as the cognitions and sentiments converge through interaction of individuals in networks *and* through the process of selecting others into the network.

emerge as similar and shared through prior rounds of interaction, reciprocation, and convergence.

“Each (person) imperfectly imagines the state of those about him. What happens then? Once aroused in my consciousness, these various representations combine with one another and with my own feeling. A new state is thus formed, less my own than its predecessor, less tainted with individuality and more and more freed, by a series of repeated elaborations analogous to the foregoing, from all excessive particularity. Such combinations...then blend and fuse in a compound absorbing them but different from them....This is indeed the only procedure by which the mind has the power of creation” (*Suicide* (1966:125-26).

From such reasoning, Durkheim derives his conclusion on the emergence of culture. “(This) synthesis has the effect of disengaging a whole world of sentiments, ideas and images, which once born obey laws of their own” (1961: 471).

#### *Culture’s consequences as contextual effects*

For Durkheim, not only the causes but also the consequences of culture flow through social networks. As distinct from a micro- level process of individuals acting out internalized values and beliefs (Hilbert, 1986), the doctrine of exteriority and constraint implies that culture shapes social behavior through a macro-mechanism. It works as follows. Some number of individuals, via the mutual influence processes described above, do indeed internalize a common set of values, sentiments, and beliefs. Once formed, their “collective conscience” then yields concerted action that constrains the behavior of others. Thus, culture emerges from the convergence of individual minds yet at the same time is experienced by each individual as an exterior social force.

When the socialization process imprints a critical mass of people with the same cultural codes, their collective actions will constrain the actions of others whose own codes differ. Durkheim cites the example of social contagion (1966: 96). If enough people are doing something and that information is widespread, others will jump on the bandwagon—even mimicking an act as extreme and personal as suicide.

In fads or social movements, such tipping effects typically occur when the true believers approximate a majority. In an employing organization, however, tipping demands fewer persons acting on their own predilections if they hail mostly from the management ranks. For the individual employee, the costs of noncompliance—at a minimum in peer group collegiality, at a maximum in exclusion, demotion, and job loss—are patently steep (Kanter, 1977; Kunda, 1992; Martin, 2002: 71; 99; O’Reilly and Chatman, 1996).

The channels through which organizations exert pressure on members to conform with prescribed ways of doing things are many and diverse. Given the short tenures and weak ties that often bind employees to modern firms, the role played by socialization/internalization in individuals’ proclivities to bow to organizational demands is probably small. The bulk of such compliance derives from external constraint. That need not mean the organization

lacks a culture. But if the people who genuinely share—have truly internalized-- the culture are mostly upper-level managers, ideology seems the more appropriate term (Goll and Zeitz, 1991).

These processes are fundamental to Durkheim's view of culture as an exterior and constraining social force. The distribution of values, beliefs, and sentiments in a group may channel its behavior in ways that differ from that of individuals acting on their common values and beliefs. Durkheim's famous example from *Suicide* was that, while Protestants in Europe killed themselves at 4-5 times the rate of Catholics—a pattern he attributed to the tighter integration and conformity demands of Catholic moral teachings-- the ratio fell to 3-1 for Protestant minorities residing in Catholic countries. Members of a minority faith, he wrote (1966:156), "...facing the hostility of the surrounding populations...are obliged to exercise severe control over themselves and subject themselves to an especially rigorous discipline." Their suicide rates were thus more a function of external constraint, less one of internalized morality.<sup>25</sup>

Another poignant Durkheimian example of group behavior diverging from individual disposition is the collective outpouring of grief in ceremonial rites of bereavement (Fisher and Chon, 1989). Observing funeral services in Australian aboriginal society, he construed the ritual of mourning, not as an individual-level process of people giving vent to personal anguish, but as the macro-process of a community reaffirming commitment and identity on the occasion of a member's loss. "Grief," he wrote, "...is not a natural movement of private feelings wounded by a cruel loss." Rather it is "a ritual attitude which (one) is forced to adopt out of respect for custom, but which is in large measure independent of his affective state" (Durkheim, 1961:443).<sup>26</sup>

A substantial research literature has addressed such emergent macro-processes. First labeled *structural effects* by Blau (1960), they are more commonly termed contextual effects. As in Durkheim's example of religion and suicide, the defining feature of such effects is that the averages of two or more individual-level attributes (e.g., religious affiliation and suicide) correlate over collectivities (e.g., nations) in a way that diverges from the individual-level correlations. The divergence is technically known as aggregation bias, a nuisance problem in economics and demography which generally posit individual-level causation but rely on data assembled for aggregates (e.g., industries, regions, nations). But for Durkheim and the tradition of macro-sociology he pioneered,

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<sup>25</sup> In practice, as Hermalin (2001) suggests, it is not easy to draw the line between internalization and external constraint. Do I drive on the right side of the road because I have internalized the rule as habit or merely because I consciously or unconsciously fear the sanctions that noncompliance might evoke?

<sup>26</sup> An important stream of organizational culture research deserves mention here. In Hochschild's (1983) study of flight attendants, the pressures on these service workers to present smiling, cheerful demeanors to customers is portrayed as calculated (and dehumanizing) management policy. The ever-present threat of dismissal ensured that, no matter how tired the attendant or rude the passenger, the former kept an upbeat persona. Moreover, management sought to avert the formation of a subculture of resistance by warning attendants against airing gripes in the presence of coworkers. This company had no bona fide customer-service "culture" of friendly eager-to-please workers. By contrast, Joanne Martin's (1998) research on The Body Shop finds a genuinely emergent culture of emotionality. Some employees internalized a propensity to display emotionality in work settings; others seemingly did so in response to peer group pressures.

aggregation bias bespeaks an emergent social fact: a macro-process operating above and beyond its micro-level counterpart.

The study of emergent group effects was central to Durkheim's sociology, and his writings here had a strongly polemical thrust. In asserting that collective properties and processes are not reducible to individual ones, he was attacking the atomistic utilitarianism of Bentham, Mill, and Spencer. Durkheim's quarrel with the utilitarians finds a parallel today in the sharply competing epistemologies of modern economics and sociology (Granovetter, 1985). As Manski (1993) acknowledges in a useful technical paper on contextual effects models in the social sciences, economic reasoning is highly reductionist. Economists resist the idea of group or network phenomena that transcend the decisions and actions of individuals. In sociology, by contrast, a core theme—classically typified by Durkheim—is that groups and networks matter and macro-level processes must be explicated with macro-level causal laws (DiMaggio, 1997).

Blau's article remains perhaps the best-documented example of an emergent group effect readily interpretable as external cultural constraint. Common to many work organizations is a division between organization-centered and occupation-centered cultures, as our citation to Wuthnow and Witten earlier testified. In human service agencies, this materializes in the tension between the client-service posture of caseworkers and the bureaucratic orientation of the agencies that employ them. The agency sees clients as costs to be minimized or inputs to be processed. Many, if not all, caseworkers see them as people in need of the services that the caseworker was trained to provide in a spirit of sympathetic professional care. Blau's data showed that, irrespective of their own attitudes, caseworkers on predominantly pro-client teams behaved in pro-client ways. Arguing the exteriority and constraint of the group's pro-client culture, his (1960:182) interpretation is Durkheimian:

“The structural effects of the prevailing values in a group are not necessarily parallel to the effects of the individual's value orientation. In some respects pro-client group values and the individual's own pro-client attitudes have opposite implications for his conduct.... These findings suggest that the social values that prevail in a work group do exert external constraints upon the thinking and acting of its members. If pro-client values prevail in a group, merely checking on the eligibility of clients meets with social disapproval while providing casework services gains a worker approval and respect. But this is not the case if pro-client values do not prevail. In other words, the pro-client values of the members of a group motivate them not only to furnish more intensive service to their own clients but also to express social approval of colleagues who are service-oriented and social disapproval of those who are not. In response to those sanctioning patterns, individuals tend to modify their approach to clients.”

Thus, Durkheim's thoughts on the emergence problem illuminate the sharing criterion for the presence and strength of organization culture. Sharing is requisite only up to some critical mass. Beyond that threshold, network-embedded normative constraints come into play, which induce more conformity and thus action in line

with the culture even among those who cannot be said to share it.<sup>27</sup>

In our view, the search for emergent macro-level causal processes warrants high priority in organizational culture research. Beyond specifying the mechanisms whereby cultural effects in actuality occur, they address the matter of whether a company's manifest system of values, symbols, and beliefs is better framed as culture or ideology. Culture in the oversocialized Parsonsian sense of most contemporary organizational culture research implies that all members internalize the same cultural codes. Organizational culture in the Durkheimian sense of externalized collective consciousness might be better cast as ideology: some share it; others do not but are constrained by the network to comply with its rules.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, the causes and consequences of culture rest on two distinct network mechanisms, both by Durkheim: (1) through reciprocated social influence people iteratively mold one another's cognitive and cathectic makeup so that more and more acquire, hence share, the culture; (2) those same network constraints induce people to act in accordance with the culture/ideology even when the organization's socializing processes have failed to win their hearts and minds.

### Conclusions

For the study of organization culture to win broad social science acceptance, it requires better grounding in the vast scholarly literatures on culture in sociology and anthropology. Culture in organizational study is a rich but underspecified concept. While there are useful discussions of its content (i.e., specific values and beliefs); its significance for corporate performance; how best to observe it (whether qualitatively and quantitatively); and other related matters, insufficient attention has been paid to an array of thorny questions, a number of which this paper has addressed: the culture versus ideology problem; the presence versus absence problem (must culture *always* exist?); the cognitive versus cathectic/evaluative problem; the questions of hot versus cool ritual and how much of each organizations really have; the structure versus culture problem: which drives which; and the level of causation problem: are culture effects funneled through socialization and sharing or via external network constraint? The neglect of these issues is in substantial part a consequence of the unfortunate decoupling of organization culture studies from mainstream social theory and research. While greater integration of these literatures might be achieved in a number of ways, a first place to start, we suggest, is with careful reassessment of the work of Durkheim, a towering figure in the social sciences, whose writing has lately enjoyed some renaissance in culture inquiry, but whose impact on organizational study on whole remains small.

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<sup>27</sup> Mark Granovetter (1985) makes a similar argument against oversocialized models of social action, such as Parsonsian and other varieties of cultural determinism. His *embeddedness* theory is largely about the externally constraining properties of networks.

<sup>28</sup> For other relevant work on contextual/network effects, Erbring and Young, 1979; Friedkin, 1990; Lincoln and Zeitz, 1980; and Manski, 1993.

Can the writings of a 19<sup>th</sup> Century theorist who gave little explicit attention to matters of formal organization really offer anything useful on an issue that has drawn enormous research and journalistic attention since it appeared on the scene some 25 years ago? As our review hopefully demonstrates, Durkheim's ideas as applied to the organizational culture question are not only creative and nuanced but also fresh and timely. His writings on how ritual and ceremony serve to build cohesion and facilitate collective cognition is a novel take on a question that has spawned wide interest but little theoretical closure (Trice and Beyer, 1984). The distinction between hot and cool ritual, rooted in the division between Durkheim's and Weber's thought, also seems a fruitful way to assess the oft-noted ceremonial side of organization. Durkheim's concept of anomie or culture breakdown is a helpful corrective to the pervasive tendency in organization studies to attach the culture concept to anything and everything instead of carefully assessing when culture exists, when it does not, and what difference to the organization that makes.

Finally, Durkheim's portrayal of culture (collective consciousness) as an exterior and constraining social fact lays down a challenge to organizational culture research, most of which assumes a reductionist etiology of culture shaping behavior through processes of socialization that psychologically motivate persons to comply with its codes. Durkheim's writing here is much criticized for appearing to embrace the opposite extreme of macroscopic collective mind, positioned outside people and society and dictating human thought, feeling, and behavior from afar. Yet a fine-grained reading gives a different sense: all consciousness of necessity resides in individual minds, but it converges and coalesces through a web of interpersonal relations and so becomes exterior and constraining in the incontrovertible sense that people are impelled by network pressures to join the crowd. Work organizations, as the studies by Kunda (1992) and Martin (1998) show, contrive to spin these ideological webs, as they effectively economize on the formal structural controls whose origins are easily pinpointed and against which resistance can readily form. Some interesting and sophisticated organizational research and theory has engaged the network basis for culture emergence and constraint. It would do well to consider Durkheim's pioneering contributions to these themes.

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