

## Introduction

### **Symbolic Power and the Social Organization of Turmoil**

Since the inception, election, and reception  
of Mrs. Koh last year,  
Costen Elementary has been under -  
her deception, poor direction, and rejection.

Teachers have to fight reassignment,  
and isolation,  
forced relocation,  
and poor relations.

We all feel burdened and unstable  
due to mailboxes, classrooms,  
policies, and positions  
being changed to the degree that it disables.

You see,  
enthusiastic and dedicated . . . veteran staff  
were forced out on Mrs. Koh's behalf.

New forms are created, day after day,  
teachers are confused, drifting away,  
watching their teachers trip and fall  
makes even our best students challenge it all.

All in all,  
over the past 10 months,  
life at Costen,  
has really stunk!

Frances Drew, a teacher at Costen School, wrote this poem about her new principal, Mrs. Koh.<sup>1</sup> Aptly titled "Turmoil at 'KOH'sten School," the poem provides the opening for a 119 page collection of complaint letters in regards to Mrs. Koh, mostly from teachers, but

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<sup>1</sup> All names appearing in the text are pseudonyms.

also from office staff and a few parents.<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Drew compiled this document and mailed it to various external offices, prompting an investigation of Mrs. Koh. In the end, this investigation yielded little more than a reprimand that was oddly coupled with a vote of confidence by the Chief Executive Officer of Midwest City schools, in part because none of Mrs. Koh's actions exceeded the authority of her office. Yet, despite her rational-legal authority, "Turmoil at 'KOH'sten School" is indicative of Koh's *illegitimacy* in the eyes of many teachers.

How are we to understand this ironic combination of authority and illegitimacy?<sup>3</sup> To solve this puzzle, I contend that particular uses of rational-legal authority come at the expense of a different form of power, a power that does not flow from static bureaucratic rules, but rather dynamic social interactions. This other power is an abstraction of the relationships between people—it is symbolic in nature. To acquire this "symbolic power" you must cultivate interactions such that others see you as a credible social actor. In turn, this credibility can be deployed as the symbolic power to define reality (Bourdieu 1990, 1991, Hallett 2003), influencing the practices of followers in a way that circumvents resistance. For all of her authority as principal, without this credibility, Mrs. Koh lacks the symbolic power to keep teachers from compiling a 119-page collection of complaint letters.

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<sup>2</sup> The document contains thirty-one complaint letters from individual teachers, four complaint letters from groups of teachers, eight complaint letters from the office staff, four complaint letters from parents, and one complaint letter from a group of parents.

<sup>3</sup> In using "illegitimacy" this way, I am stressing that Mrs. Koh is operating without the informal sanction of the teachers. In the legal sense of the word, Mrs. Koh is not illegitimate, because she has the sanction of her office.

However, this poem speaks to more than issues of authority and symbolic power. It also speaks to the *turmoil* felt by teachers at Costen School. This turmoil involves conflict around the changes introduced by Mrs. Koh on her arrival, changes that disrupt the established modes of operation used by the teachers. Mrs. Drew describes how “we all feel burdened and unstable, due to mailboxes, classrooms, policies and positions being changed to the degree that it disables” and how “new forms are created, day after day, teachers are confused, drifting away.” In reading the poem, one is swept into the chaos experienced by the teachers.

Though the poem may state that the teachers are “confused,” I argue that the turmoil at the school is not. Though we may think of turmoil as something that is chaotic, this dissertation theorizes the social organization of turmoil (of which symbolic power is a vital component). Yet if turmoil is properly understood as organized rather than disorganized, what does it mean to speak of “turmoil”? The word turmoil is often used as a synonym for conflict, and conflict is part of the theory I develop. Scholars who study organizations describe different types of organizational conflict (Morrill, Zald, and Rao 2003, Morrill 1995, Lammer 1969, Thompson 1960), and the different sources of organizational conflict, particularly as it relates to the bureaucratic structure of organizations (Selznick 1949, Gouldner 1954, and Corwin 1969) and political conflicts within organizations (March 1962, Corwin 1965, Ocasio 1994, Jackall 1998). However, turmoil is something more than conflict. Turmoil involves conflict of a particular kind, conflict that arises from the disruption of an established social order. Once established, a social order provides a stock of knowledge about everyday life, allowing people to

exercise control over their environment and act with confidence (Schutz 1970, Berger and Luckmann 1966, White 1992). If it is not disrupted, the social order becomes taken for granted, and is maintained through the routinized interactions of the participants. However, when the social order is violated, participants lose the established footing for their actions, fostering ambiguity and frustration. Involving more than conflict, turmoil is *phenomenologically unsettling*—it involves a disruption in the taken-for-granted social order, such that (as Mrs. Drew states) “we all feel burdened and unstable.”

The goal of this dissertation is to theorize this turmoil, and I argue that turmoil is organized by changes in the broader social context, pointed disruptions of the immediate social order, authority relations that facilitate disruptions, and symbolic power relations that define disruptions. First, turmoil is conditioned by changes in the broader context in which the setting for turmoil exists. These changes may involve the weakening of traditional structures (Durkheim 1951) (for example the decreasing strength and status of teaching as a profession), or structural inconsistency that creates competing demands (Merton 1938). In the context of education, the rise of the bureaucratic logic of accountability is at odds with the professional logic of autonomy. These competing institutional logics are tied to correspondent social orders that often have divergent views and interests: the world of administrative purview on the one hand, and the traditionally autonomous world of teaching on the other. When a compromise between these contending logics and orders cannot be reached, anomic conditions develop. These conditions threaten the immediate social order experienced by the people in the setting, creating situations ripe for turmoil.

Second, turmoil involves pointed disruptions of an established social order: something happens that interferes with the patterns of thought and action typically used by people in the setting, disturbing their sense of control over the situation. In the case of Costen Elementary School, these disruptions involve (in part) efforts by Mrs. Koh to create a tighter connection between accountability policies and everyday practices in the school. In contrast, the prior administrations maintained a loose coupling between accountability policies and school practices. Under the previous administrations, the school operated according to an “indulgency pattern” (Gouldner 1954) characterized by low surveillance by the administration, and high teacher autonomy. The tighter coupling that Mrs. Koh creates disrupts the professional autonomy esteemed by the teachers, pushing the world of administration into the world of teaching. This disruption estranges the teachers from the social order that they had established with the prior administrations. Without the sense of control provided by the previous social order, the teachers become frustrated and alienated (Marx 1972 [1844], Seeman 1983, 1975, 1959). Through these local disruptions, anomie from above collides with alienation from below.

Third, turmoil involves authority relations that enable a disruption of the social order to endure: Disruptions in the social order are of little consequence if they are fleeting, because participants can return to their standard modes of action once the disruptive episode is over. For disruptions to grow into “turmoil” requires that they persist, and in the case of Costen Elementary, persistent disruptions are enabled by Mrs. Koh’s rational-legal authority as principal.

Fourth, turmoil is organized around symbolic power relations. For an intervention in a social order to be disruptive, it must be defined as such. As the power to define the situation, symbolic power relations are of *dupla gravitas*, dual importance in the organization of turmoil. On the one hand, turmoil involves a lack of symbolic power by the actor who initiates a change in the social order. Without symbolic power, Mrs. Koh cannot define the disruptions that she creates into the teachers' social order as just, even though many of her changes are based on accountability policies, and she has the rational-legal authority to make these changes. As we will see, when the initiator *does* have symbolic power, he or she can use this power to define the disruption as justified, and thereby avoid resistance (consequently not all disruptions of a social order result in turmoil, some result in effective changes). On the other hand, the symbolic power of respondents is also involved, and the greatest turmoil arises when respondents who have symbolic power use it to define the change as particularly disruptive. While Mrs. Koh frequently disrupts the social order of the school, teachers with symbolic power also use their power to define her actions as especially negative, and to establish lines of resistance. Thus, turmoil is both organized around symbolic power relations (who has it and who does not), *and articulated* by those with symbolic power: Symbolic power is implicated in the presence (and absence) of turmoil, *and* the emergent texture of that turmoil.

While the theory of turmoil presented in this dissertation is new, data that speak to the organizational features of turmoil is not. In the course of research, a number of scholars (typically with an interest in organizations) have collected data that address the

different elements of the four-part organization of turmoil. For example, Carol Heimer's work on competing institutions (Heimer 1999, 1996) describes the type of structural context that can foster turmoil. Much like the early studies of anomie that examine conflicting demands created by structural inconsistency (Merton 1938), Heimer examines how the institutions of law, medicine, and the family compete with each other and complicate the process of organizational decision making in neo natal intensive care units. Heimer's work situates decision making in a complex institutional environment. An analysis of turmoil takes this appreciation of the broad context in which a setting exists, and ties these structural conditions to actual disruptions at the local level, while focusing on how conflicts around these disruptions evolve through ongoing interactions (in the case of Costen School, between teachers and administrators).

Where Heimer focuses on institutional pressures, Vaughan focuses on the establishment of a local social order. In an effort to explain the Space Shuttle Challenger launch decision; Vaughan (1996) describes how a social order is established, and how a social order operates to resist change. Restricted by Congress, the Air Force, and a lack of resources, and confronted with design problems early in shuttle history, NASA engineers responded in ways that resolved short-term difficulties but failed to address larger problems. In time, these types of solutions became the standard operating procedure and were transformed into acceptable behavior. In this way, poor engineering judgment became normalized by NASA managers and engineers. In time, these practices became routine and taken-for-granted, providing a precedent for launch decisions. In light of this established social order, it becomes easier to understand why the shuttle

launch was not aborted. Once established, the social order at NASA resisted the kinds of disruptions that would have created internal turmoil, but also may have stopped the Challenger launch decision and the disaster that followed.<sup>4</sup>

Where Vaughn describes the establishment and stability of a social order, work in the ethnomethodological tradition makes a conscious effort to disrupt social orders. The “breaching experiments” fabricated by ethnomethodologists disrupt the taken-for-granted assumptions that underlie stable social orders, making these assumptions visible (Garfinkle 1963, 1967, Heritage 1984). While researchers in this tradition create disruptions as a means to understand the social order that existed prior to the disruption, the study of turmoil examines the disruptions created by the participants themselves. Like the ethnomethodologists, I use these disruptions to learn about the prior social order, but I also follow these disruptions forwards into evolving turmoil, while keeping an eye on the structural context that provides the background conditions for disruptions.

As to authority and power, Jackall’s (1988) study of corporate managers examines the complex relations that accompany bureaucracy. Noting that subordinates most often refer to their superiors in personal terms, Jackall suggests that organizations are best conceived as “patrimonial bureaucracies.”<sup>5</sup> In other words, rather than being attached to a position, influence is attached to a relationship with a person, and all the features of that interpersonal relationship. Focusing on interpersonal relations reminds us that rational-

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<sup>4</sup> Where I study the organization of turmoil as it involves conflict around disruptions of an established social order, Vaughn studies how disaster is organized by an established social order that normalizes poor decision making.

<sup>5</sup> For a discussion of patrimonial bureaucracy, see also Antonio (1979).

legal authority does not walk alone in organizations. Rather it is accompanied by informal symbolic power.

Taken together, these works touch on the different organizational aspects of turmoil—the broader social context, the establishment, stability, and disruption of social orders, and authority and symbolic power relations. In what follows, I take these pieces and stitch them together with ethnographic data from Costen Elementary School to create a tapestry of turmoil.

To the untrained eye, this tapestry appears chaotic because it is organized in part around symbolic power relations that are particularly elusive, buried beneath taken-for-granted social interactions. Compared to other forms of power, symbolic power does not correspond to positions in a hierarchy, or in the capacity to bestow rewards or administer punishments. Nor does symbolic power result strictly from the possession of material resources. Rather, symbolic power is an abstraction of the interactions between people, interactions through which people bestow credibility on others, credibility that can be used to assure complicity. Defined as “the power to construct reality,” (Bourdieu 1991b: 166) symbolic power enables one to circumvent resistance while influencing the practices of others and shaping the social order (Lukes 1974). Because symbolic power is the power to define the very reality in which we are enmeshed, it is not readily observable when it operates in the ideal-typical sense. In other words, because this power is symbolic in nature, both in its origins in social interaction and in its outcome of defining

reality, it frequently goes unnoticed until it becomes problematic<sup>6</sup>. In the presence of symbolic power, situations become more clearly defined, but the absence of symbolic power leaves room for ambiguity and the erroneous sense of disorganization that we typically associate with “turmoil.” The role of symbolic power in the organization of turmoil is literally definitive.

To understand turmoil, we must first theorize the symbolic power that is hidden in the interactions between people and is of *dupla gravitas* in the organization of turmoil. Towards this end, I build on the work of Bourdieu, Strauss, and Goffman. While Bourdieu analyzes symbolic power at the macro level of “fields” and the micro level of the “habitus,” the constitutive role of social interaction remains under-theorized. I fill this gap with an adaptation of Strauss’ (1978) negotiated order approach. Strauss contends that social order emerges through interactions or “negotiations” nested within the confines of the established social context. Though negotiated order theorists include power in their models, it remains a black box: assumed in existence but not interrogated in its operation. To open this box I develop a model implicit in Goffman’s analyses of deference and demeanor (1959, 1967). I argue that people attribute credibility to others based on valued forms of human, cultural, social, and economic capital. Once acquired, this credibility can be deployed as the symbolic power to define reality and thereby influence the practices of others and the existing social order. Thus, where Goffman focuses on the ritual maintenance of an interaction order, symbolic power helps us understand the creation and recreation of a social order.

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<sup>6</sup> as it is in the relationship between Mrs. Koh and the staff of Costen Elementary School.

Symbolic power is not the only form of power. Power has long been a topic of social analysis, though its definitions have varied. Definitions usually involve some component of getting people to “do something” despite efforts to resist. While scholars have developed diverse typologies to describe different forms of power (Goldhammer and Shils 1939, Butler 1960, Harrison 1960, Read 1974, Digeser 1992, Earle 1997), what is often missing is an organized theory of how power operates that explains how and why different bases of power become salient (Emerson 1962: 31). Though scholars disagree about the development and implications of power (Hardy and Clegg 1996), beginning with the classical theorists, power has been examined as a structural capacity. In the Marxian tradition, power is predetermined by the class structure, and in the case of capitalism, control of the means of production (Marx 1972 [1848]). Weber shares an interest in property relations, but also stresses the importance of bureaucratic rule systems in modern, formal, rational-legal organizations (Weber 1968). Despite their differences, Marx and Weber both take a critical stance on power, equating it with domination.

What is missing from these structural accounts of power is an investigation of the relations that permeate social life (Emirbayer 1997). To quote Anselm Strauss, “A social order--even the most repressive--without some forms of negotiation would be inconceivable” (1978: ix). Likewise, Weber states that, “every genuine form of domination implies a minimum of voluntary compliance” (1968:212). Despite Weber’s relational nod, management scholars emphasize his structural account of formal organizations. Moreover, where Weber associated power with domination, management scholars usually take a functional stance and equate power with legitimate authority. To

quote Hardy and Clegg, “the power embedded in the hierarchy has been viewed as ‘normal’ and ‘inevitable’ following from the formal design of the organization.” (1996: 624). These rational-legal conceptions of power are popular in management literature, especially in analyses of schools (Dunlap and Goldman 1991). In contrast, the more symbolic and interactive components of power continue to go unaddressed.

Apart from identifying symbolic power, I demystify its operation by modeling its origins and outcomes in the micro-politics of social interaction. Symbolic power is especially important in the organization of turmoil because, in defining reality, symbolic power bypasses conflict (Lukes 1974). In this way, symbolic power differs from efforts to secure influence over the resistance of others--a feature common to models in political science (Dahl 1957, 1961, Bachrach and Baratz 1962, 1963, 1970). Those with symbolic power have the capability to not only influence the reception of various organizational issues as they relate to practices, but also to define which issues first become part of a political agenda.

To make the empirical case for the social organization of turmoil and the dual importance of symbolic power, I use data from a two-year ethnographic study of “Costen Elementary School.” I start by theorizing the elusive symbolic power that is hidden in social interaction and has a (literally) definitive role in the organization of turmoil (Chapter One). I argue that symbolic power involves a process in which people first attribute credibility to others based on valued forms of capital. The attribution of credibility can be observed empirically in social interactions in which people make

positive evaluations of others. Once acquired, this credibility can be deployed as the symbolic power to define the situation.

Though the attribution of credibility and the deployment of symbolic power occur through social interactions, these interactions are always contextualized. As such, Chapter Two discusses the organizational context of education. Like schools more generally, Costen Elementary is located at the intersection of competing institutional logics and their corresponding social orders. Discussing these competing logics provides us with a sense of the broader social context (or what Strauss has called the “structural context) in which Costen Elementary is embedded. However, in the everyday life of the school, these competing logics are made felt through particular disruptions, and the disruptions and the interactions around these disruptions are constitutive of the emergent turmoil.

Chapters Three, Four, and Five focus on these disruptions and interactions. Chapter Three develops the concept of turmoil by focusing on Mrs. Koh’s disruptions to the social order cherished by the teachers, while linking these disruptions to the structural conditions discussed in Chapter Two. Though the teachers eagerly assign blame to Mrs. Koh, to understand the organization of turmoil we must examine the link between Mrs. Koh’s disruptive actions, accountability policy, and rational-legal authority. The disruptions that Mrs. Koh creates are enabled by her authority as principal, and she uses her authority to create a tighter coupling between accountability policies and school practices. In doing so, Mrs. Koh violates the autonomy and individual control that the

teachers esteem. Despite her authority, Mrs. Koh's actions damage her credibility in the eyes of the teachers, weakening her symbolic power.

Chapter Four focuses on the symbolic power that has become problematic for Mrs. Koh, and the role of symbolic power in the organization of turmoil. That Mrs. Koh violates the social order is one point of contention between her and the staff, but the teachers also chafe at *how* she violates the order. Mrs. Koh has a tough, terse manner that she carries into her interactions with the staff. Instead of attributing credibility to Mrs. Koh based on this interactive style, the teachers criticize her, further damaging her credibility and symbolic power. Without credibility, Mrs. Koh lacks the symbolic power to define her disruptions of the social order as just, and she cannot quell the turmoil that has arisen from her disruptions. Where Mrs. Koh struggles to foster a positive impression in the minds of the teachers, Mr. Carrol (a new assistant principal) uses interactions to cultivate credibility with the teachers, and he deploys his credibility as the symbolic power to effectively redefine school policies while bypassing turmoil. Lacking symbolic power, Mrs. Koh cannot effectively change the social order without risking turmoil, because she cannot define her disruptions as justified. Armed with symbolic power, Mr. Carrol can, even while making the same changes attempted by Mrs. Koh.

Where Chapter Four focuses on the symbolic power of administrators who try to initiate changes in the social order, Chapter Five examines the symbolic power of teachers in response to disruptions in the social order. The symbolic power of teachers is an important "weapon of the weak" (Scott 1985): it is a means through which the teachers, as subordinates, combat Mrs. Koh's disruptive changes by defining lines of

resistance. As the editor and contributing author of “Turmoil at ‘KOH’sten School,” Frances Drew (a veteran seventh grade language arts teacher) was one of the first teachers to combat Mrs. Koh. Mrs. Drew’s efforts defined lines of resistance that other teachers followed. Brenda Donalds (a veteran sixth grade language arts teacher) alternated between dampening and amplifying the turmoil at the school in response to Mrs. Koh’s disruptions. At times Brenda would use her symbolic power to foster communication over conflict, but at other times she would use it to increase the conflict between the teachers and Mrs. Koh. Where Mrs. Drew and Mrs. Donalds used their symbolic power in direct confrontations with Mrs. Koh, the effect of Carrie Andretti’s (veteran second grade teacher) symbolic power was indirect. Mrs. Andretti’s symbolic power defined the group culture of the primary teachers. Following Mrs. Andretti, the primary teachers are highly sarcastic group. They responded to Mrs. Koh’s disruptions accordingly, mocking her actions while validating their established social order.

Chapter Five also examines how the teachers who have symbolic power are able to effectively intercede in the social order, changing the school while bypassing turmoil. By discussing how symbolic power is involved in the presence (and absence) of turmoil, as well as the emergent texture of turmoil, Chapters Four and Five examine the double importance of symbolic power in the organization of turmoil.

Throughout chapters Three, Four, and Five, I discuss twelve disruptions to the social order that result either in turmoil, or an effective change absent conflict. Though various comparisons are made throughout the dissertation, Chapter Six brings all of these cases together for systematic comparison. Using the logic of the comparative method

(Ragin 1987, 2000), I assess the necessity and sufficiency of the four conditions that organize turmoil. While changes in the broad context in which a setting exists and the authority relations in the setting are important precipitating and enabling conditions for turmoil, the data indicate that a disruption of an established social order combined with a lack of symbolic power (by the initiator of the disruption) are necessary conditions for turmoil: according to the data, turmoil only occurs when these conditions are present. This combination of conditions is also sufficient for turmoil: Other conditions aside, when a disruption to a social order and a lack of symbolic power by the person initiating the disruption are present, they suffice for creating turmoil. The theory of turmoil developed in this dissertation, the data from Costen School, and the analysis of necessity and sufficiency provides the foundation for a broader study of turmoil, and a series of predictions as to the kinds of situations that create turmoil.

The conclusion reintegrates the discussion of symbolic power and the organization of turmoil while addressing issues of generalizability. While the *empirical* story told in this dissertation is limited to Costen Elementary School, I argue that the model provides *theoretical* leverage for understanding other contexts. There are actually two points of theoretical generalizability, the model of turmoil, of which symbolic power is a part, and the model of symbolic power itself. To demonstrate the broad utility of turmoil, I use the theory to examine research on other organizations (for profit and non-profit, formal and informal), social movements, and revolutions.

Apart from the issue of turmoil, the model of symbolic power *itself* provides theoretical leverage for understanding multiple contexts. Symbolic power is

consequential to any social order, because it is the very power to define that order. While the particular features of a social order may be unique, the *process* in which symbolic power is created in social interaction is more general. Though symbolic power is a fundamental pillar in the organization of turmoil, it also stands alone as a significant concept for our understanding of the social world.

At its core, this project contributes to our understanding of power, turmoil, and social interaction. By extension, this work has implications for how we think about organizations, educational policy and practice, the micro-politics of leadership, and contentious politics. I explore these implications in the conclusion and throughout the chapters that follow.

### Research Methods

This dissertation is empirically grounded in a two-year ethnographic study of “Costen Elementary School,” located in a large urban area that I will refer to as “Midwest City.” Of all the possible places to study symbolic power and turmoil, one may ask, “why schools?” First, as an organizational setting, studying schools allows researchers to compare the operation of symbolic power to other forms of power, for example rational-legal authority and social exchange power. Though it would be interesting to develop a model of interaction and symbolic power implicit in various studies of informal street-corner society (Whyte 1943, Anderson 1978, 1999), showing how symbolic power operates *even within* formal bureaucratic organizations makes the case for symbolic power that much stronger. Moreover, organizational settings allow us to observe the

interplay of different forms of power, which has consequences for the organization of turmoil.

As opposed to other organizations, schools are interesting because they are undergoing a period of increasing bureaucracy. Where schools have traditionally been described as loosely-coupled organizations (Weick 1976, Meyer and Rowan 1977), recent accountability policies are in part an effort to strengthen the bureaucratic form of schools (Hoffer 2000, Bidwell 2001). Though many politicians applaud Midwest City for its accountability reforms, the bureaucratic logic of accountability is often a threat to the professional logic of autonomy that has long characterized teaching (Bacharach and Mundell 1993), and creates situations conducive to turmoil. Exploring how symbolic power and turmoil operate in the context of reform provides a lens for understanding the challenges of implementing accountability policies.

Second, schools are unique organizations in that each year they start afresh, but not anew. That is, they involve a social order that is created in and through interactions, but over the course of the year this order comes to be routinized and the interactions that form the base of this order become less visible (as is the case with most organizations). However, once summer arrives the social order changes with the temporary departure of students and faculty who are not involved in the summer term. With the coming of fall, the staff reestablishes the social order, in part based on past routines, but also based on struggles for symbolic power. As such, schools allow us to examine symbolic power and turmoil in relation to the creation and recreation of a social order, as well as the routinization of that order. Moreover, as a major institution charged with the

socialization of children, symbolic power and the micro-politics of schools are of consequence beyond the immediate social order of the school.

Costen itself is a good research site for studying symbolic power because it is undergoing a period of “unsettled times” (Swidler 1986) in which processes normally taken for granted (like symbolic power) become contested and visible (Jackall 1988). When I began fieldwork Mrs. Koh was beginning her first full year as principal at Costen, and her tenure has been marked by conflict between various groups. These conflicts make visible how people attribute credibility and symbolic power to their representative leaders, and how they *do not* attribute credibility to others. The turmoil also makes visible attempts by people to deploy their symbolic power. While unsettled times make these taken for granted processes visible, as we will see, turmoil has its own social organization.

My research at Costen School began in mid October of 1999, and closed at the end of the 2000/2001 school year (mid June). A typical day in the field went as follows: I would arrive at Costen before school to observe a meeting, during which I took extensive field notes, emphasizing verbatim discourse to capture the style and content of social interaction. After the meeting, I would usually go to the faculty lounge (it was sparsely populated until lunchtime) and immediately type up my notes. Other times I would shadow members of the administration to observe their work, or conduct a classroom observation, in both cases taking copious notes. Other times I would interview teachers on their resource breaks. At lunchtime, I would return to the lounge to eat with the teachers, absorbing their gossip. After lunch, I would usually go to the vacant school

auditorium and type up my field notes. After school I would often interview a teacher or administrator, or work on my field notes at a nearby coffee shop. In most cases field notes were completed within twenty-four hours of an observation.

In addition to the field notes, I also videotaped a total of nineteen meetings. All told, I took field notes on thirty-six staff meetings, twenty grade level meetings, five subject area meetings (two videotaped and transcribed), twenty “leader team meetings” where teacher representatives from the different grade levels would meet with the administration (thirteen videotaped and transcribed), eight local school council meetings (five videotaped and transcribed), seven other miscellaneous meetings, eleven shadowings of administrators, sixty-one lunches with teachers, thirteen classroom observations, and twenty-one other observations of various interactions.

I supplemented my field notes and videos with interviews. I analyzed data from forty-five interviews with twenty-seven different teachers (thirty-two taped and transcribed), as well as fifteen interviews with the school administration (nine taped and transcribed). Finally, I took advantage of four interviews with two members of the Local School Council. The interviews conducted for this project take three forms: A general, semi-structured interview (taped in all but two cases), a pre and/or post meeting or classroom observation interview encouraging respondents to reflect on recent events (usually taped), and various informal conversations about recent events (usually not taped).

While this project is based on an ethnographic study of one school, the primary unit of analysis is the social interactions between people and various groups. As such,

this project is *fundamentally comparative* in its approach, as analysis is accomplished by and conclusions are drawn from the comparison of interactions between different people and groups. To facilitate this process of “constant comparative analysis” (Glaser and Strauss 1967) a computer based qualitative coding program—NUDIST—was used to code all field notes and transcripts. NUDIST facilitates comparison by rapidly cutting strips of coded data into categories that can be cross-examined against each other. Though some codes were based on preliminary concepts of interaction and symbolic power developed during early observations, other codes were created and considered for analysis as they emerged from the data (Miles and Huberman 1984) in a process of “double fitting” between theory and data (Ragin 1994).

I began this project with an interest in the relationship between power and social interaction. In an effort to gauge the attribution of credibility that forms the basis of symbolic power, I focused on interactions in which people made evaluations of others. At times these evaluations occurred as people interacted with me during interviews, but they also occurred in my field notes as school personnel interacted with each other. Next, I attempted and link these evaluations backwards to practices I had observed in my field notes. When people’s evaluations of others were consistently positive, I then followed these interactions forward, looking for times in which people deployed their acquired credibility to define the situation, to say in effect “this is how we’re going to do things,” while circumventing resistance.

As the interview and ethnographic data accumulated, I realized that symbolic power was indeed an important part of the story at Costen Elementary School. My data

were filled with excerpts in which school personnel were evaluating each other positively and negatively. The ways in which people were interacting with each other and the problems of credibility and symbolic power that accompanied those interactions helped me to understand some of the issues at the school, particularly Mrs. Koh's reception as a new principal. However, symbolic power was only part of the emergent story. After a few weeks, once I had become familiarized with the school, and the school had become familiarized with me (and realized that I was not going away), people dropped that happy faces they had put on for "the researcher from Northwestern" and went about their everyday lives at the school. These lives were characterized by regular confusion and conflict about "what was going on?" The confusion and conflict involved a series of disruptions in the social order that the teachers had established with the prior administrations. Before one disruptive event would fade from the life of the school, a new one would begin, sparking another round of conflict and confusion that the teachers described, in their own words, as "turmoil." This turmoil saturated the discourse at the school, not only as the teachers and the new administration described the school to me, but more importantly, as they interacted and conversed with each other.

As my data accumulated, I realized that my field notes were tracing the lineage of a series of disruptions to the established social order. Some of these disruptions created turmoil, while others did not. As I analyzed my data and tried to make sense of this finding, I realized that the strips of turmoil that I had observed were bound with issues of symbolic power. When people who had acquired credibility and symbolic power created disruptions, they were able to circumvent turmoil and effectively change the social order

of the school. However, when those who lacked symbolic power created disruptions, turmoil ensued. Moreover, the contour of the emergent turmoil was defined by teachers who used their symbolic power to articulate lines of resistance in response to a disruption.

In the chapters that follow, I discuss twelve disruptions to the established social order of the school. I attempt to trace these disruptions backwards to learn about the origins of the disruptions and the prior social order that is disrupted, and forwards to see if the disruptions result in turmoil, and if so, then why. Table One briefly introduces these disruptions (See Table One). Table One outlines who initiated the disruption and with what groups, the periods in which my data followed the disruption, the chapter in which the disruption is discussed, and whether or not the disruption resulted in turmoil.

The teachers mentioned a number of other disruptions in addition to those included in Table One, for example changes to a popular school recycling program, changes to the school newspaper, changes in grading procedures, changes in discipline practices, and many others. However, I selected these twelve disruptions for analysis because I had acquired consistent data on them in my field notes and interviews, and because they affect groups of people involved in the school (instead of disrupting relations between a few people, they disrupt a wider order). While I discuss and make partial comparisons between these disruptions in separate chapters as a means to theorize the organization of turmoil, in Chapter Six I compare these disruptions systematically as a way to examine the necessary and sufficient conditions for turmoil.

### The Feel of Turmoil

Schools are places of routine. Though the details of each day vary—which students (and teachers) are having good and bad days, different meetings, lessons, assignments, and tests—life in schools is ordered around regular schedules, procedures, curriculum, and general school practices. These routines provide school personnel with a sense of control over the oftentimes uncertain work of education. However, at Costen School, established routines have been disrupted, and uncertainty has become endemic. On arriving at the school in the morning, there is only a limited sense of what is to come during the day.

Daily life at Costen usually begins with a meeting of some sort—a general staff meeting, a grade level meeting, or a leader team meeting (between the administration and representatives from each grade level). Yet the subject of these meetings is rarely a known. Will there be another change in school procedures? What is going to happen in regards to all the accountability paperwork? What about the attendance records? What’s going on with the staffing? What’s that status of the bilingual program and grading? What is going on with the student reward system? How about the copy procedures? Will the meeting end up being canceled? Who is going to run the meeting if Mrs. Koh is not there? The meeting may involve any combination of these things, or something else may pop up. In the past, this ambiguity was limited, because the school had an established mode of operation that was known by the staff. However, with the advent of the new administration, these routines and the sense of control that they provide have been disrupted, spreading ambiguity throughout the school.

Whatever the subject of the morning meeting, it always raises more questions and more unknowns. Before these questions can be answered, the morning bell rings and the teachers retreat to their classrooms. As the classroom doors close and instruction begins, the school settles into a momentary calm. However, as the lunch period nears, a new round of confusion begins as the teachers try to make sense of the meeting. At lunch the veteran teachers recall the past—things used to go so smoothly, what is going on? Why are things changing? These questions, difficult to answer, are accompanied by frustration, and conflict. As many of the teachers associate the disruptions with Mrs. Koh, they begin to resist. Many teachers hold on to their previous practices and complain to each other, to their union representatives, and to the district office. Other teachers just want to survive, but they find themselves embedded within this confusing, uncertain, stressful context. The turmoil reverberates through informal interactions in the hallways and the teacher’s lounge, and during formal interactions at meetings later in the week.

In short, life at the school has become contentious and difficult to predict. Even though the Costen staff comes to school every day, the school is unfamiliar, and each day must be learned anew. Take some of these excerpts from teacher complaint letters in “Turmoil at ‘KOH’sten School”:

This seems to be my daily life at Costen. It has become par for the course not knowing what to expect from day to day.

I am unfamiliar with school politics or principal contractual agreements, but I do know what since Denise Koh has been at our school, the educational environment has become increasingly more fractured, stressful, and disorganized, not only for the teachers, but for the students and parents alike.

I have worked at Costen School for many years and have never experienced such widespread dissatisfaction and feelings of stress as are evident now. . . it is hard to work under such stressful conditions.

For most of the veteran teachers, the disruptions that have come with the new administration do not make sense. Many teachers resent these disruptions (for example there were 31 individual teacher complaint letters in “Turmoil at ‘KOH’sten School”) and refuse to accept them. To quote one teacher, “It’s a constant battle to keep these traditions going and they are all things that have been working, that have shown very good results, but now all of a sudden, you know, it’s—it’s come into question” (Interview transcript 2/02/01). Another teacher put it more simply, “Why can’t we have a normal school year? It’s so tiring.” (Field notes 5/10/01).

The turmoil at the school takes a toll on the teachers. One teacher lamented to me that she always tries to arrive at the school in a good mood, but after the morning meetings, she is “always upset” (Field notes 2/2/01). As the turmoil intensified during my second year of observations, another teacher told me:

I think for a while this year there was a huge low point. There was a time when I’m hearing about all these teachers leaving and crying and breaking into tears in the middle of these things. It seems like everyday somebody else was losing it. (Interview transcript 2/23/01)

To quote excerpts from three different complaint letters from teachers included in “Turmoil at ‘KOH’sten School”: “Stress levels are extremely high and teacher morale is extremely low,” “The atmosphere at Costen is very hard and unbearable,” “Fear, worry, and depression has replaced happiness and well-being.”

Given the stress associated with the turmoil at Costen, it may not be surprising that teacher attrition at the school is high. Over twenty teachers have left the school since the arrival of the new administration (nearly one quarter of the faculty).<sup>7</sup> Even the new teachers at the school contemplate leaving. To quote one of the new teachers, “I wish I would have taken my job in the suburbs. I really do. The only reason I took this job is because it’s two minutes from my home” (Interview transcript 11/16/99). Another new teacher did leave, saying of the turmoil, “It’s too much” (Field notes 2/2/01). It is not uncommon for the teachers who remain to take ‘personal days’ as a temporary escape from the turmoil.

The turmoil also wears on Mrs. Koh. Despite her consistently optimistic and positive attitude in our interviews, Mrs. Koh has become thinner, she has frequent colds, there is a new hint of gray in her hair, and her skin is frequently pallid. I was not alone in making these observations. The teachers also commented on Mrs. Koh’s health and appearance (Field notes 1/22/01, 3/2/01).

The turmoil also exhausts the parents on the Local School Council (LSC). The Chair of the LSC, Stan Feierman, often lamented to me that he was at the “end of his rope.” When I asked him how he copes with the difficult problems at the school, he said: “I don’t. I get sick. I mean it’s like (laughs), it’s terrible. It takes a terrible toll on me personally” (Interview transcript 11/01/00). If not for his strong belief in public education, Stan told me he would have taken his children out of the school and placed them in a private school. Another LSC parent (Jessica Churley) expressed similar values

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<sup>7</sup>The staff turnover will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three.

to me. However, when the turmoil increased during my second year of observations, Jessica made the difficult decision to take her three children out of the school and to put them into a private school. This meant that she would have to go back to work and spend less time with her children, but she made this sacrifice because she felt the school no longer provided a positive learning environment because of the turmoil. Jessica's concern was foreshadowed in a teacher complaint letter: "The atmosphere is certainly not conducive to learning and working conditions are very difficult and stressful" (excerpt from "Turmoil at 'KOH'sten School").

Though these last few examples involve students and instruction, one of the interesting things about Costen is that students and instruction are largely absent from my data. As one reader of this dissertation commented, it is as if they are not present at Costen, which is very odd for a school. However, the absence of students and instructional issues in my data is not a research oversight. Rather it speaks to the situation at the school. Students and instruction do not appear regularly in my data because the turmoil at the school overwhelms discourse about the students, and especially about instruction. During formal meetings and informal conversations, the staff of Costen school is preoccupied with turmoil, and other issues take a backseat. To quote one teacher: "In order to 'put children first,' your teachers cannot feel disgruntled or out of sorts" (excerpt from "Turmoil at 'KOH'sten School").

In short, turmoil has implications for the quality of life at Costen School. The turmoil at the school makes life uncertain, and there is little solid ground on which to stand. It is as if the school has to "reinvent the wheel" everyday, an exhausting and

frustrating endeavor. However, in addition to being a very stressful place to work, turmoil also has implications for the learning environment. Embroiled in turmoil, it is rare for the people at Costen to engage the core technology of schooling—instruction. Research on model schools stresses the central role of instruction and its ties to teacher collaboration, teacher learning, and teacher certainty (Rosenholtz 1989). Instruction is the primary means through which student outcomes are improved. However, instructional improvement is stalled when people in schools are confronted with turmoil. Moreover, when I asked teachers how they cope with the problems in the school, many of them told me that they close their classroom doors. To quote on teacher: “I close that door. . . Once I have to open that door and be part of the bigger community, I—it’s difficult and stressful. . . I don’t go out there much. I stay in here with my children” (Interview transcript 2/02/01). Though the classroom can be a sanctuary from turmoil, it is a sanctuary that isolates teachers from each other and prevents them from forming a professional community conducive to instructional learning and improvement.

As we will see, the teachers frequently blame Mrs. Koh for disrupting the social order that they had established with the prior administrations. While it is true that these disruptions instigate the turmoil at the school, many of these disruptions are linked to the rise of accountability policies in education. Mrs. Koh’s changes frequently involve an attempt to comply with these policies, policies which are intended to improve student outcomes. However, when the implementation of these policies creates turmoil, the very means through which learning improves (instruction) becomes obscured.

Though disruptions to the established social order often create turmoil, this is not always the case. The disruptions that result in turmoil and the disruptions that instead create changes absent conflict are married to issues of symbolic power. It is to these complex symbolic power relations that I now turn.

## Chapter 1

### **Symbolic Power and Social Interaction**

*Shaking her head no, Laura tells me “She’s so overwhelmed and she lets it show, she has to hide it. Like if I’m overwhelmed in the classroom I don’t let the kids know, because you lose that respect. And that’s what she’s done. She’s lost that respect, and now it’s too far gone. Either she’s gonna have to go, or they’re (older teachers) gonna have to go, and that’s not gonna happen.” (Field notes).*

When I asked Laura, a teacher at Costen School, if there was anything her principal (Mrs. Koh) could do to salvage a school mired in turmoil, her response summarized two years of conflict: “she’s lost that respect, and now it’s too far gone.” Despite the rational-legal authority Mrs. Koh can harness as principal, something is missing, a particular kind of power that does not reside in bureaucratic rules. The power Mrs. Koh lacks is more vague, residing in ill-defined notions of “respect,” symbolic in nature, but no less important when it comes to running a school, an organization, or any other social order. Euphemized as “leadership,” it is a “gentle, disguised form” of power (Bourdieu 1990), a symbolic abstraction of the interactions between people (Hallett 2003). While Mrs. Koh has not been able to obtain this symbolic power, others in the school have, and to understand the turmoil at Costen School is to understand the daily struggles for this elusive “respect,” the efforts of people in the school to win, and use, symbolic power.

With the turmoil at Costen School in mind, this chapter unpacks the elusive concept of symbolic power, comparing it to a form of power that shares a similar unit of analysis, social exchange power. I argue that people *attribute credibility* to others based

on various forms of capital that are put to use and made visible in social interaction. Once acquired, credibility can be deployed as symbolic power, “the power to construct reality” (Bourdieu 1991), thereby influencing the practices of others while circumventing resistance. I argue that symbolic power is a constitutive element of any social order, yet the interactions generating symbolic power are themselves constituted by the situation.

I start with a discussion of Bourdieu’s work on symbolic power, expanding it to embrace the constitutive role of interaction. Bourdieu examines how symbolic power operates at a micro level through the classificatory schemata of the habitus, and at the macro level of fields. Though Bourdieu begins to theorize how symbolic power is created and deployed at the meso level of interaction, it is not his primary focus.<sup>8</sup> While the habituses of actors involved and the field in play condition interactions, I argue that *interactions themselves* are constitutive of symbolic power.

By emphasizing interaction, the negotiation context, and the structural context, the negotiated order approach provides a set of concepts for the meso analysis that is under developed in Bourdieu’s sociology. Though negotiated order theorists include power in their models, they assume its existence rather than interrogating its operation. I argue that the interactions generating symbolic power are shaped by the negotiation context. Yet, deployments of symbolic power shape the definition of the situation and future interactions, in a continual dance between the negotiation context and symbolic power.

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<sup>8</sup> I refer to the level of interaction as meso because it mediates between the larger level of analysis of institutions and fields, and the smaller level of analysis of the individual.

Goffman's work also informs my model of symbolic power. The acts of legitimation that provide the foundation for symbolic power are similar to acts of deference, and impression management is a means to exhibit the appropriate demeanor to receive deference (credibility) from others. However, I contend that efforts to engage in impression management are bounded by the negotiation context, audience aesthetics, and the toolkits of actors. While deference, demeanor, and impression management operate to maintain a comfortable interaction order, I argue they are *also* mechanisms through which symbolic power is generated and deployed to define the situation and continually *(re) create* a social order.

After presenting my model, I compare symbolic power to a similar form of power, social exchange power. I close this chapter with a summary and reflection on how symbolic power complements other forms of power and institutional approaches to understanding organizations, while foreshadowing the role of symbolic power in the organization of turmoil.

### Pierre Bourdieu and Symbolic Power

Much of Bourdieu's work is an attempt to overcome dualisms in sociology, and to understand his conceptualization of symbolic power we must address how he overcomes tensions between structure and agency, objectivism and subjectivism, and micro-macro levels of analysis through an understanding of social space, the habitus, and fields.

Bourdieu views society as a social space where people exist in relation to each other on the basis of their economic capital, cultural capital (tastes, dispositions), and

social capital (networks) (1986, 1989, 1990a). This social space has an objective existence, operating “independent of the conscious will of agents,” while “guiding and constraining their practices or their representations” (1990a: 122). People are born into this social space, typically inheriting the capital of their parents (1984).

However, Bourdieu believes that people are able to move in social space. These movements are manifestations of the “habitus,” defined as “systems of durable, transposable *dispositions*, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures” (1977: 72). An individual’s habitus is *structured* by the *objective* conditions in which the individual develops, such as the cultural, economic, and social status of their parents. These objective conditions inculcate dispositions in the individual that reflect the individual’s position in objective social space. These dispositions *structure* the individual’s subjective actions and experiences. These subjective actions have a *structuring* effect, reproducing the “objective” conditions from which the habitus is born.

Via the habitus, “objective” social space is subjectively recreated over time: “The habitus, a product of history, produces individual and collective practices – more history – in accordance with the schemes generated by history” (Bourdieu 1990b: 154). This is where the symbolic power of the habitus emerges. As a “scheme of perception,” the habitus effectively defines reality for actors as they go about their practices in daily life. Because the habitus is so deeply ingrained, its symbolic power to define reality remains hidden, as the actor is unaware of the schemata used in formulating action. Through the habitus, objective, macro social structures are reproduced by subjective, micro acts, a reality constructed by the symbolic power of the habitus (Wacquant 1993: 4). For

example, those who are raised by middle class, white-collar parents absorb the tastes and dispositions of this lifestyle, and then act on these dispositions to recreate this lifestyle and their position within it. By acting on the dispositions of the habitus, the individual has an agentive role, though this agency is deflated in the sense that it reproduces social structure. Bourdieu examines symbolic power as generated by the habitus in his research on education (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977), sports (1990a), academia (1988), and the consumptive “tastes” of social classes (1984).

Closely related to the habitus is Bourdieu’s concept of “field.” In summarizing Bourdieu, Thompson defines a “field” as “a structured space of positions in which the positions and their interrelations are determined by the distribution of different kinds of resources or ‘capital.’” (Thompson 1991: 14). Examples of fields studied by Bourdieu include academia (1988), language systems (1991b), science (1991a), art and literature (1993) the state (1998), and television (1998, 1998b). Each case comprises a different “field” in the overall social landscape. Each field has a different bounded authority, and fields are structured according to the forms of capital valued in each particular field.

Despite the differences between fields, each field is similar in that they are all repositories of symbolic power. In Bourdieu’s approach, those who possess the forms of capital valued by the field are consecrated with symbolic power. Actors are situated in fields; their positioning based on their possession of the forms of capital valued by the fields:

The kinds of capital, like trumps in a game of cards, are powers which define the chances of profit in a given field. . . For example, the volume of cultural capital determine that aggregate chances of profit in all games in which cultural capital is

effective, thereby helping to determine position in social space. (Bourdieu 1991b: 230).

Those who are located in high status positions are consecrated with symbolic power by the field, and they use their symbolic power to define reality in accordance with their interests and the interests of those in similar positions. As a result, fields are sites of cultural production and struggle, where groups compete over how culture will be produced and whose interests it will serve. Though this terminology may sound like a pluralist conception of power (Dahl 1957, 1958, 1961),<sup>9</sup> Bourdieu's usage suggests a more hegemonic process (Gramsci 1971). Instead of involving an open conflict around decision making, the symbolic power of fields more closely resembles the power of non-decision making (Bacharach and Baratz, 1962, 1963, 1970, Lukes 1974): the capacity to define which issues are even placed on the bargaining table, and to suppress alternatives (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991).<sup>10</sup> The symbolic power of fields operates behind the scenes as an invisible censor, and the emergent reality is taken for granted as the natural order of the world.<sup>11</sup> It is Bourdieu's goal to unmask this hidden form of power while revealing its consequences (Edelman 1992, Kelly 1993).

Bourdieu's concept of "field" has penetrated organizational sociology, especially in new institutional theory. However, new institutional theorists often ignore the understanding of power found in Bourdieu's work (Fligstein 2001: 111). While new institutional theorists tend to emphasize fields but not symbolic power, a few sociologists

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<sup>9</sup> Or what has been termed a "One-Dimensional" view of power (Lukes 1974).

<sup>10</sup> Or what has been termed a "Two-Dimensional" view of power (Lukes 1974).

<sup>11</sup> In fact, when talking about symbolic power at the field level Bourdieu often slips into a usage of "symbolic violence" to evoke a suffocation of issues.

have used symbolic power and fields in the analysis of American society. Orville Lee studies how American juridical and political fields operate to codify social categories (race), thereby restricting rights to self-representation (Lee 1998). Klinenberg examines how the Chicago political machine and media used their symbolic power to define the 1995 Chicago heat wave as a “natural” event, obscuring the inadequacy of the state’s response to the disaster (1999). Auyero examines how, at the field level, the discourse of Peronist politics constructs images of politicians in Argentina, and how, at the micro level of the habitus, having grown up in the era of Peronist politics shapes the lived experience of politicians, serving as a generative medium in the practice of clientelism (Auyero 2001). Escoffier examines how different intellectuals in the gay community pull from different sources of symbolic power. According to Escoffier, tension arises between intellectuals who use the “charismatic” authority of “everyday common experience” to create solidarity in the gay community and intellectuals who use the “epistemic” authority of educational institutions to create legitimacy for queer social theory (1995: 23).

To quote Lee, the constitutive force of symbolic power is “enacted at the macro-level through the institutions of the public sphere and at the micro-level in face-to-face interactions” (Lee 1998: 433). Though the empirical work on symbolic power is useful for understanding its operation at the habitus and field levels, these works shed little light on how symbolic power is created and used in face-to-face interactions. They provide the reader with an understanding of the “logic” of the field in question, but they say little of how specific individuals come to power in those fields, or how these individuals use

their symbolic power. While they argue that people in various fields have the agency to deploy symbolic power, the possession of symbolic power is based on the possession of various forms of capital and a position in a particular “field,” not in the agency of people (consecrated by the institution, not by people per se). Their empirical analyses shed light on the struggles within fields, but not on the micro-politics of everyday life and the turmoil involved in these struggles. In glossing these interactive struggles, these works present a picture of symbolic power and interaction that looks automatic and inevitable; while in truth these interactions and the power they entail can be quite problematic.

Returning to the quote that opens this chapter refocuses attention onto these interactions: “She’s so overwhelmed, and she lets it show, she has to hide it. . . She’s lost that respect, and now it’s too far gone.” The manner in which Mrs. Koh presents herself to the teachers during interaction has become problematic, causing her to lose “respect.” These interactions prompt unfavorable evaluations by the teachers. While the positioning of Costen in the overall field of education and the habituses of the actors involved shape the interactions between Mrs. Koh and the faculty, the *interactions themselves* and what people bring to these interactions constitute who has symbolic power in the school. Without knowledge of these interactions we cannot understand how symbolic power is created and deployed in everyday life, how it is used in creating a social order, and how it is implicated in the organization of turmoil.

Such an interactionist approach is implicit in Bourdieu’s theoretical statements. While fields consecrate symbolic power on those who possess valued forms of capital, this power is an “arbitrary social construction which serves the interests of some groups

more than others” (1991b: 23). As a social construction, symbolic power is dependent on a relationship in which the powerless accept the holders of symbolic power as legitimate:

To understand the nature of symbolic power, it is therefore crucial to see that it presupposes a kind of *active complicity* on the part of those subjected to it. Dominated individuals are not passive bodies to which symbolic power is applied, as it were, like a scalpel to a corpse. Rather, symbolic power requires, as a condition of its success, that those subjected to it believe in the legitimacy of power and the *legitimacy of those who wield it*. (1991b: 23 emphases added).

In this sense, symbolic power is relational and not based entirely on asymmetrical structural positions (Wrong 1968, Emirbayer 1997). A relational understanding of power is true to Weber’s formulation. To quote Weber, “every genuine form of domination implies a minimum of voluntary compliance, that is, an *interest* (based on ulterior motives or genuine acceptance) in obedience” (1968: 212). Likewise, Simmel notes that:

Even in the most oppressive and cruel cases of subordination, there is still a considerable measure of personal freedom. We merely do not become aware of it, because its manifestation would entail sacrifices which we usually never think of taking upon ourselves. Actually, the ‘absolute’ coercion which even the most cruel tyrant imposes upon us is always distinctly relative. Its condition is our desire to escape from the threatened punishment or from other consequences of our disobedience. (Simmel 1971: 97)

The complicity that Weber and Simmel discuss locates power in an interactive framework.

Thus, symbolic power involves a not only a structural relationship between habitus and fields, but also an interactive relationship between those who have symbolic power and those who do not. The interactive view of power entails a different interpretation of the role of capital in symbolic power. In this view, people acquire symbolic power not simply because of their positioning in fields that define the certain

forms of capital as valuable, but also because other people *likewise define these forms of capital as valid*, legitimating those who possess these forms of capital, and imbuing them with symbolic power. In this light symbolic power is a dynamic process in which people attribute credibility to others, credibility based on valued forms of capital. When a participant in a social situation possesses certain forms of capital *and* a group of other people in the situation value those forms of capital, the group of others attributes credibility to the participant based on these forms of capital, credibility that can be later be deployed as the symbolic power to define the situation (See Figure One).

Broadly speaking, capital can be defined as resources that are acquired, accumulate, and are of value in certain situations, or to use the lingo of economists, are of worth in particular markets. I focus on four forms of capital as the basis of credibility: human capital, cultural capital, social capital, and economic capital. Human capital involves a person's knowledge, skills, and expertise,<sup>12</sup> and is acquired through the development of skills and capabilities that enable people to perform in new ways (Schultz 1961, Becker 1964, Coleman 1988). When valued by others, human capital becomes a basis for the attribution of credibility. Take the following example in which a Midwest City teacher describes her principal:

Another reason I really like working for him is he has a background in reading also. An awful lot of principals really don't know a whole lot about teaching reading and I—so he understands it, knows it, has done it himself, has a master's

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<sup>12</sup> In including "human capital," I acknowledge Bourdieu's reservations about whether human capital is distinguishable from cultural capital (1986). However, in the context of elementary schools, it is useful to think of human capital as knowledge, skill, and expertise related specifically to the educational field, apart from cultural capital broadly defined. I also acknowledge that Weber associated expertise or human capital with rational-legal power.

degree in reading. . . So how could I not be supportive of him? (Spillane, Hallett, and Diamond 2003: 7).

In formulating a positive evaluation of her principal, this teacher is attributing credibility to him based on his knowledge of reading. Similarly, a Midwest City teacher attributes credibility to other teachers based on human capital:

Kelly is a much better life science teacher than I am. So in the next couple of weeks, I'll be talking to her because I'm sure that I'm going to not like some of the textbooks and I'll want alternate ideas. And since I don't have that background, and she does, I'll go to her. (Spillane, Hallett, and Diamond 2003: 6)

These positive evaluations are the “stuff” of credibility. In time, credibility can be deployed as the symbolic power to define the situation (or in this example, science instruction).

Since Bourdieu first introduced the term, “cultural capital” it has been used in a variety of ways (Lamont and Lareau 1988), from the consumptive tastes of social classes (Bourdieu 1984) to taking art courses in school (DiMaggio 1982). My use is related to what Bourdieu terms “embodied” cultural capital (1986), referring to internalized dispositions manifested in behaviors or “practice” (Bourdieu 1990, 1977). Like Lareau (1987) and Lareau and Horvat (1999), I emphasize the baseline modes of operation that underlie our actions. Eminently corporeal, this cultural capital expresses itself as a surface manner or style, but involves a deeper and more fundamental *way of being* that is acquired through the life course. In this sense, a person’s interactive style matters (Blasé and Blasé 1998; Blasé and Kirby 1992), but only to the extent that other people in the

situation *value* this underlying way of being. When this occurs, cultural capital becomes a basis for the attribution of credibility. Take the following example in which a Midwest City teacher (Mrs. Watson) describes how another teacher (Mrs. Jefferson) influences her teaching practices:

I go to Mrs. Jefferson a lot. I mean I don't interact with her—any of her students. I don't have any of her students but our personalities are very similar . . . She's very—very honest and very, you know, she'll listen and give me what she thinks is her honest opinion even if it maybe isn't what I wanted to hear. You know? It doesn't always make me the happiest, but it is probably what would be the best. (Spillane, Hallett, and Diamond 2003: 7-8)

Even though the two teachers do not have any students in common, and even though Mrs. Watson does not cite any particular instructional knowledge that Mrs. Jefferson may possess, Mrs. Watson values Mrs. Jefferson's cultural capital, her honest way of being. A teacher studied by Rosenholtz expressed a similar sentiment about her principal: "He can be critical of you but not make you feel bad about it. . . He's critical in areas where I'm having problems but he does not make me look bad" (Rosenholtz 1989: 56). Though *what* the principal has to say is important to the teacher, this teacher is especially appreciative of *how* he says it. Where human capital manifests itself in the content of an interaction (for example about instruction in schools); cultural capital manifests itself in the manner of the interaction.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> If we were to conceptualize human and cultural capital as variables, human capital would be more of a continuous variable, as people acquire increasing amounts of skills, knowledge, and expertise. In contrast, cultural capital (as I am using it) would be more of a discrete variable, where people acquire assorted ways of being, or different sets of manners.

Though the previous examples treat human and cultural capital as analytically distinct, oftentimes they work together. Take the following example from Mrs. Henson, a Midwest City teacher. Mrs. Henson explains how she had the opportunity to observe another teacher, Mrs. Jackson, and how Mrs. Jackson came to influence Mrs. Henson's science teaching:

So that (observation) was the best thing because you get to see, ok, how were they dealing with the kids to get their attention? What are they doing or some strategies they're using? And she (Mrs. Jackson) was so good. It was like she never raised her voice, she never did anything, she was, but she always had their attention. She always got them back on task if they got off task. And she was just really good in keeping science interesting and keeping them going here and there. . . . And so definitely her, I've gotten a lot from her. Just a lot.

In this example Mrs. Henson formulates a positive evaluation of Mrs. Jackson, citing her skills, knowledge and expertise about teaching. This human capital manifests itself in the content of the lesson, the use of different "strategies," and the success at "keeping science interesting." But Henson also appreciates the form of the interaction: Jackson has a particular way of being that Henson values: "It was like she never raised her voice, she never did anything, she was, but she always had their attention." Based on this mixture of human and cultural capital, Henson attributes credibility to Jackson. Through continued interaction, Jackson can deploy her credibility as the symbolic power to define the situation, to say in essence "this is what teaching should be like," influencing the practices of Mrs. Henson: "And so definitely her, I've gotten a lot from her. Just a lot."

The manner in which the teachers cited above attribute credibility to others also appears to involve relations of trust, a form of social capital shared between people. In addition to relations of trust, social capital also takes the form of broad social networks

(Coleman 1988:S101-S102; Portes 1998). Social capital typically facilitates the acquisition of other forms of capital, for example human capital and economic capital (money and other material resources) (Diamond 2000, Wong 1998). In the following example, the social capital that a Midwest City teacher (Mrs. McClain) shares with her 5<sup>th</sup> grade team members facilitates the dissemination, and subsequent valuation, of human capital:

Uh, my team members. We're all very unique. Mrs. Bryant is really, um, very learned and she loves math. And so she, her technique is, you know she has a way of really showing the kids. And she uses a lot of manipulatives with the kids in math. Mrs. Rodriguez is very knowledgeable in science. And she has a lot of ideas about science. Mrs. Diaz is a strong language arts person. Um, so you know whenever I have a question or I, you know, want to know about how to go about a strategy a particular way, I might ask her, "Well, how do you do this?" and "Does this work well with your students?" (Spillane, Hallett, and Diamond 2003: 6)

Through the social capital that this group holds in common, Mrs. McClain attributes credibility to Mrs. Bryant based on her skills and expertise in math instruction, to Mrs. Rodriguez for her knowledge of science, and Mrs. Diaz for language arts.

The next example involves the valuation of social and economic capital. A Midwest City teacher explains how another teacher, Kate Hunt, got her involved in a science program from a local university:

Actually Kate Hunt, she's been involved with the University for quite some time. And she still has a lot of the University equipment in her room. She's got a special grant from the University. I think this is her last year with some of that equipment though. Some of the computers and that. And she got me involved in the seminar last summer.

In discussing her use of a particular science program, this teacher discusses Mrs. Hunt and her network with a University (social capital) and the material resources Mrs. Hunt

has acquired in connection with the University (economic capital). The teacher appreciates the forms of capital Mrs. Hunt has acquired, forming a positive evaluation and imbuing Hunt with credibility. Armed with this credibility, Hunt has the symbolic power to say, in essence, “you should try out this program,” influencing Jasper’s instruction.

Where positive evaluations based on valued capital are the “stuff” of credibility, negative evaluations can damage credibility and symbolic power. For example, a teacher studied by Rosenholtz said of her principal “She is very unprofessional. She screams at children. She screams at teachers. You don’t go up to a teacher and say, ‘Are you in charge here?’ or ‘Are these children following directions?’” (Rosenholtz 1989: 56). Another teacher explained: “The principal is moody. You never know how he’ll take something. Sometimes he takes suggestions like we’re criticizing him” (Rosenholtz 1989: 59). These teachers are critical of the interactive styles employed by their principals. Though the principals have rational-legal authority over their teachers, such negative evaluations are costly in terms of informal credibility and symbolic power.

Though forms of capital can be a source of credibility, in themselves they mean little, and they can only be understood within interactive contexts (Lareau 1989; Lareau and Horvat 1999; Farkas 1996). People and the forms of capital they possess matter, but only to the extent that others in the situation *value* those forms of capital as bases of credibility.<sup>14</sup> People enact and interpret forms of capital based on the meanings those

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<sup>14</sup> Like capital, “value” is also a relational in nature. To quote Strauss “Value is not an element; it has to do with a relation between the object and the person who has experiences with the object” (1959: 24).

forms of capital have for them (Blumer 1969), and to acquire symbolic power one must be constructed as credible by others.

The interactive conception of symbolic power used to analyze these excerpts revives the human agency that Bourdieu deflates: symbolic power emerges from an interactive process in which we attribute credibility to others, credibility that can later be deployed to define the situation. The role of interaction in symbolic power and the ties between symbolic power and the social order can be further examined in light of the “negotiated order” approach to sociology.

#### Symbolic Power and the Negotiated Order

Wedding Bourdieu’s symbolic power with the negotiated order approach may seem odd at first glance. In its relation to symbolic interaction, the negotiated order approach has been criticized for its lack of structure (Stokes and Hewitt 1976), and lumped with ethnomethodology and phenomenology (Maines 1977, 1982), approaches Bourdieu criticizes for ignoring the conditions of possibility that inform action. Where the negotiated order approach has been considered too agentive, Bourdieu has been criticized for being too deterministic (Jenkins 1982, 1989, Sewell 1992, King 2000). Despite their differences, both approaches attempt to overcome tensions between structure and agency and micro-macro levels. Where Bourdieu accomplishes this through his concepts of social space, the habitus, and fields, the negotiated order approach emphasizes the “structural context,” the “negotiation context” and interaction.

Founded by Strauss, the negotiated order approach begins with the premise that social order is the result of dynamic interactions or “negotiations” between actors. Thus, where Bourdieu takes objective social space as his starting point and moves down to the level of the habitus, negotiated order theorists begin with interaction. However, to say social order is the result of negotiations between interactants is not to say these interactions are voluntary:

Social interaction is always contextualized interaction in the dual sense that the elements of situation, circumstance, and setting shape what identities and relevancies will be transacted by participants, and in the sense that interaction can be thought of generically as participants mutually contextualizing one another’s activity in the situation. (Maines 1982: 275).

While interactions and negotiations create (and recreate) social order, these interactions take place in contexts that enable, constrain, and shape them. The picture is not unlike Giddens’ “structuration,” where social structure, itself the outcome of agency, acts as the “generative medium” of practices that further (re) create social structure (Giddens 1979: 67, 1984, Clarke 1991: 141).

In particular, negotiated order theorists are interested in two types of structure, broadly defined as the “structural context” and the “negotiation context.” The structural context relates to the broader social order, loosely described as “the larger lineaments of groups, organizations, nations, societies, and international orders that yield the structural conditions under which negotiations of particular kinds are or are not initiated by or forced on actors” (Strauss 1978: 12). An example of the structural context would be the history and general organization of schools; for example the traditional cellular isolation

and autonomy of teachers and loose coupling between policy guidelines and school practices (Bidwell 1965, Lortie 1975, Weick 1976, Meyer and Rowan 1977). The structural context also involves the institutional environment in which organizations operate (Hirsch 1975); for example the political context of education and reform initiatives. The structural context bears directly on the “negotiation context,” consisting of “the structural properties entering very directly as conditions into the course of the negotiation itself” (Strauss 1978: 99). An example of the negotiation context would be the unique features of a particular school, such as a school’s neighborhood setting, the size and composition of a school’s student body and staff, and established practices and relationships (the features of the structural and negotiation contexts as they relate to schools are discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two).

Thus, the interactions and negotiations that create social order are embedded in the negotiation context, which is further embedded in the structural context. In this view, lines of influence flow down from the structural and negotiation contexts, and up from interactions: “Negotiation contexts are created insofar as certain elements of those transcending phenomena are incorporated into or become relevant to negotiations, but negotiations may work their way back through negotiation contexts ‘up’ to structural contexts” (Maines 1982: 270). Instead of stressing a micro or macro level of analysis, the negotiated order approach goes to the middle, searching for a meso level of analysis.

The negotiated order approach has been used to study many topics, ranging from the social order of hospitals (Strauss et al 1963) and holistic health centers (Kleinman 1982) to jokes (Emerson 1969, Seckman and Couch 1989), social networks (Fine and

Kleinman 1983), and organizational cultures (Fine 1984). Many negotiated order theorists include power in their models, helping to explain negotiations in which particular parties exert undue influence over interactions, for example in lawyer-client interactions (Scheff 1968, Hosticka 1979), psychiatrist-client interactions (Scheff 1968, Kahne and Schwartz 1978), team teaching arrangements (Martin 1975) and in the definition of various personal and relational issues as “problems” (Emerson and Messinger 1977). While this research identifies power as a part of the negotiated order, it assumes power exists rather than unpacking the operation of power.<sup>15</sup>

Although power in the negotiated order perspective remains a black box, I argue this box can be opened through an understanding of symbolic power situated within the structural and negotiation contexts. These contexts provide the “felicitous conditions” not only for interaction (Goffman 1983), but also symbolic power. When people attribute credibility to others based on valued forms of capital, they do so within the confines of the negotiation context. Likewise, when credibility is deployed as the symbolic power to define the situation, it occurs and is received within the confines of the negotiation context.

The attribution of credibility and the deployment of symbolic power are a form of negotiation occurring within the negotiation context. The negotiation context of one moment conditions symbolic power in the next. However, because symbolic power involves the ability to define the situation and construct reality, once it is deployed it

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<sup>15</sup> See Heimer (1985) for an exception at the level of interorganizational analysis.

shapes the negotiation context of the next moment, creating a mutually constitutive “dance” between the negotiation context and symbolic power.

In this light, to understand a social order is to see it as an emergent set of interactions that are embedded in the negotiation and structural contexts, and shaped in particular by deployments of symbolic power. This “negotiated” order emerges from the discourse between those who possess symbolic power. However, another discourse exists as well. Recall that for a person to acquire symbolic power he/she must undergo a process of valuation in which others attribute credibility based on valued forms of capital. Rigorous fieldwork makes it possible to observe how certain people act to gain credibility in the eyes of others, and to witness how those with symbolic power deploy it to create and recreate a social order.

However, the presence of multiple bases of credibility (the various forms of capital among them) diffuses power, making it difficult for anyone one person to monopolize symbolic power in a social order. This is because many contexts contain *multiple audiences* (Heimer 1995, 1999), audiences who value different forms of capital (or bases of credibility) according to their interests and small group cultures (Fine 1979, 1984b). For example, at schools audiences abound, from the regional office, to the parents, the students, the administration, and the teachers (Tyack and Cuban 1995).

Based on their interests and group cultures, particular audiences have distinct *aesthetics* (Bielby and Bielby 2000). They have an appreciation for particular people, valuing those who possess the forms of capital that reflect their interests and culture. People who match this aesthetic are a good “fit” (Lamont 1987), and via this aesthetic, an

audience imbues people with credibility and symbolic power (Hallett 2003). Examining the number of audiences and their aesthetics is important for understanding the social organization of turmoil *and* coherency. Because situations often involve multiple audiences, each with different aesthetics and fitting leaders, there are often competing pockets of symbolic power within a social order. The existence of multiple audiences increases the likelihood of a negotiation context marked by conflict. In contrast, fewer audiences result in greater homogeneity in the forms of capital valued, the attribution of credibility, and the deployment of symbolic power.

Through symbolic power and the negotiation context, we can also explain stability and change in social orders. Stability in the structural and negotiation contexts reproduce the conditions of possibility for the attribution and deployment of symbolic power, favoring reproduction. Once established, the negotiated order provides a stock of knowledge about everyday life, allowing people in the order to exercise control over their environment and act with comfort and confidence (Schutz 1970, White 1992). If not disrupted, the negotiated order becomes taken-for-granted, and is maintained through the routinized interactions of the people in the order.

When a negotiated order becomes institutionalized in this way, symbolic power is abstracted from the level of interactions and comes to reside in the order itself. That is, the established negotiated order has the symbolic power to “define reality” for the participants in the order, influencing their actions in a way that continually recreates the order. However, changes in the structural and negotiation contexts foster disruptions in the established negotiated order and conflict around these disruptions (turmoil). In time,

these changes may create conditions in which different forms of capital are valued, enabling the attribution of credibility to new participants, new deployments of symbolic power and definitions of the situation, and the stabilization of a new negotiated order.

The influences of the structural and negotiation contexts and the two-fold discourses of the attribution and deployment of symbolic power come together in interactions between people. It is to these interactions that I now turn.

### Symbolic Power and Social Interaction

The process of interaction and symbolic power I have described is similar to Goffman's discussion of "deference and demeanor" (Goffman 1956, 1967).<sup>16</sup> 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" (1967: 56). Examples include the "little salutations, compliments, and apologies which punctuate social intercourse" (1967: 57). In contrast, "demeanor" involves "behavior typically conveyed through deportment, dress, and bearing, which serves to express to those in his immediate presence that he is a person of certain desirable and undesirable qualities" (1967: 58). In Goffman's view, people are deference-seeking creatures. However, to receive deference, one must exhibit the proper demeanor towards others:

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<sup>16</sup> Though Bourdieu is often critical of symbolic interactionism, the approach Goffman is most often associated with (though he resisted being labeled as a part of any single tradition), 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" (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).

The individual may desire, earn, and deserve deference, but by and large he is not allowed to give it to himself, being forced to seek it from others. In seeking it from others, he finds he has added reason for seeking them out, and in turn society is given added assurance that its members will enter into interaction and relationships with one another. If the individual could give himself the deference he desired there might be a tendency for society to disintegrate into islands inhabited by solitary, cultish men, each in continuous worship at his own shrine” (1967: 58).

That people exhibit the proper demeanor towards others to receive deference is crucial for understanding the endurance and structure of interaction (Goffman 1967: 84-85) and the maintenance of a widely shared “interaction order” (1983b). Yet, in emphasizing the maintenance of interaction, Goffman downplays how social contexts are transformed. In limiting his scope to immediate interactions, Goffman’s has a “non-developmental focus” (Glaser and Strauss 1964: 675), and he declines to develop a notion of power implicit in his work. Acts of deference and demeanor not only insure an interactional order, but they are also the means through which credibility is attributed to certain participants, creating symbolic power. Interactions are the “stuff” of credibility, and to receive credibility, one must exhibit the proper demeanor towards an audience of others.

However, once acquired credibility can be deployed as the symbolic power to define the situation. At stake are not only an interactional order, *but also the very power to define that order* and influence the practices of others; a hidden form of coercion that goes unnoticed yet has profound effects. Thus, when embarrassing situations arise that threaten the flow of interaction (Goffman 1956b), people engage in face saving techniques not only to revive the interaction order (Goffman 1955), but also to protect any symbolic power they have acquired in the course of interactions.

One especially relevant component of demeanor is what Goffman terms “impression management,” defined as efforts to manage and control how others perceive you (Goffman 1959). People engage in impression management not only to present a self to others, but also in an effort to persuade, a kind of political impression management (Hall 1972: 51). Impression management gives those who seek credibility a small measure of control over the process of valuation that forms the basis of symbolic power. As mentioned above, to acquire symbolic power a participant must undergo a process of valuation: Situated within a negotiated order, the participant must be perceived as credible by an audience of others who have an aesthetic to appreciate the forms of capital possessed by the participant. It may appear that a participant who seeks symbolic power has little control over this process. For the most part this is true. Participants enter negotiation contexts that predate their entrance into interactions, and -- apart from importing an entirely new audience into the situation -- they can do little to change the aesthetics of audiences. Nor can participants easily acquire new forms of capital to match an audience’s aesthetic; accumulating new forms of capital takes time and effort. Even so, there is the opportunity for participants to engage in impression management to shape perceptions, enacting certain forms of capital to match audience aesthetics, and increasing the likelihood that an audience will perceive the participant as credible.

In other words, the ability to engage in political impression management is itself a kind of social skill (Fligstein 2001). A participant can use impression management to highlight the human capital, cultural capital, social capital, and economic capital that he/she possesses. However, even though impression management can be used to

consciously enact forms of capital, at a more unconscious level participants also *use* their capital as a means to *create* an impression. While participants may use impression management to enact forms of capital valued by others, it is difficult to present an image based on capital that one does not have. To do so is to risk betrayal by unconscious signs given off (Goffman 1959). Moreover, once such actions have been exposed, it becomes all the more difficult to become viewed as credible and acquire symbolic power. It is much easier to engage in impression management based on capital you have, as opposed to faking an impression to fool others into believing you have capital that you do not. It is easier for someone who attended Choate and has acquired the corresponding way of being, social network, and financial resources to act like a part of the cultural elite than it is for someone who does not possess this cultural, social, and economic capital.

Successful impression management is not a given. Returning to the example opening this chapter brings forth the importance of well-managed impressions, and the pitfalls of failure: “She’s so overwhelmed and she lets it show, she has to hide it. Like if I’m overwhelmed in the classroom I don’t let the kids know, because you lose that respect. And that’s what she’s done.” Engulfed by the responsibilities of her job, Mrs. Koh is unable to hide her frustrations, letting them seep into her interactions with the staff. Unable to exhibit a proper demeanor, she fails to receive deference. The result is a lack of respect, and many question her credibility as a social actor. Mrs. Koh has difficulty using impression management to enact the forms of capital valued by the staff, and despite her rational-legal authority, she lacks symbolic power.

Mrs. Koh's failure can be contrasted with the efforts of Mr. Carrol, a new assistant principal at the school:

Mr. Carrol and I walk to his office to check his schedule, because he does not want to miss one of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade basketball games. I ask him if he is a hoops fan, and he says not really, "but the kids like to see me there, and I like the kids to see me there." He feels that his presence at the games helps him to establish a "connection and a rapport" with the students, especially when it comes to discipline. Mr. Carrol continues on the importance of being at the games, explaining that he does not mind going because "I have an interest in the games," adding with a laugh, "It's better than doing this!"

As we walk down the hallway Mr. Pearl joins us, and we stand talking for a few minutes. Mr. Pearl asks Mr. Carrol if he knows what has been going on with the principal position over at Warner School, where his daughter has been student teaching. Mr. Carrol responds that the position is open and they are looking for candidates. The school asked him to take the position, but Mr. Carrol explains with a frown, "But I said no, I don't want to do it." Mr. Carrol continues, now with a grin, "The 1<sup>st</sup> thing I'd do is put those partitions up."

"You're not a pod man?" replies Mr. Pearl as he nods with a smile and a chuckle.

"I'm not a pod man," continues Mr. Carrol with a smile, "Those ideas from the 60's" about open learning and freedom in the classroom, he doesn't like them because the classroom gets too loud, becomes too distracting, and lacks focus. Laughing about the children of the 60's, Mr. Carrol says, "Now they're 50 and they're still 'free'" and unstructured. As Mr. Pearl snickers and nods in agreement, Mr. Carrol laughs that his style is "Sit down, face forward, and *I'll* be leading our instruction today!" Then Mr. Carrol extends his criticism of such freedom into administration, and says teachers cannot be involved in all decisions because in the end "it comes down on us," while patting his chest for emphasis. In the end, the administrators have to "take the heat" from the Regional Office.

Mr. Pearl nods and grins (in apparent agreement) "Welch (the old, well loved principal) had a saying, 'The buck stops here.'" They smile and laugh.

"He was great," replies Mr. Carrol, who also knew Mr. Anderson.

A few minutes later, after Mr. Carrol has left, and unprompted by me, Mr. Pearl begins to tell me how much he likes Mr. Carrol. I ask why, and Mr. Pearl explains with a smile "he's going to the basketball games. I mean, who does that? He's got an interest in the kids" (Field notes).

Mr. Carrol makes a concerted effort to be visible in a way that many students and teachers like Mr. Pearl find appealing, in this case by going to the boys' basketball

games. Mr. Carrol's stated "interest in the games" is in fact threefold: his interest in escaping his job for a time ("It's better than doing this!"), his interest in managing the impressions of students to foster credibility as a disciplinarian and establish a "connection and a rapport," and also an interest in managing the impressions of teachers like Mr. Pearl. By exhibiting the appropriate demeanor towards these audiences, Mr. Carrol receives deference, the very "respect" Mrs. Koh often lacks. To quote Mr. Pearl, "He's going to the basketball games. I mean, who does that? He's got an interest in the kids."

Yet I want to argue that Mr. Pearl is not only exhibiting deference towards Mr. Carrol, but also imbuing Mr. Carrol with credibility. This credibility stems not only from attendance at basketball games, but also a combination of particular beliefs, values, skills, knowledge, and experiences about teaching and administration, mocking the open learning, "pod" innovations of the 1960's. It is a jumbled blend of human and cultural capital acquired throughout his many years in the Midwest City School system, and shared with the former, well loved principal at Costen, Mr. Welch, whom Mr. Carrol knew (social capital). In the context of his interaction with Pearl there is a *market* for these forms of capital. Mr. Carrol uses these forms of capital as he engages in impression management, creating an interaction that is punctuated with frequent smiles and chuckles. Through the interaction Mr. Carrol elicits a positive evaluation by Mr. Pearl. In this way, Mr. Carrol has become a credible social actor in the eyes of Mr. Pearl. In time, Mr. Carrol can deploy the credibility he has acquired through interactions such as these as the symbolic power to define reality, influencing the practices of others, and shaping the

social order of Costen School without prompting turmoil--all of which occurs in, and through, interaction.

In this way, a participant can facilitate the attribution of credibility and gain symbolic power. However, impression management is tightly bounded, shaped by the features of the negotiation context, especially the aesthetics of the audiences present. Mr. Pearl's affirmative nods, smiles, and chuckles indicate an appreciation of the very things Mr. Carrol says and the capital he utilizes. Likewise, impression management is limited by the forms of capital possessed by participants like Mr. Carrol: the capital possessed by participants form an overall "toolkit" (Swidler 1986) used in formulating the interactions through which impressions are created in the minds of others. Goffman is often criticized for neglecting macro sociological issues (Waksler 1989: 12). However, forms of capital, as possessed by participants and reflected in the aesthetics of audiences, provide a link to broader social space and more macro sociological concerns. Participants acquire their toolkits based partly on their positioning and movements in social space, for example Mr. Carrol's lifetime experience in the Midwest City School system, and when they enter negotiation contexts they bring their toolkits with them.

While Mr. Carrol's efforts to enact valued forms of capital with impression management appear quite purposeful—going to the basketball games in part to establish a "connection and rapport" with the students and perhaps even teachers like Pearl—the manner in which Pearl attributes credibility is not so intentional. Though Pearl goes out of his way to praise Carrol while in my presence, it does not appear that Pearl entered the interaction cognizant that he would end up attributing credibility to Carrol. Instead, Pearl

entered the interaction seeking information about a school where his daughter was student teaching. However, as Carrol answers these questions and the interaction unfolds, Carrol uses and displays capital that Pearl values. By the end of the interaction Pearl is singing the virtues of Mr. Carrol.<sup>17</sup>

Nor must interactions be as purposeful as this example indicates. Oftentimes participants *do not* consciously intend to manage the impressions of others. However, as participants go about the tasks of everyday life and put their “toolkits” to use, they enact the forms of capital that they possess. When visible and valued, others attribute credibility based on these forms of capital even though the participant had no intention to foster this credibility. In other words, symbolic power does not presume intent, and the people who are influential within groups often have little sense of their own symbolic power.

In sum, interactions are a fundamental component of symbolic power.<sup>18</sup> The negotiation context plays itself out in and through interactions, and interaction is the primary means through which people (while using a particular aesthetic) attribute credibility to certain participants based on valued forms of capital. Those who seek credibility can gain a small measure of control over this process by using impression management to enact valued forms of capital. Once acquired, credibility can be deployed

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<sup>17</sup> Moreover, this interaction and attribution of credibility occurred shortly after Mr. Carrol arrived at the school. Instead of being a reflection of a relationship with a history, this interaction is establishing the foundation for the relationship between Mr. Carrol and Mr. Pearl.

<sup>18</sup> Just as interactions have a constitutive role in symbolic power, interactions also have a constitutive role in the acquisition of the habitus that is so central to Bourdieu’s sociology. For example, though children are situated in class and cultural spaces, they are active participants in peer cultures, and through their interactions with each other, they are active participants in their own class-based socialization (Corsaro 1992, 1993, Corsaro, Molinari, and Rosier 2002).

as the symbolic power to define the situation and influence the practices of others, all of which (re) shapes the social order, in a dance between symbolic power and the negotiation context.

### Symbolic Power and Social Exchange Theory

Having outlined my model of symbolic power, I now compare it to a similar approach: social exchange theory. Both models take small-scale social relations as their primary unit of analysis, and both models have a temporal component, stressing how relations unfold over time. The concepts of “value” and “dependency” are also central to both models. However, the nature of dependency and intent varies in the two models, creating differences in the forms of power and its endurance.

As in social exchange theory, I take the relations between people as my primary unit of analysis. In this view, the relations between people “form a single conceptual and observational unit, the parts of which are only analytically distinct” (Emerson 1976: 345). While at times I discuss the actions and forms of capital possessed by people, these features only matter to the extent they tell us about social relationships. Mine is not a simplistic trait-based understanding of power: people and the forms of capital they possess matter, but only in relation to others. Like social exchange theorists, I attempt to use interpersonal situations “as a lens through which broader social forces, properties, and processes can be understood” (Stolte, Fine, and Cook 2001: 388).

Examining both sides of social relations allows us to avoid the tautological reasoning that plagues microeconomic approaches to action, as does a focus on social

relations over time. Instead of stressing decision making at single moments, both models use a “natural history” framework in which social relations are “progressively elaborated, analyzed and specified” (Emerson and Messinger 1977: 121, 122). The symbolic power process involves the attribution of credibility at one time, and the deployment of credibility as the symbolic power to define the situation at another time (credibility is potential symbolic power).

Both approaches likewise examine power in terms of relations between people. Key to both models is the notion of “value.” To quote Emerson, “Any ability possessed by Person A is a resource only in relations with specific other persons who value it” (1976: 347). In this way, power is a dependency relation, dependent on how others value the basis of power controlled by person A. As social exchange theorists conceive power, it is a relation of *mutual* dependence. While the power of person A depends on how the basis of power controlled by A is “valued” by person B; B is likewise “dependent” because some outcome valued by B is controlled by A (Emerson 1962, Cook and Emerson 1978, Lawler and Yoon 1993, Molm and Cook 1995). The resulting power can be formulated as follows:

$$P_{ab} = D_{ba}$$

Where the Power of A over B equals the Dependence of B on A.

Symbolic power (as I have conceived it) is also a relation of dependency: The symbolic power of A depends on a perception of credibility on the part of B. However, symbolic power is *not necessarily* a relation of mutual dependence. The “trick” of symbolic power is to get others to value you and perceive you as credible, whether or not

they are dependent on you. Person B values and attributes credibility to person A not simply because B is dependent on A, but also because B has an aesthetic to appreciate the forms of capital possessed by A. In this sense, those who might typically be called “followers” are responsible for the attribution of credibility to “leaders.” As such, “followers” are quite powerful, though they rarely recognize the operation of symbolic power and their role in the creation of symbolic power. After all, the process occurs through and is hidden in interactions that we normally take for granted. Though “followers” are responsible for the attribution of credibility to “leaders,” they may not be dependent on leaders for some tangible outcome.

In this way symbolic power (at the level of social interactions) is something of a ruse: To acquire credibility and symbolic power you must get others to value you and perceive you as credible, *whether or not they actually are* dependent on you. Herein lays the ironic singular dependency of symbolic power: the symbolic power of A depends on a perception of credibility by B. Yet, B may not depend on A. Even so, once B has attributed credibility to A, A can deploy his/her credibility as the symbolic power to define a situation and influence the actions of B. The symbolic power possessed by leaders is dependent on followers, even though followers may be, in many ways, independent of their leaders.

Take as an example the relationship between teachers and administrators. Teachers normally operate with high autonomy, and while the work of administrators is absolutely important for the overall operation of the school, administrators typically have little bearing on the immediate operation of individual classrooms (Bidwell 1965, Weick

1976). When a teacher is absent, the administrators scramble to find a substitute for the classroom. However, when an administrator is absent, the teachers do not scramble to find a substitute for the main office. That is, while administrators are dependent on teachers for credibility, in many cases teachers are not dependent on administrators for the day-to-day operation of their classrooms. For example, in a study of Midwest City Schools, a teacher explained the influence of her principal not in specific exchange terms, but in more general interactive terms:

She would, you know, it's just the way you say it and do it I guess. When you're working with a group and the way they come across and talk to you and I, I guess I'm just a fool for people knowing how to talk to you. (Spillane, Hallett, and Diamond 2003: 7)

In this excerpt the teacher formulates a positive evaluation of her principal, attributing credibility based on the principal's interactive style (cultural capital). The principal is dependent on the teacher for this attribution of credibility, but it is not clear what, if anything, the teacher gets in exchange. Yet in time, the principal can deploy this credibility as the symbolic power to define the situation and influence the practices of teachers.

Hence, while credibility and symbolic power are established in a tacit negotiation between leaders and followers, the negotiation does not require the kind of "tit for tat" mutual dependency that characterizes social exchange power (Emerson 1962, 1976, Lawler and Yoon 1993, Molm and Cook 1995). Moreover, the mutual dependency of social exchange power is couched in dyadic relationships, while the attribution of credibility that forms the basis of symbolic power can be linked to group relations that

overwhelm a single dyadic relationship. In other words, a principal or teacher might have symbolic power because a group of teachers views him or her as credible, even if one teacher in an interaction or exchange does not.

Symbolic power can be further distinguished from social exchange power in that it does not presume intent. The rhetoric of “exchange” is typically one of rationality, of calculated means and ends, of cognizant, purposeful action. At times this may also be true of symbolic power: Potential leaders may consciously enact their valued forms of capital in visible ways in an intentional effort to acquire credibility in the eyes of followers. However, often those who are identified as leaders do not purposefully “seek” credibility in the eyes of followers. Yet in going about their everyday life they put their capital to use, and when an audience of followers sees and values this capital, they attribute credibility even though the leader may not have consciously sought credibility. As such, some people are unwittingly leaders, and when told they are leaders, they often reply with shock, “I am?!” Likewise, the attribution of credibility need not be purposeful. Take as an example the interaction between Mr. Carrol and Mr. Pearl discussed earlier. Though Mr. Pearl goes out of his way to praise Mr. Carrol while in my presence, it does not appear that Mr. Pearl entered the interaction with a plan to attribute credibility to Mr. Carrol. In the course of everyday interactions it is unusual for followers to ponder, “To whom can I attribute credibility?”

The mutual dependency of social exchange power and the ironic “singular” dependency of symbolic power have different theoretical implications for the endurance of these different forms of power. Social exchange power is inherently unstable

(Emerson 1962, Lawler and Yoon 1993). When person A exercises his/her social exchange power over person B towards some outcome, it becomes recognizable to B, since the outcome sought by A is so dependent on B. The recognition of a power imbalance leads to four “balancing operations” that bring greater equilibrium to the A---B relationship:

If the A---B relation is imbalanced in A’s favor, then change towards balance can be produced by a decrease in the value of x for B (‘withdrawal from the relation’), an increase in the value of y for A (‘status giving’ from B to A), and increase in alternatives for B (‘network extensions’) or a decrease in alternatives for A (‘coalition formation’ by B with other alternatives for A) (Molm and Cook 1995: 217).

Because social exchange power results from a relation of mutual dependency, both parties feel imbalances, and both sides then “do things” that bring the relation into greater balance. In this way, social exchange power begets *less* power.

In contrast, symbolic power often begets *more* symbolic power. While the symbolic power of person A is dependent on a perception of credibility on the part of person B, when A uses his/her credibility as the symbolic power to define the situation, it often goes unnoticed, because B is not “dependent” on A per se. Person B perceives no imbalance, and continues to perceive person A as credible. Moreover, those who have symbolic power can use it in ways to define themselves as legitimate, thereby *increasing* their credibility and symbolic power. However, because of the ironic singular dependency of symbolic power, it is fragile. Once symbolic power becomes noticed and challenged, it quickly falls apart: B can immediately stop perceiving A as credible, especially since B may be independent of A.

In sum, the model of symbolic power I have developed shares a unit of analysis in common with social exchange theory. Both approaches examine power through the lens of social relations over time. Likewise, valuation and dependency are important in both approaches. However, where social exchange power is a relation of mutual dependency tending towards equilibrium, symbolic power is a relation of ironic, singular dependency that often goes unnoticed. Because symbolic power is the power to construct reality, it helps to shape the negotiation context in which social relations are embedded, constitutive of the interactions that are themselves constitutive of more symbolic power.

### Summary and Reflection

Power has long been a topic in sociology. Though most sociologists agree with the importance of power in social analysis, few agree as to the definition and operation of power. In this dissertation, I make the case for studying a particular kind of power, “symbolic power,” at an interactional level. Defined as the power to define the situation, symbolic power is a fundamental component of any social order, and to understand turmoil, we must understand how symbolic power operates in and through interaction. In making my case for symbolic power, I bring together a number of literatures, reading them in dialogue as a means to inform my own model.

My conception of symbolic power builds from Bourdieu, who examines how symbolic power operates at a micro level through the classificatory schemata of the habitus, and at the macro level of fields. While the habituses of actors involved and the

field in play may condition interactions, I argue that *interactions themselves* are constitutive of symbolic power.

Through an emphasis on interaction, the negotiation context, and the structural context, the negotiated order approach provides a set of concepts for the meso level analysis that remains underdeveloped in Bourdieu's sociology. Though negotiated order theorists include power in their models, they assume its operation rather than showing the mechanisms through which it operates.<sup>19</sup> I argue that the interactions through which symbolic power is generated are shaped by the negotiation context. Yet, deployments of symbolic power can reshape the definition of the situation and future interactions, in a continual dance between the negotiation context and symbolic power.

My model of symbolic power is also informed by Goffman's research on interaction. The acts of legitimation that provide the foundation for symbolic power are similar to acts of deference, and impression management is a means to exhibit the appropriate demeanor in order to receive deference and credibility from others. However, I contend that efforts to engage in impression management are bounded by the negotiation context, audience aesthetics, and the capital of the participants. While deference, demeanor, and impression management operate to maintain a comfortable interaction order (Goffman 1983b), I argue they are also mechanisms through which symbolic power is produced and deployed in the creation and recreation of a social order.

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<sup>19</sup> That negotiated order theorists and symbolic interactionists in general do not take a more critical stance towards power is not surprising given the largely optimistic, pragmatic "American Creed" on which it was built (Munch 1986, see also Kanter 1972 and Hall 1972).

In its capacity to help us to understand social interaction and the definition of a social order, symbolic power is an important contribution to sociology. The model presented here is especially useful for understanding the micro-politics of everyday life, because it examines how power is relational and dependent on people, yet fundamental to the social order. Symbolic power is the subtle capacity to define reality and thereby influence the practices of others in a way that often goes unnoticed, or is euphemized as “leadership.”

Though symbolic power can stand on its own as an important contribution to sociology, as we will see, it is also a fundamental pillar in the organization of turmoil. As indicated by the excerpt that opens this chapter, Mrs. Koh lacks credibility and symbolic power in the eyes of many teachers: “She’s lost that respect, and now it’s too far gone.” Without this credibility, Mrs. Koh cannot intercede in the social order of the school without creating turmoil—she cannot define her own actions as justified. Though Mrs. Koh lacks symbolic power, others in the school use it to effectively change the social order of the school, *and* to define Mrs. Koh’s failed efforts as particularly unjust, shaping the emergent turmoil at the school. In this way, symbolic power is of *dupla gravitas* in the organization of turmoil.

In its relation to social structure and human agency, symbolic power is a useful complement to institutional approaches for understanding organizations. The image conveyed through symbolic power is one of agents acting dynamically, yet under the pressures of the structural and negotiation contexts. Because new institutional theory typically places its gaze above the ground level of social interaction, its conception of

agency is based on people as carriers of institutional processes (DiMaggio 1988). This is a view of agency shared by Foucault who takes people to be the vehicles through which discourse operates (Foucault 1980). Thus, while institutional theorists readily incorporate Bourdieu's notion of field, the image of power implicit in much institutional work is more consistent with a Foucaultian approach. While Bourdieu's conception of agency is admittedly narrow, the dispositions of the habitus provide a broad range of possible practices, and actors select from the possibilities based not on strict formulas for action but rather a vague "feel for the game" as characterized by the field in question. Though certainly not "voluntary," the practices that result cannot be predicted by the structure of society or field in play.

In other words, agency is not interpolated from social structure (Althusser 1971), and actors are not simply the "carriers" of institutional forces (DiMaggio 1988, Scott 2001: 79, 131), rather they are the shapers of those forces (Creed and Scully 2001). Though institutional logics enable and constrain organizational discourse, there is rarely a direct correspondence between these logics and the practices, as actors in organizations struggle over meanings and resources, shifting the contours of these logics (Lounsbury, Ventresca, and Hirsch 2003). However, when new institutional theorists focus on fields as detached from action or what Bourdieu would term "practice," they implicitly adopt a conception of power that corresponds more closely to the work of Foucault than Bourdieu. When institutional theorists discuss the diffusion of various organizational forms and practices, all too often the picture corresponds to the totalizing rampage of discursive power (Foucault 1977, 1979, 1980, Digeser 1992). In such cases, "what

remains is a picture of ‘disembodied forces’ inexorably creating and maintaining institutions” (Creed and Scully 2001). Though we may never be able to exist outside of certain forms of discourse, as we engage the realities of everyday life there is plenty of space to generate and deploy symbolic power through interactions, shaping the immediate social order in which we are engaged.

Unfortunately, new institutional research often lacks a theory of action to understand these spaces (Fligstein, personal correspondence). Thus, while examples of institutional isomorphism and decoupling abound, it is hard to understand how these processes occur on the ground level (Fligstein 2001: 211), or the emergent micro political battles that result from competing institutions (Heimer 1995, 1999). The notion of symbolic power developed here can help us to see how institutional processes occur through actors, actors who possess symbolic power. For example, cases of mimetic isomorphism occur to the extent that those who possess symbolic power view some other organization as relevant and successful,<sup>20</sup> and use their own symbolic power to shape their organizations along similar lines, but also based on their own interests and the aesthetics of relevant audiences. Thus, participants with symbolic power are not only “carriers” of institutional processes, but they also shape them (Creed and Scully 2001). Similarly, organizations are more likely to be decoupled when there are multiple audiences and actors with symbolic power. Tightly coupled organizations are more likely when there are fewer audiences, creating homogeneity in aesthetics, and a greater

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<sup>20</sup> You could say that this other organizational form has its own “symbolic power” based on perceptions of validity, even if its success and efficiency as an organizational form is actually a “rationalized myth.” (Meyer and Rowan 1977).

monopolization of symbolic power. A loosely coupled organization usually has a greater number of relevant audiences, each with different aesthetics and representative leaders, resulting in competing pockets of symbolic power, and creating the need for loose coupling.

Having theorized symbolic power, I now situate its operation within organizational bounds, contextualizing the “Turmoil at ‘KOH’sten School” to be discussed in chapters three, four, and five.

## Chapter 2

### **The Organizational Context of Symbolic Power and Turmoil**

On the surface, Costen Elementary School may not seem like a good candidate for turmoil. Costen has successfully avoided many of the problems that confront urban elementary schools. Like many urban schools, Costen is overcrowded, but where a number of schools in Midwest City are forced to shepherd classrooms into makeshift trailer parks on school playgrounds, in 1996 Costen benefited from construction that added a new teachers' lounge, a new lunchroom and kitchen, a multipurpose room, a library, a computer lab, and fourteen additional classrooms, bringing the classroom total to nearly sixty for a student body approaching 1600. Though there is not an abundance of space, the hallways are clean, the roof does not leak, and the rooms are well heated in the winter. Physically, the school is sound, and it provides a good learning environment for the students.

Within school walls, considerable learning takes place. Of the ten largest public elementary schools in Midwest City, Costen has the highest scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), and Costen's ITBS scores are well above city averages. City wide, 40.3% of Midwest City Public School students were reading at or above national norms in 2001, compared to 54.3% at Costen. Likewise, 43.1% of Midwest City Public School students scored at or above national norms in math in 2001, compared to 62.9% at Costen.

Despite these positives, Costen, like schools in general, is situated in a context in which competing institutional pressures collide. While schools have traditionally operated according to a professional logic of autonomy, increasingly schools are confronted with a contesting logic, the bureaucratic logic of accountability. These competing logics and their corresponding orders—the world of teaching on the one hand, and the world of administration on the other—create an atmosphere ripe for turmoil.

In this chapter I canvas the institutional backdrop of education and the competing logics that provide the context for the turmoil at Costen Elementary School. Though the institutional approach to organizational sociology helps us to understand the environment in which Costen is situated, to understand the organization of turmoil we must create a link between the broader context of education and the local order of Costen Elementary. To make this link, I engage the negotiated order approach to sociology (first introduced in Chapter One). Using the negotiated order lens, I describe the social order that the teachers at Costen had established with the prior administrations, an order that would be disrupted when Mrs. Koh attempted to create a tighter connection between accountability policies and school practices. Of the four-part organization of turmoil introduced at the start of this dissertation, this chapter addresses the first part (changes in the structural context in which a setting exists), and begins to address the second part (the establishment of a social order that would become disrupted).

### The Institutional and Organizational Context of Education

The development of schools in the United States has long reflected the logic of autonomy that permeates teaching. From the now idealized beginnings of the one room schoolhouse, schools have grown larger, but with this growth, its parts have retained their independence, and teaching has long been characterized by cellular isolation and autonomy (Lortie 1975: 14). Throughout the growth of schools, the professional logic of autonomy remained, becoming an institutionalized component of the American approach to education.

However, as the demand for education exploded in the early twentieth century, schools grew in size and complexity. This growth was accompanied by a consistent rise in bureaucratization (Tyack 1974, Bidwell 2001). To accommodate the influx of students, schools created a division of labor between grade levels, and later subject areas. As the administrative needs of schools grew, schools began to define separate administrative roles as offices. This move was accompanied by a hierarchical ordering of offices, and the creation of various rules and procedures (Bidwell 1965). Though the era of the one room schoolhouse was gone, the logic of autonomy still prevailed. The classroom was still the sacred domain of the teacher, and the world of teaching was placed apart from the world of administration. These organizational characteristics provided flexibility in how schools and teachers met the client serving function of preparing a complex, heterogeneous student body for adult status (Bidwell 1965: 973).

Though the world of teaching and the world of administration had been placed apart, the establishment of the administrative world within school walls introduced a new logic to education, the bureaucratic logic of accountability. This logic grew in strength after World War II, when organizations of many types began to adopt the bureaucratic practices that had made the mobilization for war a success (Selznick 1949, Gouldner 1954). Though the increasing formalization of schools as organizations may have increased efficiency, schools also draped themselves in the trappings of bureaucracy for more ceremonial purposes: The bureaucratic façade was a means to signal legitimacy to external constituencies who sought to reform schools, for example parents and politicians (Meyer and Rowan 1977, 1978). However, the formal structure that schools appeared to be adopting was something of a myth: Even as schools draped themselves in bureaucracy, under the sheets the tradition of teacher autonomy remained, and instructional practices changed little. This myth was something of a functional necessity, because the autonomy and the need for flexibility that characterize the world of teaching are somewhat at odds with the rigid rules and structure of formal organizations.

In sum, schools increasingly operate with two different logics (Bacharach and Mundell 1993). On the one hand there is the professional logic of autonomy, but there is also an increasing bureaucratic logic of accountability. These two logics do not always fit with each other (Corwin 1965, Blau et al 1966), and the situation is anomic in Mertonian sense that these logics involve contradictory expectations (Merton 1938). To solve this dilemma, schools are often loosely coupled organizations (Weick 1976, Meyer and Rowan 1977): Though connected, administrators and teachers rarely work closely,

and rather than using constant coordination, inspection, and evaluation, schools operate according to norms of confidence and good faith.

However, with its emphasis on the institutional level of analysis, much of organizational theory glosses over how “norms of confidence and good faith” operate at a local level. Ironically, the institutional approach popularized by Meyer and Rowan’s research on schools rarely examines how a loose-coupling is actually maintained (or disrupted) through a local interaction order, or how the competing logics that are supposedly decoupled may actually intersect *within* schools. All too often in institutional analysis, organizational actors are depicted simply as “carriers” of institutional forces (DiMaggio 1988, Scott 2001: 79, 131), glossing over how people in organizations interact, and how these interactions themselves may shape institutional logics and the relations between them (Lounsbury, Ventresca, and Hirsch 2003, Creed and Scully 2001). Without a focus on local interaction, it becomes easy to forget that a loose coupling between school practices and the formal structure of an organization does not preclude connections between school personnel. Though autonomous, teachers interact with other teachers and with administrators daily. While these interactions may be informed by various “logics,” interactions always have a measure of spontaneity and unpredictability, and these interactions have consequences for the organization.

In contrast to the institutional approach, rational-legal models of organization place greater emphasis on the local level. Rational-legal models are especially popular in the analysis of schools (Dunlap and Goldman 1991). With their emphasis on formal authority, these models stress hierarchic relationships between regional offices,

administrators, and teachers. However, researchers who focus on the concrete relations between school personnel paint a more sophisticated picture. To be sure, rational-legal authority matters in schools. In discussing the authority structure of schools, Howard Becker cites a teacher as stating that the principal is “the authority and you have to follow his orders. That’s all there is to it” (Becker 1953: 135). However, a recent study of 84 teachers in 8 Midwest City Elementary Schools complicates this view. Though over 83% of the teachers interviewed identified their principal as influential, only eight percent of teachers cited position alone when discussing the influence of their principal. Moreover, almost 80% of the teachers also identified other teachers as influential (Spillane, Hallett, and Diamond 2003: 5, 11). Instead of attaching influence to position alone, personnel in schools and other organizations cite interpersonal relationships with others, creating a web of informal “fealty” ties and a form of “patrimonial bureaucracy” (Jackall 1988, Antonio 1979). While rational-legal models of schools borrow their understanding of bureaucracy from Weber, this understanding remains ideal-typical, downplaying the many different forms of power first addressed by Weber, and how different forms of power and authority may be contradictory. As we will see, some uses of rational-legal authority can come at the expense of credibility and symbolic power.

The discussion of symbolic power and the negotiated order introduced in the previous chapter can bridge the institutional level of analysis with the local interaction order of schools, while accounting for the informal social relations that are consequential to organizations but are obscured by rational-legal models. Though competing institutional logics create a context conducive to turmoil, to understand turmoil we must

examine how these structural pressures come together in interactions between school personnel and in disruptions to established social orders. Though informed by background logics, these interactions and disruptions are the means through which turmoil develops, and they have a constitutive role in the onset and content of turmoil.

### The Negotiated Order and the Social Organization of Schools

As a means to examine the social organization of turmoil, the “negotiated order” approach is particularly useful because it provides a conceptual apparatus to account for the immediate interactions through which a social order is created and disrupted, as well as the background conditions that contribute to the organization of the disruption.

Founded by Strauss (1978), the negotiated order approach begins with the premise that social order is the result of dynamic interactions or “negotiations” between actors. To quote Fine:

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

However, to say that social order is the result of interactions is not to say these interactions are voluntary. Though interactions create (and recreate) social order, these interactions take place in contexts that enable, constrain, and shape them (Maines 1982: 275). This view resembles Giddens’ argument that social structure is both the medium and the outcome of agency (Giddens 1979: 67).

In particular, negotiated order theorists address two types of structure, broadly defined as the “structural context” and the “negotiation context.” The *structural context* relates to the broader social order (Strauss 1982), for example, the population in which an organization is embedded (Stinchcombe 1965), the broader institutional environment (Hirsch 1975), including institutions that create competing organizational demands (Heimer 1995, 1999), and the corresponding institutional logics that permeate organizations (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, DiMaggio 1987, Jepperson 1991)<sup>21</sup> and condition interactions or “negotiations.” In the case of schools, the structural context encompasses all of the history and institutional pressures discussed above.

The structural context also includes policy initiatives that attempt to improve schools. In the case of Midwest City, these policy initiatives have oscillated between the logic of autonomy and the logic of accountability. After a number of reports in 1985 demonstrated the weak performance of Midwest City schools, reformers responded with a school-based governance approach. This approach stressed the establishment of Local School Councils (LSC) to work with school staff and external partners to create school improvement plans for advancing academic achievement (SIPAA). Under this plan, schools and their LSCs were given broad autonomy to formulate ways to improve instruction. When this approach did not yield gains in test scores, in 1995 the Mayor of Midwest City went in the opposite direction of central control, appointing a “Chief Executive Officer” of city schools and giving the CEO the rational-legal authority to

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<sup>21</sup> For example the white, middle class cultural and political logic that legitimates the “Real School” as the primary organizational/educational form even when other approaches may better serve different types of students (Metz 1990).

place low scoring schools on remediation or probation. The era of accountability policy had begun. With this shift in policy, LSCs were placed under the umbrella of accountability. Where LSCs were once an agent of local control, they are now agents of bureaucratic accountability.

In many ways, accountability policies are an effort to formalize schools as organizations (Hoffer 2000). Dominated by rational-legal conceptions of power (Dunlap & Goldman 1991), these policy levers involve rewards and sanctions for schools, staff, and students (Ladd 1996), especially in regards to test scores. In Midwest City, if low achieving schools do not show improvement on ITBS scores, the CEO can have the school reconstituted, ordering new LSC elections while replacing the principal and faculty. The assumption is that the authority implied in the accountability policies will trickle down from the district to principals and into classroom practices. In addition, accountability policies increase the bureaucratic form of schools through an increasing standardization of work (for example structured curriculum and standardized goals) that stresses uniformity in client (student) problems while treating personnel interchangeably. The rise of accountability policies represents a change in the structural context, a change that both reflects the bureaucratic logic of accountability, and strengthens it in its competition with the professional logic of accountability. Costen elementary is embedded within this structural context.

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), and other

features particular to the setting. At Costen, these conditions include the size of the school and the composition of the student body. The manner in which the faculty and the administration “negotiate” (interact around) these conditions establishes the local social order.

Costen is a large school, with eighty teachers serving a student body that has increased from 1052 in the 1989/1990 school year to 1586 in 2000/2001. This growth has forced the school to open a “branch” location in an old Catholic school 4 blocks away. The main building houses grades kindergarten through second and grades fifth through eighth, while the branch is the home for grades three through four.

As large as the student body is, it is equally diverse. According to the school system’s crude racial categories, in the 2000/2001 school year 31.8% of the students were classified as white, 7.9% as black, 37% as Asian, 25.5% as Hispanic, and 0.7% as Native American. However, these categories do not capture the vast ethnic diversity of the school. Multiple immigrant groups have settled in the area, and Costen has bilingual programs in Spanish, Russian, and Urdu.<sup>22</sup> Numerous other students receive English as a second language instruction (ESL), and overall 41% of the students are classified as “limited English.” As these immigrant families gain prosperity, they often move out of the neighborhood. The teachers joke that as long as the families qualify for free lunch they stay at Costen, but once they move off of free lunch they relocate to the suburbs.

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<sup>22</sup> and in the past Korean, Assyrian, Gujarati, and Arabic.

This joke has some statistical accuracy: In 2001 the mobility rate<sup>23</sup> was 30.6%, and 76.7% of the students were from low-income families.<sup>24</sup>

Despite the low family incomes and the limited English of the students, most teachers perceive the students as capable, well mannered, and hard working. Though they have their complaints at times, teachers are quick to note how good the students are compared to those at other schools.<sup>25</sup> Once again, these perceptions correspond to school statistics. Reading and mathematics scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) increased gradually between 1991 and 2001. In 1991 41% of the students scored at or above the national average in reading, gradually increasing to 54.3% in 2001. In 1991 56.3% of the students scored at or above the national average in math, rising to 62.9% in 2001.

While these scores may tell us something about the students, they may also tell us about the quality of instruction. For many years the staff and the long time principal, Mr. Welch, responded to the disparate needs and pressures flowing from the structural and negotiation contexts by creating a negotiated order that can best be described as an “indulgency pattern” (Gouldner 1954). This negotiated order/indulgency pattern was characterized by high classroom autonomy to meet the diverse needs of students, and low surveillance on the part of the administration. Aligned with this pattern, Mr. Welch created an organizational structure to support teacher autonomy, using administration and

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<sup>23</sup> Percent of students coming in and out of the school in school year.

<sup>24</sup> Percent receiving free or reduced lunches.

<sup>25</sup> In fact, in the turmoil that follows Mrs. Koh’s arrival, alienated veteran teachers who decided to stay on at Costen often cited the good students as a reason they have decided to stay, despite the conflicts in the school.

support staff as a means to deal with the more bureaucratic and political aspects of schools, while leaving pedagogy to the teachers. As the veteran staff established their own practices within the autonomous space of this order, the order became a known mode of operation. The teachers repeatedly told me that during the Welch era “we were running like a well oiled machine.” The teachers embraced Mr. Welch and the indulgency pattern that they had negotiated with him.

However, the growing popularity of accountability policies threatened this negotiated order. Mr. Welch resisted these policies and shielded the teachers from their intended effects while maintaining the hands-off indulgency pattern. In particular, Mr. Welch resisted the purview of the LSC and the accountability it represented. Reflecting on Welch’s tenure, the LSC Chair (Stan Feierman) stated: “I think curriculum issues were never the purview, were never allowed to be the purview of the LSC. In fact, I was actively discouraged” (Interview Transcript 11/17/99). The staff loved Mr. Welch and his laissez-faire style, and when he retired, the long time assistant principal took his place for a year before retiring.

Welch’s retirement opened the door for the Local School Counsel to hire Mrs. Jackson. Jackson emphasized direct instruction in reading and the “Everyday Math” curriculum designed by a prestigious city university. Jackson also reorganized the 5-8<sup>th</sup> grades from self-contained classrooms into departments, and hired an outside consulting firm to align the curriculum with the newly formed city standards. However, when many of the veteran staff members resisted Jackson’s efforts to change methods they felt were

proven, she did not use her authority to impose the new curriculum on them. For the most part Jackson respected the indulgency pattern negotiated between the staff and Mr. Welch. Not surprisingly, the staff paid little attention to the new curriculum, drawing from it selectively or emphasizing that it sat dormant in their drawers. The purpose of the new curriculum was largely ceremonial (Meyer and Rowan 1977, 1978). It was something that the school could present to the LSC and the Regional Office, even as they maintained their established practices.

At the school level, the indulgency pattern created a boundary between the world of teaching and the world of administration. Within these boundaries, the administrators did their work, and the teachers were free to do theirs. As a veteran teacher explained:

The first administration—when I first started in 1991—was a man who was very, very laid back, and we have a lot of creative teachers in this school and you pretty much were able to do what you needed to do and use your creativity and kind of go with your own flow more or less. (Interview Transcript 11/15/99)

Another veteran teacher reiterated this view:

We had a principal. . . He's a really good guy and what he did was he hired good people who he let do their jobs, and his assistant principal was a strong woman but she was the same way, she let people do their jobs. . . and then our previous principal accomplished things. . . and most of the time she let people do their jobs. (Interview transcript 5/12/00)

These teachers repeatedly stress the hands-off approach of the prior administrations. Via the indulgency pattern, teachers were left to teach, and administrators handled the tasks of bureaucracy, making a larger decoupling between accountability policies and school practices possible. Just prior to the start of the 1997/1998 school year, Mrs. Jackson abruptly quit and accepted a job with the consulting firm that had redesigned Costen's

curriculum. Costen began the year without a principal, giving the staff full autonomy to maintain their negotiated order.

If not disrupted, the negotiated order becomes taken-for-granted, and is maintained through the routinized interactions of the participants. When this occurs, symbolic power is abstracted from the level of interaction, and comes to reside in the negotiated order itself. So established, the indulgency pattern at Costen had symbolic power: it defined the situation for the teachers, providing them with patterns of thought and action that reduced uncertainty in the school (Cyert and March 1963: 118-120, Thompson 1967: 6-10). The veteran staff knew how the school worked, and what to expect on a day-to-day basis. When Mrs. Koh arrived at Costen School, she walked into this type of institutionalized negotiated order.

In the middle of the school year (start of 1998) the LSC hired Mrs. Koh. Originally from Hong Kong, Mrs. Koh came to America in eighth grade. After teaching regular and bilingual classes at Catholic and Public schools while obtaining an ESL endorsement and her type 75,<sup>26</sup> Koh sought a “new challenge” and moved on to assistant principal positions at two small elementary schools. Then she was encouraged by one of her college professors to apply to a new Principal Leadership Training and Education (“PLTE”) program. Mrs. Koh was accepted, and was then selected to act as an associate principal at a high school that had been placed on academic probation. In time Koh’s mentor in the PLTE program encouraged her to apply for the position at Costen. Though

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<sup>26</sup> The certification required for being an assistant principal or principal in Midwest City Public Schools.

Koh did not expect to be hired, the LSC was impressed with her PLTE credentials, high standards, bilingual experience, energy, and work ethic.

Mrs. Koh started work on the 21<sup>st</sup> of December 1998. A longtime widow in her mid 40's, Koh considers herself married to education and brought this commitment to her new job. Though she recognizes the previous success of the school, she feels there is room for improvement:

But when I look at the test results – and I happen to be one that believes that the test results do tell you something about curriculum –fifty percent are succeeding. I look at it the other way, fifty percent of our children are not succeeding. . . . Bottom line is the kids have to bring those grades up to apply for the best high schools. They're not going to be considered if they don't have the scores in their hands. (Interview transcript, 11/4/99)

Mrs. Koh's rhetoric is tightly coupled with the spirit of accountability, and she sought to use her authority to produce results, a commitment that *even extends symbolically to the key code used to enter the school*--a number based on a targeted increase in the ITBS test scores.

Mrs. Koh's alignment with accountability also extends beyond the issue of test scores to a more general overview of the school. As Mrs. Koh explained to me in an interview:

One teacher said to me one day, and I think it really gives you a lot of information, she told me that . . . they'd (teachers) been running the school without a principal for six months. So when the interim principal was here, everyone took full advantage of running in every direction that they choose to. Well, that's not going to happen with this administration. If you want to make any purchases with a reason, you submit a roster of what you need to purchase and you get approved and then you get reimbursed. I mean if you allow no system in place, 100 people out there doing shopping on their own and bring the bill back and expect to be reimbursed – can't – can't function that way. But a lot

of people have gotten really what I call . . . bad practice from the previous experience. And of course they tried to – and they expect the new administration to comply (with the teachers’ order). So I think some of the resentment (to her) comes from the change of requiring teachers to take a little bit more of a step of complying – doing things. So I think some of them are legitimate concerns that we can streamline, but some of them are just vicious attack because they are not getting what they want. (Interview Transcript 11/04/99)

In contrast to the low surveillance used by the prior administrations, Mrs. Koh keeps an eye on the teachers. Mrs. Koh’s administrative gaze threatens the indulgency pattern the teachers had negotiated with the prior administrations. The teachers had expected Mrs. Koh to comply with their prior negotiated order, but instead, Mrs. Koh began to restrict the autonomy the teachers had long enjoyed, limiting their sense of control and holding them accountable for such things as classroom purchases and reimbursement. The teachers responded with what Mrs. Koh labels “resentment” and “vicious attack.”

### Summary and Reflection

Costen Elementary is situated in context fraught with contending institutional logics—the logic of professional autonomy, and the logic of bureaucratic accountability. While these contending logics create an atmosphere conducive to turmoil, to understand the emergence of turmoil and the shape and feel of turmoil, we have to understand how these logics come together in local interactions. Though informed by the pressures of the structural context, these local interactions (or “negotiations”) have a constitutive role in the establishment of local orders. For many years, the faculty and the administrations of Costen elementary responded to the contradictory pressures emanating from the structural

context by creating a social order best described as an “indulgency pattern” (Gouldner 1954). Characterized by high autonomy and low surveillance, the indulgency pattern created a boundary between the worlds of teaching and the worlds of administration, and facilitated a loose coupling between accountability policies and school practices. Even with the departure of Mr. Welch and the expansion of accountability policies, this loose coupling endured because the indulgency pattern had become well established, and was maintained during the Jackson administration.

However, Mrs. Koh’s alignment with accountability policies (and the spirit of accountability more generally) threatens this order. While the competing institutional pressures of the structural context weigh on the school, turmoil only erupts when Mrs. Koh begins to disrupt the immediate local order of the school. When Mrs. Koh disrupted the indulgency pattern and restricted the autonomy that the teachers cherished, the veteran staff braced themselves to defend their practices, criticizing Mrs. Koh in their discourse with each other and in the 119 pages of “Turmoil at ‘KOH’sten School.” To quote one teacher, “Mrs. Koh apparently has not taken the time, or felt it important enough to observe and learn the modus operandi of the organization that has been bestowed upon her to effectively manage” (Anonymous letter from a teacher included in “Turmoil at ‘KOH’sten School”). As we will see in the chapters that follow, instead of getting a sense of the social order that she walked into, Mrs. Koh used her authority as principal to create a tighter coupling between accountability policies and school practices. In doing so she disrupted the negotiated order that the teachers cherished, but she also

damaged her credibility in the eyes of the teachers. Without taking the time to cultivate interactions and acquire credibility, Mrs. lacks the symbolic power to effectively intercede in the social order.

But what actually happens as Mrs. Koh disrupts the indulgency pattern so esteemed by the teachers, and what is meant by the term “turmoil?” To answer these questions, the next chapter conceptualizes turmoil by focusing on Mrs. Koh’s disruptions to the established orders, and the conflicts around those disruptions. While this chapter has focused on the first component of the organization of turmoil, the chapters that follow examine the second (disruption to established orders), third (authority relations that enable disruptions), and fourth (symbolic power defining disruptions) components.

## Chapter 3

### **The Social Organization of Turmoil**

*Your arrival at Costen is like a person who buys a new house. It is only natural to be anxious to fix it up and make changes that turn your new house into your own home. But in doing so, you should remember that your new 'house' already had people living in it. It can be detrimental to the morale of the staff when massive change is forced upon us in a relatively short time - especially when it seems to occur without the benefit of any discernible observations of how things have worked thus far (Anonymous letter from a group of teachers first sent to Mrs. Koh and then included in "Turmoil at 'KOH'sten School").*

This excerpt from a letter included in "Turmoil at 'KOH'sten School" aptly summarizes the disorientation and frustration felt by the teachers at Costen Elementary. The teachers at Costen have difficulty comprehending the changes Mrs. Koh introduced to the school upon her arrival, particularly when she made changes without gaining a sense of how the school had operated beforehand. The changes that Mrs. Koh introduced to the school disrupted the social order the teachers were accustomed to, making their world unintelligible, damaging their "morale," and throwing the school into turmoil. This turmoil permeates everyday life at the school, from the dramatic 119 pages of "Turmoil at 'KOH'sten School" and the investigation of Mrs. Koh by the Central Office that followed, to the mundane conflicts that echo through the hallways as teachers struggle with the changes introduced by Mrs. Koh.

What are we to make of this "turmoil"? Far from disorganized or chaotic, the turmoil at the school has an order. Though the teachers at Costen are quick to place blame at the feet of Mrs. Koh, I contend that the disruptions she created in their established social order are but one part of the organization of turmoil. By documenting

the origins and responses to the disruptions introduced by Koh, I analyze how the “Turmoil at ‘KOH’sten School” involves tensions between accountability policies, the prior social order of the school, rational legal authority, and Mrs. Koh’s lack of credibility in the eyes of the teachers.

This chapter is divided into two parts. In part one, I define turmoil as conflict around a disruption of an established social order, and I engage various literatures on conflict and order to develop the concept. Though conflict is often a routine feature of organizations, turmoil involves a disruption to routines, and subsequent conflict around the disruption. In light of the context provided by Chapter Two, I examine Mrs. Koh’s attempts to change the negotiated order of the school, particularly her efforts to create a tighter coupling between accountability policies and school practices. While these efforts are enabled by the authority of Mrs. Koh’s position, her use of authority to disrupt the established social order comes at the expense of her credibility in the eyes of the staff. Without this credibility, Mrs. Koh lacks the “symbolic” power to define the situation, to safely intercede in the social order, and to quell the rising turmoil at the school.

Confronted with the turmoil at the school, part two of this chapter details how Mrs. Koh attempted to shift her practices in an effort to gain credibility in the eyes of the staff. Ultimately, this effort was complicated by competing accountability policies and their representative audiences (Heimer 1995, 1999). When tightly coupled to their intended educational practices, these policies created a catch-22, as exemplified in turmoil involving Mrs. Koh, the bilingual teachers, and the teachers in the regular education program.

I conclude this chapter with a discussion of the ongoing turmoil at the school and briefly compare Mrs. Koh's difficulties with the new assistant principal's (Mr. Carrol) efforts to acquire credibility in the eyes of teachers. Where Mrs. Koh began to disrupt the negotiated order shortly after her arrival, Mr. Carrol initially pays deference to the teacher and their order, cultivating interactions as a means to acquire credibility in their eyes. This comparison sets the stage for the following chapters that examine the *dupla gravitas* of symbolic power in the organization of turmoil.

### Conflict, Order, and Turmoil.

At first glance, we may tend to think of turmoil as chaotic, without order. However, if turmoil is socially organized rather than disorganized, what is meant by the term? In part, turmoil involves conflict, and as there is a strong tradition of sociological thought centering on conflict (Marx 1972 [1848], Dahrendorf 1958, Coser 1961, Collins 1975). Likewise, conflict is a frequent topic for organizational scholars. Where organizations were "once perceived bastions of calm," more frequently conflict is a "hallmark of organizational experience" (Binder 2002: 19-20). Accordingly, a number of works document different types of organizational conflict (Thompson 1960, Lammers 1969, Morrill, Zald, and Rao 2003), strategies to manage these conflicts (Litterer 1966, Pondy 1967 & 1969, Morrill 1995), and the different functions and dysfunctions of organizational conflict (Assael 1969).

Other studies examine the sources of conflict, particularly as conflict relates to the structure of the organization (Corwin 1969). Bureaucracy is frequently implicated in

these studies (Selznick 1949, Gouldner 1954), especially as it pertains to the division of labor, growing size, and authority relations (Blau et al 1966, White 1961, Thompson 1961, Corwin and Herriott 1988) that create structural differentiation and problems of coordination between departments (Blau 1970, Walton et al 1969). Other work views organizations under the lens of competing interest groups and their political conflicts (March 1962, Ocasio 1994, Jackall 1998). School systems are particularly ripe settings for political conflicts, as they are structured around different groups who often have countervailing interests and goals (lay policymakers, administrators, practitioners, and parents) (Tyack and Cuban 1995, Bacharach and Mundell 1993). In addition, there are a number of social psychological studies that discuss conflicting attitudes and sentiments associated with bureaucracy (Merton 1940), discrepancies between different manifest and latent roles filled by organizational occupants (Gouldner 1957, 1958), role conflict and ambiguity (Nicholson and Goh 1983, Miles 1976, Morris et al 1979, Rizzo and Lirtzman 1970), and peer groups and organizational conflict (Warren 1969).<sup>27</sup>

All of the works cited above stress how conflict is both organized and organizes society. Once known and established, conflict can be the foundation for a stable social order. For example, Calvin Morrill argues that conflicts are so common in organizational experience, that the strategies used by executives to manage conflicts create stable, habitualized routines, and predictable interactions: “aggrieved parties typically opt for

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<sup>27</sup> Though most of the studies cited above involve intra-organizational conflict, attention has also been paid to conflicts between related organizations (Corwin 1972), between organizations and their publics (Corwin and Wagenaar 1976, Lourenco and Glidewell 1975), and groups that represent an external threat to cohesion within the organization (Brager 1969). Another set of studies examines the competing institutional logics that organizations must navigate as they go about their work (Heimer 1999, 1995, Corwin 1965).

conflict management scripts that are well known to them or at least feel well known to them. These routines—customs of conflict management—thus provide the foundations for normative orders at the executive levels” (Morrill 1995: xiii).

Where conflict is often a routine aspect of an established order, what I am calling “turmoil” involves a *disruption* of an established social order, a disruption that is followed by conflict around the disruption. Such disruptions are phenomenologically unsettling. That is, they upset the control that participants exercise over their environment through established patterns of thought and action. Once established, a social order provides a stock of knowledge about everyday life, allowing people to control their situation and act with confidence (Schutz 1970, Berger and Luckmann 1966, White 1992). If it is not disrupted, the social order becomes taken-for-granted, and it is maintained through the routinized interactions of the participants. Disruptions impose a distance between people and the taken-for-granted social order, estranging people from established patterns of thought and action and the sense of control that they provide. To return to the example that opens this chapter, it is as if a stranger has entered your home, and where you once know where things were, now they have been moved. Like many of the entries in “Turmoil at ‘KOH’sten School,” this example involves an alienating loss of control (Marx 1972 [1844], Seeman 1983, 1975, 1959) accompanied by conflict between those who disrupt the order, and those who wish to defend it. More than a synonym for conflict, turmoil involves a phenomenologically unsettling disruption of an established social order.

Like conflict, the problem of “order” (and its janus-faced sibling, “disorder”) has long been a central issue in our discipline (Vaughan 1999: 271). Explicitly or implicitly, most sociologists engage the problem of order, from Hobbes (1909) and Durkheim (1960) to Goffman (1983b) and Bourdieu (1977, 1990b). For all our differences, sociologists are defined by our quest to find the order of various things.<sup>28</sup>

The “problem of order” was particularly dear to early American sociology, where the issue was central to the human ecologists of the Chicago school (Park, Burgess, and McKenzie 1925). Following Durkheim’s model of anomie that lamented the disintegration of social rules that regulate individual behavior, these sociologists were disturbed by the apparent “disorder” of urban ghettos, for example the “weak” family structures, the lack of “strong” churches, and the abundance of tenant houses and furnished rooms that they labeled “pathological extremes” (Zorbaugh 1929: 182-3). Zorbaugh describes the slum as “disorganized,” but underestimates “the degree of organization of anything found in the slum” (Whyte 1943a: 37), even as he describes how life in the area is organized by the history of the city, population movements, and commerce. As such, Whyte goes to great lengths to argue that what looks like “disorganization” to outsiders “often turns out to be simply a *different* form of social organization, if one takes the trouble to look closely” (Whyte 1943b: 273 emphasis added).<sup>29</sup> Likewise, Suttles eschews the “disorder” moniker to instead focus on how

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<sup>28</sup> Diane Vaughan (1999, 1996) and Carol Heimer and Lisa Staffen (1995, 1998) argue that even such random things as mistakes, disasters, and health contingencies have a social order.

<sup>29</sup> Whyte describes how the corner gangs, rackets and police organizations, and political organizations foster a system of reciprocal obligations that organize the slum. Though now considered a classic, *Street Corner*

slum morals involve an “ordered segmentation” from the larger society, creating a provincialism that organizes personal relations (Suttles 1968).

Despite the corrective offered by Suttles and Whyte, the order/disorder dichotomy remains embedded in urban sociology. Echoing Whyte a half century later, Wacquant criticizes “disorganization” scholarship for analyzing the ghetto in “essentially *privative* terms” in relation to “mainstream” society and based on “putative ‘middle-class’ standards” (Wacquant 1997: 345). Wacquant argues that this “pernicious premise” distracts researchers from the mundane, patterned, thoroughly organized operation of the ghetto.<sup>30</sup>

The interest in order and disorder is not limited to urban sociology. Merton shifted Durkheim’s emphasis on weak structures and low integration (Durkheim 1951, Merton 1934) to conceptualize “anomie” in terms of conflicting, contradictory structures in which “the cultural demands on persons in the situation are incompatible” (Merton 1938: 679).<sup>31</sup> In turn, Merton inspired research on deviance and social disorganization (Cohen 1965, Shaw and McCay 1969, Sampson and Groves 1989). Related lines of research examine marital and family disorganization (Scanzoni 1965, 1966, Sprey 1966),

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Society was not well received by Whyte’s dissertation committee. Whyte’s dissertation defense did not go smoothly, as he had to fight to “resist the efforts of Louis Wirth and Herbert Blumer to put Street Corner Society into the social disorganization framework then popular in Chicago and elsewhere” (Whyte 1943b: 361).

<sup>30</sup> A viewpoint shared in Auyero’s study of Argentine slums (Auyero 1997, 2001) and Venkatesh’s study of Chicago’s State Street Projects (Venkatesh 1997, 2000).

<sup>31</sup> Though Merton’s approach would become most well-known, prominent sociologists George Homans (1947) and Otis Duncan (with Schnore and Rossi 1959) also proposed general models of social organization.

and disorganization as a condition for collective action (Davis 1962, Piven and Cloward 1977, Useem 1985).

Throughout this literature the work on order and disorder struggles to escape its “morally laden” Durkheimian roots (Turner 1990: 1090, Kramer 1943). Furthermore, notions of ‘disorder’ and ‘disorganization’ typically associated with anomie are misnomers because it is routine for those who purport to study these phenomena to in fact detail their organization. However, the conceptualization of turmoil that I propose is more than a terminological clarification. Rather, it is a means to theorize a particular kind of disruption in an established social order (one that is phenomenologically unsettling), the organization of this disruption, and the conflicts that ensue. The theory of turmoil presented here bridges structural conditions, the features of the more immediate situation, and social psychological feelings of alienation. Though the contending institutional logics of professional autonomy and bureaucratic accountability place schools in a difficult position, these logics only become problematic when they collide with established modes of operation. Via disruptions of the local social order, anomie from above collides with alienation from below.

The works that best approximates the disruptive aspects of turmoil are the breaching experiments of Garfinkel and the ethnomethodologists (Garfinkel 1963, 1967, Heritage 1984). In addressing the study of order, Garfinkel states:

In accounting for the persistence and continuity of the features of concerted actions, sociologists commonly select some set of stable features of an organization of activities and ask for the variables that contribute to their stability. An alternative procedure would appear to be more economical; to start with a system with stable features and ask what can be done to make for trouble. The

operations that one would have to perform in order to produce and sustain anomic features of perceived environments and disorganized interaction should tell us something about how social structures *are ordinarily and routinely being maintained*. (Garfinkel, 1963: 187 emphasis added)

However, where Garfinkel and the ethnomethodologists fabricate breaches as a means to study the social order that existed *prior to* the breach, I examine the very organization of authentic breaches and the organization of the turmoil that ensues.<sup>32</sup> In examining the various ways in which Mrs. Koh disrupted or “breached” the teacher’s social order, we can learn not only how the prior social order operated, but also the origins of Mrs. Koh’s disruptions, and the organization of the turmoil that followed.

In sum, I demarcate “turmoil” as the conflict that surrounds a disruption of an established social order. These disruptions are phenomenologically unsettling: they rob participants of the patterns of thought and action used in everyday life. The many disruptions that Mrs. Koh created in the school estranged the teachers from their familiar social order, causing frustration and uncertainty. As evident in the 119 pages of “Turmoil at ‘KOH’sten School,” the teachers decided to fight back.

The inclusion of both “conflict” and “disruption” in this definition is important, because simple disruptions of an established order do not always involve conflict (as we will see in Chapters 4 and 5). In other words, disruptions of established social orders are not always cases of turmoil (they must be accompanied by conflict), and turmoil can be contrasted with situations in which disruptions result in changes without conflict.

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<sup>32</sup> See Glaeser (2000) for a kind of “post turmoil” analysis. In his study of Berlin Police Officers, Glaeser examines how Germans established a new social order (in the wake of turmoil from the fall of the Berlin wall and reunification) through processes of identity construction.

Turmoil can also be contrasted to situations in which there is confusion because there is no widely accepted order to be disrupted. When young teenagers get together for their first eighth grade dance and have little idea how to interact, the situation is not turmoil, though it may turn into turmoil as the teens negotiate an order that is disrupted when the adults turn on the lights and send hands scurrying.

### The Social Organization of Turmoil at Costen Elementary School

Was it unreasonable for us to expect that reorganization would wait until the end of the school year, which is the traditional time for principals to assess what is needed and make no disruptive changes? At the very least, were we naïve to believe that an intense overhaul would wait until after quality review? With the scrutiny of outside reviewers bearing down on us, wouldn't it have been more pragmatic and manageable for us to fix up our 'old face' rather than trying to put on a new one overnight? (Anonymous letter from a group of teachers first sent to Mrs. Koh and then included in "Turmoil at 'KOH'sten School").

This quote, like many others in "Turmoil at 'KOH'sten School," is indicative of Mrs. Koh's disruption of the negotiated order. Rather than observing the order to get a sense of how the school had been working, Koh immediately used her rational-legal authority to alter school practices. Though the teachers aim their frustrations at Mrs. Koh, Koh's efforts were conditioned by the rise of accountability policies (a change in the structural context). For example, the quotation mentions outside observers involved in a "quality review." At one time a routine practice, quality reviews have taken on greater meaning as an agent of compliance during the rise of accountability policies.

However, accountability policies (and the bureaucratic logic they manifest) alone do not generate turmoil. After all, the school's scores on the ITBS had been on the rise

and were well above the city average. The school was in little danger of being put on probation for low student performance. Though accountability policies created constant pressure to improve, the prior administrations established a loose coupling between accountability policies and school practices, maintaining the indulgency pattern they had negotiated with the staff.

Though accountability policies (and changes in the structural context in general) have a role, the turmoil at the school only develops when Mrs. Koh creates a tighter coupling between accountability policies and school practices, pushing the world of administration into the world of teaching, and disrupting the indulgency pattern that the teachers hold dear. I begin by examining four of Mrs. Koh's changes that created disruptions to the old way of doing business. 1) Her general emphasis on high standards and accountability, 2) Attendance and record keeping, 3) Support staff and resource periods, and 4) and the staffing "holocaust." These disruptions were enabled by Mrs. Koh's authority as principal. However, using her authority this way damaged her credibility in the eyes of the teachers, decreasing her symbolic power. Following an investigation of Mrs. Koh prompted by "Turmoil at 'KOH'sten School," Mrs. Koh made an effort to appeal to the teachers and acquire credibility in their eyes. However, this effort was complicated by turmoil involving the bilingual program. These five episodes of turmoil involve visible disruptions that breach the prior negotiated order at the school, and conflict as the teachers resist these disruptions. Before starting, let me provide some additional background on Koh's arrival at the school.

When Koh accepted the principal position at Costen School, she had no knowledge of the negotiated order that had endured through the prior administrations. Koh's lack of knowledge was exacerbated by the fact that this order existed only in the minds and practices of the staff: When Mrs. Koh came to Costen Elementary; there was no documentation of the school's operation.<sup>33</sup> During my first day of fieldwork Koh told me:

We're fine tuning a lot of procedures. When I came in the old administration didn't leave anything, so we're really starting from the bottom." When she had arrived at the school the office was completely bare, so "it's hard when there's a history of things that are done, and you don't know anything about it" then she continued saying "and everyone has their own way." (Field notes 10/12/99)

A few teachers, as well as the LSC chair (Stan Feierman) corroborated the story:

The fact is that Denise (Koh) came into a school where there were no records, where there was no structure, and she had to create it. From scratch. Which she should not have had to do. You know, there should have been something she could take over and she never was able to, so it appeared to everybody that she was being heavy handed because she was actually trying to bring order to a disordered situation. And that appears to be authoritarian. (Interview transcript, 5/13/00)

In one sense, Stan is correct. It is not easy to come in and take over an organization with no documentation. However, when he says that there is "no structure," he is incorrect. There *was* a structure in the school, but it involved a loosely coupled indulgency pattern, and not an order that corresponded with the rhetoric of accountability. When Mrs. Koh could not learn from documentation, instead of taking the time to observe the *modus operandi* she used the rational-legal authority of her office to create a structure that was more tightly coupled with accountability policies. When Koh did so, a number of veteran

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<sup>33</sup> The only exception being student records.

teachers did in fact interpret her actions as “heavy handed,” and “authoritarian,” even though she had every legal right to act as she did, and despite the fact that many of her changes were backed by accountability policies. Instead of attributing credibility to Mrs. Koh in the ways discussed in Chapter One, the teachers actively criticized her for her disruptions in the negotiated order. Without credibility in the eyes of the staff, Mrs. Koh lacked the symbolic power to define her continued disruptions as justified, and she could not effectively intervene in the social order.

*High Standards and Accountability.* In her alignment with accountability policies, Mrs. Koh has high standards of performance for teachers and students. Upon her arrival, Koh began to hold teachers accountable to her standards and to those of the region and the district. In doing so she disrupted the indulgency pattern employed by the previous administration, causing a palpable tension. For example, when I asked a new teacher what she would change about various meetings she said:

I guess I would change the fact that it's so negative. I mean, there's a lot of changes happening from Mrs. Koh who gets changes from the central office and it trickles down into things that we have to do and it's a lot of work. A lot of busy work, we could say, paperwork. Having to explain our exchanges to them, that I see a lot of people not liking. I guess with myself I've been at - the last school I was at we had to do things like that, be held accountable to what it is you're doing. So for me, it's not something new, apparently for a lot of people here it is. (Post observation interview transcript, 11/16/99)

In this passage Laura clearly identifies the logic of accountability policies that “trickle down” from the central office to Mrs. Koh and on to teachers in the form of paperwork to “explain our exchanges to them.” What is so telling about this excerpt is that it comes from a new teacher who is more familiar with accountability than the veteran teachers at

Costen, even though she spent the previous year teaching in another state: “So for me, it’s not something new, apparently for a lot of people here it is.” While Midwest City schools have faced accountability for a number of years, the prior administrations shielded the teachers from these pressures by maintaining a loose coupling between the world of teaching and the world of administration.

In contrast, increased surveillance via accountability paperwork is a means through which the world of administration trespasses on the world of teaching. The teachers often criticize Mrs. Koh’s use of accountability paperwork. Take this excerpt from a leader team meeting (from which Koh was absent) in which teacher representatives lament the influx of paperwork that began with Mrs. Koh’s arrival:

*Mrs. Andretti:* I know, I know, but you know what, when I first started here, in 1989-

*Mrs. Donalds:* (Jumping in) With Dr. Welch?

*Mrs. Andretti:* (Affirmative tone) It was so calm, and you could teach, no one was constantly looking over your shoulder, they knew, exactly what was going on, I mean, they ordered books, we, we weren’t, we didn’t have to do all this extra stuff we were allowed to teach, and I don’t know if this is, the, way of the future, but it’s, it’s, kinda stifling. (Leader Team Meeting Video Transcription 2/23/01)

The paperwork that accompanies accountability represents more than additional labor, it represents a broader loss of control, an infringement on the autonomy that the teachers had negotiated with the previous administrations. In contrast to the indulgency pattern where “no one was constantly looking over your shoulder” and “we were allowed to teach,” Koh’s move towards a tighter coupling with accountability policy disrupts the indulgency pattern and is “kinda stifling.” Andretti’s comments echoes that of another

teacher, who told me: “A Lot of that stuff gets stifled and squashed—there’s so many paper and test demands that a lot of creativity is getting lost in the shuffle” (Interview Transcript 11/15/99). Mrs. Koh’s emphasis on accountability disrupts the indulgency pattern and alienates the teachers from the autonomy that they hold dear, causing frustration.

Koh’s “stifling” adherence to high standards and accountability was a consistent frustration among the teachers. For example, during a staff development day in the fall of 1999, the staff was supposed to work on creating a uniform curriculum. Instead, discussion soon turned to the rigidity of accountability and the need for autonomy and flexibility.<sup>34</sup> As emotions began to simmer (as evidenced by numerous looks of disgust on the faces of veteran teachers and rising tones and pitches during conversation), Koh (calmly and with even tones), attempted to defend her actions in the school:

Mrs. Koh explained to the teachers that “if you value running a tight ship” then you have to have structure, not just in the classroom but also in the hallways and in the lunchroom. She continued that “I believe in giving children freedom of control, but until they can control themselves, you can’t give them freedom,” and “You’ve got to have order in society. It’s more than getting a certificate” for graduation. (Field notes, Staff Meeting 10/29/99).

Once again, the issue is control, and Mrs. Koh seeks accountability in the classroom, but also in the hallways and the lunchroom. Though the control issue is couched in terms of student development, the overarching “structure” and “order” that Mrs. Koh desires is a disruption of the teacher control and autonomy that the faculty had negotiated with the prior administrations.

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<sup>34</sup> Or what Rosenholtz termed a “non-routine technical culture” (Rosenholtz 1989).

What is ironic is that Mrs. Koh refers to the need for “structure” and “order,” and yet she repeatedly disrupts the negotiated order that existed prior to her arrival, an order the teachers deemed successful. Though her actions are consistent with accountability policies and she has the rational-legal authority to carry them out, because they violate the prior negotiated order the teachers view her actions as unjust. The teachers view Mrs. Koh and her actions negatively, and instead of attributing credibility in the ways discussed in Chapter One, they criticize her. As we will see in Chapter Four, without credibility in the eyes of the teachers, Mrs. Koh lacks the more “symbolic” power to effectively change the negotiated order and to quell the turmoil sparked by her disruptions.

The policies that Mrs. Koh introduces to the school have their origins in the bureaucratic logic of accountability. This logic has been on the rise in education, and it competes with the professional logic of autonomy. Yet the tensions between these logics only become felt at the local level through disruptions of the old indulgency pattern. Mrs. Koh’s changes create a tighter coupling between accountability policies and school practices, alienating the teachers from the autonomy they had negotiated with prior administrations. It is through these disruptions and the set of interactions and conflicts around these disruptions that the “Turmoil at ‘KOH’sten School” unfolds.

*Attendance and Record Keeping.* Another example of Koh’s disruption of the prior negotiated order involves methods of record keeping, particularly around attendance. Before Mrs. Koh’s arrival, the school had a quick and simple method of

taking attendance. However, this method was developed long before accountability policies were created, and it did not follow the requisite guidelines for attendance audits.

While record keeping is a regular feature of formal organizations, when a new method replaces earlier modes of operation, the change disrupts the established negotiated order. During a fifth grade team meeting, a group of teachers lamented this disruption:

The attendance is a recent issue, since the administration is trying to be accurate with the school record keeping. The 5th grade teachers reminisce about how it used to be, but Mrs. Gregory notes, “With a new principal comes new procedures.” The teachers remembered how in the past, the records were processed by an experienced clerk. Now the records are 3 weeks backed up. The group laments, but Mrs. Gregory comments that “With the CEO, we need to more careful.” (Field notes, 5<sup>th</sup> grade team meeting, 10/18/99).

Teachers like Mrs. Gregory recognize the logic of accountability and the rational-legal power it entails—“With the CEO, we need to be more careful.” In projecting the situation onto the CEO, Mrs. Gregory’s comments could be interpreted as sympathetic to Mrs. Koh’s situation as a middle manager. However, in a later interview Mrs. Gregory puts greater responsibility on Mrs. Koh and the new administration as the mediators of accountability policy (especially in light of the prior administration’s indulgency pattern):

They made changes very quickly, it’s been difficult for a lot of people because of the quick change and they have very high expectations as they should, but I am not sure if they are giving enough time to get a feel for things before they just jump into things. I think they have very good ideas but they might be moving too fast. (Interview transcript 11/19/99)

Preoccupied with making changes quickly, Mrs. Koh missed the opportunity to foster credibility with her staff. Moreover, her disruptions to the teachers’ established order further damaged her credibility in their eyes.

The frustrations the teachers feel as their negotiated order is being violated is amplified by Koh's inability to successfully convey the pressures she faces as a middle manager (Spillane et al 2002). For example, when I informally asked Chris Meachim, a 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade math teacher, what he thought of a staff meeting we had attended, he commented:

“It didn't go well,” because it did not solve the problems they had been having with the attendance records. Chris explained that there used to be a better system with “highlighted names” and “color codes” for the different categories of students (i.e. bilingual and special education), but when the new administration came in they changed it and he does not know why. I asked him “if you could change anything about the meeting, what would you change?” Chris chuckled “I'd try to get an answer” to explain the changes in attendance record keeping. (Informal post meeting interview notes, 11/30/99)

Mr. Meachim cannot stomach the changes in attendance record keeping. Mr. Meachim's frustration is exacerbated by Mrs. Koh's failure to explain the origins of the changes. When Mrs. Koh's fails to explain these origins, she misses an opportunity to create a more favorable impression in the minds of the teachers as she disrupts their social order. On the whole, Mr. Meachim had been supportive of Mrs. Koh, but these problems endanger whatever credibility Mrs. Koh has cultivated in the eyes of supporters like Mr. Meachim.

Koh's concern with attendance accountability was well founded, as the school was selected for a routine attendance audit in the spring of 2000. After the winter break, Koh hired a new counselor whom she knew from her days as an assistant principal (Mr. Mondello), in part to oversee attendance. Just prior to an interview, Mondello told me about the audit, and explained that the attendance books should be okay, though they

were “questionable before I got here.” In our interview he went on to explain: “When she (Koh) came in, there were a lot of things that were not done according to snuff, and she’s trying to make sure that they now are. Reports go in, in a timely fashion. Reports go in correctly” (Interview transcript, 5/30/00). In the case of attendance (and a number of other issues) Mrs. Koh has made a concerted effort to conform to accountability policies, using her rational-legal power as principal to make sure things are done “according to snuff.”

As a form of accountability, the changes in attendance procedures involve additional work for the teachers. Though this disruption has a labor cost, once again the increase in labor is symptomatic of a broader loss of control over how things will be done. The disruptions alienate the teachers from the prior negotiated order that provided them with considerable autonomy, and the disruptions also alienate the teachers from control over the labor process. Through Mrs. Koh’s changes, the administrative gaze creeps into the world of teaching.

Though Mrs. Koh’s actions are aligned with the bureaucratic logic of accountability, her actions disrupt the prior negotiated order that the teachers hold dear. Because Mrs. Koh’s actions are at odds with the autonomy that had long characterized the teachers’ world, they view her actions as unjust. Instead of attributing credibility to her, the teachers criticize her, and in using her authority as principal to disrupt the teachers’ established order, she actually damages her symbolic power.

*Support Staff and Resource Periods.* Part of the disruption around attendance involves conformity to accountability policies. However, part of the disruption stems

from Koh's vision for the school and her corresponding use of rational-legal authority.

At the start of her first full year at the school, Koh wanted to create a science lab for the primary grades. The labs would serve two functions: 1) Provide additional resource periods for teachers in the primary grades while their students go to the science lab (increasing from three to five resource periods a week), and 2) Allow for specialized science instruction. Staffing the lab required hiring an additional teacher. When I asked Mrs. Koh how she fit the lab into the budget, she explained:

When I came into the school, we had two teacher's aides that I didn't think they were very effective. One of the teacher aides was really was not doing much of anything. . . . Another aide was working on attendance. Her title was attendance, but she was not - I mean no one followed up on the truants. No one really called the parents when the kids are tardy. So I thought if I could eliminate two teacher's aides and find a new teacher that does not cost a lot of money and create a science lab, since the teachers didn't have five preps a week when I came. And I know that we need to - in order to get the prep, you need to find a resource person. (Interview transcript 3/31/00)

Though Koh labels these two staff members as "teacher aides," they in fact worked in the main office and were a part of the organizational structure Mr. Welch had created to free teachers from bureaucratic duties and protect their autonomy. One of these aides processed the attendance records. Koh's decision to eliminate/replace these positions to create a science lab and additional resource periods for the primary teachers played a role in the attendance issue. The problem was especially salient for the teachers in the upper grades who were now burdened with additional paperwork yet did not receive an additional resource period (though they already had five resource periods a week).

The resulting disruption of the negotiated order was again compounded by Koh's inability to articulate the reasoning behind the changes.<sup>35</sup> For example, in discussing the office staff changes with me, Brenda Donalds (teacher) could only vaguely explain that "They didn't fit in Mrs. Koh's plans is my understanding. They were budget positions and she chose to bring some of her own people in from where she had been.

Unfortunately they don't have the same expertise. I don't think." Then of these types of decisions, Donalds continued:

She's entitled to make them, it's her business, she's the new boss. She can't change teachers but she can reassign classrooms but she can't come in and summarily let teachers go without good reason. Most of us are tenured. But she can with those kinds of positions. (Interview transcript 12/02/99)

Mrs. Donalds identifies Mrs. Koh's rational legal authority to hire and fire office staff and aides. What she does not recognize is that Mrs. Koh used her authority in this way *for a reason*, to provide specialized science instruction and increase resource periods in the primary grades, and that some of the fallout around attendance is related to this reason. Mrs. Koh's failure lies in her inability to make these reasons visible, to manage the impressions teachers form of her as she tinkers with the negotiated order. Without these acts of impression management the teachers can only assume that the decisions come from the fact that Koh is an authoritative "new boss" and lament that the new office staff "don't have the same expertise." These errors come at the expense of Koh's credibility with teachers and symbolic power, perpetuating the turmoil at the school.

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<sup>35</sup> Nor were all these connections immediately apparent to me during the initial stages of my fieldwork.

*The Staffing “holocaust.”* One of Mrs. Koh’s largest transgressions against the negotiated order involved a large decrease in the veteran staff and an influx of new staff. The remaining teachers lamented the disappearance of their longtime colleagues, and the staffing issue made its most dramatic appearance in my data at an unexpected time. I had just observed Mrs. Donald’s classroom lesson on the Holocaust. Following an interview protocol, I asked her why she thought it was important to teach the Holocaust. I was shocked by her answer:

It’s something that we parallel our lives to- Only because with our administration, there was one time when things were so bad here that people were sort of (pause) – we’ve had some really tough times here where I said to someone “I feel like a blue eyed blond from Germany in the early 1940’s that nothing was happening to me but the people all around me.” (Continues later) I mean we have had people disappear and not know what happened to them. That’s the way it happens in the business world. You know its one thing to say “so and so has been transferred” or they’re going to take a position at this (other) school, it was we came back (from summer vacation) and 25 people out of 100 were gone. (Interview transcript 5/12/00)

Such harsh evaluations of Koh’s administration were common. To quote an anonymous letter included in “Turmoil at ‘KOH’sten School,” “Something has to be done! We feel like we are in a communist country!”

However, at no time during the staff turnover did Koh exceed her rational-legal authority. When Koh arrived at Costen she publicly stated that when openings became available, she would “only hire young teachers” who were enthusiastic, energetic, and more affordable (to allow for greater budgetary creativity). Because the majority of the existing staff was tenured, Koh could not easily fire them. Instead, she took a passive-aggressive approach, putting advertisements for job openings at other schools in teachers’

mailboxes (4 such advertisements were reproduced in “Turmoil at ‘KOH’sten School”).

This move damaged her credibility in the eyes of the remaining staff. But technically, when these teachers left the school, they left of their own will, and as tenured union members, were able to get jobs elsewhere.

Though Mrs. Koh broke no formal rules, her actions disrupted the negotiated order that had existed for years. Though Koh could not easily fire teachers, she could fire the longtime assistant principal, and she did:

One of the complaint was that I eliminated the former assistant principal and hired my own. *But that was within the legal right of new principals.* So I followed the guideline.

(Continuing later) *And I’m not going to keep someone on the staff simply because I need to be politically correct. It’s just – I’m not going to do it.* And whether the teachers support that idea or not, whether they feel that this is a person they’ve worked with for the last 20 years of their life or not, it is really not my concern. *As long as I’m not breaking the rules.*

(Continuing later) And the president of the Principal Association, she told me “why did you not keep the former AP? Well she was sick. She had breast cancer. You can’t push her out the door.” I’m looking at her and I think, “Well is that the criteria? *That was not included in your policy.*” (Interview 3/31/00 emphasis added)

In using her rational-legal authority to fire the old assistant principal, Koh follows the policy guidelines *to the letter*. In doing so, she fails to (even refuses to) pay homage to the negotiated order that had existed at the school, disrupting the logic of confidence and good faith that accompanies the traditional loosely coupled order of schools (Meyer and Rowan 1977). Mrs. Koh’s focus is on formal policy, and not the informal autonomy and respect the teachers had established with the prior administrations (“I’m not going to

keep someone on the staff simply because I need to be politically correct”).<sup>36</sup> However, in her single-minded focus on guidelines, Koh loses sight of another form of power, power that emerges not from bureaucratic rules, but rather credibility in the eyes of teachers. In turn, a letter writing campaign by teachers prompted an investigation into her practices.

### Recognizing Teachers as an Audience

Though no serious repercussions came from the investigation by the Central Office, Mrs. Koh learned that her rational-legal authority was not enough for her to successfully manage the school, and that she had to treat the teachers as an important audience and acquire credibility in their eyes: Instead of using her authority to operate in her own interests and in the interests of accountability, she also had to perform in ways that the teachers would find favorable. As Mrs. Koh explained to me in an interview:

As we've gone through the change process, I said, "What are our challenges?" So I begin to look at teachers. And I think there was some positive things come out of it (the investigation). I begin to look at teachers a little differently. I think I take into – in account of how they view things a little bit more. And try to find ways to work with them and try to look into ways that motivate them and let them see that yes, they are allowed to have input when there is room for it. But it's just not in everything that I do that will involve the (teacher) input (Interview Transcript 5/15/00).

Following the investigation (Winter 1999/2000), in the spring of 2000 Mrs. Koh shifted her practices in an effort to appeal to the teachers. One of the first things she did was to

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<sup>36</sup> Koh chose to fire the assistant principal because Koh wanted to hire an assistant whom she felt better complemented her own skill set. Also, the old assistant was unable to help Koh with the overwhelming amount of work that she faced as the only administrator in the school (due to her illness).

reestablish a “leader team” structure used by the previous administration to provide teachers with a forum to voice their concerns and to participate in decision-making. Take the following excerpt from one of these meetings. A year earlier Mrs. Koh had moved a large number of teachers to different grade levels and classrooms. When a teacher representative asked Mrs. Koh “where they would be” next year, Koh replied:

I want to honor everybody (with) what they want. The reason is that I’ve learned a lot in the first year really going through as principal that the key is teamwork. I would love to move the entire second grade team to the third grade team, but that’s not what they want to do. Because they work so well together. The first and second grade team, you know, I’ve done a lot of thinking. When I think about this school year what really holds through with all the changes, it’s really the teamwork. And look at the eighth grade team, how they pull together for the graduation. The kindergarten team that I never have time to stop by to say hello to, how you do independently as a team. And if I do anything to upset the teamwork I think it’s going to be much more difficult for us in the upcoming school year. (Video Transcription, Leader Team Meeting 6/5/00)

In this passage Mrs. Koh is making a concerted effort *not* to violate the negotiated order for the rest of the year. In talking about “teamwork” she is in fact honoring the teacher’s negotiated order (“I want to honor everybody what they want”). She recognizes that the teachers are an important audience for credibility, and that she cannot use her rational-legal authority to further disrupt old practices and alienate the teachers, even though she believes that moving the second grade teachers would improve instruction in third grade.

Mrs. Koh’s efforts to recognize the teachers as an audience are further reflected in the following passage from a Local School Council Meeting. The LSC secretary had just read the notes from the teachers’ feedback box, and there was one anonymous letter complaining that classroom assignments should have been finalized by now. One complaint represents a steep decline in the past volume, but in light of Mrs. Koh’s efforts

to appeal to the teachers, Mrs. Koh became emotional. Koh seemed to be fighting tears for a time while using a tone that can best be described as a combination of frustration, anger, and exhaustion:

I'm really tired of this. There hasn't been one single teacher that comes to my door over the past month that has asked for something I have not granted. I'm going around asking people what they want to teach next year in addition to the form they already submit. . . You know I had a gym teacher that stood at my door at 9:00 today and said, "Could I go to the graduation?" and I said yes. I have a bilingual teacher who came to me at the end of the day yesterday and said, "Could I go to the graduation" and "I used to be invited" and I said, "I never said you can not come. If you don't tell me, I don't know what happened prior." I said come on over, I have three bilingual teachers coming to the graduation. I have not had anybody asking for things I have not granted at their wishes. (Video Tape Transcription, Local School Council Meeting 6/8/00)

After going out of her way to appeal to the teachers as an audience and to respect their prior negotiated order ("I never said you can not come. If you don't tell me, I don't know what happened prior"), one minor complaint was enough to evoke an emotional response.

Despite her emotional response at the LSC meeting, Mrs. Koh continued to appeal to the teachers. When the teachers requested a switch from homogeneous to heterogeneous ability grouping in classrooms, Mrs. Koh agreed despite the fact that she believes that homogeneous grouping produces better student outcomes. Moreover, throughout this reorganization of students, Koh further honored the teachers' requests for room numbers and grade levels. She had learned that her rational-legal authority was not sufficient for credibility in the eyes of the teachers, and that to acquire symbolic power she needed to appease them as an audience and better manage interactions to repair the negotiated order she had disrupted.

### 2000-2001: The Bilingual Blow-Up

Compared to the year before, the 2000/2001 school year began smoothly. Over the summer Mrs. Koh purchased all the materials the teachers requested, and oversaw the creation of a staff handbook. Most teachers were pleased with the new heterogeneous grouping and the continuity in their grade levels and room assignments. For a time it appeared as though the negotiated order had stabilized. This would soon change when issues concerning bilingual education would send a new wave of turmoil through the school.

During the summer of 2000 Mrs. Koh changed the bilingual program at Costen Elementary. The change involved decreasing the number of self-contained bilingual classrooms, particularly Russian, where class size had become small due to shifting neighborhood demographics. During the 1999/2000 school year, the Russian bilingual teachers had self-contained classrooms with just over 20 students, while the teachers in the regular program had over 30 students. Koh eliminated the self-contained classes, putting the students in regular classrooms where they would receive bilingual pullout instruction, while placing the Russian bilingual teachers in regular classrooms. She also (as she had done before) “pushed” out a few of the bilingual and ESL teachers so she could hire more young teachers and further lower class sizes. While this restructuring did lower class sizes overall, it greatly expanded the bilingual-ESL pullout program without any significant increase in pullout teachers.

Koh made these changes for two reasons, neither of which was well articulated to the staff. First and foremost, Mrs. Koh needed to lower the overall class size in the ever-

expanding school. If Koh did not lower classroom size, she was risking a union grievance (class sizes were approaching the limits permitted in the contract with the teacher's union). Just as the district office holds Mrs. Koh accountable for the school's attendance books, she is also held accountable to the union contract by the teacher's union. Second, Koh wanted to create more of an immersion model that fit with her preferences for bilingual education. Though Koh never clearly articulated the reasoning for these changes, for the most part the teachers in the regular program were pleased. After all, they could see that their class sizes were down, and they could also see that the pullout teachers had to work harder (many of the regular program teachers perceived the pullout teachers to be lazy, as they would say "in the door at 9:00 and out the door at 2:30").

However, Koh's changes created sharp divisions among the teachers and she now had to deal with two competing audiences, the teachers in the regular program and the pullout teachers.<sup>37</sup> Though Koh's changes appealed to the regular teachers, the restructuring angered the pullout teachers. The change increased the number of students receiving pullout instruction, but because of overcrowding there was no space to increase the size of pullout sessions. As a result, the minutes of instruction per student decreased. Before the change, students would normally receive two forty-minute periods of instruction in a day, but now many of them only received one. In the past the pullout teachers had worked with students on their native languages, on English, math, and social

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<sup>37</sup> There are approximately twenty bilingual teachers affected by the pullout program, and fifty-five teachers in the regular program (with five more teachers in special education).

science, and had graded the students in these subjects. However, with the changes the pullout teachers (lead by the Harriet Lui, the bilingual coordinator and Alana Yeldenko, an LSC teacher representative) did not feel that they could grade students fairly when they only instructed them for forty-minute periods. As the first grading period arrived, Harriet Lui abruptly announced that the pullout teachers would only provide grades the students' in native language, leaving the regular program teachers to grade the other subjects.

In short, when Mrs. Koh changed the bilingual program, the changes appealed to the teachers in the regular program, but disrupted the established negotiated order of the pullout teachers. The pullout teachers retaliated by changing their grading practices, and in doing so, blind-sided the regular program teachers and disrupted *their* negotiated order, just when it had began to settle. Baffled and newly burdened, many regular program teachers did not feel they could grade the students fairly because the students did not speak English and they did not speak the native languages of the students. As these contentious excerpts from a bilingual team meeting illustrate, Mrs. Koh was acutely aware that any changes in grading practices would disrupt the negotiated order of the regular program teachers:

Mrs. Koh says, "Mrs. Yeldenko, you're preaching to the wrong person," because she understands the point on the grading. However, the classroom teachers had expected the pullout teachers to grade for all areas "because you were doing that for years."

(Continuing later) Mrs. Koh says, "Harriet (Lui), you don't listen. I'm going to be direct." Mrs. Koh continues that "if you've been doing something as a past practice for 10 years don't expect change overnight."

(Continuing later) Mrs. Koh tells them “I had to learn from last year, you know my schedule of change,” (she prefers rapid change), but “you have to realize it is a process we have to help people to understand.” (Field notes, Bilingual Team Meeting, 10/27/00)

As she had been doing since the investigation the year before, Mrs. Koh honors the negotiated order of the teachers in the regular program (“if you’ve been doing something as a past practice for ten years don’t expect change overnight” and “I had to learn from last year”). However, it is ironic that, in learning from the previous year, Koh did not anticipate how changes in the bilingual program would disrupt the negotiated order of the pullout teachers, and, in return, the regular teachers. Perhaps Koh assumed that the pullout teachers knew of the looming problem with class size and the union contract. However, she never articulated these concerns publicly, leaving the pullout and regular program teachers to think the worst of her and each other.

The negotiated order that the pullout teachers had established in the past was further disrupted by Koh’s demand that they formalize their curriculum. Koh ordered the pullout teachers to document their practices so the new, young bilingual teachers who had come into the school could learn the curriculum. Though Koh’s demand fits with the spirit of accountability, it violates the indulgency pattern that the bilingual and pullout teachers also shared with the previous administrations. Echoing the complaints of the regular program teachers a year earlier, a bilingual teacher who had been moved into a regular classroom told me “you don’t have a baby in a month, it takes nine months” (field notes 2/16/01).

Mrs. Koh did not anticipate the unintended consequences the changes in the bilingual program would have on the negotiated order throughout the school. When things began to unravel, she lacked the credibility and symbolic power to create a grading compromise between the bilingual and regular program teachers. Though she had learned to respect the teachers as an audience for credibility, given her past transgressions she had not cultivated interactions to the point where the teachers felt she was a credible actor in the school, despite her rational-legal authority. Just as the regular teachers had done a year earlier with “Turmoil at ‘KOH’sten School,” now the pullout teachers went over Koh’s head to complain, this time to the Bilingual Compliance Office.

While the complaints in “Turmoil at ‘KOH’sten School” had no legal basis, the complaints of the pullout teachers did: With the changed structure of the bilingual program, the students no longer received the number of minutes of bilingual instruction required by the state. Now Mrs. Koh was placed on the other side of the fence: She was being held accountable, and for the first time her actions *did not* match policy. Koh’s changes in the bilingual program had involved a loose coupling with bilingual policy as a means to lower classroom size and conform to the contract with the teachers union. But following the complaints of the pullout teachers, the Bilingual Compliance Office mandated a tight coupling between policy and practice, causing the bilingual program to be restructured the next year. As a result, many of the young, non-tenured teachers Koh had hired to lower class size had to be let go. In the past Koh had used her rational-legal authority to violate the loosely coupled indulgency pattern at the school. Now the

negotiated order she had attempted to establish based on a loose coupling between bilingual policy and practice was violated by the rational-legal authority of the state.

Mrs. Koh's changes in the bilingual program disrupted the social order that the pullout teachers held dear, sparking turmoil in the school just when the negotiated order had begun to settle. Moreover, the pullout teachers exacted revenge by disrupting the grading practices of the teachers in the regular program, thereby spreading the turmoil throughout the school. However, a careful look at the bilingual blow-up at Costen School reminds us that a disruption in an established negotiated order is just one part of the organization of turmoil. The bilingual turmoil has its roots in the school's contract with the teacher's union and requirements for class size. Mrs. Koh is held accountable to the union contract, and the changes in the bilingual program were in part an effort to avoid a union grievance.

Koh's accountability to competing policies put her in a catch-twenty-two--union contract or bilingual mandate? Koh's inability to handle the bilingual blow-up further damaged her credibility and symbolic power with teachers in the pullout *and* regular programs. The turmoil at Costen School is socially organized around this tension between accountability policies, the negotiated order, rational legal authority, and the struggle for credibility and symbolic power.

### The Ongoing Turmoil at Costen Elementary School

Shortly after the staff meeting where Mrs. Lui announced that the pullout teachers would no longer grade students as they had in the past, I made the following comment to a group of teachers during lunch in the teacher's lounge:

“I could be wrong, but it seemed like things were going pretty smoothly at the beginning of the year, and then this thing with bilingual came out of nowhere and messed everything up.” But the gym teacher and Mrs. Andretti reply with a (tired sounding) “no” while gently shaking their heads. The gym teacher says it’s “more of the same,” for example Mrs. Koh saying they need to have standards for behavior in the hallways. Then Jackie Mitchell half agrees, saying “We’re inundated with paperwork,” but she thought things had been going well. Then Mrs. Granger says, “I’m going to disagree” (with the gym teacher and Mrs. Andretti) she thought things were going well, “and I was happy, but this (bilingual mess) is awful, it has really divided us.” (Field notes, 10/24/00)

Though the teachers disagree in response to my loaded statement, they all point to things that disrupted their previous negotiated order: The gym teacher citing student discipline, Mrs. Mitchell citing paperwork, and Mrs. Granger mentioning the bilingual program. These transgressions, no matter how small, pull the rug out from under the teachers, upsetting “business as usual” and violating the known order that allows them to exercise control over their situation (Schutz 1970, White 1992).<sup>38</sup> Without the control that a stable negotiated order provides, it becomes difficult to act with confidence, creating an emotional drain and the potential for turmoil.

The frustrations that arise from a disrupted order and turmoil extend beyond the teachers. As a frazzled Stan Feierman (LSC chair) told me:

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<sup>38</sup> Though complaints are a part of the everyday life of most organizations, these complaints involve turmoil because they are about the ways in which things have been disrupted, upsetting business as usual. Complaints and conflict are common in organizations, but turmoil is distinct in its focus on disruptions, followed by conflict.

I mean um, I think we need to bring some normalcy, that's the word, to this school. (Continuing later) See that's the thing. Whenever we begin to get to the point where things are kind of are calming down, like I mean this year, the steps went OK, Denise (Koh) spent the whole stinkin' summer making sure we have supplies and everything was ready to go. You know we met with the CEO; things were seemingly going along very well . . . And then this bilingual stuff blows up. . . You know it's kind of like just when we think everything's like gonna really fall into shape and the regular teachers are starting to calm down and we're past the investigation and all that junk. It's like there's all these little things kind of, you know, bugging us. (Interview 11/01/00)

Though Stan is unwavering in his support of Mrs. Koh, without the “normalcy” that a stable negotiated order provides he is, as he often told me, “at the end of my rope.”

Consequently, when principals violate an established negotiated order, they risk causing turmoil and losing credibility in the eyes of their staff, despite the rational-legal authority that their position entails. Though the social order of a school may at times appear to be based on the requirements of accountability policies, Stan's comments demonstrate that this order is in fact a continuous negotiation between groups: “things were seemingly going along very well. . . And then this bilingual stuff blows up.”

Ironically, for all the turmoil at the school, a policymaker could uphold Costen School as an accountability success story. After all, the school's test scores had been on a rise for years, and after a small dip during Mrs. Koh's first full year, the scores continued their rise. Despite the problems at the school, it is a place where students learn (at least to take a test). But test scores do not measure the human cost of turmoil, the pain that comes with a lack of “normalcy” and endemic uncertainty. For all of the school's success in educating students, it is a very trying place to work for both administrators and

teachers.<sup>39</sup> The frayed emotions, frustration, and conflict involved in turmoil underscore the hidden costs that accountability policies and other disruptions to the social order can incur.

Though the school might be deemed a success, I argue that the success of the school comes *despite* the turmoil, not because turmoil has a functional purpose. The number one goal of schools is to instruct students. Even though Costen is a place where students learn, there is shockingly little discourse at Costen about the core technology of education—instruction. During my two years at Costen, the only time teachers came together as a group to talk about instruction was during Midwest City’s official staff development days (twice a year). Nor was instructional discourse a common feature of informal interactions. When people at Costen get together to talk, either formally or informally, they are preoccupied with the turmoil at the school, and they struggle to come to grips with the different disruptions to the prior social order and the conflicts around these disruptions. The research on model schools stresses the central role of instructional discourse and its linkage to teacher collaboration, teacher learning, teacher certainty, and student learning (Rosenholtz 1989). Though Costen is a good school, a focus on instruction has been buried under the mounting turmoil. Mrs. Koh often lamented that people in the school never had the time to talk about instruction, and as I was finishing my observations, Mrs. Koh expressed hope that they would be able to address instruction in the near future (Interview 8/3/01). Accountability policies seek to improve student

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<sup>39</sup> Likewise, the constant uncertainty at the school made it a very trying place to conduct fieldwork. As a researcher I rarely knew what to expect, and it took two years of observations for my data to reach a kind of saturation that enabled me to recognize patterns of turmoil.

outcomes, but students learn through instruction. Ironically, the tight-coupling that Mrs. Koh has created between accountability policies and school practices and the emergent turmoil in the school actually squash instructional discourse. In terms of instruction, the teachers at Costen are increasingly isolated.

Accountability policies can have another hidden cost: symbolic power. When implemented through the rational-legal authority of administrators, accountability policies may be antagonistic to an existing order and the credibility that forms the basis of symbolic power. How does one balance these contradictions? Rational-legal authority aside, before changing a negotiated order one must cultivate credibility through interactions with teachers. Though Koh has learned, she has not mastered this technique, and the turmoil continues. Armed with credibility and the symbolic power that it affords, one can work from within the negotiated order to improve instruction. Though the image of decoupling in schools is popular, teachers *are* linked to administrators and other teachers through informal interactions, and these informal interactions are an important influence on instruction (Spillane, Hallett, and Diamond 2003). In using her rational-legal authority to impose accountability from above, Mrs. Koh fractures these informal ties and influence that flows through them.

Because of the problems in the school, when the opportunity arose to hire a new assistant principal, the Regional Office put pressure on Koh and the LSC to hire Mr. Carrol, a veteran of the city system. Though city policy gives principals the right to hire and fire their own assistants, Mrs. Koh went along with the office's recommendation (perhaps recognizing that her credibility with the Regional Office was at stake).

Although some people at Costen initially perceived Mr. Carrol as a watchdog for the Regional Office (disdainfully referring to him as the office “pet”) and expected him to make immediate changes, he did not. In fact, despite all of the problems the school has faced in the past two years, when I asked Carrol what his biggest challenge in the school was he replied: “The biggest challenges in this school? Just - the biggest challenge for me was to run a day-to-day operations and still learn the culture at the same time. Being the new guy on the block.” When I asked him “how do you go about learning the culture?” he responded, “Become a good listener” (Interview 7/10/01). Carrol’s first goal was to learn the negotiated order, not disrupt it. Moreover, he seemed to recognize that there was a disconnection between the negotiated order and the formal duties of his office: the challenge was to “run a day-to-day operations *and still* learn the culture” (emphasis added).

Mr. Carrol’s reflections match his early actions in the school. The first time I observed Mr. Carrol was in a staff meeting:

Then Mrs. Koh says “and I know you met with our new AP earlier this week,” and motions to Mr. Carrol who was sitting in the corner. Then Carrol stands and states (loudly and clearly, friendly, voice varied in tone and pitch) “My name is Mr. Carrol,” and he says he enjoyed meeting everyone, but “I apologize for forgetting names, the school is so big.” Then at the center table Mr. North (Eighth grade teacher) smiles and jokes (in a loud overstated manner) “That’s OK Mr. BROWN.” And the room bursts out into loud laughter. Once the laughter dies down Carrol smiles and tells them all “I’m here to support you all, and thank you.” To my surprise the room breaks out into clapping, with nearly every teacher participating. (Field notes, staff meeting, 1/19/01)

Whenever I observed Mr. Carrol in a meeting, if he was not leading the meeting he was sitting in a corner location where he could see most everything (my own method of

observation). Once introduced, after a good dose of impression management he tells the teachers “I’m here to support you all, and thank you.” Carrol immediately recognizes the teachers as an important audience for credibility, an overture that the teachers reward with applause. Though he has not flexed any rational-legal muscles or implemented an accountability policy, he has paid homage to the negotiated order and taken a step towards credibility.

This is not to say that Mr. Carrol never disrupted the negotiated order, but when he did so he would often attempt to manage impressions around his transgression. For example, during a literacy group meeting on the same day as the preceding observation, Carrol became long-winded on the topic of organizing the daily schedule to facilitate improvement in reading instruction. He spoke at length, and disrupted the freely flowing exchange of ideas between teachers that characterized the meeting before his involvement. Yet he seemed to catch himself and said “and I’m the new guy. I’m not disturbing your culture. You know much more about this place than I do” (Field notes, literacy group meeting, 1/19/01). Even though Carrol *was* disturbing their culture, immediately after doing so he showed *deference to* their culture “You know much more about this place than I do.” Carrol tries to manage the impressions the teachers form even as he violates their negotiated order. In this way he increases the likelihood that teachers will view him as credible, while protecting any credibility he has already acquired.

### Summary and Reflection

In this chapter we have seen how, in addition to changes in the structural context (Chapter Two), turmoil is also organized by disruptions to an established social order. While changes in the structural context may precipitate turmoil, disruptions to established social orders instigate turmoil. Mrs. Koh's disruptions restrict the individual autonomy of the teachers, distancing them from the sense of control provided by the indulgency pattern that they had negotiated with the prior administrations. With this loss of control, the teachers become alienated from their labor, and from the social order that they hold dear. In many of the examples of turmoil at Costen, the disruptions involve efforts by Mrs. Koh to create a tighter connection between accountability policies and everyday practices in the school. However, turmoil is not always linked to changes in the structural context: the disruption and turmoil involving the staffing turnover (or "holocaust") does not relate to accountability policies.

Turmoil is also organized around authority relations. For disruptions to grow into "turmoil" requires that they persist, and in the case of Costen Elementary, the persistent disruption is enabled by Mrs. Koh's rational-legal authority as principal. Because of the authority of her position, the teachers cannot simply "shrug off" Mrs. Koh's disruptions surrounding her high standards and accountability, attendance bookkeeping, staffing decisions, and the bilingual program.

Finally, turmoil is organized around symbolic power relations. Preoccupied with changing the school immediately on her arrival, Mrs. Koh did not cultivate interactions

with the staff as a means to acquire credibility in their eyes. Instead of attributing credibility to Mrs. Koh, the teachers criticize her disruptions, and the 119 pages of “Turmoil at ‘KOH’sten School,” speak to Mrs. Koh’s symbolic power problems. As the power to define the situation, the role of symbolic power is of particular consequence in the organization of turmoil. On the one hand, turmoil involves a lack of symbolic power by the actor who initiates a change in the negotiated order. Without symbolic power, Mrs. Koh cannot define her disruptions to the negotiated order as just, or manage the emergent turmoil in the school. As we will see in the following chapters, when the initiator *does* have symbolic power, he/she can use this power to define the change as justified and thereby circumvent resistance (as such, not all changes in a social order result in turmoil). On the other hand, the symbolic power of respondents is also involved, and Chapter Five explores how the teachers as respondents use symbolic power to define a change in the negotiated order as particularly disruptive. Thus, turmoil is both organized around symbolic power relations (who has it and who does not), *and articulated* by those with symbolic power: Symbolic power is implicated in the presence (and absence) of turmoil, *and* the emergent texture of that turmoil. It is towards these symbolic power relations that I now turn.

## Chapter 4

### **Defining Turmoil from Above: The Symbolic Power of Administrators**

*“I don’t care if she’s the principal, she can’t treat me like that. I don’t care if you’re having a bad day. You have to give respect to get it.”* (Lunchroom observation 3/23/01)

This quotation comes from Theresa, a member of the office staff at Costen School. It was the lunch period, and as soon as Theresa arrived in the teacher’s lounge, she started a polemic against Mrs. Koh that encapsulates much of the situation at Costen. First, as I have described, Mrs. Koh’s rational-legal authority as principal is not sufficient for her success (“I don’t care if she’s the principal, she can’t treat me like that”). Second, Theresa’s words touch on the face-to-face interactions that have become problematic for Mrs. Koh: In order to receive deference from her coworkers, Mrs. Koh must exhibit the proper demeanor (Goffman 1967, Anderson 1978): “you have to give respect to get it.” However, I argue that there is more at stake than a successful, respectful interaction. Rather, such interactions are constitutive of symbolic power at the school. While Mrs. Koh uses her authority to disrupt the previous order at the school in an effort to create a tighter coupling between school practices and accountability reforms, her actions spark turmoil because without symbolic power she cannot define her own actions as justified. Mrs. Koh’s difficulties at the school are linked not only to her violation of the negotiated order, but also to credibility and symbolic power problems that emerge from her interactions with the staff. Mrs. Koh’s lack of credibility and the symbolic power relations at the setting are fundamental pillars of the “Turmoil at ‘KOH’sten School.”

While Mrs. Koh has been unable to foster credibility through interactions with the teachers, she has been more successful with another audience: The Local School Council. Mrs. Koh uses her symbolic power with the LSC to redefine the principal evaluation process in a way that bypasses her micro-political difficulties with the teachers. So defined, the principal evaluation process protects her credibility in the eyes of the LSC, despite the turmoil at the school. In contrast, Mr. Carrol steps into the micro-political mess that Mrs. Koh tries to avoid. Mr. Carrol fosters credibility for himself through his interactions with the teachers, and he deploys his credibility as the symbolic power to redefine school policies, altering the negotiated order while avoiding the teacher resistance and turmoil that plagues Mrs. Koh.

Stepping from a discussion of the negotiated order at Costen School (Chapter Two and Three) into the details of the social interactions that constitute the negotiated order reveals an underlying layer of complexity in the social organization of turmoil. Mrs. Koh and Mr. Carrol possess different forms of capital that inform their daily practices (Bourdieu 1977, 1986, 1990). Koh and Carrol bring these different forms of capital with them into social interaction, and through interaction different groups (LSC and teachers) attribute credibility to them based on their capital in divergent ways. In what follows I examine Mrs. Koh's interactions and lack of credibility with the teachers, her interactions and symbolic power with the LSC, and Mr. Carrol's interactions and symbolic power with teachers. Analysis of these interactions uncovers the defining role of symbolic power in the organization of turmoil. Lacking symbolic power, those who initiate changes in an established social order are unable to define their actions as

justified. Unable to manage the very disruptions in the negotiated order that they create, these disruptions spawn turmoil. However, armed with symbolic power, one may effectively intercede in the negotiated order while circumventing turmoil.

### Mrs. Koh's Interactions and Lack of Credibility with Teachers

In a sense, Mrs. Koh is the micro embodiment of the wider institutional logic of accountability that has made its way into educational reform. Accountability policies set standards to which all are held. They are tough and rigid, and so is Mrs. Koh. Mrs. Koh applies her standards to all without prejudice, including herself. Just as she holds students accountable for their compliance with the school's uniform policy (black or blue pants with a white top), she also arrives at school in compliance *every day*. Mrs. Koh takes it for granted that others would follow suit. As she often expressed to me in disbelief: "Why can't our students come to school in compliance with the uniform code?" In this sense, her own compliance is second nature, and she finds noncompliance baffling.

This "nature" makes its way into her interactions with the staff, taking on a kind of "manner" or surface "style." However, Mrs. Koh's rule-like nature and respect for authority is more than a surface style. It is a more fundamental, underlying way of being. It is a baseline approach to the world that she embodies. Though this way of being is manifested verbally, it also has a corporeal existence, for example her taste in clothing. Acquired through the life course, this underlying way of being is a type of cultural capital that informs how Mrs. Koh goes about interacting with others. Depending on how this capital is valued by others, it can be the basis of credibility, or criticism.

Mrs. Koh's way of being—her cultural capital—is tied to her background. Mrs. Koh is a first generation Chinese immigrant, and the effects of race and gender in credibility and symbolic power are complex. I will elaborate on these issues in time. In short, my data indicate that the effect of race is indirect, making its presence felt through the kind of cultural capital that Mrs. Koh has acquired and brings to her interactions with teachers. There is an established literature on the parenting practices of Asian families (Dornbusch et al 1987, Lin and Fu 1990, Chao 1994, Chen, Dong, and Zhou 1997), and coming from a culture in which rules matter, obedience is valued, and authority is an honor, it is not surprising that Koh *embodies* this way of being in her interactions with the staff. When I would ask teachers informally if the difficulties Mrs. Koh was having had anything to do with race, they would respond to the effect of “no, it’s her interpersonal skills.” The teachers do not respond to the hue of Mrs. Koh skin, rather they respond to her deeper cultural style. It is not race per se that shapes the interactions between Koh and the staff, rather it is the cultural capital that Mrs. Koh brings into her interactions with the staff, and the staff’s response to her cultural capital.

Though Mrs. Koh’s way of being fits the logic of accountability, it is not suited to individualized interactions with the staff, a problem that she freely admits. In an early interview she volunteered to me: “I am not particularly strong in the human resource aspect, what they call the human aspect of management, with the political and human resource, I’m not strong in it. I tend to say directly what I feel” (Interview Transcript 11/04/99). Koh does not filter her comments to appease discriminating ears. Rather, she

has a standard approach that treats all the same. Later in the year I asked her why she thought this approach was problematic:

I guess because we were all brought up differently. With a faculty of a hundred and staff of a hundred people, all of us are brought up differently, with different family values and standards. I truly believe that children, and every school that I worked with, children will do what you permit them to do and if you set the standard - and parents will do what you permit them to do. (Interview Transcript 3/31/00)

Here Mrs. Koh guesses that her standards are different from those held by the diverse staff, and she reiterates those standards. However, Mrs. Koh's commitment to standards is more than a belief; it is her *baseline mode of operation*, a deeper way of being that informs her interactions with others.

In her embodiment of standards, Mrs. Koh takes accountability policies beyond their original scope: Where Midwest City Schools have a set of minimum standards for what must be taught in various subject areas, and there is a uniform code for discipline referrals, Mrs. Koh pushes the accountability logic by trying to create further standards.<sup>40</sup> In what follows I examine the interactions between Mrs. Koh and the teachers around standards for classroom management, lunchroom and hallway behavior, and rewards for student behavior. Instead of being a source of credibility for Mrs. Koh, the way of being (cultural capital) that she exhibits in these interactions are a basis of criticism and a component of the turmoil at the school.

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<sup>40</sup> In this sense Mrs. Koh is not only a carrier of the institutional logic of bureaucratic accountability (DiMaggio 1988, Scott 2001: 77), she also shapes the logics and pushes them forward in her interactions with others (Barley 1996, Creed and Scully 2001, Fligstein 2001: 211).

In her push for standards, Mrs. Koh's way of being is blunt (oftentimes interpreted as terse and authoritarian), but not altogether to the point: She often formulates statements by using a series of questions, answers, and rhetorical questions. Take the following example from a staff meeting where Mrs. Koh argues with the teachers about setting behavior standards for students in classrooms and hallways:

*Mr. North (veteran eighth grade social studies teacher) tells Mrs. Koh:* "There is a perception in this school among teachers and students that creativity is limited" and "I'm being honest with you" and "people are afraid to walk a certain line, and it's a perception, but you have something to do with it" and "It filters down with the kids" and "I agree there should be order, but there has to be some noise with creativity, so how do you find the balance, how do we get the balance?"

*Mrs. Koh replies:* "You say I am too strict with the students, but when I walk into the room Robert (a student) scrambles to take off the earrings." Then she asked the teachers "Do you want students to follow rules in your classrooms?" and the teachers say "Yes." So Koh continues that "Society is changing," and "we are putting those preventative resources in place, why should we wait for a disaster?"

*Mr. North responds:* "I wouldn't disagree, but I think there has to be a balance with the fluidity required for creativity."

*Mrs. Koh answers:* "And I do allow fluidity," but then she talks about some students who became pregnant, and who knows where that happened? What if it happened in the school bathroom? So they have to be in control: "Why do we want to monitor the halls? How can we insure these kids won't go into the bathroom and do what they need to do?" and "I have to insure that those kids won't be doing bad things in the bathroom." She continues: "Where's the balance? When students see order." (Field notes 10/29/99)

In this example Mrs. Koh is violating the prior negotiated order that allowed space for teacher autonomy and creativity. These disruptions are one point of contention between Mrs. Koh and the teachers, but the turmoil at the school also involves the manner in which Mrs. Koh interacts with the staff and her corresponding lack of credibility and symbolic power. To quote Mr. North: "People are afraid to walk a certain line, and it's a

perception, but *you* have something to do with it” (emphasis added). The issue is not simply accountability, but also how Mrs. Koh enacts accountability in her interactions with the staff. Though Mr. North cannot put his finger on it exactly (“it’s a perception”), in this excerpt Mrs. Koh makes use of seven questions to make a relatively simple point, a manner that many teachers find belittling. As Mrs. Hudson (a teacher union representative) explained: “She’s nasty. Her tone of voice” (Informal interview notes 12/06/99). When I asked Mr. North what things specifically bothered him about Mrs. Koh, he responded that “she just doesn’t get it,” that being principal is about “interpersonal relationships” and you have to be nice to the students and the teachers (Informal interview notes 11/30/99). Instead of attributing credibility to Mrs. Koh in the ways discussed in Chapter One, the teachers criticize the way of being that Mrs. Koh enacts in her interactions with the staff, diminishing her credibility and symbolic power.

The interactive style that Mrs. Koh uses to emphasize standards is not a trivial issue. Instead, it permeates many of the contentious interactions I observed between Mrs. Koh and the staff. Take the following example from a leader team meeting just over a year after the previously mentioned staff meeting. In this meeting Brenda Donalds (sixth grade teacher representative) voices concerns from a fellow sixth grade teacher (Kathy Smith) who has a particularly difficult classroom. Smith and Donalds want to look into moving one of the students into a different classroom. Mrs. Koh says moving students is a possibility, but she then reverts to her typical emphasis on standards, in this case involving classroom management:

But I also notice one thing: and, and I'm gonna go into the classrooms and observe teachers, if- you have to highly stress to your classrooms every minute of the day, if you allow children five to seven minutes of, non-structured behaving, and then you wanna pull them back, and you don't give them the stare, that you need to, children need to know the expectations (Koh has been gesturing actively throughout, now she looks around the room at all the teachers, looking them in the eyes). Children need to know the expectations plain and simple. If they are allowed to create noise in the hall, they don't know what to expect, you're gonna have to be consistent. You know when I walk down the hall it's always "Mrs. Koh's coming!" (She sits up straight, as a student would when seeing her) 'cause they know what I expect.

(Camera pans to Brenda Donalds who is sitting back in her chair with her arms folded and her lips pursed tightly together)

(Mrs. Koh continues after an aside about how students stop being disruptive in the lunchroom when they see her) So it's also what you allow to happen (extending her arm forwards with her hand open for emphasis), and teachers have to know sixth graders. You can't give 'em a minute of free time, not a minute. It has to be highly structured. And I think you can get some success if they're highly structured because they're- what I observed is, Darcy Klein has a tough kid too, you know? Almost every room in sixth grade has some tough children to deal with, and you just have to highly structure it. At the same time, but we're all for changing rooms, whatever the, the, works for the kids, and if we have to move the student to another room to help Mrs. Smith we'll do that.

(Mrs. Koh continues after an aside about teachers sending students to the office because the teachers have failed to handle the students in the classroom) If a child talks back to you (voice rising in tone and pitch), deal with it. Just simply say "close your mouth, we're not gonna listen to it, close your mouth." (Video transcript 11/17/00).

In this example Mrs. Koh tries to appeal to the teachers, twice saying that moving the student is possible (a reflection of her increased sensitivity to teachers as an important audience after the investigation prompted by "Turmoil at 'KOH'sten School"). Despite her efforts, her blunt, rigid way of being seeps through, from the statement "You're going to have to be consistent" to "If a child talks back to you, deal with it." Koh's way of being is a form of cultural capital that she uses to formulate interactions with the teachers,

and she uses the word “structure” four times, and “expectation” twice. In addition, Mrs. Koh uses some variation on the word you fourteen times, even though Mrs. Donalds raised the issue on behalf of Mrs. Smith who was not in attendance.

However we may feel about Mrs. Koh’s assessment of the situation, to understand Mrs. Koh’s credibility problems and the turmoil at the school, we must understand how the teachers respond to Mrs. Koh. After the meeting, Mrs. Koh has a sense that she has failed in her interaction with the teachers, and she tells Anastasia Cygnar (art teacher and one of Mrs. Koh’s supporters). “You know what, next time, I sit next to you and when I get out of control you kick me under the table.” Mrs. Koh’s concern is well founded. In an interview later that day, Mrs. Donalds articulated the frustration that showed in her body language during the meeting:

I don’t think anything was done about that (moving the student) except insinuating she (Kathy Smith) has terrible classroom control. I mean I really thought that’s how it came across. (Continues later) Maybe Kathy does need some help in her classroom control methods, but she does have a tough bunch of kids. And we have to respect everybody’s styles too. Not everybody can be – Frances (Drew) would not have that trouble. But Frances will say things to kids that a lot of people would never say and a lot of people could not say and she gets away with it. You know? She does. But it’s not Kathy’s style. Kathy’s very soft. She’s ladylike. She’s not mean. She’s very frustrated. You know? So - I mean I felt that problem was not dealt with at all. (Interview transcript 11/17/00).

What I want to stress in this excerpt is Mrs. Donalds’ statement “we have to respect everybody’s styles too.” In her interactions at the leader team meeting, Mrs. Koh fails to exhibit a demeanor that will receive deference from teachers like Mrs. Donalds and Mrs. Smith. Though Mrs. Koh makes some effort to interact with the teachers in a way that will create a positive impression, her blunt way of being seeps through, resulting in an

underlying set of signs given off that violate the initial sign about moving the student (Goffman 1959). Mrs. Koh struggles to exhibit an appropriate demeanor to receive due deference. But more importantly, without this deference she lacks credibility in the eyes of the teachers, and the symbolic power that this credibility affords.

A few weeks later, after word of the contentious meeting had filtered through the rumor mill and similar interactions between Mrs. Koh and the staff had occurred, Mr. North approached me and volunteered that Mrs. Koh's "heart is in the right place." He told me that Koh means well, and that she even called him into her office to solicit advice despite his open criticism in the past. However, echoing his statement from a year earlier, he said that Koh lacks "interpersonal skills" and "the analogy I use is someone who picks up a musical instrument and is tone deaf" (Field notes 12/05/00). It is difficult for Mrs. Koh to imitate the surface manner or style favored by Mr. North because she has a fundamentally different underlying way of being. This way of being makes it difficult for her to pick up and play the instrument of impression management to the tune preferred by many teachers, despite her efforts. Instead of attributing credibility to Mrs. Koh, the teachers devalue her cultural capital: to these teachers she is "tone deaf." Without credibility and symbolic power, Mrs. Koh cannot define her interventions into the established negotiated order as justified, and she cannot circumvent the conflict and turmoil sparked by her disruptions to the order.

The next example also involves an effort by Koh to create standards, this time around award assemblies for good grades and behavior. Once again, she violates the previous order of the school. However, the emergent turmoil also involves her lack of

credibility and symbolic power based on the teachers' devaluation of her terse way of being. In the meeting Mrs. Koh noted that many classrooms have their own reward ceremonies, and she wanted to create a uniform system of assemblies for the entire school. Brenda Donalds responded:

*Brenda Donalds:* Well, what happened to our ribbons? This is the first time EVER for a quarter we didn't have certificates or ribbons or something. We ALWAYS had something that goes with the report card, ALWAYS-

*Mrs. Koh:* (interrupting at the second "Always") It takes time to order them. Does that make sense to you? (Donalds vigorously shaking her head no) It doesn't.

*Donalds:* (chuckling and raising her voice in pitch, seeming disbelief) Absolutely not. Why don't we cover like, ahead of time, or we could say, I said to the kids, "You know, the awards, aren't here," and I put their names on the board.

(The group argues back and forth for a while about different rewards and their availability)

*Mrs. Koh:* But what I'm simply saying is that you have to be patient, how many LSC meetings have we had, to talk about nothing but the bilingual program, and it's still not over? We're asked by the compliance manager to revamp the whole kindergarten program, but I've not even ever got a chance to talk to the kindergarten teachers? (After a confusing aside about changes in the bilingual program she continues, voice rising in tone and pitch) So don't sit here and complain about what is not taken care of, because there are things that come up in this school that you would never anticipate in another school. (Video transcript 2/2/01).

In addressing the rewards issue, Mrs. Koh engages in her typical practice of asking rhetorical questions ("Does that make sense to you?") a question she had already answered ("It takes time to order them"). However, this time Mrs. Donalds responds, and she refuses to "give face" to Mrs. Koh by accepting Koh's answer (Goffman 1955). Mrs. Koh responds with more rhetorical questions, and the terse statement about teacher complaints.

At lunch later that day, a group of primary teachers expressed their frustrations about this meeting:

The group talks about how they do not even want to have award assemblies each quarter. They feel like it is a waste of time, and they like the old practice of simply putting ribbons in report cards. Mrs. Andretti says (with a tone I interpret as frustration) “Why do we have to do this (change things and argue) every stinkin’ year?” The others agree, no one knows why they have to redo all of this, and Mrs. Andretti (who was at the meeting) turns to me (using me as a tool since I video taped the meeting) and says (with a tone I interpret as sarcasm) “But we don’t understand.” I respond by paraphrasing Mrs. Koh “You don’t understand budgeting,” (Koh’s original comment “Does that make sense to you? It doesn’t”) and Andretti confirms “Right” (sarcastic tone). (Field notes 2/02/01)

In this excerpt the teachers respond negatively to Mrs. Koh’s change in the negotiated order (“Why do we have to do this every stinkin’ year?”). However, Mrs. Andretti also criticizes Koh’s way of being, the mode of interaction employed by Mrs. Koh as she violates the negotiated order. These negative evaluations are indicative of Mrs. Koh’s lack of credibility and symbolic power.

Mrs. Koh’s changes to the student reward system are especially interesting in that they involve little in the way of labor for the teachers. Though some of Mrs. Koh’s disruptions increase the teachers’ workload, this one takes students out of the classroom for an assembly, reducing the teachers’ class work and related preparation labor. However, Mrs. Koh’s proposal disrupts the teachers’ individual autonomy, and the larger issue is about control. Even though the assemblies reduce teaching labor, Mrs. Koh lacks the symbolic power to define the loss of control as justified.

Moreover, the interactive style that Mrs. Koh exhibits while disrupting the prior negotiated order further damages her credibility in the eyes of the teachers.

Martha June, an 8<sup>th</sup> grade language arts teacher in her second year at the school, echoed

Mrs. Andretti's criticism:

I think Mrs. Koh is condescending. I think that one leadership meeting where she was basically telling us - I mean what I got out of it was we should feel sorry for her because she's dealing with a bunch of incompetent teachers. And that's what I reported back to my team. I tell them exactly what's going on in that meeting because I feel like that's - I said to them that that was my - that was my - the way I looked at it. The way she was talking about us. (Interview Transcript 2/23/01)

While Martha cites the content of Mrs. Koh's interaction, she also stresses the *form* of the interaction, particularly Mrs. Koh's way of being: "I think Mrs. Koh is condescending. . . The way she was talking about us." Instead of attributing credibility to Mrs. Koh, Martha criticizes her way of being. Martha also shares her negative evaluation with her fellow teachers, further reducing the likelihood that they will attribute credibility to Mrs. Koh. As a form of cultural capital, Mrs. Koh's way of being purchases little in the way of symbolic power.

Martha's negative evaluation of Mrs. Koh's cultural capital is particularly damaging because she is one of the newer teachers who Mrs. Koh hired to replace the older teachers she had pushed out of the school. Martha had no knowledge of the prior negotiated order at the school, so she wasn't as disposed to treat some of Mrs. Koh's changes as negative. However, as a result of unsuccessful interactions, Mrs. Koh has started to alienate young teachers like Martha. For example, when I asked Laura (a second grade teacher in her second year) for her impressions of the meeting earlier that morning, she told me in her typically soft manner:

"I'm beginning to see. . ." Laura let that statement hang in the air (waiting for me to say something, but instead I wait). After about five seconds (kind of giving up

on me and now glossing over) Laura says that Mrs. Koh “should just give us a list and say ‘do it.’” So I asked if Koh did that, would people do as she asked? Laura pauses again, and then says, “She has lost her respect, and that’s (how she acted at the meeting) not going to get it back.” Once again Laura says, “I’m starting to see.” Laura does not really elaborate, but she talks about how at the meeting Mrs. Koh tried to distract the teachers by talking about problems with bilingual, but “teachers don’t want to hear that, that’s just fuel for the fire,” instead, to put out the fire “just say you’re sorry” but “she lacks that wisdom.” (Field notes 2/02/01)

Laura would have liked to see Mrs. Koh repair the fractured interaction by apologizing, an opinion that Brenda Donalds also shared with me after the meeting. Brenda told me that everything would have been okay if, instead of “making excuses,” Mrs. Koh had just put a little note in the teacher’s boxes saying “Sorry, the ribbons weren’t ordered” (Informal interview field notes 2/02/01). As much as the turmoil at the school is organized around Mrs. Koh’s violation of the prior negotiated order, it is also organized around her interactive failings and her corresponding lack of credibility and symbolic power. Though Koh makes some effort to manage the impressions that the teachers form of her, as Mr. North put it so eloquently, it is like someone “who picks up a musical instrument and is tone deaf.”

Having failed in the attempt to play the instrument, Mrs. Koh decided to put it aside, withdrawing from interactions in an effort to save what little face she had left (Goffman 1955). In particular, Mrs. Koh stopped attending the Leader Team Meetings she had originally established while trying to appeal to the teachers as an audience. Instead, she tried to use Anastasia Cygnar (art teacher and a Koh supporter) as a mediator between herself and the leader team. At the start of the next leader team meeting,

someone asked a question, and Anastasia wrote it down and said she would put it in Mrs. Koh's mailbox, sparking the following conversation:

*John Pearl:* She's not coming to these meetings anymore, or she. . ? (pausing for answer)

*Anastasia:* (Stops writing and looks up) No, um (across the table someone mutters "Oh" while Mrs. Sizemore claps her hands and smiles)

*John:* (Smiling but stammering in what I take as surprise) Why, why not, wha-, what did she tell you? You're the intermediary here.

*Brenda Donalds:* (Chuckling) She doesn't like the way we behave.

*John:* Tell us why.

*Anastasia:* No, it's not, it's not that, it's just that we're (pause) leaders, and that one meeting was kinda (pause) ugly, (breathing inwards and gesturing inwards with her hands while cringing) where she was getting upset.

*John:* All hyper.

*Anastasia:* And, um, so, since we are able to talk, together, we're all, professional, adults, we can talk about issues and report back and forth (Video transcript 2/23/01).

Mrs. Koh's decision to withdraw from interactions was also enabled by the arrival of Mr. Carrol (the new assistant principal), who could now shoulder some of the work.

However, Mr. Carrol's involvement did little to help Mrs. Koh's credibility in the eyes of the teachers. To quote Shelia Long, a 6<sup>th</sup> grade language arts teacher in her first year at

Costen:

She seems to be less confident of herself when she - when - and also like when we have our faculty meetings on Tuesday, it's really Mr. Carrol that's taking charge. And Mrs. Koh seems - like in her dress, sometimes like she rolled out of bed, which is very unusual. And also she was usually here like very early in the morning and stayed very late. But now, ever since Mr. Carrol came, it's kind of

like she's, or she keeps like – she'll come late. Even later than him and leave early. (Interview Transcript 2/7/01)

The teachers also reflected on Mrs. Koh's disappearance since Mr. Carrol's arrival at the leader team meeting that Koh did not attend:

*John Pearl:* Don't you think she's finally delegating to him? I mean she's-

*Brenda Donalds (Interrupting):* No, I think she disappears every time he (Carrol) shows up; notice the Tuesday meeting she was gonna go check on something, so lame (Video transcript 2/23/01).

By withdrawing, Mrs. Koh prevents herself from bungling her interactions with teachers, and she protects what little credibility she has established in their eyes. However, in withdrawing from interaction she is also withdrawing from the means through which credibility is attributed. She has effectively taken herself out of the symbolic power game.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, Koh's sudden, unexplained absences open the door to “quasi theories” (Hall and Hewitt 1970, Hewitt and Hall 1973): Without an explanation of the changes in Koh's behavior, the teachers began to formulate their own theories, and soon began to gossip that Koh was going “schizoid.”

In sum, the turmoil at Costen School is socially organized in part by the symbolic power relations at the school. Instead of attributing credibility to Mrs. Koh, the interactions between Koh and the staff are a means through which the teachers devalue Koh's cultural capital. The teachers take offense to Mrs. Koh's tough, terse interactive style, and Mrs. Koh has been unable to formulate interactions that foster a positive

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<sup>41</sup> In established, credible relationships, it may be possible to maintain credibility and symbolic power without co presence. However, in relationships where credibility has been damaged and must be rebuilt, some form of interactive face work is imperative.

impression in the mind of the teachers. To quote Shelia Long, “Some of the things she does, you’d think she was trained by Attila the Hun” (Informal interview notes 2/7/01). Despite her rational-legal authority, Mrs. Koh’s credibility in the eyes of teachers is an ongoing problem. Without credibility, Mrs. Koh lacks the symbolic power to define her interventions into the negotiated order as justified, and she is unable to avoid the resulting turmoil. As much as the turmoil at Costen School is organized by changes in the structural context (the rise of accountability policies), pointed disruptions in the established negotiated order, and authority relations (Mrs. Koh’s rational-legal authority as principal to enforce her disruptions of the established order), symbolic power relations are also involved.

#### Mrs. Koh’s Interactions and Symbolic Power with the Local School Council

For all of her struggles with the teachers, Mrs. Koh’s interactions with the Local School Council (LSC) are more successful. As an agent of bureaucratic accountability, the LSC is more attuned to the changes Mrs. Koh makes to the school, and the interactive style that she exhibits while making them. Where the teachers chafe at Mrs. Koh’s violations of the negotiated order and her tough manner, the LSC is an audience that attributes credibility to her, imbuing her with the symbolic power to effectively influence their practices. Mrs. Koh uses her symbolic power to introduce a new principal evaluation program without prompting turmoil on the LSC, and at the same time protecting her own credibility with the LSC (despite the turmoil with the teachers).

LSCs were created in 1985 as a part of reforms premised on a school-based governance approach. After the school-based reforms did not yield improvements in tests scores, the Mayor of Midwest City implemented a centralized model, appointing a Chief Executive Officer of City Schools and giving birth to accountability reforms. However, the LSCs remained a part of the system, operating within the umbrella of accountability. The LSC consists of a chair, two to four parent representatives, two community representatives, the principal, and two teacher representatives.<sup>42</sup> The purview of the LSC is to review school policies, to approve a School Improvement Plan for Advancing Academic Achievement (SIPAAA) that fits the minimum standards and goals of the Midwest City Schools, and to hire and evaluate the principal.

In contrast to the teachers at Costen who want to protect the negotiated order (indulgency pattern) they established back in the days of Mr. Welch, the LSC is born of reform, and has become part of the mechanism through which accountability policies operate (approval of the SIPAAA). Where the teachers at Costen are invested in the stability of their negotiated order, the LSC is invested in change. Instead of disparaging Mrs. Koh's accountability based changes, they are open to them. Take the following excerpt from an LSC meeting:

Then Stan Feierman (LSC Chair) says, "Next is the principal's report." As Mrs. Koh stands to retrieve large stacks of papers from a nearby cart, she tells the LSC "I'll admit a lot of the report, time is so short in the day, I can't tell you how short the day is," but to "bear with me on this report" because she put the report together quickly. As she sorts various papers Koh tells the LSC, "It really takes time for leadership, my mentor told me five years" just to get things in place in

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<sup>42</sup> The chair is an elected official, and the teacher representatives are elected by their peers in the school. The parent and community representatives are selected through nominations by the LSC and an LSC vote.

order to start making changes. Nonetheless, “we do have a form and a binder” for the teachers for their grade level team meetings. Fred Josten asks why the teachers needed a binder, and Mrs. Koh explains that the binder will be used by the teachers to take minutes for their grade level meetings that will be available for review by absent teachers. The binders will also help the administration identify problems.

Then Mrs. Koh continues her report by saying “Sometimes Jessica (the LSC Secretary) says ‘why are you in the building so much, so long?’ So I thought I would bring some of the work to you,” (in reference to the large stacks of paper she has been putting together). Then Koh holds up a large stack of “500 forms” that serve as mid quarter failure notices. Related to the failure notices are a large stack of papers to detail remediation plans: “So every teacher, you need to identify to the parents what needs to be improved,” and Koh points to the long checklist on the remediation form. Then Koh plops the two large stacks of paperwork onto the table with a loud “THUNK” and Jessica and Stan laugh (in a tone I interpret as sympathetic). Then Mrs. Koh explains that the forms are an important way to “start tracking. We have students failing and repeating grades more than once.” As Mrs. Koh passes around some of the forms, Jessica looks at them and exclaims “Wow!” (I interpret as being impressed). (Field notes 11/10/99).

There are a number of things I want to emphasize in this excerpt. To begin, Mrs. Koh makes a number of disclaimers. Disclaimers are rhetorical devices that align potentially deviant actions with the tacit expectations of a group (Hewitt and Stokes 1975). For example, Mrs. Koh asks the LSC to “bear with me on this report” because she put it together quickly. Below the surface of this disclaimer is a tacit recognition that the role of the LSC is to hold her accountable for her report, and in essence she is asking them to relax their standards. Next, Mrs. Koh makes a disclaimer about the time needed to establish leadership, a tacit recognition that the LSC expects changes that she has been unable to deliver thus far.

Having framed her report this way, Mrs. Koh makes considerable effort to show how she is holding the teachers accountable, first through the recording of minutes for

grade level meetings, and second through standardized forms for failure notices and remediation plans. Though I take some liberty in interpreting the response of the LSC members as appreciative (Jessica and Stan in particular), Mrs. Koh seems to have fostered a positive impression in their eyes. At a minimum, the LSC is open to Mrs. Koh's accountability paperwork. Where the teachers despise accountability paperwork (recall some of the examples from Chapter 3), there is no indication that these changes frustrate the LSC. Instead, the LSC appears receptive. After all, the LSC is an agent of bureaucratic accountability. Where Mrs. Koh's accountability paperwork violates the professional logic of autonomy cherished by teachers, it matches the bureaucratic logic of the LSC.<sup>43</sup>

While the LSC is open to the changes that Mrs. Koh is making in the negotiated order, they also appreciate the forms of capital that Mrs. Koh brings to her job. For example, shortly after the meeting cited above, I asked the LSC Chair (Stan Feierman) what made Mrs. Koh an appealing candidate for principal. He replied:

Well a number of things made her an appealing candidate. She had been through PLTE<sup>44</sup> number one. She was very articulate, she was obviously very committed, she was young, she was not jaded. (Continues later) She seemed very tenacious, she seemed very intelligent, very well spoken and I guess - she had a lot of energy and a lot of integrity as far as I was concerned. (Interview transcript 11/17/99).

In this excerpt Stan is not simply telling me about Mrs. Koh's hiring, he is also attributing credibility to Koh based on forms of capital that she possesses. First, Stan mentions Mrs.

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<sup>43</sup> The LSC is also fortunate in that they do not have to use the new procedures. Those who must actually use a new procedure often have a different view than those who propose it.

<sup>44</sup> PLTE stands for "Principal Leadership Training and Education." It is a principal training program at a prestigious university located in a suburb of Midwest City.

Koh's connection to a principal training program at a prestigious university (PLTE) (social capital and human capital). Next he cites her intelligence (human capital), but also her tenacity and integrity (cultural capital).

When I posed the same question to Jessica Churley (parent representative and LSC secretary), she commented on both Mrs. Koh and Koh's assistant principal, Mrs. Milbern:

I think they're very tough. I think they're very no nonsense. They're not afraid of confrontation. (Continuing on Koh specifically) In her interview, she was very intelligent. That meant a lot to me. She was very well spoken. She seemed to have a lot of ideas. She seemed to be a very hard worker. Genuine, just being who she was. Accessible. But mainly her intelligence and her ideas and her striving for excellence. (Interview transcript 12/23/99)

Like Stan, Jessica makes a positive evaluation of Mrs. Koh, attributing credibility to Mrs. Koh based on her human capital, her "intelligence" and "ideas," but also Mrs. Koh's embodied way of being (cultural capital), "no nonsense," "not afraid of confrontation," and "genuine, just being who she was."

How can Mrs. Koh's way of being be so offensive to one audience (the teachers), and so appealing to another (the LSC)? I argue that the answer lies in the different small group cultures of the two audiences (Fine 1979, 1984b, Harrington and Fine 2000), and Mrs. Koh's interactions with these audiences. In their relation to accountability policies and the broader institutional logic of bureaucratic accountability, the LSC has an interest in Mrs. Koh's efforts to change the school. At a more personal level, Mrs. Koh's enactment of accountability standards resonates with Jessica Churley who wants to see change and improvement at Costen because "I want my kids to stay at the public school.

I don't want to have to be away from them by working to go to a private school" (Interview transcript 12/23/99). Stanley Feierman expressed a similar sentiment. Moreover, Stan is himself a "low level bureaucrat" in the Midwest City School System (Interview transcript 11/17/99), and is not surprised by Mrs. Koh's tough manner and her enactment of accountability. Mrs. Koh's way of being also matches with Willie Dean's (parent representative and LSC treasurer) job experience: Who better to appreciate accountability than an accountant?

Though Mrs. Koh's tough, tenacious, rigid manner fits the LSCs culture of accountability better than the teacher's culture of autonomy, Mrs. Koh also uses her manner to formulate different interactions with the two groups. Mrs. Koh doesn't use her interactions with the LSC to confront them and to disrupt their order in the same way that she does with the teachers, in part because Mrs. Koh's actions with the LSC are aligned with their culture of accountability. In this way, the same way of being can inform different interactions with different audiences for credibility, and different outcomes in symbolic power. In addition, though Mrs. Koh is part of the LSC, she does not have authority over them as she does the teachers. Without authority, Mrs. Koh seems to realize that she must cultivate her interactions with the LSC as a means to acquire credibility. Because she lacks the authority to impose changes on the LSC, she instead works with them to negotiate symbolic power, a negotiation that is facilitated by the match between her interactive style and the LSCs culture of accountability.

In sum, the LSC's tie to accountability policy and the institutional logic of accountability combine with their interests and their aesthetic, creating an appreciation of

Mrs. Koh's changes to the negotiated order and the way of being that she puts to use while implementing accountability. At base, Mrs. Koh's way of being resonates with this aesthetic, and with this audience she can use her way of being as the foundation for successful impression management (as the prior example shows). In contrast, the experiences of teachers are flavored more by the institutional logic of professional autonomy (Lortie 1975, Bacharach and Mundell 1993), and the teachers have a vested interest in protecting the negotiated order (indulgency pattern) they established with the prior administration. If Mrs. Koh had not used her authority to impose disruptions on the teachers' negotiated order, it is possible that she may have been able to negotiate symbolic power with them, as she did with the LSC. However, Mrs. Koh's tough, rigid way of being does not resonate with the teachers' aesthetic for autonomy. Compared to the LSC, the teachers are less inclined to attribute any credibility to Mrs. Koh.

Mrs. Koh deploys her credibility with the LSC as the symbolic power to further define herself as a credible, successful principal despite the turmoil at the school.<sup>45</sup> She accomplishes this by getting the LSC involved in a special principal evaluation program. To explain, let me first provide some background. As mentioned earlier, one of the duties of the LSC is to evaluate the principal. During the 1999-2000 school year, the LSC followed the standard Midwest City School System Principal Evaluation Protocol,

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<sup>45</sup> It may be tempting to argue that Mrs. Koh has credibility with the LSC *because* the turmoil at the school shows she is willing to take tough stands with the teachers. However, the turmoil at the school also takes its toll on the LSC. Recall Stan's comment in the previous chapter that he was at the "end of his rope." Similarly, Jessica eventually left the LSC when she made the decision to pull her three children out of the school and enroll them in a private school because she felt the school no longer provided a positive learning environment because of the turmoil. Just as the regular teachers are not disconnected from the pullout teachers, the LSC is not disconnected from the teachers as a whole, and turmoil has some resonance throughout these interconnected orders.

which included feedback from the teachers. This feedback involved a number of unpleasant criticisms of Mrs. Koh. The LSC interpreted many of these criticisms as “personal attacks.” Citing an LSC policy that states that the LSC cannot publicly comment on issues of a personal nature (the principal evaluation is a public document), they left many of the criticisms out of their report. To quote Stan: “I’m not interested in this becoming a witch-hunt any longer. Daily operations and input (from the teachers) is OK, beating on the principal is not.” The LSC gave Mrs. Koh very high marks on her evaluation, sparking outrage by a number of teachers who demanded an explanation. The LSC used a loophole to deny the teachers the explanation they sought: while the principal evaluation is public, the evaluation process takes place in a closed LSC “executive session” that cannot be disclosed to the public. However, this further angered the teachers and resulted in more complaints. While the LSC stood by their positive evaluation of Mrs. Koh, their stance had been made difficult, posing a potential threat to Koh’s credibility in the eyes of the LSC.

During the 2000-2001 school year, Mrs. Koh learned of an alternative principal evaluation program called MEA (“Merit in Evaluating Administration”). The MEA program was developed by an external consulting firm that was trying to sell the program to the Midwest City School System. Midwest City Schools told the consulting firm they would try the program in a few schools where the principals and the LSCs were interested. Mrs. Koh was attracted to the program because, compared to the regular evaluation, it was more results oriented--based on reaching targeted goals while minimizing the political aspects of evaluation. At the November LSC meeting Mrs. Koh

told the LSC she wanted to give the program a try, explaining: “What is nice about it is the concept, ‘What business matters?’” Then Mrs. Koh turned the meeting over to the MEA representative who explained:

The form that we are going to introduce that is more behaviorally-anchored type goals is more--I hate to say state of the art ‘cause that is such an overused word--but is a more contemporary way of looking at evaluation that tends to be *more results oriented* where people understand what they are being evaluated on. *It’s not a personality contest*, its not like I think somebody is doing a great job because I happen to like the one thing that they did. Uh, it’s not depending on the halo effect. (Video Transcript 11/09/01 emphasis added)

The MEA evaluation downplays the micro-political problems between Mrs. Koh and the teachers. However, the catch is the time involved: a six hour weekend time commitment for each member of the LSC to be trained in the evaluation program, on top of the time put into the evaluation itself. As the LSC discussed the program, Stan echoed Mrs. Koh’s comments and the comments of the representative:

What I kinda like hearing about this is, it’s a lot of work, but *if we can take the whole evaluation out of the political realm and put it into the needs realm*. The needs of this school and the needs of person involved, we will all feel a lot more comfortable with all of this. There is always an aspect of evaluation, and everyone knows this well who has been on the Council before, uh, we are going to have to support the principal because if we don’t nobody else is. And that’s what that (MEA) form does to us. And we would rather talk about how things can be improved and what supports can be put in place for the principal as opposed to how are we going to get her. *We are not out to get her, our principal. Quite the contrary. We are always put in the position of defending her.* (Video Transcript 11/09/00 emphasis added)

Stan’s comment “we are not out to get her,” is in reference to the negative comments by some of the teachers that threaten to make their way into the old evaluation form. In contrast, the MEA program takes evaluation “out of the political realm”—The realm

where Mrs. Koh is weakest. By taking the evaluation out of the political realm, the MEA program helps the LSC to defend Mrs. Koh.

As the LSC got ready to vote on their participation in the new evaluation, Stan reminded them “And everybody realizes that we’re all in this for six hours, three hours now, three hours later.” The LSC members responded yes, and then voted unanimously to participate in the program (seven to zero with one teacher representative absent).

To be sure, introducing a new evaluation program does not require much in the way of symbolic power. What does take considerable symbolic power is getting the LSC to accept the program when it requires a six-hour weekend commitment just for training, *in addition to* the change in the evaluation process and the time and energy involved in making the switch from the old format to the new one. For volunteers who are not paid and have work and family commitments outside of the school, this is a large sacrifice of time and energy. The new program involves a large labor cost for the LSC. But in bringing the program to the LSC, Mrs. Koh has enough credibility in their eyes to define this sacrifice as a worthy investment. The LSC is not doing the program for the sake of the MEA representative, or for their own sake. Rather, they do it for Mrs. Koh who has enough credibility and symbolic power to define the program and the time commitment involved as just. In contrast, we can imagine the turmoil that would result from Mrs. Koh forcing an additional 6-hour time commitment onto the teachers.

Mrs. Koh’s deployment of symbolic power works: the LSC approves the program, goes through the extensive training, and as a result Koh received another positive evaluation. Moreover, this evaluation bypassed the teacher uproar tied to the

previous one (even though I would argue that the school was in a greater state of turmoil at the end of the 2000-2001 school year than the 1999-2000 school year, as a result of the chain of events linked to the bilingual problems discussed in Chapter 3). Mrs. Koh is not only able to change the practices of the LSC, but because of her symbolic power with this audience, she is able to do so without creating turmoil—a stark contrast to her interactions with the teachers. The difference lies in the symbolic power relations between Mrs. Koh and the different audiences: as an agent of bureaucratic accountability, the LSC values Mrs. Koh's tough, no-nonsense way of being, and attributes credibility based on this cultural capital. In contrast, the teachers relish the autonomy of the indulgency pattern established in the days of Mr. Welch, and therefore devalue Mrs. Koh's way of being.

Once established, the evaluation program minimizes Mrs. Koh's greatest weakness: her micro-political struggles with the teachers. In essence, it provides Mrs. Koh with a mode of impression management that depends more on stated "targets" and "goals" than the spontaneity and ambiguity of social interaction. While the teachers had plenty of complaints at the end of the 2000-2001 school year, I heard nothing about the principal evaluation. The new principal evaluation protected Mrs. Koh's credibility in the eyes of the LSC from the threat of the teachers. Despite the ongoing turmoil at the school, when I visited the school in May of 2002 to see if much had changed, Mrs. Koh informed me that the LSC had renewed her contract even though "there are still some people out to get me" (Field notes 4/26/02). The LSC still viewed Mrs. Koh as a credible principal, even though the teachers told me that the school was still a "mess" (Field notes

4/26/02). The comparison between Mrs. Koh's unsuccessful actions with the teachers and her success with the LSC enables us to see that turmoil is organized not only around a disruption of an established social order, or the changes in the structural context that precipitate a disruption (accountability policies), or the authority that enables a disruption to endure (Koh's rational-legal authority as principal), but also the symbolic power relations that affect how the disruption is *defined*.

#### Mr. Carrol's Interactions and Symbolic Power with Teachers

I think as administrator you have to understand sometimes to win the war does not mean you have to win every little battle. And you have to humble yourself and compromise in certain areas. Get what you want in the long run. (Interview Transcript 7/10/01)

This quotation from Mr. Carrol summarizes his approach to being an administrator.

Where Mrs. Koh describes herself as "like a rock" (Informal interview notes 9/26/01), Mr. Carrol is much more pliable, a contrast that is immediately evident in the appearance of the two administrators: Where Mrs. Koh employs the standard school uniform and looks the same day to day, Mr. Carrol (a white male in his late 50's) prefers a variety of sport coats cut to the present fashion. Where Mrs. Koh has a blunt, rigid way of being that is aligned with the bureaucratic logic of accountability, Mr. Carrol is much more flexible, enabling him to tailor his interactions to fit the aesthetic of teachers as an audience. Where Mrs. Koh is "tone deaf" in her interactions with teachers, Mr. Carrol's style resonates with the teachers' aesthetic. Take the following excerpt in which Mr.

Carrol was introduced at a staff meeting (a different meeting and introduction than the one cited in Chapter 3):

Then Mr. Mondello (the counselor) says, “It is my pleasure to introduce Mr. James Carrol,” the new assistant principal. (Carrol stands at his table situated along the backside wall. He’s wearing a gray sport coat with charcoal pants in style with recent fashion). Carrol begins by saying (with a toothy smile) “I started about a half hour ago, I’ve been looking at your handbook and I’m very impressed.” Quickly and briefly and he talks about having “30 years in Midwest City Schools,” working at “schools this size” and “I’m very impressed with your test scores, and your attendance, and I’m here to support you.” Then he immediately sits down, and to my surprise everyone claps. (Field notes 1/16/01)

Instead of enacting accountability, Mr. Carrol uses the interaction to publicize his experience (human capital): “30 years in Midwest City Schools” at “schools this size.” Next, Carrol pays deference to the teachers (“I’m very impressed with your test scores, and your attendance, and I’m here to support you”). The teachers appreciate the tune he is playing enough to clap.

A few days later, as I was having lunch with two teachers (Tulsi Lashkara, a veteran sixth grade teacher, and Ann Lee, who teaches first and second grade science and is in her second year at Costen), I asked them “Any first impressions of the new assistant principal?”

Tulsi smiles and says, “He’s nice, he’s (pauses) very knowledgeable, he knows that he can control the situation, and is comfortable.” There is a pause, and I ask Ann what she thinks and she says “I haven’t talked to him, but (laughs) his car (white late 80’s Nissan Z sports car) fits him.” I ask “How so?” but Ann cannot place it. Tulsi says, “He’s very disciplined, well dressed but not expensive, very upper middle class.” Ann smiles “Right.”

They ask me what I think, and I say I am amazed at how silent the room gets when he speaks (When Mrs. Koh talks she usually does so over a low chatter). Tulsi replies (eyes widening), “YES, he has that control.” I ask why she thinks he can quiet a room so easily, and Tulsi answers “He’s experienced, his sentences

are very calculated, he doesn't bounce around, and he doesn't leave you with a loophole to attack him." Tulsi continues that Carrol's comments are "measured" and "not redundant." (Field notes 1/22/01)

In this example the teachers (Tulsi especially) attribute credibility to Mr. Carrol. Tulsi values Mr. Carrol's human capital, citing his knowledge and experience (the human capital that Carrol advertised to the teachers in the staff meeting). Tulsi also values Mr. Carrol's cultural capital, his way of being, "comfortable" and "very upper middle class." While Tulsi attributes credibility to Mr. Carrol based on his human and cultural capital, she also comments positively on his interactions with the staff. While interacting with the staff, Mr. Carrol draws from his capital, putting his experience and his way of being to use. As we've seen, Mrs. Koh has a tendency to use a series of questions to make a statement and to use rhetorical questions. In contrast, Mr. Carrol "doesn't bounce around," "doesn't leave you with a loophole to attack him" and he is "not redundant."

Mr. Carrol also knows when to step away from a line of interaction. Take the following interaction from a staff meeting in which Mr. Carrol was reviewing a recent fire drill:

Then Mrs. Sizemore says that during the drill Mr. Carrol yelled at Alex (a student) for closing the door to the classroom. Carrol responds no, Alex wasn't closing the door, "He was getting his coat" (and should not have been). But Mrs. Sizemore responds, "Alex didn't have his coat." Carrol says, "He was in the closet." Sizemore says (voice raising in tone and pitch) that Alex was closing the closet door. Then Mr. Carrol relents (frowning slightly) "Well, OK." (Field notes 2/28/01)

As the disagreement between Mr. Carrol and Mrs. Sizemore escalates, Mr. Carrol draws back. Instead of pursuing his argument further and berating Mrs. Sizemore for losing sight of one of her students and questioning his view of the incident, Mr. Carrol gives

ground. In doing so he “gives face” to Mrs. Sizemore, allowing her to retain a favorable presentation of self in front of her colleagues (Goffman 1955, 1959), even though she publicly challenges his interpretation of the events. However, Mr. Carrol’s act of giving face is still in his interests: by exhibiting a somewhat submissive demeanor towards Mrs. Sizemore he increases the likelihood that she will show him deference in another interaction. Mr. Carrol chooses to “give face” in the short-term so he can “get face” in the long-term. In doing so he is not simply restoring a comfortable interaction order (Goffman 1983), he is also safeguarding the means through which teachers attribute credibility to him, credibility that he can later deploy as symbolic power. This example is an apt precursor to Carrol’s later statement “To win the war does not mean you have to win every little battle. And you have to humble yourself and compromise in certain areas,” not only to safeguard interaction (Goffman 1983), but also to “get what you want in the long run” (Interview transcript 7/10/01). By paying homage to the teachers and their negotiated order, Carrol echoes the maxim: “A wise leader faces up to the character of his organization, although he may do so only as a prelude to designing a strategy that will alter it” (Selznick 1957: 70)

In contrast, with her rigid manner, Mrs. Koh is constantly holding the teachers accountable in an effort to win every little battle, while losing sight of her long-term credibility. As Martha June told me in comparing Mr. Carrol to Mrs. Koh: “People love the meetings now because he gets you in there, he tells you what has to be done and then

he gets you out. It's not this whole 'Let me explain why I'm doing this and justify myself' all the time"<sup>46</sup> (Interview Transcript 2/23/01).

During my interview with Martha she also attributed credibility to Mr. Carrol:

I met him in the summertime actually because when I was working here, and he and I had a long conversation and I thought he was very knowledgeable. And I didn't even know he was going to be assistant principal at that time. And he was just offering me advice on, you know, being an administrator in Midwest City. And there were a lot of things that I liked that he said. He seemed to be very knowledgeable. (Interview Transcript 2/23/01)

Martha finds the experience that Mr. Carrol has acquired in his years in the Midwest City Schools to be of value, and she attributes credibility to him based on this human capital.

Brenda Donalds expressed a similar sentiment after a meeting to discuss the School Improvement Plan (SIPAAA). At the meeting Mr. Carrol told the teachers that his strength rested in his knowledge of organization and scheduling, and he demonstrated how that expertise could contribute to the SIPAAA. Brenda volunteered to me that she valued this expertise and liked that Mr. Carrol "can identify his strengths" (Informal interview notes 2/23/01).

While Mr. Carrol fosters credibility for himself by enacting valued capital during interactions related to formal school tasks, he also takes advantage of informal interactions. In this next example, I observed Mr. Carrol and John Pearl hanging out in Pearl's classroom before the start of a staff development day:

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<sup>46</sup> It is interesting to note that this lack of explanation is also what the teachers criticize Mrs. Koh about. This seeming paradox is explained by Mrs. Koh's way of being, her penchant for using rhetorical questions during interactions. These rhetorical questions have the effect of providing long-winded quasi explanations without a definitive answer.

As John waves me into his classroom he smiles and tells me “James” (Carrol) is a “great musician,” and can play the guitar and the drums. Then Carrol tells us “This is a solo I learned,” setting his fingers loose on the guitar.

When Carrol is done with his solo he looks up at John with a grin and asks “Ya know any Beatles?” As John smiles and nods, Carrol says, “Name that tune,” and starts to play a Beatles song. John pulls out a large 3 ring binder from his desk starts to name Beatles songs to see if Carrol can play them. After a few misses, John says “Hold Your Hand.” Carrol starts to play, and John sings along. Next they converge on “Hey Jude.”

They wrap up singing to get ready for a staff meeting. Carrol leaves ahead of John and me, and once Carrol is gone, John tells me “He’s a nice guy, and he came at just the right time.” Then he adds “It’s better now (with Carrol at the school) don’t you think?” (Field notes 3/30/01)

It is difficult to imagine Mrs. Koh hanging out with teachers and singing in her spare time--it simply does not fit with her way of being. Almost all of Mrs. Koh’s interactions with teachers are related to formal school tasks, and even if she tried to be more informal, her way of being would seep through and betray the impression she was trying to create. However, as we have seen, Mr. Carrol’s way of being is much less rigid, and allows him to engage in a broader range of interactions. It is through these interactions, both formal and informal, that the teachers attribute credibility to Mr. Carrol. Shortly after this display of cultural capital, John attributes credibility, commenting that Mr. Carrol came to the school at the right time and that things have subsequently gotten better.

Later that day at the staff luncheon, Mr. Carrol and I shared food and conversation with John Pearl, Brenda Donalds, and Mike North. As we were eating and talking, a teacher approached Mr. Carrol and told him that the students who had been helping to set up the luncheon wanted to give the centerpieces away to the teachers, but there were not enough to go around:

Mr. Carrol stands (very naturally, seems very at ease) and while smiling and laughing, he tells the room that the kids want to give away the centerpieces, so “Who has a joke to tell?” (As a ‘price’ to receive a centerpiece). The teachers laugh and think of jokes, but no one will share as people chuckle “Too dirty!” While laughing, Carrol says, “OK, who knows the cold weather procedure?” (A procedure he had been revising, I interpret his tone as making fun of himself) Someone answers “20’s!” and a student hands over a centerpiece. Carrol follows this up: “Whose birthday is it?” and “Who’s pregnant?” (During all of this Carrol seems very comfortable, the teachers are laughing, and people seem to be enjoying themselves). When Carrol rejoins our table Mike North compliments him: “Nice job Mr. Carrol.”

Then Mrs. Koh wanders over to the table for a moment, and the conversation immediately turns to business, as Koh and Brenda discuss some sort of follow up to a field trip.

Koh, Brenda, and Mike depart, leaving John Pearl, Carrol, and me behind. Then John smiles and tells Mr. Carrol, “In the short time that I’ve known you, it surprises me that you’re not in the classroom.” (Field notes 3/30/01)

During my time at Costen, I never observed Mrs. Koh joking with the teachers with such ease, and it is telling that when she stops by the table, the discourse moves back to business. Mrs. Koh is unable to tap the “shadow land of informal interaction” (Selznick 1949: 260) that is a resource for Mr. Carrol, in part because she does not possess the requisite cultural capital to succeed in such efforts.

Mr. Carrol’s way of being informs his casual interactions with the teachers and results in a number of compliments. Through these positive evaluations the teachers are not only paying deference to Mr. Carrol, they are also imbuing him with credibility. Mr. Carrol’s cultural capital purchases substantial credibility from the teachers, but Mrs. Koh’s way of being is a currency that is not valued in this market (though it is with the LSC).

Mr. Carrol deploys his symbolic power to redefine the school's copy policy, putting a more restrictive policy in place of what had been a very liberal one. While the issue of copies may seem trivial to an outsider, any teacher can tell you how important making copies is to their daily work. Moreover, the copy issue had been a hot topic in the past. One of Mrs. Koh's early violations of the negotiated order involved placing limits on the number of copies a teacher could make while requiring that requests for copies be made 24 hours in advance. Teachers were to fill out a copy request form, and turn it over to an office aide, and the aide would make the copies. As with so many of her disruptions, Mrs. Koh was holding the teachers accountable. The teachers did not respond kindly to this change. After the investigation sparked by "Turmoil at 'KOH'sten School," one of the ways Mrs. Koh tried to reach out to the teachers was by reliberalizing the copy procedures. Mrs. Koh relived the situation for me during an interview. Mrs. Koh shared how she told the teachers:

I try to accommodate. I try to meet your needs. When you say that you need papers, I order a case for everybody for emergency use. There are no - not many schools that I know in the system allow teachers to have unlimited use of copiers and papers the way we do at Costen School. (Continues the story after an aside) I'm doing it because I've learned - I've learned to listen to your needs. I'm learning to listen to your needs. I'm learning to respond to you and in return, I need the same respect. (Interview transcript 11/30/00)

As discussed earlier, Mrs. Koh had realized that a blunt use of rational-legal authority, even if it was tightly coupled with the rhetoric of accountability, was not sufficient for her success. She knew that she needed to acquire credibility in the eyes of the teachers, and her reliberalization of the copy procedures was one such attempt.

However, the copies remained an administrative problem: Too many different people making too many copies at too many different times and resulting in too many copy machine breakdowns and expensive repair bills. Mrs. Koh and Mr. Carrol decided that a change had to be made, but this time Mr. Carrol notified the teachers:

When I arrive at the staff meeting at 8:30, Mr. Carrol is passing around packets of new procedures to the teachers as they come in. The first page is a list of new procedures for copy machine use. At one of the tables Brenda Donalds asks Mr. Carrol about it, and he replies in a friendly voice (varied in tone and pitch) “We’ll try it and see how it goes.”

At 8:38 Carrol begins the meeting, stating with a loud, clear voice, “Ahh, good morning staff.” Immediately the teachers stop their side conversations and Carrol has already moved on: “I wanted to explain a couple of things.” Referring the teachers to the packet of new forms he tells them “With a school of 1600 students” the administration has to make adjustments, and “I have to streamline my own methods as well.” He continues, “We have an inordinate amount of money spent on the copy machines” (I immediately think to myself that the teachers will not like where this is going). He says the cost of repairs is very expensive, so he is assigning some of the aides to “use the machine to do multiple copies,” and for sets of 35 copies the teachers will fill out a form and make a request with 24 hours notice. For sets of 35 or more, they should “allow another day,” for their copies to come through. So they’ll try this and “If this doesn’t work, we’ll revisit it.”

Mr. Carrol continues by telling the teachers that miscellaneous copies can be made on the Lanier copier, and each teacher has been assigned a code, “and we’ll keep a running tally of how many copies we’ll use” (his voice remains loud and clear, and he draws further attention to himself by waving his hands gently as he talks). He tells the teachers to “Please try and bear with us,” and he has had some success with this policy at another school. He tells the teachers that they should turn in their copy requests to the main office or to room 117 if they are in that section of the building and the office aides “will run off those copies.”

Then Jackie Mitchell (veteran first grade teacher using a loud clear voice) says that the Lanier copier “isn’t working.” Carrol responds, “It will be up and running today, and you’ll have your codes.” Jackie says something about other copiers not working, and Carrol replies, “I just had ‘em fixed.” Jackie responds “Great,” as Carrol adds that they now have a regular person assigned to copier maintenance.

Carrol continues, “These things (copies) are related to what you do in the class,” so the copies will be high priority. Mrs. Granger (veteran second grade teacher) comments “They (the aides) aren’t gonna want to stop and copy for us.” Carrol assures her “I’ll deal with that, that’s an administrative problem.” (Field notes 1/30/01)

In changing the copy policy, Mr. Carrol is disrupting the negotiated order. However, even as he violates the negotiated order, he engages in considerable interactive work. He prefaces the disruption by outlining his motives for the coming change: “I wanted to explain a couple of things,” the need to “streamline” procedures in a large school, and the “inordinate amount of money spent on the copy machines.” Carrol also mentions his success with this procedure at another school. By engaging in this “motive talk” (Mills 1940, Hewitt and Stokes 1975), Mr. Carrol is anticipating the complaints by the teachers and preparing them for the shock in the negotiated order.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, he is prepared for their complaints, and he assures them that the Lanier machines are ready for miscellaneous copies, all copiers have been repaired, and he’ll keep the office aides in line. This observation corresponds nicely with Tulsi’s earlier comment that Carrol “doesn’t leave you with a loophole to attack him.”

Given the complaints that accompanied Mrs. Koh’s earlier changes to the copy policy, I expected the teachers to vent a number of frustrations about the new policy. Because copies provide integral materials for the work of teaching, the change in the policy disrupts the teachers’ sense of control over their labor process. Moreover, the new policy has a large labor cost. Instead of making copies as needed, the teachers are now

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<sup>47</sup> In contrast, I noticed that Mrs. Koh usually waits until the complaints arise, and then provides an account for her actions after the fact (Scott and Lyman 1968).

responsible for having the materials ready 24 hours in advance, a labor cost that also affects lesson planning. In restricting teacher control, the disruption created by the change in copy policy had the potential to alienate teachers from the autonomy provided by the previous order and from their control over their own labor. To my surprise, the responses of the teachers to this disruption were tame:

As the group of primary teachers packs up with the close of the lunch period, I ask them for their impressions on the new copy procedures. Jackie Mitchell says, "It's too early to tell, ask in a week." Carrie Andretti says, "To be honest" the change doesn't bother her. Ramona tells me she did it for the 1st time yesterday, and it worked fine. (Field notes 2/2/01)

I waited, but the complaints I never materialized. Later in the summer I asked Mrs. Koh to reflect on the important issues that arose during the past year, and she replied: "The copy machine was one of the issues that came up. It's an ongoing issue. But it kind of died down somewhat now" (Interview transcript 8/3/01). What is so interesting about this situation is that the policy Mr. Carrol introduced is almost identical to the one Mrs. Koh tried to introduce. Part of the success of the new policy may involve better implementation by the office aides. However, the success also involves the credibility and symbolic power that Mr. Carrol had fostered through his interactions with the teachers. For example, when Mrs. Koh reflected on the success of the new policy, she didn't address the content of the policy itself, rather she discussed Mr. Carrol: "He has good people skills. He has good people skills" (Interview transcript 8/3/01).

To establish the copy policy, Mr. Carrol deploys his acquired credibility as the symbolic power to redefine the situation and circumvent resistance, allowing a disruption in the negotiated order without causing the turmoil that is so common with Mrs. Koh's

changes. Armed with symbolic power, Mr. Carrol can define the teacher's loss of control and the related labor cost involved in the policy change as just. The credibility and symbolic power that Mrs. Koh lacks has a *defining role* in the social organization of turmoil. For example, during an interview with Martha Jones, Martha told me that she felt Mr. Carrol had been a successful leader. When I asked her to explain she said:

I think a prime example, that was when the copy machine and he instituted that copy machine thing. There wasn't much grumbling. I haven't heard much grumbling about it. And I have feeling that if Koh had instituted that, it would have been disregarded. You know? (Interview transcript 2/23/01)

Aside from the details of the policy itself, Mrs. Koh doesn't have the symbolic power get the staff to accept the policy. Even though Mrs. Koh is principal and she has more rational-legal power than Mr. Carrol, he is the one who has been able to foster credibility in the eyes of the teachers, and the success of the new policy is in part a reflection of his symbolic power. Because of his symbolic power, Mr. Carrol is able to violate the negotiated order and get away with it. Without this power, when Koh violates the negotiated order she is crucified by the teachers and turmoil ensues.<sup>48</sup>

One alternative explanation to the lack of turmoil following Mr. Carrol's disruption of the copy procedures is that the teachers were simply too exhausted from their battles with Mrs. Koh to resist. However, my data do not indicate that this was the

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<sup>48</sup> In addressing the copy situation as administrators, Mrs. Koh and Mr. Carrol are working together, in what could be seen as a "good cop"/ "bad cop" relationship. However, this characterization is inaccurate. When Mr. Carrol arrived at the school Mrs. Koh was no longer being a "bad cop," rather, she was withdrawing. As such, Mr. Carrol had to be both "bad cop" and "good cop" with the teachers—to introduce a disruption and get it through without turmoil. He can do this because of his symbolic power. Though the two were working together in this example, when I visited the school briefly the following year, the teachers said that their relationship was adversarial, and the teachers said that they could not tell who was really running the school.

case. The change in the copy policy was not the final disruption to occur. Another disruption, which I will discuss in the Chapter Four, involves Mrs. Koh's withdrawal from the leader team meetings. For the teachers, the leader team meetings were an important locale in which they could negotiate with Mrs. Koh, but Mrs. Koh's absence disrupted this order. This disruption resulted in turmoil, and it occurred after Mr. Carrol had effectively changed the copy policy. Moreover, the teachers knew that Mr. Carrol was coming to the school on the recommendation of the regional office, and even before he arrived they were primed to battle him, labeling him the region's "pet." However, when he first arrived, he paid deference to the teachers and their negotiated order, taking the time to cultivate interactions and acquire credibility in their eyes. The teachers value the administrative experience that Mr. Carrol has acquired in his 30 years working in the Midwest City Schools. The teachers attribute credibility to Mr. Carrol based on this human capital, but also his cultural capital--his easygoing, flexible manner. This way of being is more consonant with the professional logic of autonomy that characterizes the work of teaching (Lortie 1975, Barcharach and Mundell 1993) than Mrs. Koh's rigid manner. Ironically, once Mr. Carrol had acquired credibility, he deployed it as the symbolic power to avoid turmoil—even as he violated the autonomy that the teachers cherish by redefining copy procedures in a way that holds teachers accountable.

### Summary and Reflection

In Chapters Two and Three we examined how turmoil is socially organized by changes in the broad structural context in which a setting exists (the rise of accountability

policies and the competition between competing institutional logics), pointed disruptions of an established negotiated order (the many changes introduced by Mrs. Koh into the school), authority relations (the rational-legal authority that enables Mrs. Koh to continuously disrupt the negotiated order), and symbolic power relations (Mrs. Koh's lack of credibility in the eyes of the staff). At Costen Elementary School, Mrs. Koh uses her rational-legal authority to create a tighter coupling between accountability policies and practices in the school. However, by using her authority in this way, Mrs. Koh violates the indulgency pattern that the teachers had negotiated with the prior administration, an order the teachers had deemed successful. As a result (and despite her rational-legal authority), the teachers view Mrs. Koh's actions as unjustified, and rarely attribute credibility to her.

However, Mrs. Koh's struggle for credibility is linked not only to her violation of the negotiated order, but also the features of her interactions with the teachers. Examining the details of these interactions reveals an underlying layer of complexity in the social organization of turmoil, and the defining role of symbolic power. In her interactions with teachers, Koh is the micro embodiment of accountability policies: tough, rigid, and unyielding. Though this way of being fits the logic of accountability, it is not well suited to individualized interactions with a staff that values professional autonomy, and Mrs. Koh's approach purchases little credibility in the eyes of the teachers. Without credibility and the symbolic power that it provides, when Mrs. Koh disrupts the negotiated order she is unable to define her disruptions as just, and turmoil ensues.

For all of her difficulty with the teachers, Mrs. Koh has more success with the Local School Council. Born of reform, the LSC is itself an instrument of accountability, and the members of the LSC have an interest in changing the negotiated order of the school. Where the teachers find Mrs. Koh's mode of interaction offensive, the same way of being resonates with the aesthetic of the LSC. The LSC attributes credibility to Mrs. Koh. Mrs. Koh deploys this credibility as the symbolic power to define the principal evaluation process in a way that sidesteps her micro political problems with the teachers, and protects her credibility in the eyes of the LSC.

Compared to Mrs. Koh, Mr. Carrol has a relaxed manner. This enables Carrol to engage in a broad range of impression management during formal and informal interactions with teachers, crafting interactions that fit with the aesthetic of teachers. The teachers value Mr. Carrol's way of being (cultural capital) and the administrative experience he has acquired in 30 years of employment with the Midwest City Schools (human capital). The teachers attribute credibility to Mr. Carrol based on his cultural and human capital. Armed with credibility in the eyes of teachers, Mr. Carrol can safely violate the negotiated order: he deploys his credibility as the symbolic power to redefine copy procedures while avoiding teacher resistance and turmoil.

To this point, I have not addressed an important comparison: Mrs. Koh is a female and a first generation Chinese immigrant, and Mr. Carrol is a white male born and raised in Midwest City. Though it may not be surprising that a group of largely white teachers take issue with an Asian woman as their principal, when I would ask the teachers informally if any of Mrs. Koh's difficulty involved race, they would respond no and then

refer to what they saw as her interpersonal failings. In emphasizing a cultural difference as opposed to a strictly racial one, these responses gloss over the interpenetration of race and culture, a relationship that is difficult to untangle. The issue is not simply the tone of Mrs. Koh's skin. Rather, according to the data, the issue is the cultural style (as first generation Chinese immigrant) that Mrs. Koh brings to her interactions with the teachers and how the teachers respond.<sup>49</sup> Mrs. Koh has acquired a particular way of being that respects authority and embodies that authority, enacting it during her interactions with teachers. Tough, rigid, and at times interpreted as terse, it is a form of cultural capital that the teachers do not value as a basis of credibility.

If the effect of race was direct, we might expect racial minorities to attribute credibility to Mrs. Koh based on her minority status. However, the bilingual teachers (who are mostly racial minorities) are among Mrs. Koh's loudest critics, and the LSC (nearly all white) are Koh's biggest supporters. Furthermore, there are a number of successful principals and assistant principals in the Midwest City Schools who have acquired symbolic power in the eyes of relevant audiences despite their minority statuses.

In terms of gender, a white male might be able to get away with the rigid, authoritarian way of being that Mrs. Koh exhibits. However, it is important to note that, rather than being authoritarian, Mr. Carrol *often defers* to the teachers and their negotiated order. Though sociologists in the ethnomethodological tradition have defined "doing deference" as a "submissive" and therefore "feminine" act (West and Zimmerman

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<sup>49</sup> If, in contrast, I argued that the teacher's evaluations of Mrs. Koh were clearly racial in nature, I would have no data to support this argument.

1987, Segura 1992, Hall 1993a, 1993b, West and Fenstermaker 1995), *Mr. Carrol's* acts of deference are a means through which he acquires credibility with the teachers. The comparison is further complicated when we consider Mrs. Jackson, the principal between Mr. Welch and Mrs. Koh. Mrs. Jackson is a black female, yet she did not appear to have the kinds of credibility problems that Mrs. Koh does. Moreover, as we will see in the next chapter, there are minority female teachers at Costen School who have acquired credibility and symbolic power. In this light, the fact that Mrs. Koh is an Asian female does not preclude her from acquiring and using symbolic power, but the manner in which teachers respond to her forms of capital as manifested in social interaction does.

While the issues of race and gender are complex, the existing data indicate that the turmoil at Costen School is socially organized by changes in the structural context (accountability policies), pointed disruptions in an established negotiated order, rational-legal authority relations, and symbolic power relations. In particular, symbolic power is of *dupla gravitas* in the social organization of turmoil. As we have seen in this chapter, the symbolic power (or lack thereof) of those who attempt to disrupt an established negotiated order has a defining role in the organization of turmoil. However, the symbolic power of those who *respond* to these disruptions must also be considered. Though Mrs. Koh lacks symbolic power, there are a number of teachers at Costen School who have acquired symbolic power, and use it in response to her disruptions to their negotiated order. In this way, teachers with symbolic power *articulate* the turmoil at the school, defining lines of resistance and the nature of the emergent turmoil. It is towards

this second facet of symbolic power and the social organization of turmoil that I now turn.

## Chapter 5

### **Defining Turmoil from Below: The Symbolic Power of Teachers**

When Mr. Carrol arrived at the school, he did not enter a power vacuum. Because symbolic power is based on a dynamic social process in which people attribute credibility to others based on multiple forms of capital, it is not restricted to administrators. Though Koh struggles for credibility and had begun to withdraw from interaction—the very means through which symbolic power is created—there were a number of teachers who had acquired symbolic power.

Examining the symbolic power of teachers reveals a second side to the role of symbolic power in the social organization of turmoil. The symbolic power of teachers is an important “weapon of the weak” (Scott 1985): it is a means through which the teachers, as subordinates, combat Mrs. Koh’s disruptive changes by defining lines of resistance. Though Mrs. Koh lacks the symbolic power to define her disruptions as just, teachers who have symbolic power use it to define Mrs. Koh’s actions negatively, introducing lines of resistance through which the emergent turmoil is expressed. Hence, the role of symbolic power in the organization of turmoil is of dual importance: turmoil is both organized around symbolic power relations (who has it and who does not), *and articulated* by those with symbolic power. Even though teachers are lower on the organizational chart than administrators, when armed with symbolic power, teachers can define turmoil from below.

In what follows, I examine how three teachers at Costen School use their symbolic power to articulate turmoil. For each of these teachers, I examine how they use their symbolic power in response to Mrs. Koh, how they acquired their symbolic power, and how they use their symbolic power to circumvent turmoil as they introduce their own changes to the negotiated order. As the editor and contributing author of “Turmoil at ‘KOH’sten School,” Frances Drew (seventh grade language arts) is one of the primary respondents to Mrs. Koh’s disruptive actions. Mrs. Drew acquired her symbolic power through interactions in which teachers attribute credibility based on her human and social capital. While Mrs. Drew uses her symbolic power to define lines of resistance, she also uses it to avoid turmoil as she restructures the schools language arts curriculum.

Where Frances Drew uses her symbolic power to define lines of resistance, Brenda Donalds (sixth grade language arts) alternates between dampening the turmoil at the school (by fostering communication over conflict), and amplifying the turmoil (by increasing the conflict between the teachers and the administration). Brenda’s symbolic power originates in the ways her colleagues value her cultural and human capital. Like Mrs. Drew, Brenda also uses her symbolic power to effectively change the language arts curriculum while avoiding turmoil.

While Brenda Donalds and Frances Drew use their symbolic power in visible response to Mrs. Koh’s disruptions, Carrie Andretti’s use of symbolic power exhibits greater subtlety. Armed with a quick wit and a sarcastic manner, Mrs. Andretti (second grade) has a way of being that resonates with her fellow primary teachers. Mrs. Andretti’s symbolic power defines the group culture, and as a group, the primary teachers

have adopted Mrs. Andretti's sarcastic manner. In turn, the group's sarcastic responses to Mrs. Koh's actions reaffirm the distance between the primary teachers and the administration, while validating their prior negotiated order and mocking the disruptions initiated by Mrs. Koh. Though the group culture that she defines, Mrs. Andretti's symbolic power influences how the teachers respond to various disruptions and articulates the turmoil at the school.

#### Defining Resistance—Frances Drew

An African-American woman in her late 30's, Frances Drew is a five year veteran of Costen School. Mrs. Drew teaches seventh grade language arts, and she came to the school during the Jackson administration (the principal between Mr. Welch and Mrs. Koh). Even though Mrs. Drew never met Mr. Welch, she greatly esteems the indulgency pattern that he negotiated with the teachers, a pattern that was maintained during Mrs. Jackson's tenure. When Mrs. Koh began to disrupt this order, Mrs. Drew used her symbolic power to define lines of resistance and shape the emergent turmoil.

The editor and contributing author of "Turmoil at 'KOH'sten School," Mrs. Drew compiled the document while on a sabbatical that she earned by winning a prestigious teaching award (and her symbolic power is related to this award). Mrs. Drew mailed the document to various external offices, prompting an investigation of Mrs. Koh (Introduction, Chapter Three). As she told me during an interview, "I can even honestly say on this tape and to you that I couldn't stand Mrs. Koh. I just could not stand her"

(Interview Transcript 1/24/01). When I asked Mrs. Drew “What is it, in particular, that bothers you about Mrs. Koh?” She replied:

(Referring to a copy of “Turmoil at ‘KOH’s ten School”) Oh I’ve written letters all over the city. You’re just one more person to tell. What bothered me most about her is that she never took the time to figure out what was going on here because she just totally dismantled. And I’m not using hyperbole when I’m using that word “dismantled.” She totally dismantled every system that we had going here and she did it before she met, talked to, observed anyone. We we’re at home over Christmas break,<sup>50</sup> we came back and everything was changed. And to me, that is the most illogical way to go into any system. Whether you are a department store manager, a school leader. You first go and see well what are they doing, how is it working. (Interview Transcript 1/24/01)

Like many teachers, Mrs. Drew chafed at the disruption Mrs. Koh created in their established order (Chapter Three). When Mrs. Koh failed to pay homage to the teachers and their established order, Mrs. Drew was one of the first teachers to resist Mrs. Koh’s disruptions. In compiling “Turmoil at ‘KOH’s ten School,” she did so in a very public and organized manner. As Mrs. Drew explained to me:

I plastered her (Koh’s) name all over this city. Everybody I could think of I sent that book to. And the book was just magnificent because I had a lot of free time (because of her sabbatical) and I like typing and writing and being on the computer. And I compiled letters from the entire staff here and I compiled - it had about twenty letters from parents. It had - oh God, maybe a good forty odd letters from various teachers. But some people wrote more than once. Some people wrote anonymously. Some people wrote in small groups and so it ended up being this book, maybe about 150-200 pages total (Actually 119). And then I had it bound and I had it organized with a table of contents. I had a poem in there. I had a lot of free time. I was on my sabbatical. And I created this book and the title of the book was, a little thing with her name, “Koh”, “Turmoil at ‘KOH’s ten School.” And I sent it all over the city. (After sharing a copy of the book with me she continues) And through the whole process, all I kept hearing was “You can’t make principals change. You can’t get rid of principals. This is Midwest City. Principals are here forever. Let’s just ride her out and eventually

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<sup>50</sup> Mrs. Koh was hired and started work at Costen on the 21<sup>st</sup> of December, 1998, while the teachers were on winter break.

she'll be gone." I was just like "No, no." The reason it's so difficult to combat leadership is that everybody runs scared. (Continues after an aside) And so whenever I would hear people say, "Well you just – it's just a waste of time. It won't happen." I said, "That's why the city is loaded with these terrible principals. Because everybody is walking around so afraid." (Interview Transcript 1/24/01)

In compiling "Turmoil at 'KOH'sten School," Mrs. Drew used her credibility as the symbolic power to resist Mrs. Koh, and to define such resistance as an effective way to "combat" Mrs. Koh. Armed with this symbolic power, Mrs. Drew was able to do so despite what Mrs. Drew says was an initial inclination by the teachers to "just ride her out." Mrs. Drew uses her symbolic power to define how the teachers respond to Koh's disruption of the negotiated order, and this line of resistance eventually led to the investigation of Mrs. Koh by the Midwest City School's Central Office. Moreover, Mrs. Drew's resistance is ongoing. When I returned to the school briefly at the end of the 2001-2002 school year, I learned that the teachers had elected Mrs. Drew as one of their Local School Council teacher representatives. While the turmoil at the school involves Mrs. Koh's lack of symbolic power as she disrupts the negotiated order, it also involves Mrs. Drew's deployment of symbolic power to define resistance in response to Mrs. Koh's disruptions.

Though Mrs. Drew is appalled by Mrs. Koh's disruptions to the negotiated order, ironically, Mrs. Koh and Mrs. Drew are similar in that teachers criticize both of them based on their ways of being. However, where Mrs. Koh had begun to withdraw from interaction, Mrs. Drew was able to manage interactions enough to take the edge off of the manner that the teachers dislike. In keeping interactions open, Mrs. Drew makes visible

her considerable human and social capital, and the teachers attribute credibility to her based on these capital, despite their negative responses to her general manner. To explain how Mrs. Drew acquired her symbolic power, I begin with the cultural capital that her fellow teachers decry.

Frances Drew was born and raised in Midwest City, and educated in Midwest City Public Schools. Though she had a brief flirtation with child psychology in college, her experiences in psychology reinforced a lifelong desire to teach:

*Frances Drew:* But at one point I thought maybe I would go into child psychology. But I just couldn't buy a lot of the rhetoric. I knew it wouldn't fit my personality.

*Tim Hallett:* So give me an example, like –

*Frances Drew:* For instance, a lot of the behavior modification programs that psychologists (inaudible) styles where you take children through these step-by-step phases, I just don't believe in a lot of it. I think sometimes with children we have to simply tell them, "This is what I expect and you have no choice." And if you lay it down like that, most times you'll get what you expect. But if you start piece-mealing it, "Well if you'll just sit still today, but you can blurt out. And then in two weeks you have to sit still and not blurt out." Whereas my approach is, you have to sit still and be quiet and you have to do it today. We're not going to piggyback this over a 3-4 weeks. So -

*Tim Hallett:* Where do you think that facet of your personality comes from?

*Frances Drew:* My childhood in Midwest City Public Schools. And in my mother's home. It was the combination. But what was going on in her home was also what was going on in the schools during that time. We're talking the middle '60s to the '80s basically is when I was being educated. And it was just a totally different mindset. But then after the '80s, all of a sudden we had to coddle children. We had to explain and negotiate and take them through these little steps and that was different. And so I just got how can I say? I lost my love of psychology. After four years of classes in that I thought "I can't do this. I can't." I can't coddle my kids now. (Interview Transcript 1/24/01)

In this excerpt Mrs. Drew articulates some of her knowledge and beliefs about education (human capital), but she also invokes popular psychology to comment on her “personality.” Though one could, as Mrs. Drew does, simply label the way of being that Mrs. Drew describes as a “personality,” by discussing this as capital we emphasize how a “personality” is situated within a context and is valued (or not) only when placed in a social relationship with other people (audiences).<sup>51</sup> In this sense, Mrs. Drew is commenting on her cultural capital: her manner with children, a style of interaction that she acquired through her “childhood in Midwest City Public Schools. And in my mother’s home.”

Just as Mrs. Drew “can’t coddle” her students, she carries this way of being into her interactions with other teachers. As Brenda Donalds said of Mrs. Drew: “She isn’t the most tactful, whether she knows it or not, she scares a lot of people.” Brenda added:

She’s much more blunt than I am where she will say – “Hey you know what, dude? Get your face out of here, be gone.” Where I might say, “Let’s just decide. Here’s what needs to be done. If you wanna help do it, sign up. It’s a choice.”  
(Interview transcript 5/12/00)

In another interview Brenda said of Mrs. Drew: “She treats teachers the exact same way she treats kids and that is ‘don’t mess with me because I don’t take any nonsense from anybody’ ” (Interview Transcript 11/16/00). Echoing these comments, Sheila Long told me that she finds Mrs. Drew overbearing, and explained: “Frances is such a strong character, it’s very hard to express your doubts or should you be doing this because then you’re afraid that you’ll get derided” (Interview Transcript 2/07/01). In another

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<sup>51</sup> This move allows us to shift from a substantialist approach to a relational sociology (Emirbayer 1997).

interview, Martha June said that Mrs. Drew has “a very abrasive personality. Like we could be in a meeting and we would be done and she’d be like ‘Okay, now get out—I’ve got stuff to do’ ” (Interview Transcript 2/23/01). From a sociological point of view, Martha’s comment illustrates that a “personality” is only of consequence when put into a social relationship. More than an isolated “personality,” Mrs. Drew has an acquired way of being that informs her interactions with others and, through this relationship, is regarded as “abrasive”—a form of cultural capital that purchases little credibility in the eyes of her fellow teachers.

As these examples indicate, a number of teachers have difficulty with Mrs. Drew’s manner. In her own words, she has a “big mouth.” Mrs. Drew is somewhat cognizant of how teachers respond to her, and she makes an effort to soften the edges of her interactions with teachers. For example, before starting a meeting of the reading teachers, Mrs. Drew told them: “I will say something about my personality, I am outspoken, that’s just who I am” (Field notes 10/27/00). In using this disclaimer (Hewitt and Stokes 1975), Mrs. Drew is acknowledging that her manner does not fit the ideal type valued by the teachers, and she is asking them to suspend their expectations and forgive her for any perceived abrasiveness.

Similarly, just prior to a leader team meeting later in the year, Mrs. Drew entered Anastasia’s room (where the leader team meetings are held) and gave Christopher Meachim (LSC teacher representative) a memo she had put together regarding the school’s reading program. Mrs. Drew asked Christopher to distribute the handout during the meeting and discuss it in the following weeks (Mrs. Drew is not on the leader team).

Then she turned and left the room in a hurry without acknowledging anyone else. However, as she left the doorway, Mrs. Drew turned around, reentered, and said to Anastasia with a smile “I’m sorry, good morning, I came into your room and didn’t even address you.” Anastasia smiled and laughed in response, in what I interpreted to be forgiveness (Field notes 2/16/01). Though Mrs. Drew has an abrupt manner (similar to Mrs. Koh in fact), she apologizes and gives face to Anastasia (Goffman 1955, 1967).

Though this type of interactive work, Mrs. Drew is able to soften how teachers respond to her abrupt way. Though Mrs. Koh and Mrs. Drew both have ways of being that the teachers criticize, Mrs. Drew is more successful in her efforts to soften her interactions with various forms of impression management. While Mrs. Koh has been unable to sustain successful interactions with the teachers, Mrs. Drew’s efforts lubricate interactions enough to keep them moving. Through these ongoing interactions, Mrs. Drew’s other forms of capital are made visible. Mrs. Drew is a well-regarded language arts teacher, and the staff values the considerable skills, knowledge, and expertise (human capital) that Mrs. Drew has acquired over the years.<sup>52</sup> Mrs. Drew’s success as a teacher has resulted in a prestigious reward: a Midwest City “Golden Apple.” Prior to Mrs. Koh’s arrival, the students and teachers nominated Mrs. Drew for the award, and shortly after Mrs. Koh came to the school, she won. As a Golden Apple winner, Midwest City Schools paid for Mrs. Drew to go on sabbatical during the 1999-2000 school year to acquire her master’s degree as a reading specialist at a prestigious suburban university (as

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<sup>52</sup> Likewise, Mrs. Koh has considerable human and social capital, after all, she was a member of the prestigious PLTE program. However, her problematic interactions with teachers create a roadblock to the valuation of these capital and the credibility they could provide.

well as a vacation in Hawaii). Mrs. Drew's Golden Apple credentials certify her human capital. The teachers value Mrs. Drew's knowledge as a reading specialist, and her university ties (human and social capital), and they attribute credibility accordingly. As Brenda Donalds summarized to me, even though Mrs. Drew has been "terribly rude" at times, her human capital remains a basis for the attribution of credibility: "If she were a rotten teacher, then no – but Frances is a good teacher" (Interview transcript 11/16/00). Other teachers praise Mrs. Drew for her classroom organizational skills (Field notes 11/16/00) and because she "knows her stuff and I admire what she does in her classroom with the way she teaches." (Interview 2/23/01).

A more specific example of how the teachers attribute credibility to Mrs. Drew comes from a series of positive evaluations made by Anari Ali (a new 5<sup>th</sup> grade language arts teacher). During lunch one day, Anari joined a group of new teachers, and excitedly showed them a writing assessment sheet that Mrs. Drew had given her that included a peer editing program. Anari exclaimed of Mrs. Drew: "That girl is good! You know she was a Golden Apple winner?" A few days later I observed Anari's classroom, and in an interview, she discussed how Mrs. Drew had influenced her teaching practices to involve novels and paper editing:

The upper grades are doing that (novels) because we have more experienced teachers, I think, in the uppers. We have a Golden Apple winner who's - you probably know, Mrs. Drew. She's, she's doing the novels. I asked, I go to her. She, I went to her yesterday and I went to a workshop for her, with her during the summer. She told us to all come in and I said, "Okay, I want to learn this." So she's doing the novel kind of thing. And actually, she starts from there and they're writing - she knows what she's doing. I go to her if I need, she gave me like these lists of like what to look for, you know, in their writing. And the students check it themselves. We have peer editing. The editing process—the whole editing

process is—it takes like maybe I'd say a month, let's say. That's a long process. Not a month, I'm exaggerating. But it's just a long process for editing. They have to go back and check their mistakes. They read backwards, for example, which is a great idea that she gave me. (Continues later) I like the way she does her writing activities, intensive reading stuff. (Interview Transcript 12/01/00)

In this excerpt Anari cites the “knowledge” of the upper grade teachers and of Mrs. Drew in particular as a Golden Apple winner who “knows what she’s doing” and has a “great idea” for peer editing (human capital).

It is through these types of positive evaluations that the teachers attribute credibility to Mrs. Drew. Though Mrs. Drew’s credibility flows from human and cultural capital that are made visible as she engages in various instructional tasks, Mrs. Drew uses the symbolic power that her credibility affords in an effort to defend the social order that the teachers hold dear. Mrs. Drew uses her symbolic power to define lines of resistance in response to Mrs. Koh’s disruptions, and Mrs. Drew’s symbolic power has a major role in articulating the “Turmoil at ‘KOH’sten School.”

Mrs. Drew also uses her symbolic power to avoid turmoil as she makes changes in the school’s language arts curriculum. When Mrs. Drew returned from her Golden Apple sabbatical (Summer 2000), she planned a number of workshops for the language arts teachers and pushed for the school to go to a “block-schedule” for language arts in the upper grades. At Costen, the fifth through eighth grades are departmentalized, with students moving from period to period and subject to subject. Language arts had been separated into separate reading and writing periods, and Mrs. Drew pushed for all fifth through eighth grade students to have language arts instruction in a double period/block,

either with the same teacher for both subjects, or with reading and writing in back-to-back periods (depending on the preferences of the language arts teachers at each grade level). For the reading portion, Mrs. Drew pushed for an “intensive reading” program that she developed that stresses word attack skills, decoding skills, and comprehension.

At the start of the 2000-2001 school year, the school adopted Mrs. Drew’s block schedule/intensive reading plan for the upper grades. As the school year unfolded I did not observe any turmoil around the change, even though it is a considerable disruption of previous practices. The success of the change could have something to do with the timing of the implementation, but the success of the change is also a reflection of Mrs. Drew’s credibility and symbolic power. Moreover, in implementing the program, Mrs. Drew made her human capital visible, inviting a further attribution of credibility. For example, during an interview early in the 2000-2001 school year, Mrs. Koh applauded Mrs. Drew’s efforts with the reading program. When I asked Mrs. Koh what makes Mrs. Drew “good for that sort of thing,” Koh replied:

Well, she has a reading specialist background. She’s a reading teacher and um, she has years of teaching in reading. And also she has attended a writing workshop as part of the Golden Apple recipient. They had additional training. And plus she initiated it. It was her idea to begin with and that’s the way that I think good schools, the effective schools, good schools ideas come from the teachers. If they have an idea I’ll go with them. Because that’s where implementation will come in when the ideas comes from them. And I think it’s a good idea. Our children do need the intensive reading. What she’s calling intensive reading is focusing on the phonic components of it, the phonemic component of it, the vocabulary and the comprehension skills. And all are needed by our children. So I thought it was a good idea. (Interview Transcript 9/18/00)

In this excerpt Mrs. Koh cites Mrs. Drew’s connections to workshops as a Golden Apple recipient (social capital), as well as her experience as teacher, additional training and

knowledge as a reading specialist, and her “good idea” for the reading program (human capital). Mrs. Koh attributes credibility to Mrs. Drew based on these capitals, and Drew’s resulting power is symbolic. After all, it is Koh who has the rational-legal authority.<sup>53</sup> Later in the year Mrs. Koh made this attribution public, as she praised Mrs. Drew for her “great ideas in reading” and her “expertise” (human capital) at a staff meeting (Field notes 11/14/00).

Armed with the symbolic power that her credibility affords, Mrs. Drew can effectively intervene in the established social order while avoiding turmoil. However, her symbolic power is also a means to combat Mrs. Koh’s disruptions, and she uses it to define lines of resistance that articulate the turmoil at the school.

#### Dampening and Amplifying Turmoil—Brenda Donalds

A white woman in her early 50’s, Brenda Donalds is a seven year veteran of the school, where she teaches 6<sup>th</sup> grade language arts in the schools gifted program.<sup>54</sup> While Mrs. Drew uses her symbolic power to define lines of resistance, Brenda Donalds’

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<sup>53</sup> Mrs. Koh’s statement that she likes to “go with” the teachers ideas may be one of her efforts to “reach out” to teachers as an audience after the fallout from “Turmoil at ‘KOH’sten School,” and Koh’s increasing awareness that her own rational legal authority is not enough to run the organization. Increasingly, she recognizes the importance of symbolic power, especially for teachers “Because that’s where implementation will come in.”

<sup>54</sup> Interestingly, Brenda’s position as a “gifted” teacher is not a strong basis of credibility in the eyes of other teachers. In fact, that Brenda teaches the “gifted” students places bounds on some of the suggestions she makes since she gets to work with the “best” students and does not have to deal with some of the “challenges” of the regular and bilingual students. Her “gifted” status may actually damage her credibility with the regular program teachers. As we will see, Brenda’s credibility is based on the teachers’ valuation of her cultural and human capital.

deployment of symbolic power defines responses to Koh's disruptions in ways that alternate between dampening and amplifying the emergent turmoil.

To explain how Brenda's use of symbolic power dampens turmoil, let me provide some background. During an especially contentious time amidst turmoil around the bilingual program (Chapter 3), the tensions between Mrs. Koh, the bilingual teachers, and some of the regular program teachers erupted in an LSC meeting. Though I did not observe this LSC meeting, the teachers reconstructed it for me. By all accounts the meeting got out of hand, with different people yelling at each other. In the middle of the meeting, Brenda stood up and said that the yelling was "unprofessional," and everyone needed to work on "communication skills" (Field notes 12/01/00). During the same period, the leader team meetings were filled with turmoil around Mrs. Koh's changes to the bilingual program and its reverberations with the regular teachers. After the LSC meeting, Mrs. Koh told Brenda to run the next leader team meeting (My sense is that it was a sarcastic "Would you like to teach the class?" situation). At the next leader team meeting, Mrs. Koh handed it over to Brenda:

*Brenda Donalds:* Ok then. I get to run the meeting and John is saying, "Why?" (The group laughs) Because you were with me at the LSC meeting (making fun of herself) and you heard me spout off.

*John Pearl:* Right. Not spout off, you made a terrific contribution. And I think everybody there thought you were right on target.

*Brenda Donalds:* Well, we just need to talk about communication skills. We have a lot of rocky times. (Video Transcript 12/01/00)

What followed was an uneventful meeting, and this is what is so interesting. The meeting was devoid of the conflict around Mrs. Koh's disruptions that characterized

previous meetings. Brenda is able to dampen the turmoil, because of the credibility that she has acquired in the eyes of her fellow teachers, and the symbolic power that her credibility affords. Though I will discuss the origins of Brenda's credibility in time, it is notable that at the start of the meeting, John further legitimates Brenda: "you made a terrific contribution, and everybody there thought you were right on target." By exhibiting a proper demeanor, Brenda receives deference from John. However, these ritual acts of deference and demeanor are not simply the means through which an interaction order is maintained (Goffman 1967, 1983b). If that were so, the turmoil from the previous meetings would have continued. Rather, there is more at stake: Through such interactions Brenda has acquired the symbolic power to redefine the interaction order for the meeting.

After the meeting, Brenda commented to me, "It's nice to have a meeting where people aren't yelling at each other, huh?" and I smiled and agreed (Field notes 12/01/00). Brenda used her credibility and symbolic power to redefine the situation in which the meeting was embedded from one of conflict to one of "communication," introducing a line of interactions that dampened the turmoil at the school.<sup>55</sup>

Granted, the decrease in turmoil provided by Brenda's symbolic power only lasted for this one meeting. However, had she desired, Brenda could have continued to use her symbolic power to dampen turmoil. I say this because Brenda did not stop using her symbolic power after this meeting, she just began to use it in a different way. In

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<sup>55</sup> Though I was not an official participant in the negotiated order, this lull in the turmoil was a nice break, even for me.

dampening the turmoil at the school, Brenda could be seen as helping Mrs. Koh. However, there is no love lost between Brenda and Mrs. Koh (recall Brenda's comparison of Mrs. Koh's staffing changes to the Holocaust in Chapter Three), and Brenda only used her symbolic power in this way because of the challenge issued by Mrs. Koh in the LSC meeting that preceded this meeting. As the turmoil at the school continued, Brenda used her symbolic power not to dampen it, but to amplify it.

For example, when Mrs. Koh began to withdraw from interactions (Chapter Four), she stopped going to the leader team meetings. The purpose of the leader team meetings was to foster positive communications between the teachers and the administration after the investigation that followed "Turmoil at 'KOH'sten School." For the teachers, the leader team meetings were an important locale in which they could negotiate with Mrs. Koh, but Mrs. Koh's absence disrupted this order. As she withdrew from interactions, Mrs. Koh encouraged the teachers take leadership roles and to run the meetings without her. However, Mrs. Koh lacked the credibility and symbolic power to define her absence as acceptable, prompting turmoil.

However, to understand the texture of the turmoil that emerged, Brenda's symbolic power as a respondent must also be considered. When Mrs. Koh disrupted the meetings with her absence, there was some ambiguity as to how the teachers should respond. In the following example, Brenda used her symbolic power to define Koh's actions as especially unwarranted. As the teachers were waiting for Mrs. Koh to arrive, the following announcement from a secretary came over the intercom:

*Announcement:* Hello Ms. Cygnar (art teacher, they meet in her room) good morning. Mrs. Koh will get in about 10:30 this morning, she said to please run the meeting for her, she's not feeling well.

(At the mention of Koh's name, side conversations stop and the room goes silent for a few seconds)

*Anastasia Cygnar:* Alright (passes around agendas). My instructions are –

*Brenda Donalds:* (Interrupts by slamming her bottle of water down on the table, voice elevated in tone and pitch) Let's have it on tape, this is ridiculous (hits the table with the palm of her hand), I'm sorry, you're in the-, Anastasia, I'm not gonna, this has nothing to do with you.

*Anastasia Cygnar:* Um-hmm.

*Brenda Donalds:* It doesn't, you are not an administrator, you are a wonderful person.

*Anastasia Cygnar:* I'm not, I'm not being an administrator.

*Brenda Donalds:* No you're not, no no, here's the point, why is it she doesn't feel well? I'm sorry Chris (Meachim) is not here as an LSC (teacher) representative, this is absurd.

*Martha June:* Personally I think we should- need to do what we did with the new teacher meetings last year when no administrator came-we stopped meeting.

(Silence for a second and then chaos as people begin to pack up and voice agreement) (Leader Team Meeting Video Transcript, 3/09/01).

What I want to stress here is that Brenda deploys her credibility as the symbolic power to define the meeting and Mrs. Koh's actions as "ridiculous" and "absurd." Though it could be argued that any of the teachers could have done so, it is telling that, after the silence following the announcement of Koh's absence, that it *is* Brenda who defines the situation. In fact, Anastasia tries to go forward with the meeting. However, Brenda intervenes with her symbolic power—not surprising given her use of symbolic power at

other meetings—defining the situation as “ridiculous” and “absurd.” In turn, Martha suggests that they cancel the meeting, a suggestion that fits Brenda’s definition of the situation.

However, Brenda not only uses her symbolic power to define a line of resistance, she also uses it in a highly emotive display that amplifies turmoil. The emotions in the room were palpable (as an observer even I was on edge), rising with the ongoing interaction and exploding with the meeting’s chaotic end.<sup>56</sup> As is often the case with emotions, people feel remorse afterwards, and the following day (Saturday morning) Brenda called me at home to apologize for the meeting:

The phone rang and my wife picked it up, and in a confused voice said, “May I ask whose calling?” Then she handed me the phone with a shrug and a confused “Brenda Donalds?” I took the phone and gave a friendly hello (thought I was quite surprised, teachers only called me at home if I had given them my number to set up an interview). Brenda immediately told me “I just want to apologize,” for the leader team meeting on Friday. Brenda said she was afraid that I had not been able to observe the kinds of things I needed to in order to write my dissertation. I told her not to worry, and that they did not need to meet on my account. But Brenda again apologized and said she felt “awful,” but “things are just falling apart this year.” (Field notes 3/10/01)

It is telling that Brenda felt responsible for that Friday’s turmoil, after all, she is powerful teacher in the school. Brenda’s symbolic power has a definitive role, amplifying the expression of turmoil.

Brenda’s symbolic power to dampen and amplify turmoil is a product of her interactions with her fellow teachers. In these interactions, Brenda’s cultural and human capital are made visible, and the teachers attribute credibility to Brenda based on these

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<sup>56</sup> For a discussion of the role of interaction in emotional amplification, see Hallett (2003b).

capital. To explain how the teachers attribute credibility to Brenda, let me first describe Brenda. The dedicated mother of two daughters (though she had hoped for 6 children), when her youngest reached 1<sup>st</sup> grade, Brenda sought a job that would allow her ample and flexible time with her daughters, because “who would take care of them?” (Interview Transcript 5/12/00). Substitute teaching was a logical choice, and Brenda found that she enjoyed the work. She began to take classes, eventually acquiring her master’s degree in teaching. With both children in college, Brenda learned from a friend who was teaching at Costen that a position had opened for a 6<sup>th</sup> grade language arts teacher in the school’s gifted program. Brenda thought, “Oh, the timing’s right, sure. Here I am 7 years later” (Interview Transcript, 5/12/00). Though Brenda’s own children are now adults, she still has the air of a “super-mom” (Hochschild 1989), arriving at school fresh faced from her morning work-out, staying late for various meetings, and then hustling home to make dinner.

Brenda embodies this stereotypical model of middle-class motherhood, even using it to describe her teaching practices:

See I came to this older too. I didn’t even get into subbing until my youngest was in 1st grade. I’m also the first of five and to torment me when we were little my brother and sister, who were right after me within three years, used to call me “Little Mother.” So I think its just part of my nature.

(Continues Later) I’ll tell you how my husband describes it. He describes it as maternal. When I talk about the kids he always says, “You sound like you’re their mother,” and I said from 8:30 to 2:30 I am. (Correcting herself) I’m not. They have mothers. They don’t need a mother. There is something about them they are so dear to me.

(Continues Later) I think raising my daughters gave me a tremendous outlook because you learn how fragile kids are. (Post Classroom Observation Interview Transcript 5/12/00).

More than just a self that Brenda presents (Goffman 1959), or a “role” that Brenda plays (McCall and Simmons 1966), or a salient identity (Stryker 1980), the “mother” in her is an acquired way of being, a tool, a cultural repertoire that Brenda exercises in the classroom. It is a form of cultural capital that she *uses* as a means to present a self, or to play a role.

Brenda carries this embodied way of being into her interactions with teachers, expressing kindness and concern, but without the condescension implied in “mothering” one’s peers. The teachers at the school value this cultural capital, and attribute credibility accordingly. During the very interview cited above, Mr. North interrupted us to express his appreciation to Brenda. As captured on tape:

*Mr. North:* It was teacher appreciation week, so Mrs. Donalds just decided to have the kids write letters to teachers. I don’t know if they wrote to all their teachers or if they picked a teacher or whatever...

*Brenda:* No, they wrote to every one that they wanted to.

*Mr. North:* I get this whole bundle in my mailbox this morning, I got 35 letters and I just sat down (tone conveying he was pleasantly overwhelmed). I didn’t know what they were when I started and all of a sudden, boom, one after another it was kind of nice. I’m gonna save them. (Interview Transcript 5/12/00)

In her interactions with other teachers, Brenda embodies kindness and appreciation, exhibiting a demeanor that receives deference from others (Goffman 1967). Brenda’s actions frequently elicit positive evaluations. Teachers like Mr. North value the way of being that Brenda exhibits and North attributes credibility to her based on this cultural

capital. In another example, Brenda began a sixth grade team meeting by passing around a sympathy cards for the group to sign for an office worker who was having surgery, and for a teacher whose mother had died (Field notes 12/13/00).

Though Mr. North is a veteran teacher, Brenda also interacts with the new teachers. For example, Brenda told me how she was helping the new 6<sup>th</sup> grade science teacher (Darcy Klein):

Now this is Darcy who's brand new. And the eighth grade science teacher went to her and said they all have to have abstracts (for their science fair projects). (Sympathetic tone) Well, poor Darcy was like "Wait, I have 180 kids, I can't get this done." And I said to her - because I'd never had to do it before, I said "You know what, I can have them do the abstract" (As a part of her language arts class). (Interview Transcript 11/17/00)

Brenda's relationship with Darcy is not one sided. That is, Brenda does not simply offer help; rather Darcy frequently solicits Brenda's advice. When Darcy Klein told me that she seeks Brenda for advice, I asked Darcy, "What makes Brenda good for that?" Darcy explained:

She's always willing to help. She's - I mean as a first year teacher I'm supposed to have a mentor, but nobody's ever like formally set anything up. You know welcome to the world, right? But Brenda Donalds has, you know, I said at the beginning of the year I was like "I really need someone who I can talk to." And she's like totally, totally - I mean *she's kind of like a mom to me* also because I can come to her with frustrations, advice, you know, questions about anything. And she's more than willing to help. (Emphasis added)

(Continues later) She doesn't let things like just sit. So it's something - if she's upset with something she's not going to - you know she might choose the appropriate time to bring it up or attend a meeting that shows that she's concerned about. I've never been to a team leader meeting, but I know she goes to those and - and doesn't sit there - let things slide - right. So I respect her so much for that.

(Continues later) You can see it in her face that she wants to help you. (Interview Transcript 2/9/01)

Stuck without a formal mentor, Darcy found the help she needed with Brenda. In her capacity to help Darcy, Darcy is dependent on Brenda's knowledge.<sup>57</sup> However, Darcy responds to more than the exchange of knowledge, commenting extensively on the interactive style that Brenda uses throughout the exchange ("I mean she's kind of like a mom to me" and "she's more than willing to help" and "You can see it in her face that she wants to help you"). Brenda's way of being resonates with Darcy, and this cultural capital also fosters social capital between them, creating an informal mentoring relationship. Encompassing more than a mutual exchange, the manner in which Darcy attributes credibility to Brenda provides her with symbolic power.

Mothers can be effective moral entrepreneurs (Becker 1963, Spinosa, Flores, and Dreyfus 1995), and it is also Brenda's style to speak up when she feels an injustice has occurred. In Darcy's words Brenda does not "let things like just sit. . . Doesn't sit there- let things slide. So I respect her so much for that." Darcy was not the only teacher impressed by Brenda's manner. During an interview with Lana Henstrich (4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher), I asked her what she thought of the leader team meetings, and she said of Brenda: "I like how - actually I was thinking - I said I love how she's for - she's active. Very active. And she - she's like a fighter for - for certain things she believes in. . . So I like listening when she's speaking" (Interview Transcript 2/16/01). Darcy and Lana

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<sup>57</sup> In this sense, Brenda has social exchange power over Darcy.

formulate positive evaluations of Brenda, and through evaluations such as these, the teachers at Costen attribute credibility to Brenda.

Teachers also attribute credibility to Brenda based on her human capital, her specific skills, knowledge, and expertise as a language arts teacher. For example, when I asked Ms. Adolphus (fifth grade language arts) to identify the influences on her instruction, she replied:

Well, Mrs. Donalds who helps me--I don't know if I had mentioned this before--like Mrs. Donalds helps me a lot now that I am doing the writing part in Language Arts. I've asked her for some information about how I am teaching like the word roots instructing, how she developed ideas to teach better. She gives me a lot of ideas that are helpful (Interview Transcript 11/10/99).

Ms. Adolphus attributes credibility to Brenda based on her valued skills and knowledge as a language arts teacher, as does Mrs. Linden (eighth grade language arts): "Brenda is a really good teacher who I've gotten good ideas from. . . I think she has creative ideas" (Interview Transcript 5/10/00).

Through these types of evaluations, the teachers attribute credibility to Brenda. As we have seen, Brenda deploys her credibility as the symbolic power to dampen and amplify the turmoil at the school. However, there is also evidence that Brenda uses her symbolic power to avoid turmoil as she makes her own changes to the school's language arts curriculum.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Though the example that follows occurred before I became aware of Brenda's activity in the school and before I documented the attributions of credibility cited above, we may speculate that it involves the deployment of symbolic power based on credibility acquired in earlier interactions similar to those cited above.

I first learned of Brenda's involvement in the school when she organized a meeting of the upper grade language arts teachers in May of 2000 (my first year of observation) to order a basal reader for the school. It had been the established practice of the language arts teachers in the upper grades to use novels during instruction. This practice provided the teachers with great autonomy over what, and how, to teach in their classrooms. This practice reflected the indulgency pattern that the teachers had negotiated with the previous administrations. However, Brenda wanted to bring greater coherency to the language arts curriculum. Where in the past teachers had taught from an array of different novels, the basal reader provided a common baseline by collecting excerpts from a set of novels and placing them into one large book. In Brenda's mind, the teachers could use this common set of readings and then supplement instruction with novels of their choice. Brenda took the lead, collecting samples of different readers, sharing them with the teachers, and organizing a meeting.

Given Brenda's credibility and symbolic power, it should not be surprising that the teachers followed Brenda's lead by meeting and deciding on a reader. However, this kind of productive meeting was not the norm at the school (at my time at Costen I recorded a number of meetings that never occurred, or where little was accomplished). I learned of the meeting the next school year when Brenda was telling me about the new reader. I asked how the teachers decided on a new reader, and Brenda explained how she called the meeting. Invoking her stereotypical super-mom manner, she told me "It was just sort of, I don't know, the Girl Scout Leader approach or something." Brenda elaborated:

I put together the memo and I just sent it to everybody who taught reading and writing because we were picking out the basal and said it should be a collaboration, it shouldn't be one teacher. So I'm the one who puts it together just because nobody else is and it needs to be done and I'm old enough and tired enough that when I see it needs to be done, I'll just do it. If we wait, it won't happen (Interview Transcript 11/17/00)

In one sense, Brenda is correct. Given the turmoil at the school, the reader probably would not have been ordered if she had not called the meeting. However, Brenda conveys the sense that anyone could have called the meeting and it would have happened, and this is where she is incorrect. Brenda was successful in calling the meeting and ordering the books because she had acquired credibility in the eyes of her fellow teachers.

The basal reader represents a considerable change in teaching practices at the school. It involves a partial loss of autonomy and control over teaching practices, and incorporating the new reader into instruction also has a labor cost for the teachers. We can imagine what might have happened in the way of turmoil if Mrs. Koh had used her authority to impose the reader on the teachers. Though Koh supported the move (because it establishes standards for accountability evaluations), it was Brenda who orchestrated the change.<sup>59</sup> Armed with symbolic power, Brenda was able to disrupt the established indulgency pattern while avoiding turmoil (I have no data to indicate that the disruption created conflict), effectively changing the language arts curriculum.

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<sup>59</sup> As we have seen, there is no love lost between Brenda and Mrs. Koh, and it is hard to imagine that Brenda was doing this to help Mrs. Koh.

Symbolic Power, Group Culture, and the Articulation of Turmoil—Carrie Andretti

While Brenda Donalds and Frances Drew use their symbolic power to directly confront the disruptions create by Mrs. Koh, the effect of Carrie Andretti’s symbolic power is indirect, mediated through the group culture of the primary teachers, a culture that she defines.

A white woman in her late 30’s, Carrie Andretti has taught second grade at Costen for eleven years. Every morning teachers from kindergarten through second grade congregate around Mrs. Andretti’s doorway to gab informally about the school and life in general. It is in these informal interactions that Mrs. Andretti shines, though at first glance, one would not expect her to be the center of the group culture. Mrs. Andretti is reserved—not boisterous or outgoing—but when she interjects, she does so with a sarcastic wit. Typically, this sarcasm is directed at herself:

Bernice Shine joins a group of fellow primary teachers at lunch, and tells them that during her class a mother came into her room and instructed her son to “Beat this kid (another student) up!” The teacher’s share in Mrs. Shine’s disbelief, and Mrs. Shine tells them “I’m about to call the police myself!” Then Mrs. Andretti jokes dryly “I’m about to call 911 and have myself committed” (sarcastically labeling herself as crazy) and everyone laughs. (Field notes 5/10/00)<sup>60</sup>

Lunchtime in the teacher’s lounge was a frequent stage for Mrs. Andretti’s self-deprecating sarcasm:

At lunch, Mrs. Andretti talks about the re-release of “The Exorcist,” which she and her husband went to see over the weekend. Andretti tells the group that she loves horror movies, and doesn’t scare easily, but this one really got to her. Andretti explains sardonically: “I guess it’s because I grew up Catholic, ‘The

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<sup>60</sup> Gary Fine notes that self-deprecation can be a means to attack others (personal correspondence), and Seckman and Couch argue that sarcasm can be used to communicate social distance. Such observations fit this example, as Bernice Shine is on the periphery of the primary teacher’s in group.

Devil's gonna get you!" Then the teachers laugh and Andretti joins them, chuckling at herself. (Field notes 10/18/00)

Mrs. Andretti frequently made fun of herself in the presence of others. Andretti's sarcastic, self-deprecating manner was not limited to her interactions with the primary teachers. Take this example from the start of a leader team meeting:

At 8:19 (four minutes late) Andretti drifts through the door and sarcastically mocks her status, telling the group "We can start now." As the group laughs, Brenda Donalds jabs back playfully "What are you bringing to this table?" Andretti retorts dryly "My body," prompting more laughter. (Field notes 11/03/00)

Though Andretti's sarcastic humor was often directed at herself, at times she would direct her comments towards me, as an outsider to the group. For example, at lunch one day, I thought Andretti and a group of primary teachers were discussing a new committee. I asked what the committee was about, and Andretti corrected me in her sarcastic manner "It's a women's group, do you want to come?" and the group laughed (Field notes 11/06/00). The next week I asked Andretti if they had fun with their women's group, and she joked back in her sarcastic way, "We had strippers and beer." Again, the group laughed (Field notes 11/10/00).

In summary, Mrs. Andretti has a consistently sarcastic way of being that informs her interactions with others. A final example from a lunchtime observation exemplifies this interactive style:

As Ron Jenner prepares his food he announces, "Thank God it's Friday," and Shelia agrees, Friday is her favorite day of the week. Ramona says she likes Saturday better because "we don't have work," and Sheila smiles "But it's closer to Sunday." Then Andretti pipes up in her dry, sarcastic way "I like Monday," (flipping the order expressed by the other teachers and vastly overstating the joy she finds in teaching) and Ramona and I laugh.

Then I ask Andretti when she became so sarcastic, and she replies (in character) “It’s not sarcasm, its dry humor,” as Ramona and I laugh some more. Ramona asks Andretti if her parents were sarcastic, and Andretti reflects, “My dad was funny,” as she stands and packs up her lunch stuff and begins to leave. But then she stops and states this time with self deprecating, playful sarcasm, “But I’m by far the wittiest of the Andrettis.” Ramona and I crack up, and Ramona says, “She’s awesome.” (Field notes 2/2/01)

Andretti’s sarcastic way of being is a cultural tool, a form of cultural capital that she has acquired and that she uses to formulate interactions with teachers. This way of being is valued by the primary teachers, purchasing laughter. This laughter legitimates Mrs. Andretti as a social actor, and with their laughter and their comments, the teachers formulate positive evaluations of Mrs. Andretti.

Mrs. Andretti’s way of being is manifested in sarcastic joking, jokes that are geared towards eliciting laughter. While these interactions are intentional, they have a largely unintended byproduct. In response to her sarcastic way of being, the teachers attribute credibility to Mrs. Andretti. With this credibility comes symbolic power, and over time Mrs. Andretti’s sarcastic jokes come to *define* the primary teacher’s group culture.

This unintended outcome, of defining group culture, is not as tangible as defining a curriculum or purposely articulating resistance against Mrs. Koh. However, this symbolic power to define the situation is felt as outsiders make an effort to become a part of the culture. For almost a year and a half, I struggled to interact with the veteran primary teachers. Though I could observe them in meetings and at lunch, I had a difficult time chatting with them informally about the school. Since I was having difficulty

talking to them anyway, I decided to risk sarcasm. Take the following excerpt from a lunch observation. It was Midwest City School's "Principal for The Day," and during the morning reception for the businessmen who were Costen's "principals," there was an assortment of bagels. The leftover bagels were made available to the teachers during lunch in the faculty lounge:

Felice Kerry is eating a bagel left over from this morning, and Andretti comments in her typically sarcastic way: "My bagel was stale, I should file a complaint." As the teachers laugh, Felice says that the bagel she had this morning was good, and so is the one she is having now. Imitating Mrs. Andretti's sarcastic style, I say, "They planted the stale one for you, Mrs. Andretti." To my surprise, Jackie Mitchell laughs and elaborates, "like a magnet" drawing itself to Andretti, and Andretti laughs along with the group.

Sensing an opening, I ask the group what they thought of the staff meeting on Tuesday, where Frances Drew had presented on the intensive reading program. Sarcastically mocking Mrs. Drew's presentation style, Mrs. Andretti says that Mrs. Drew needs to "modify" the program for her (at the meeting, Mrs. Drew had told the primary teachers that they would need to modify the program for their own classes). I joke back sarcastically, "We're modifying for you right now," and the teachers laugh (including Andretti). Jackie Mitchell adds, "Talk slowly," and I say sarcastically, "We talk about it before you come in: 'Now Mrs. Andretti is coming, slow down'" and we all laugh (Field notes 11/16/00).

What I want to stress in this excerpt is that, by engaging in sarcastic joking, I conform to Mrs. Andretti's interactive style. Though Mrs. Andretti never states publicly or intentionally, "This is how we are going to interact," because the teachers attribute credibility to her, Andretti's sarcastic manner defines the group's culture, and is widely incorporated into their practices (Note that in the example cited above, Jackie Mitchell also participates in the sarcastic banter, and my field notes are littered with the sarcastic statements of the primary teachers). To move beyond external observations and to converse with the group, I had to adapt accordingly, and Mrs. Andretti's symbolic power

defined the situation, even for me.<sup>61</sup> Once I had adapted my interactions to fit this culture, I gained enough credibility to ask them a question about the staff meeting earlier in the week. During the second half of the 2000/2001 school year, I was able to use impression management to better imitate this style,<sup>62</sup> and I had greater success in discussing the school with this group.

Though Mrs. Andretti's use of symbolic power is not as dramatic as Mrs. Donalds' or Mrs. Drew's, it is still of consequence to the primary teachers, to the ethnographer studying them, and to the turmoil at the school. As a result of the group culture defined by Mrs. Andretti, the typical response to a disruption in the negotiated order is sarcastic. Take the following example from a second grade team meeting, where the teachers respond to an early effort by the administration to create student award assemblies:

Mrs. Andretti explains that the proposed assemblies are meant to recognize good students and (tone turning sarcastic) "to serve as role models for the low-lives." Ann Lee asks "Is it proposed or. . ." And Mrs. Andretti replies sarcastically "I think it's 'highly recommended.'" Matching Andretti's sarcastic tone, Mrs. Granger notes that language arts and music are one of the reward categories, and she quips, "So get your guitar out, Bernice, get your banjo, and Gita, you tap dance don't you?" and the teachers laugh. (Field notes 11/10/99)

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<sup>61</sup> As an ethnographer who lacked rational-legal authority and who was not held accountable for the school's performance, I did exactly the opposite of what Mrs. Koh did. Instead of immediately disrupting the teacher's negotiated order, I spent a year and a half learning it so I could interact with them on their own terms.

<sup>62</sup> This is where impression management and cultural capital overlap. While I am using impression management to approximate Mrs. Andretti's way of being, I am also drawing from my own cultural capital to formulate this interaction. If, as a form of cultural capital, sarcasm is a cultural tool (Swidler 1986), I am using impression management to make this cultural tool visible to the teachers. But, I am also using this tool to formulate my interactions with them. I possess enough of this cultural tool to make this performance believable—If, through the life course, I had acquired *no* cultural understanding of sarcasm, I would not have been able to pull off this act. In fact, it is possible that in observing this group for so long, I may have acquired some of this valued cultural capital.

As a mode of interaction, sarcasm does not generate open social boundaries. Rather, sarcasm typically communicates social distance between group insiders and outsiders (Seckman and Couch 1989: 330), in this case between the second grade teachers and the administration. The teachers' sarcastic response to the assembly reaffirms the distance between the teachers and the administration while validating their prior negotiated order and mocking the disruption (the assembly), and by extension the disrupter (Mrs. Koh). To quote Goffman (1967: 58): "By easily showing a regard that he does not have, the actor can. . . insinuate all kinds of disregard by carefully modifying intonation, pronunciation, pacing, and so forth." Though this effort is largely symbolic (there is no direct attack on the assembly or Koh), the sarcasm of the teachers is a manifestation of covert conflict (Morrill, Zald, and Rao 2003). Though subtle, Mrs. Andretti's symbolic power and the group culture it defines foster sarcastic responses to attempted disruptions in the negotiated order. Though the group culture that she defines, Mrs. Andretti's symbolic power articulates the turmoil at the school.

### Summary and Reflection

Because symbolic power is based on a dynamic social process in which people attribute credibility to others based on multiple forms of valued capital, it is not restricted to administrators. This chapter discusses the credibility and symbolic power of three teachers, and discusses the implications of teacher symbolic power for the organization of turmoil at the school. Analysis of teacher interactions brings the *dupla gravitas* of symbolic power in the organization of turmoil into focus. On the one hand, teachers with

credibility (like administrators) can use their symbolic power to safely intervene into a negotiated order, introducing changes while bypassing turmoil. On the other hand, teachers are also respondents to disruptions of the negotiated order, and teachers with credibility can use their symbolic power to define a line of resistance, actively articulating turmoil. In this way, the symbolic power of teachers is an important “weapon of the weak” (Scott 1985): it is a means through which the teachers, as subordinates, combat Mrs. Koh’s disruptive changes. Moreover, the weapon of symbolic power is of consequence for turmoil. Though teachers are lower on the organizational chart than administrators, when armed with symbolic power, teachers can define turmoil from below.

## Chapter 6

### **The Necessary and Sufficient Conditions for Turmoil<sup>63</sup>**

Throughout this dissertation, I have focused on various disruptions to the established social order at Costen school, using these disruptions as a means to look backwards into the prior social order, but also following these disruptions forward to see if conflict surrounds them (turmoil). At times these disruptions resulted in turmoil, while at other times these disruptions resulted in effective changes to the social order, changes that occurred without conflict. In the previous chapters, I have compared various disruptions as a means to develop a theory of turmoil and to canvass the overall turmoil at the school. This chapter brings all of the disruptive cases together for systematic comparison, allowing us to assess the necessity and sufficiency of the four organizing conditions of turmoil: changes in the broader social context in which the setting is embedded (the increasing strength of the logic of accountability in education), pointed disruptions to established social orders, authority relations that enable disruptions to persist (i.e. the rational-legal authority of principals), and the symbolic power relations that define certain disruptions as justified, or not. When combined with the theory of turmoil, the comparative case analysis in this chapter provides a foundation for a broader study of turmoil, and a series of predictions as to the kinds of situations that create turmoil.

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<sup>63</sup> I am grateful to Kate Linnenberg for her insights into the logic of the comparative method and the discussion of necessity and sufficiency that appear in this chapter.

In chapters Three through Five, I discussed twelve disruptions to the established social order of Costen School (first outlined in Table One in the introduction). These disruptions were selected for analysis because I was able to successfully document them in my field notes and interviews with the school personnel, and because they affected groups of people involved in the school (instead of disrupting relations between a few people, they disrupt a wider order). If we take each of these disruptions and code them according to the presence (1) and absence (0) of the four conditions and the presence or absence of turmoil, we have twelve cases that cover six logical combinations of the four organizing conditions, as presented in Table Two (See Table Two). The first combination (or row one) involves the presence of the logic of accountability (column I), rational-legal authority (column II), a disruption of an established negotiated order (column III), a lack of symbolic power on the part of the person who initiates a disruption (column IV), and the outcome of turmoil (column V). This combination of conditions describes three of the cases of turmoil discussed in the previous chapters: Mrs. Koh's general high standards and accountability with the teachers (Chapters Three and Four), Mrs. Koh's changes in the teacher's methods of attendance record keeping (Chapter Three), and Mrs. Koh's efforts to change the copy policy (Chapter Four). Each of these cases involves the logic of accountability, rational-legal authority relations that enabled Mrs. Koh to act as she did, disruptions to the social order that the teachers had negotiated with the prior administrations, and a lack of symbolic power by the initiator of the disruption (Mrs. Koh).

The second combination (or row two) does not involve the logic of accountability, but it does involve the presence of rational-legal authority. It also involves a disruption of an established negotiated order, as well as a lack of symbolic power by the initiator, and the outcome of turmoil. This combination of conditions describes four of the cases of turmoil discussed in the previous chapters: Mrs. Koh's changes in the support staff and resource periods (Chapter Three), the "Staffing holocaust" (Chapter Three), Mrs. Koh's attempts to change the student reward system (award assemblies—Chapters Four and Five), and Mrs. Koh's absence from the leader team meetings that had been established to provide the teachers with a forum to negotiate with the administration (Chapter Five). None of these cases really involves a logic of accountability related to changes in educational policy (Column I), but in each instance Mrs. Koh had the authority to act as she did (Column II), though her actions disrupted the established negotiated order (Column III), and she lacked the symbolic power to define her disruptions as justified (Column IV), resulting in turmoil (Column V).

The third combination (or row three) involves the presence of the logic of accountability, the absence of rational-legal authority, a disruption of the negotiated order, a lack of symbolic power by the initiator, and the outcome of turmoil. This combination of conditions accurately describes one of the instances of turmoil, the "Bilingual Blow-Up" (Chapter Three). In this case, Mrs. Koh's changes to the bilingual program were in part an effort to lower class size to meet compliance with the teachers' union contract (a policy to which Mrs. Koh was held accountable). However, in making the changes to the bilingual program, a number of students no longer received the

required minutes of bilingual instruction mandated by the state, and Mrs. Koh's did not have the rational-legal authority to make the change that she attempted. Nonetheless, her attempted change disrupted the negotiated order. Mrs. Koh lacked symbolic power to define this disruption as justified, and the outcome was turmoil.

The first three combinations/rows of Table Two allow us to assess the necessity of the four conditions. For a condition to be defined as necessary, it *must* be present for the outcome in question (turmoil) to occur (Ragin 1987: 99). To assess necessity, the researcher works backwards from instances of the outcome to identify relevant conditions. In other words, you search for instances of the effect to see if they all agree in displaying the same antecedent. The presence of the logic of accountability (column I) can be eliminated as a necessary condition because combination/row number two exhibits turmoil even when this condition is absent (if it were a necessary condition, it would have to be present for there to be turmoil). With this same reasoning, rational-legal authority (column II) can be eliminated as a necessary condition (combination/row three). In examining the first three rows/combinations of Table Two, it is clear that the cases of turmoil all involve a disruption of an established negotiated order (column III) *and* a lack of symbolic power by the actor initiating the disruption (column IV). According to the data presented in this dissertation and summarized in Table Two, a disruption of an established negotiated order and a lack of symbolic power by the initiator (of the disruption) are both necessary conditions for the outcome of turmoil.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> The reader may object to this analysis since a disruption of a negotiated order is part of the definition of turmoil employed in this dissertation (combined with conflict around the disruption). However, this fits the

To assess sufficiency, we must also consider the second half of Table Two (combinations/rows four-seven). The fourth combination (row four) involves the logic of accountability, rational-legal authority, a disruption of an established negotiated order, but *not* a lack of symbolic power on the part of the initiator (the initiator has symbolic power), and the absence of turmoil. This combination describes Mr. Carrol's successful redefinition of the copy policy (Chapter four). The new policy involves the logic of accountability—placing limits on and holding teachers accountable to the number of copies they make. As assistant principal, Mr. Carrol has a measure of rational-legal authority to make this change, even though it disrupts the established negotiated order. However, in this case, Mr. Carrol *did* have symbolic power, and (in a stark contrast to Mrs. Koh who had tried to make a very similar change in the past) his change of the policy did not result in turmoil.

The fifth combination (row five) involves the logic of accountability, the absence of rational-legal authority, a disruption of the negotiated order, but *not* a lack of symbolic power on the part of the initiator (the initiator has symbolic power), and the absence of turmoil. This combination describes the change in the Local School Council's method of principal evaluation, a change initiated by Mrs. Koh (Chapter Four). As an agent of accountability, it is the responsibility of the LSC to evaluate the principal, and the principal does not have rational-legal authority over the LSC. The new method of principal evaluation disrupted the standard practice, and even required that the members

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logic of necessity. For necessity, the outcome (turmoil) is a subset of the causal conditions (disruption of the negotiated order). Thus, it makes sense that a disruption of a negotiated order is part of the more specific definition of turmoil.

of the LSC volunteer an additional six hours of their time over two weekends for training. However, Mrs. Koh had symbolic power with the LSC, and this disruption did not result in turmoil.

The sixth combination (row six) does not involve the logic of accountability or rational-legal authority, though it does involve a disruption in the negotiated order. However, it does *not* involve a lack of symbolic power on the part of the initiator (the initiator has symbolic power), and the outcome is the absence of turmoil. This combination describes the efforts of Brenda Donalds and Frances Drew (teachers) to change the language arts curriculum (Chapter Five). These cases were not in response to the logic of accountability, but rather they involved the teachers' own visions for the curriculum. Nor were their efforts backed by rational-legal authority (as teachers they had none), though their changes did disrupt how the school had been teaching language arts. These cases do not involve a lack of symbolic power on the part of the initiators (they both have symbolic power with their colleagues), and the outcome is the absence of turmoil.

Finally, though the seventh combination (row seven) does not involve a disruption, because it involves the other conditions it is useful for comparative purposes (and it brings our total number of cases to thirteen). This combination actually describes the loose-coupling/ "indulgency pattern" established between the former principal (Mr. Welch), the teachers, and accountability policies that existed prior to Mrs. Koh's arrival (Chapter Two). This combination involves the logic of accountability and rational-legal

authority, but not a disruption in the established negotiated order. In addition, there is no lack of symbolic power, and there is no turmoil.

With the table complete (based on available data), we can now assess the sufficiency of the four conditions. A condition is defined as sufficient if it can produce the outcome (turmoil) *by itself* (Ragin 1987: 99). To assess sufficiency, the researcher works forwards from the condition in question to determine if it always produces the outcome. If there are instances of the condition that are *not* followed by the outcome, the condition is not sufficient. Using this method, we can eliminate the logic of accountability as a sufficient condition for turmoil, because it is present in combinations/rows four, five, and seven, and yet it does not result in turmoil in these cases. Likewise, we can eliminate rational-legal authority as a sufficient condition, because it is present in combinations/rows four and seven, but does not result in turmoil in these cases. We can also eliminate the disruption of an established negotiated order as a sufficient condition, because its presence alone does not assure turmoil (combinations/rows four through six). Even though a disruption is necessary for turmoil (combinations/rows one through three), it is not sufficient for turmoil.

The sufficiency status of symbolic power is hazy. When a lack of symbolic power is present, turmoil always follows (combinations/rows one through three), and when a lack of symbolic power is absent (when the initiator *does* have symbolic power), turmoil is always absent. Based on this empirical data, it would seem that a lack of symbolic power (by the initiator) is sufficient for turmoil. However, this observation does not make sense theoretically: There is no reason to believe that, on its own; a lack

of symbolic power would mean anything for turmoil—there also has to be a disruption of the negotiated order.<sup>65</sup> For example, logically, if Mrs. Koh had *not* disrupted things, there would not have been turmoil at the school, even though she lacked symbolic power. Even without symbolic power, Mrs. Koh did not *have* to use her authority to create a tighter coupling between accountability policies and school practice, disrupting the negotiated order as she did. Instead, she could have maintained the indulgency pattern that characterized the Welch and Jackson administrations. If this case had existed, we would see a 0 in column III, and a 1 in column IV, allowing us to eliminate symbolic power as a sufficient condition.<sup>66</sup> Though no single condition appears sufficient for turmoil, rows one through three indicate that, when present, the *combination* of a disruption of the negotiated order and a lack of symbolic power by the initiator always produce the outcome of turmoil. Thus, this combination of conditions is sufficient for turmoil (and this fits theoretically as well as empirically).

To summarize, the data indicate that a disruption of an established negotiated order combined with a lack of symbolic power by the initiator are both necessary conditions for turmoil: turmoil only occurs when both of these conditions are present. Moreover, the data (supported by the theory) also indicates that the combination of these

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<sup>65</sup> In looking at Table Two, it may appear that I am assessing symbolic power by whether or not there is turmoil, therefore conflating the two. This is not the case. Whether or not the initiator has symbolic power depends on if he/she has a stock of credibility from the positive evaluations of others. The outcome of turmoil is conditioned by symbolic power, but the analysis of symbolic power is not determined by the presence or absence of turmoil.

<sup>66</sup> The comparative method always involves a dialogue between theory and data, and Charles Ragin argues that this kind of interpretive control provided by theory is an important and appropriate part of the assessment of necessity and sufficiency.

two conditions is sufficient for turmoil: when both conditions are present, turmoil always follows.<sup>67</sup>

However, these findings must be interpreted with caution, because the cases compared above cannot be considered discrete. Because these cases all come from the same research site, they are related in time and space. Similarly, the four conditions that organize turmoil overlap in various ways. While the data and the theory are not ideal candidates for a comparative analysis, the logic of the comparative method is a useful tool for examining the operation of the four conditions that organize turmoil.

These findings are also limited by a lack of diversity in the data. The issue is not so much a limitation in the number of cases, as thirteen cases can be a solid foundation for a comparative study. The bigger issue, from a comparative standpoint, is the other possible combinations of conditions that are not expressed by the existing data. With four conditions, there are sixteen possible combinations, leaving nine combinations unaccounted for by the existing data. As such, the assessment of necessity and sufficiency presented above is speculative, and not definitive. If I had been able to collect data that expressed the other nine possible combinations, the assessment of necessity and sufficiency may have been different, depending on the presence/absence of turmoil in regards to these conditions. The quest for cases that express these nine other

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<sup>67</sup> Once we have assessed the necessary and sufficient conditions for turmoil, it is relatively easy to examine the conditions that lead to the absence of turmoil, and it can be done without creating a whole new set of tables through the application of De Morgan's Law (Ragin 1987: 98). This application is simple: Elements that are coded present are recoded to absent, and vice-versa. Next, logical "and" is replaced with logical "or," and vice-versa. Using De Morgan's Law, either the absence of a disruption in the negotiated order, or the presence of symbolic power by the initiator, are sufficient for the absence of turmoil, but no one condition or combination of conditions is necessary.

combinations provides a program for future research. Based on the assessment of necessity and sufficiency from the existing data in this dissertation, we can make tentative predictions about the presence or absence of turmoil in these nine additional combinations. Table Three outlines these nine remaining combinations and their predicted turmoil (See Table Three).

Combination/row eight of Table Three would involve a case in which the logic of accountability is absent, rational-legal authority enables someone to make a disruption of the established order, there is a disruption, but the initiator of the disruption does not lack symbolic power (he/she has symbolic power). Hypothetically, this would have been the case if the former, well loved principal (Mr. Welch) had attempted to initiate changes in the negotiated order that did not relate to accountability policy, such as the disruptions in the support staff and resource periods initiated by Mrs. Koh. Based on the analysis presented above, we would predict that, if initiated by Mr. Welch, these disruptions would not have resulted in turmoil, because he had the symbolic power to define his actions as just. Similarly, based on the credibility that Mr. Carrol has acquired and the symbolic power that it affords, we would predict that he too could initiate such disruptions while avoiding turmoil. Moving outside of the realm of schools, this combination of conditions could also be found in any number of organizations in which a manager who has authority as well as symbolic power makes changes that are unrelated to a broader change of policy (or some other change in the broader structural context). Searching for empirical cases that exhibit this combination of conditions will enrich our understanding of turmoil.

Combination/row nine of Table Three would involve a case in which the logic of accountability is present, rational-legal authority relations enable a disruption, but there is not a disruption, and the would-be disrupter lacks symbolic power. This would have been the case if Mrs. Koh had supported the status quo at the school through a loose coupling between accountability policies and the established indulgency pattern. Under these conditions, and based on the analysis provided above, we would predict that there would not be turmoil. Even though Mrs. Koh lacks symbolic power and there has been a rise in accountability in education, she did not have to disrupt the established order. This kind of situation would also be expressed in situations of managerial succession in which the new manager, though he/she has not yet acquired symbolic power, and even though he/she faces pressure to make changes from above, does not disrupt the status quo. Under these circumstances, we would predict the absence of turmoil, but the empirical validity of this prediction remains to be seen, and a larger study of turmoil ought to examine these kinds of situations.

Combination/row ten would involve the logic of accountability, but the absence of rational-legal authority, no disruption, and no lack of symbolic power (the presence of symbolic power). This combination of conditions describes a school that has no principal or is between principals, where the teachers have symbolic power but support the status quo by maintaining a loose-coupling between accountability policies and classroom practices (for example, Costen School prior to Mrs. Koh's arrival). This situation may also be found when an organization is between managers and the personnel continue on with their established ways of doing business, even when there is pressure to change

emanating from the broader context in which the organization is embedded. Because this situation does not exhibit a disruption combined with a lack of symbolic power, we would not predict turmoil.

Combination/row eleven is very similar to ten, except there is a lack of symbolic power. This would be the case at a school that has no principal or is between principals, and the teachers lack symbolic power, but no one disrupts the status quo, maintaining a loose coupling between accountability policies and school practices. Though the symbolic power of personnel is lacking, because there is no disruption, we would not predict turmoil.

Combination/row twelve involves the absence of the logic of accountability, the presence of rational-legal authority, but no disruption to the negotiated order, and no lack of symbolic power (symbolic power is present). This combination of conditions could describe a school where there is a principal who has symbolic power but does not use it to disrupt the status quo, and faces little accountability pressure (For example Costen School under the Welch Administration and before the rise of accountability). This may also be the case in an organization where there is a well established and esteemed manager who does little to disrupt the established order, and where the broader environment in which the organization is embedded generates little pressure to make changes. Under these conditions, we would not predict turmoil.

Combination/row thirteen is similar to twelve, except the principal or manager lacks symbolic power. Despite the lack of symbolic power on the part of the principal or

administrator, we would not predict turmoil because there is no disruption to the established order.

Combination/row fourteen would involve a situation in which all of the four conditions are absent. Though such a situation may seem unimaginable, this could be the situation in “Free Schools” (Swidler 1979) where there is no formal authority/administrative apparatus, no accountability pressure, no disruption in the status quo created by the teachers, and no lack of symbolic power (the teachers have symbolic power). This situation could also accurately describe informal groups of people that have established an ordered way of doing things, and certain people in the group have acquired symbolic power. Because there is no disruption, we would not predict turmoil.

Combination/row fifteen is similar to fourteen, except the teachers or informal group participants lack symbolic power. However, because there is no disruption, we would not predict turmoil.

Combination/row sixteen would involve a situation in which the logic of accountability is absent; as is rational-legal authority, but there is a disruption, and the person initiating the disruption lacks symbolic power. This would be the case if an ordinary teacher was persistent in his/her efforts to change things, even though he/she did not have the rational-legal authority to back these efforts, and even though he/she did not have symbolic power (i.e. if Francis Drew and Brenda Donalds *had not* had symbolic power as they tried to change the school’s language arts curriculum). Another example would involve an overzealous new employee who does not have authority over others and has not acquired symbolic power but still disrupts the established mode of operation.

Another example would involve a someone who is on the outside of an informal small group but makes a persistent effort to be involved even though he/she does not have symbolic power, and in doing so disrupts the order of the group. In such cases, because there are both disruptions to the negotiated order and a lack of symbolic power by the initiators of the disruption, we would predict turmoil.

### Summary and Reflection

Bringing together all of the comparisons made in this dissertation to examine them systematically helps us understand the different roles played by the four conditions that organize turmoil. Admittedly, the conclusions drawn from such an analysis must be tempered by that fact that all of the comparisons made are linked in time and space by their location at Costen School. Moreover, the conditions that organize turmoil should not be treated as analytically distinct. Nonetheless, systematic comparisons are useful, and it is quite conceivable that a disruption of an established negotiated order and a lack of symbolic power by the initiator are necessary conditions for turmoil. Likewise, it is conceivable that the combination of these two conditions is also sufficient for turmoil.

However, even if this is the case, we must still consider the other conditions if we are to develop a full understanding of turmoil. Understanding turmoil entails more than knowing when it will be present or absent, we must also understand its origin and feel. Even though a change in the structural context may not be a necessary or sufficient condition for the presence of turmoil, it remains an important background condition that helps us to understand why certain disruptions of the negotiated order come about. Mrs.

Koh's efforts to change the negotiated order in the school were precipitated (in part) by accountability policies, and this condition should not be disregarded. Likewise, many of Mrs. Koh's disruptions were enabled by her authority as principal. Even if this condition is not necessary or sufficient, it helps us to understand the turmoil at the school. As such, changes in the structural context and authority relations remain important *precipitating* and *enabling* conditions, and any study of turmoil should consider them.

Similarly, the analysis of necessity and sufficiency ignores the *dupla gravitas* of symbolic power, its dual role in the organization of turmoil. Though the comparative method considers the symbolic power of those who initiate disruptions in the negotiated order as it relates to the presence or absence of turmoil, it does not consider the manner in which respondents who have symbolic power define lines or resistance and articulate the emergent turmoil. Finally, all of the conditions that organize turmoil (and especially symbolic power relations) come together in the dynamic interactions between people, none of which is captured in a treatment of necessity and sufficiency. Thus, to fully appreciate turmoil—not just its presence or absence but also its rich texture—is to understand its four-fold social organization.

## Conclusion

### **Symbolic Power and the Social Organization of Turmoil**

Turmoil—the very word evokes visions of chaos, confusion, a disturbing lack of order. However, this vision of turmoil is only partly correct. It is true that turmoil is disturbing for those who experience it. In particular, turmoil involves a disruption of an established social order. Such disruptions are phenomenologically unsettling—they violate the patterns of thought and action that help us to deal with the uncertainties of everyday life. These established social orders (or negotiated orders, as Strauss and others have called them) provide us with a sense of control our environments, and this blanket of control enables us to act with confidence. When this security blanket is taken away, we experience considerable discomfort.

Yet, however disturbing turmoil is, I argue that it is organized rather than chaotic, and the goal of this dissertation is to theorize the social organization of turmoil. To demarcate the area of study, I define turmoil as the conflicts that surround a disruption of an established social order. This definition is important, because disruptions of an established order do not always involve conflict, and therefore are not always cases of turmoil. If those who initiate disruptions in a social order can define their changes as justified, they can avoid the turmoil that we find so disturbing.

The ability to define the situation is a special form of power, “symbolic” power. Unlike other forms of power, symbolic power does not stem from the capacity to bestow rewards or administer punishments, or from static bureaucratic rules. Rather, symbolic

power is an abstraction of the dynamic relations between people. To acquire symbolic power, you must cultivate interactions such that others see you as a credible social actor. In turn, this credibility can be deployed as the symbolic power to define the situation, shaping the social order while bypassing resistance.

Turmoil *appears* so chaotic to the naked eye because it is organized (in part) around symbolic power relations that are abstracted from and hidden by social interactions that we take for granted. In this way, turmoil is married to symbolic power, and understanding symbolic power provides a lens through which the organization of turmoil becomes clear. As such, Chapter One draws from the work of Bourdieu, Strauss, and Goffman to theorize symbolic power at the level of social interaction. It is through social interaction that people attribute credibility to others based on valued forms of capital. Once acquired, this credibility can be deployed as the symbolic power to define the situation.

Though symbolic power is acquired and deployed through social interaction, these interactions are always contextualized. As such, Chapter Two situates symbolic power and the organization of turmoil in the context of schools. Schools are situated in an organizational environment in which competing institutional logics and their corresponding social orders collide. Traditionally, schools have operated according to the logic of professional autonomy, and this autonomy permeates the world of teaching. However, schools are increasingly confronted with a contending logic, the bureaucratic logic of accountability. The bureaucratic logic of accountability bolsters the growing world of administration within schools. These competing logics and worlds—the

autonomy and flexibility of teaching verses the purview of administration—are often contradictory. Costen Elementary School is situated in this context, and it is a setting that is ripe for turmoil.

Equipped with the lens of symbolic power and the context of schools, the signposts for the organization of turmoil begin to come into focus. Though Costen School is embedded in a context that is ripe for turmoil, at the local level turmoil only develops as Mrs. Koh creates disruptions to the established social order that the teachers had negotiated with the prior administrations (Chapter Three). Though the teachers eagerly assign blame to Mrs. Koh, to understand the organization of turmoil we must consider how these disruptions are connected to the rise of accountability policies in education, Mrs. Koh's use of rational-legal authority to create a tighter coupling between accountability policies and school practices, and Mrs. Koh's lack of credibility and symbolic power with the staff.

While chapters One, Two, and Three identify the signposts for a model of turmoil, Chapters Four and Five supply the details via an analysis of the rich social interactions through which symbolic power is created and deployed, identifying the definitive role of symbolic power in the organization of turmoil. That Mrs. Koh violates the social order is one point of contention between her and the staff, but the teachers also struggle with *how* Mrs. Koh interacts with them as she disrupts their social order. Mrs. Koh has a tough, terse manner that informs her interactions with the staff. Instead of attributing credibility to Mrs. Koh, the teachers criticize her, further damaging her credibility and symbolic power. Without credibility and symbolic power, Mrs. Koh cannot effectively intercede in

the social order—she cannot define her disruptions as justified. Where Mrs. Koh has difficulty managing the impressions the teachers' form of her, Mr. Carrol (the new assistant principal) uses interactions to cultivate credibility in the eyes of the teachers. Carrol deploys his credibility as the symbolic power to effectively redefine school policies while bypassing turmoil.

Where Chapter Four focuses on the definitive role of symbolic power for administrators who disrupt the social order, Chapter Five examines the symbolic power of teachers in relation to turmoil. The symbolic power of teachers is an important “weapon of the weak,” (Scott 1985): it is a means through which teachers, as subordinates, combat Mrs. Koh’s disruptive changes by defining lines of resistance. In this way, the teachers who have symbolic power articulate the emergent turmoil at the school. However, teachers who have symbolic power also use it to avoid turmoil while introducing changes to the social order. By discussing how symbolic power is involved in the presence (and absence) of turmoil, as well as the emergent texture of turmoil, Chapters Four and Five examine the double importance of symbolic power in the organization of turmoil.

Chapter Six brings together all of the different comparisons made in chapters Three through Five for more systematic analysis. Using the logic of the comparative method (Ragin 1987, 2000) I speculate that disruptions to the established social order combined with a lack of symbolic power by the initiator of the disruption are necessary and sufficient conditions for turmoil. Based on the data presented in this dissertation, turmoil is preceded by these conditions, and when these conditions are present, they

suffice for the emergence of turmoil. From these conditions we can predict when turmoil is likely to arise, and these predictions provide the basis for future research on turmoil.

Taken together, the chapters that comprise this dissertation suggest that turmoil is organized in four ways: First, turmoil is conditioned by a change in the broader context in which the setting exists (what Strauss and others have labeled the “structural context”). In the context of education, the rise of the bureaucratic logic of accountability is at odds with the professional logic of autonomy. When a compromise between these contending logics cannot be reached, anomic conditions develop. These conditions threaten the immediate social order experienced by people in the setting, and *precipitate* turmoil.

Second, turmoil involves pointed disruptions of an established social order: something happens to upset the patterns of thought and action typically used by participants in the setting, disturbing their sense of control over the situation. In the case of Costen Elementary School, these disruptions involve (in part) efforts by Mrs. Koh to create a tighter connection between accountability policies and everyday practices in the school. Under the previous administrations, the school operated according to an “indulgency pattern” (Gouldner 1954) characterized by low surveillance by the administration, and high teacher autonomy. Mrs. Koh’s actions disrupt the professional autonomy esteemed by the teachers. These disruptions estrange the teachers from the social order that they had negotiated with the prior administrations. The teachers become alienated, losing control over their social order and losing the control that their social order provides, causing frustration (Seeman 1983). These disruptions *instigate* turmoil,

and through these local disruptions, anomie from above collides with alienation from below.<sup>68</sup>

Third, turmoil involves authority relations that *enable* a disruption of the social order to endure: disruptions in the social order are of little consequence if they are fleeting, because participants can return to their standard modes of action as soon as the disruptive episode is over. For disruptions to grow into “turmoil” requires that they persist, and in the case of Costen Elementary, the persistent disruption is enabled by Mrs. Koh’s rational-legal authority as principal. Because of the authority of Mrs. Koh’s position, the teachers cannot simply “shrug off” Mrs. Koh’s disruptions to the negotiated order.

Fourth, turmoil is organized around symbolic power relations that *define* the turmoil. For an intervention in a social order to be disruptive, it must be defined as such. As the power to define the situation, the role of symbolic power in the organization of turmoil is of *dupla gravitas*: On the one hand, turmoil involves a lack of symbolic power by the actor who initiates a change in the social order. When the initiator *does* have symbolic power, he/she can use this power to define the disruption as justified, and thereby avoid conflict and turmoil (therefore, not all changes in a social order result in turmoil). On the other hand, the symbolic power of respondents is also involved, and the greatest turmoil arises when respondents who have symbolic power use it to define the

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<sup>68</sup> An alternative explanation would be that the teachers are offended by the increased labor associated with Mrs. Koh’s disruptions. However, the variation in labor cost does not explain the turmoil at the school. Some of the disruptions involve little to no labor increase, and yet turmoil still develops. The bigger issue is the loss of control that is entailed in a disruption of an established social order. The labor cost associated with Mrs. Koh’s disruptions is symptomatic of this larger loss of control.

change as particularly disruptive. In response to Mrs. Koh's disruptive actions, teachers who have symbolic power use it to define lines of resistance through which the emergent turmoil is expressed.

Far from chaotic, turmoil is socially organized—or so it would seem based on the theory and data presented in this dissertation. Yet how generalizable are the findings of this treatise? To be sure, the *empirical* findings are limited to Midwest City Elementary Schools, and Costen School in particular. However, the issues addressed here provide *theoretical* leverage for understanding other contexts. There are actually two points of theoretical generalizability, the model of turmoil, of which symbolic power is a part, and the model of symbolic power itself. For turmoil, the features of the model bound the theoretical leverage of the approach. After addressing these scope conditions, I demonstrate the broad utility of the approach by using it to examine research on other organizations (for profit and non-profit, formal and informal), social movements, and revolutions. While this dissertation forwards a theory of turmoil, it also provides a method for studying it, and I comment on this method. Next, I address the theoretical generalizability of symbolic power, and I close by discussing the implications of this work for educational policy and practice, organizations, the micro politics of leadership, and contentious politics.

In generalizing the model of turmoil, the features of the model bound the theoretical utility of the approach. Drawing from the example of Costen School, turmoil is most likely to occur when there is an established social order that is threatened by a change in the structural context (such as accountability policies), and where there is an

administrator who has rational-legal authority, but struggles for credibility and symbolic power with the staff as he/she attempts to initiate changes into the social order. These scope conditions limit the settings in which we would expect turmoil, and perhaps limits the settings to which the model can be applied. However, schools are not the only places that face growing bureaucracy and accountability. Nor are bureaucracy and accountability the only pressures of theoretical relevance. As settings for turmoil, organizations also face conflicting pressures from the institutions of law and family (Heimer 1999, 1996), to name just a few. Moreover, it is commonplace for administrators, despite their authority, to struggle for credibility with their staff.<sup>69</sup>

For example, the theory of turmoil developed here can help us to see similarities in the cases of Costen School in the late 1990s/early 2000, and a gypsum mine studied by Alvin Gouldner in the mid 1950s. In Patterns of Industrial Bureaucracy, Gouldner (1954) attempts to evaluate and expand Weber's theory of bureaucracy. Gouldner notes that Weber "thought of bureaucracy as a Janus-faced organization, looking two ways at once. On the one side, it was administration based on expertise; while on the other, it was administration based on discipline" (Gouldner 1954: 22). Instead of treating bureaucracy as a monolithic organizational form, Gouldner uses data from an ethnographic study of a gypsum mine to demarcate different patterns of bureaucracy. Gouldner identifies three such patterns: "Mock Bureaucracy," in which bureaucratic rules are present but largely ignored or inoperative, "Representative Bureaucracy" in which there are rules and workers readily agree with them, and "Punishment Centered Bureaucracy" where the

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<sup>69</sup> This is evident in the countless number of self-help leadership guides in any bookstore.

focus is on the enforcement of rules, regardless of their utility. Gouldner's ethnographic data reinvigorates the human dynamic of organizations that had become lost in the attention to bureaucracy as an ideal type. Foreshadowing some of the criticisms that would emerge in response to the new institutionalist focus on inter organizational conditions some forty years later, Gouldner states:

The social scene described has sometimes been so completely stripped of people that the impression is unintentionally rendered that there are disembodied forces afoot, able to realize their ambitions apart from human action. This has colored some analyses of bureaucracy with funeral overtones, lending dramatic persuasiveness to the pessimistic portrayal of administrative systems. (Gouldner 1954: 16)

Instead of presenting bureaucracy as a static ideal type, Gouldner presents it as dynamic collection of work patterns.

With his emphasis on local, intra organizational dynamics, Gouldner's work has all the ingredients of a study of turmoil. Gouldner's gypsum mine was situated in a post World War II context in which bureaucracy was rapidly diffusing as an organizational form. At the local level, this change in the broader context was made felt when a new manager was placed in the mine. The new manager introduced a number of new rules and practices—hiring people outside of kinship networks, increasing the amount of paperwork, and rigidly enforcing disciplinary procedures—accompanied by a new emphasis on hierarchy. These bureaucratic trappings were in part a response to pressure from the mine's regional office to increase efficiency. However, these changes disrupted the informal indulgency pattern that the workers had established with the previous administration. These disruptions also damaged the credibility of the new administration

in the eyes of the workers. To quote Gouldner: “Workers do not believe that management has the right to institute any kind of rule, merely because they have the legal authority to do so” (1954: 184). However, the workers also responded negatively to the manner that the new administration brought into their interactions with the workers. Gouldner explains that “A college educated, authority conscious, rule-oriented individual was substituted for an informal ‘lenient’ man who had little taste for ‘paper work.’” (1954: 69). The mine employees lamented both the disruptions to their prior order, and the mode of interaction through which these disruptions occurred. Instead of attributing credibility to the new administration, the employees criticized it.

The comparisons between Gouldner’s gypsum mine and Costen School are obvious. Both were situated in a changing structural context, and at the local level the employees of both organizations combated disruptions to their established social orders. The disruptions were enabled by the rational-legal authority of new managers, and in both cases the new managers lacked credibility and symbolic power in the eyes of the staff. Likewise, both cases resulted in turmoil (conflict around the disruptions to the previous social order). The “Turmoil at ‘KOH’sten School” was matched, if not exceeded, by a wildcat strike at the gypsum mine (Gouldner 1954b). As comparable as Gouldner’s gypsum mine is to Costen School over forty years later, Gouldner’s purpose was to interrogate and elaborate on models of bureaucracy, not to theorize the organization of turmoil.

While the gypsum mine studied by Gouldner was a for profit organization, the model of turmoil can also be applied to other non-for-profit organizations besides

schools, for example churches. Penny Becker's (1999) book Congregations in Conflict uses interviews with over 230 church members in 23 churches to demarcate different kinds of congregational cultures and the types of conflict to which these cultures are prone. In "Houses of Worship," church members focus on worship and religious education, and conflict tends to be about the use of the churches' financial resources and staffing. In "Family" congregations, church members view the church as a place of worship and education, but also as a network of supportive relationships. Family churches tend to be informal. In these congregations, conflict tends to be about the church building, church expansion, and the pastor's style. In "Community" congregations, church members view the church as a place to express values and commitments about social issues, and to engage in participatory democracy. In these congregations, conflict tends to be about financial resources, church staffing, worship, outreach, gender equality, and sexual orientation. The same set of conflicts is typical in "Leader" congregations, where the church directs community activism while espousing the official tenants of the denomination.

However, in her focus on the variation of conflict by different congregational cultures, Becker obscures a similarity in many of the conflicts she examines. Oftentimes, these conflicts emerged from a disruption to the established social order. In these situations, Becker detaches the conflict from its disruptive origins. This approach is made explicit in the introduction. After mentioning that the conflict in one of the churches began after a new pastor arrived and introduced a number of changes, she states:

I would come to understand that, while the trouble began when the new pastor came in, it was essentially a fight between two groups of lay leaders and core members. One group seemed to take for granted that their church is primarily about having a place to worship, about long-term friendships and family-like attachments, about people who know you and your family and could be counted on for help in times of crisis. Most of these people valued a traditional approach to doctrine and ritual practice. . . . For others. . . the church is primarily about providing leadership in the community, about interpreting doctrine and ritual tradition in light of contemporary social reality and current members' needs (Becker 1999: 3)

Becker focuses on what the church means to different groups of people and their conflict of interests. Though this example involves conflict of interests, it is a conflict that only arises with the disruptions created by the new pastor. The disruption has a constitutive role in the conflicts that emerge. Instead of downplaying the role of this disruption in the conflict that follows, a focus on turmoil embraces the disruption and its social organization.

Later, Becker discusses a similar example. First she discusses a congregation's negative reactions to their new pastor:

There was widespread dissatisfaction with the pastor's interpersonal style, which was described as "cold" and "formal." Some added "uncaring" to the list, while others were more apt to use phrases like "he's reserved" or "he's a very private person." One person, who supported the pastor throughout, nevertheless conceded that he "makes people feel formal. He is not relaxed. I mean, I could never go to him for Christian advice and counseling." Others reported that "it's hard to talk to him" or said that he is "aloof, not personable." (Becker 1999: 77-78)

Becker discusses this example as a conflict over the pastor's interpersonal style.

However, there is more going on here. Much like Mrs. Koh, this pastor struggles to acquire credibility in the eyes of the church members, and without credibility, he lacks

the symbolic power to define the situation. Later, Becker discusses some of the problems that arouse when the pastor attempted to make changes:

When Pastor West tried to get the congregation to take more of an outward focus, engage in the community, and tackle social issues, he was seen as devaluing exactly those things that lay members value most, namely, the inward focus on the church family. And he was unsuccessful in getting lay members to talk about these issues. Rather, members decided that the problem was with the pastor himself, as a person. (Becker 1999: 94)

In these examples Becker alternates between discussing the conflict in terms of the pastor's interpersonal style, and in terms of the established congregational culture. However, because she glosses over the role of disruptions, she does not make a connection between the two. The pastor lacks credibility in the eyes of the church members, and without credibility he cannot define his disruptions to their social order as justified. The issue is not simply conflict, but conflict around a disruption to the social order. Moreover, this turmoil is socially organized not only by the congregational cultures that Becker stresses (the established social order), but also the pointed disruption to the social order and the lack of symbolic power by the pastor who initiated the disruption.

These examples of turmoil can be contrasted with another example mentioned by Becker. Becker states of a pastor from an Episcopalian parish: "Far from cold or aloof, this pastor is involved in the lives of the members, particularly in times of trouble" (Becker 1999: 98). Then Becker explains how one of the church members told her:

Jackson's father-in-law was ill with Lou Gehrig's disease. The rector visited him and saw that he needed a haircut. So he trimmed the man's hair, trimmed his toenails, and gave him a bath. Jackson had tears in his eyes as he looked at me

and asked, “How many men – or women – of God do you know who would do that?” (Becker 1999: 98)

Through positive evaluations such as these, this rector has acquired credibility in the eyes of the church members. In turn the rector can deploy his credibility as the symbolic power to define disruptions to the social order as justified, avoiding turmoil and effectively changing the social order:

The much-loved pastor who has been there for over twenty years was able to introduce both a moveable altar and the idea of women priests to a congregation that is rather conservative in terms of ritual practices. Not only did the pastor report that this caused no conflict, but the lay members seemed to agree. (Becker 1999: 98)

Becker cites this example briefly, as an aside to explain that not all congregations have conflict. However, through an understanding of symbolic power and the social organization of turmoil, we can see how this example of a disruption absent conflict is related to instances of turmoil.

To be fair, it is not Becker’s purpose to develop a model of turmoil and its organization. Her goal is to demarcate different kinds of congregational cultures and the conflicts they face. She does this well. However, by focusing on the disruptions to the social order that she downplays, and the symbolic power relations that are linked to these disruptions, we can see that her data can speak not only to conflict, but also turmoil.

The model of turmoil has greatest resonance when applied to formal organizational settings, because the theory was inductively drawn from an empirical study of a school. However, the model can be usefully applied to more informal cases of turmoil as well. Take as an example the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). In her

book Freedom is an Endless Meeting, Francesca Polletta (2002) examines how SDS developed an informal organizational structure based on participatory democracy, as opposed to a formal bureaucratic structure. Polletta's purpose is to examine participatory democracy as a pragmatic, purposeful, strategic form of social movement organization. Where most people assume that the adoption of participatory democracy by SDS was based on antiauthoritarian principals, Polletta argues that participatory democracy was adopted for more practical reasons. SDS grew out of a tight-knit group of like-minded friends. When faced with the need to make decisions, they "took behavioral norms and expectations from a relational style with which they were familiar: friendship. Treating their fellow SDS members as friends made it easy to delegate tasks and resolve differences of opinion and interests" (Polletta 2002: 124). Based on their practical understanding of friendship, SDS developed an organizational structure with a minimal division of labor, decentralized authority, and an egalitarian ethos. Based on their friendship networks, they negotiated a social order that featured an informal method of participatory democracy.

However, changes in the structural context in which SDS was embedded would threaten this negotiated order. With the bombing of the Gulf of Tonkin and the escalation of the fighting in Vietnam, the anti-war movement gained momentum. During this period SDS membership exploded. SDS expanded from twenty-nine chapters and 1000 members in June 1964, to eighty chapters and more than two thousand members in June 1965, to 124 chapters and 4300 members by the end of 1965 (Polletta 2002: 138). Though the increase in membership could have been seen as a success, it disrupted the

close friendship network on which SDS's social order was built. Friendship is, by definition, exclusive, and it is this exclusivity that provides it with the intimacy required for effective participatory democracy. To quote Polletta:

If friendship supplies the trust, mutual affection, and respect that facilitate fast and fair decisions, it also makes it difficult to expand the deliberative group beyond the original circle. . . . Since newcomers by definition threaten existing friendships, they may find it difficult to secure the trust, respect and solicitude that veterans enjoy. (2002: 140)

SDS was unable to embrace the new membership because of the structural and affective limits of the friendship network of the old guard.

However, the inability of the old guard to open their friendship network to new members was further complicated by regional differences and a generation gap. In summarizing the old guard's response to the new members Polletta states:

The newcomers *were* different. Their antiauthoritarianism was upfront. They held little truck with the long intellectual analyses or with the thrust and parry that had been the old SDS style. They wanted action now and were indifferent to maintaining the sympathies of liberal allies. The term *Prairie Power* captured their Western origins and outlaw image. Certainly, they came from different places than the old guard: Texas, Iowa, Kansas, Southern California. (2002: 141 emphasis in original)

Todd Gitlin, a former president of SDS, reiterated this view:

The flood of new members tended to be different from the first SDS generation—less intellectual, more activist, more deeply estranged from the dominant institutions. . . . In style, too, they declared their deep disaffection from the prevailing culture; many were shaggy in appearance, they smoked dope, they had read less, they went for broke. (Gitlin 1980: 30)

The Prairie Power people did not mix easily with the more intellectualized Old Guard, who were Eastern and Midwestern, including large numbers of Jews (though still a minority), and were more likely middle- or upper-middle-class in origin. (Gitlin1980: 131-132)

The old guard responded negatively to the cultural capital of newcomers, and vice-versa. Neither group had much credibility with the other, and the old guard responded to the disruptive influx of new members by informally closing their ranks. Though public gatherings took the form of participatory democracy, privately the old guard relied on their tight network to make decisions. The newcomers responded negatively, charging the old guard with elitism.

The turmoil within SDS involved a conflict of interest between competing groups, but this conflict has its roots in the influx of new members that disrupted SDS's prior negotiated order (a disruption that was precipitated by a change in the structural context—the escalation of the Vietnam War). The old guard was unable to open their friendship network to the newcomers, and the two groups responded negatively to each other. Neither group had symbolic power with the other, and neither group could define their actions as justified. The turmoil around the membership disruption continued to escalate, and SDS eventually collapsed under the weight of this turmoil. To quote Polletta (2002: 21) “Since new people threaten old friendships, SDS was thrown into disarray by the entrance of new members”—not disarray, but organized turmoil.

To this point, I have focused on turmoil as an outcome. However, we can also shift the analysis to look at turmoil as a condition that is tied to other outcomes. For example, the insurgency practiced by many social movements can be seen as an effort to instigate turmoil as a means to foster a social change. Social movements frequently employ tactics that disrupt “business as usual,” from sit-ins and die-ins to strikes and human chains. To quote Piven and Cloward:

Institutional life depends upon conformity with established roles and compliance with established rules. Defiance may thus obstruct the normal operations of institutions. Factories are shut down when workers walk out or sit down; welfare bureaucracies are thrown into chaos when crowds demand relief; landlords may be bankrupted when tenants refuse to pay rent. In each of these cases people cease to conform to accustomed institutional roles; they withhold their accustomed cooperation, and by doing so, cause institutional *disruptions*. (Piven and Cloward 1977: 24 emphasis added)

Social movements and the disruptions that they create are themselves embedded within larger social changes, from the economic upheaval of the Great Depression to the political upheaval of the Vietnam War. However, it is often through the pointed disruptions that social movements create that broader social changes come to be felt social psychologically. For example, in recalling his role in a teach-in on Vietnam at the University of Michigan, sociologist William Gamson reflected on criticism that he and his colleagues faced from then Governor Romney: “We did not think we were being irresponsible by calling off our classes but were meeting a higher responsibility to students by *turning aside from business as usual* to educate them about Vietnam” (Gamson 1991: 30 emphasis added). Gamson adds that “I argued that something crucial would be lost if everyone went about business as usual instead of making Vietnam their business that day” (1991: 32). By disrupting the established social order of educational classes at the University of Michigan, Gamson and his colleagues were bringing a war that was thousands of miles away into the everyday lives of students, faculty, administration, and the state government. Through these disruptions the War in Vietnam was made felt at a more local, social psychological level. Much like the disruptions that Mrs. Koh introduced to Costen School, these disruptions are phenomenologically unsettling.

The social psychological component of these disruptions is accompanied by a political message: The conflict that surrounds disruptions directs attention to the social movement's agenda. However, while social movements can create disruptions, they cannot control how the emergent turmoil is received. Insurgency works by disrupting the status quo, but in doing so, it pushes people to side with the insurgents *or* the status quo, a decision that is affected by the symbolic power of different groups. For example, in his book The Whole World is Watching, Todd Gitlin (1980) argues that the media defined how the public responded to the protest activity of SDS. Gitlin says of the media: They name the world's parts, they certify reality as reality" (Gitlin 1980: 2). In other words, the media has symbolic power. Gitlin is not the only scholar to note the symbolic power of the media; it is also addressed by Bourdieu (1998b) and Klinenberg (1999). Given the symbolic power of the media, Gitlin argues, "it becomes extremely difficult, perhaps unimaginable, for an opposition movement to define itself and its world view" (Gitlin 1980: 3). Each time SDS engaged in forms of insurgency as a means to publicize their political agenda, the media was there to cover the disruptive events and the ensuing turmoil. However, rarely did the media use their symbolic power to define the disruption in a way that corresponded to SDS's agenda. To quote Gitlin:

By selecting and emphasizing certain facts for framing, and by framing them so as to marginalize and disparage the antiwar movement, the media established a baseline story which catered to the (Johnson) administration's view of the world. Later events and later reporting altered the original terms, but they had to proceed from the earliest (media) definitions of what the New Left and antiwar activity amounted to. (1980: 140)

Though the media defined SDS and their disruptive protests negatively, as the Vietnam War escalated (particularly after the Tet offensive), the media generated a more positive definition of the protests of an alternative group, the “Clean Students.” Once SDS had lost steam due (in part) to the internal turmoil mentioned above, a collection of more moderate students took to the streets, organizing a general “Moratorium” in October of 1969 that involved a “range of decentralized no-business-as usual antiwar actions around the country” (Gitlin 1980: 217). Gitlin summarized the media response to the Moratorium as follows:

On October 15 itself, Walter Cronkite introduced the Moratorium as “dramatic” and “historic in its scope.” He pointed out that it sought immediate withdrawal from Vietnam, and he stressed its large numbers but observed that the total size of its support was unknown. “With scattered exceptions,” Cronkite said, “the Moratorium was a dignified, responsible protest, in its sponsors’ words, and appealed to the conscience of the American people”; he also cited examples of contrasting irresponsibility by antiwar extremists. . . . In another film report, the correspondent said: “SDS had its origins on this campus, but today’s Michigan protest was different, peaceful, within the law, not confined to a radical minority.” (It was true that SDS had its origins in Ann Arbor, but not that its origins had been anything other than peaceful.) (Gitlin 1980: 221)

Where the symbolic power of the media had defined SDS’s disruptive protests negatively, the media defined the actions of the “Clean Students” positively. Arguably, with the help of the media’s symbolic power, the mainstream student protests succeeded in hastening the withdrawal of troops from Vietnam. In this way, turmoil can be seen not only as a dependent variable, but also an independent one.

Turmoil adds to the increasing interest in social psychological processes that have reemerged with scholarship on the emotional aspects of social movements (Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta 2001, Calhoun 2001). Though interest in the social psychology of

social movements has increased, work on revolutions continues to be dominated by structural approaches, from a focus on the resources of revolutionary groups to a focus on the breakdown of state control (Foran 1993, Goldstone 1982, Skocpol 1979). However, the focus on background conditions that enable revolution obscures the undeniably human component of revolutions. To quote Shanin:

Social scientists often miss a centerpiece of any revolutionary struggle—the fervor and anger that drives revolutionaries and makes them into what they are. Academic training and bourgeois convention deaden its appreciation. The “phenomenon” cannot be easily “operationalized” into factors, tables, and figures. . . . At the very center of revolution lies an emotional upheaval of moral indignation, revulsion and fury with the powers-that-be, such that one cannot demure or remain silent, whatever the cost. Within its glow, for a while, men surpass themselves, breaking the shackles of intuitive self-preservation, convention, day-to-day convenience, and routine (Shanin 1986: 30-31).

In other words, the study of revolutions needs social psychology.

The study of revolutions was not always detached from social psychology. Old approaches based on the frustration of rising expectations (Davies 1962) and relative deprivation (Gurr 1968) considers the psychological state of revolutionaries. However, this psychological understanding follows directly from background conditions, for example a reversal of economic and social development. In this sense, these social psychological studies are very similar to more recent structural approaches.

The goal is keep in mind the various background conditions that enable revolution while appreciating individual and group experiences and emotions. These can be linked via turmoil. As important as background conditions are for revolution (and they are important), at the local level, people must be made to *feel* these revolutionary conditions. General, revolutionary conditions are felt when people experience disruptions to their

more immediate social order. These disruptions are phenomenologically unsettling. The breakdown of state control may enable revolution, but this condition is made real to revolutionaries as the state attempts to reassert control by levying new taxes, through military conscription, through restrictive legislation on food consumption, and other such efforts. These actions disrupt the social order that people normally take for granted, an order that helps to make the world predictable, providing us with a sense of control over our lives. These disruptions destroy our sense of control and create frustration, and the response is often equally disruptive—for example protests and riots and various forms of insurgency. These strings of turmoil connect individual experience to background social conditions, and these strings resonate towards revolution. Tied to the social structural conditions that make revolutions possible are more dynamic strings of turmoil that forever disrupt the way things were, and have a constitutive role in the way things become.

Where a focus on the organization of turmoil treats turmoil as an outcome, examining how turmoil is a kind of mediating causal condition for revolutions or other outcomes pushes us towards a more general sociology of turmoil. The sociology of turmoil is accompanied by a method for studying turmoil. This technique borrows from ethnomethodology by focusing on disruptions to established social orders. However, where ethnomethodology fabricates disruptions (or “breaches”) as a means to study the social order that existed prior to the breach (Garfinkle 1963, 1967, Heritage 1984), the sociology of turmoil examines disruptions that are of the world’s own making. The sociology of turmoil follows these disruptions backwards into the prior social order, but

also forwards into the emergent turmoil, while keeping an eye on the background conditions that facilitate these disruptions and the power relations that surround them.

Though these disruptions are facilitated by background social structures, they take place locally, and evolve through social interaction. As such, the primary unit of analysis is the interactions between people, and the mode of data collection is ethnographic. Focusing on interactions enables sociologists to assess the symbolic power relations that define turmoil. It is through social interaction that people formulate evaluations of others, attributing credibility based on valued forms of human, social, and economic capital. Likewise, it is through social interaction that credibility is deployed as the symbolic power to define the situation.

The method is also fundamentally comparative in its approach, as data is analyzed and interpretations are drawn by comparing different sets of interactions and different disruptions to the social order. Following Glaser and Strauss (1967), these types of comparisons are made in most ethnographic work. Rarely is ethnography ever an analysis of a single case. The sociology of turmoil makes these comparisons explicit, and uses the logic of the comparative method (Ragin 1987, 2000) to speculate on the necessary and sufficient conditions for turmoil.

By now it should be clear that symbolic power is a fundamental pillar in the social organization of turmoil. But symbolic power is also a concept that is strong enough to stand alone as an important contribution to sociology. Though Bourdieu and others aptly discuss the operation of symbolic power at the macro level of fields and the micro level of the habitus, symbolic power is also at play in the meso level of social interaction.

Every day we interact with others, and these interactions are laced with symbolic power. Though these interactions we attribute credibility, and there are times when we deploy this credibility as the symbolic power to define the situation, a process that also occurs through social interaction. Yet we normally take these interactions for granted, and as a result we are typically blind to the operation of symbolic power. However, as the power to define the situation, symbolic power shapes the very terms through which we “negotiate” a social order through our interactions with others.

Ironically, the style of sociology that most frequently engages “symbols” and “interaction” is also blind to the operation of symbolic power. As an indigenous approach linked to American liberalism, symbolic interactionism has a humanistic viewpoint that often neglects issues of power (Kanter 1972, Hall 1972). When interactionists do include power in their analyses (as do some negotiated order theorists), the operation of power is assumed, but the mechanisms through which it operates are not interrogated. To unpack the mechanics of symbolic power, I examine the process through which people attribute credibility to others based on valued forms of capital, credibility that can later be deployed as symbolic power. While the particular features of a situation may be unique, the *process* through which symbolic power is created in social interaction is more general. In some situations, cultural capital may be the form of capital that fosters the greatest credibility and symbolic power, while in others, social capital may take precedence, or it may be a combination of any number of capitals. What remains the same is the *general process* in which people attribute credibility to others based on valued capital.

The model of symbolic power presented here can also generate propositions characteristic of more formal theories. For example, “the greater the cultural capital possessed by an interactant, the greater the likelihood that others will attribute credibility to him/her,” and “the greater the human capital possessed by an interactant, the greater the likelihood that others will attribute credibility to him/her,” and so on. However, in formulating such propositions, we must not lose sight of social interaction. The forms of capital are enacted in social interaction: to formulate interactions we put our capital to use, and in doing so we make our capital visible to others. Though capital informs our interactions, there is also the opportunity to use impression management to actively highlight certain forms of capital as we interact with others, increasing their visibility as a basis for the attribution of credibility. These interactions—at times haphazard, at times anticipated, at times spontaneous, at times planned—have a constitutive role. Interactions are the vehicle for the attribution of credibility and the deployment of symbolic power.

At its core, this dissertation contributes to our knowledge of social interaction, power, and turmoil. In addition to the applications discussed above, this work has further implications for how we think about educational policy and practice, organizations, the micro politics of leadership, and contentious politics.

*Educational Policy and Practice.* Since the mid 1990’s, educational policies that hold schools accountable for student performance have been on a meteoric rise. The purpose of this dissertation is not to evaluate these policies as a means of educational reform, but rather to examine these policies as they relate to the organization of turmoil.

I make no evaluation of whether turmoil is ultimately good or bad, only that it exists, and is organized in certain ways. Though value-free, the examination of turmoil still has implications for how we think about educational policy and practice.

While schools share a broad history and general organization in common, the social situation of particular schools is unique. However, accountability policies are uniform, standard by definition. When principals use their positional authority to create a tighter coupling between school practices and accountability policies, they run the risk of disrupting the established negotiated order and fostering turmoil that may further damage their credibility in the eyes of the staff. As accountability policies grow in popularity, (not only in schools but in other organizations), these tensions and the social organization of turmoil will become increasingly relevant.

Though accountability policies seek to improve student outcomes, the turmoil that these policies can create may overshadow the primary means through which students learn—instruction. Though Costen is a school that has done relatively well on standardized tests, it is place where discourse about instruction is surprisingly rare. When people at Costen talk, either formally or informally, they are preoccupied with the turmoil at the school. The research on model schools stresses the central role of instructional discourse and its linkage to teacher collaboration, teacher learning, teacher certainty, and student learning (Rosenholtz 1989). Though Costen is a good school, a focus on instruction has been buried under the mounting turmoil. Mrs. Koh often lamented that people in the school never had the time to talk about instruction, and as I was finishing my observations, Mrs. Koh expressed hope that they would be able to

address instruction in the near future (Interview 8/3/01). Accountability policies seek to improve student outcomes, but students learn through instruction. Ironically, the tight-coupling that Mrs. Koh has created between accountability policies and school practices and the emergent turmoil in the school actually squash instructional discourse. In terms of instruction, the teachers at Costen are increasingly isolated.

However we may feel about accountability policies—and there are arguments and data that both support and admonish them—the reality is that they place principals in a double bind: ignore accountability reforms as a means to respect the established order within the school (while risking sanctions from the regional and district offices), or create a tighter connection between accountability and school practices while risking turmoil and endangering credibility in the eyes of teachers. As middle managers (Spillane et al 2003), principals face this dilemma every day.

The solution to this dilemma is often a loose coupling between policies and school practices, where administrators engage in ceremonial displays to signal compliance to policies even as classroom practices remain unchanged. In this way, the formal structure of schools (and other organizations) is often a kind of “myth” (Meyer and Rowan 1977, 1978). However, despite this loose coupling, people within schools and other organizations are not decoupled from each other, and this dissertation and other work indicates that school personnel frequently interact with each other in a variety of ways (Spillane, Hallett, and Diamond 2003).

These interactions provide a ray of hope for administrators who seek to create a tighter coupling between policies and practice, but without prompting the anguish

exemplified in “Turmoil at ‘KOH’sten School.” If principals take the time and energy to cultivate interactions with their staffs and to acquire credibility in their eyes, they can deploy this credibility as the symbolic power to define accountability-related disruptions as justified, thereby avoiding turmoil. In short, this hope lies not in another round of educational reforms, or in the rational-legal authority of the office. Rather, this hope lies in symbolic power. Instead of immediately disrupting an established order, administrators can take the time to learn how the order works, and while doing so, acquire symbolic power with the staff. Once an administrator has learned the social order, the administrator can deploy his/her credibility as the symbolic power to change the social order from within, as opposed to using rational-legal authority to impose a change from above.

Symbolic power is also available to teachers who seek a change in the established social order. Though symbolic power cannot be secured through a policy mandate or a reform in the structure of schools, institutions of higher education *do* arm administrators and teachers with the means for symbolic power. Considerable time and resources are spent trying to equip school personnel with valued skills, knowledge, and expertise (human capital). These programs also provide people with a broader social network (social capital). Yet cultural capital remains the sticking point: it is difficult to predict and then provide people with an embodied way of being that will be of value within a particular school. However, knowing how symbolic power operates is useful for practitioners as they attempt to change schools, and principals in particular need symbolic power to implement new policies.

*Organizations*. In its relation to social structure and human agency, symbolic power is a useful complement to institutional approaches for understanding organizations. The image conveyed through symbolic power is one of agents acting dynamically, yet under the pressures of the structural and negotiation contexts. Because new institutional theory typically places its gaze above the ground level of social interaction, its conception of agency is based on people as carriers of institutional processes (DiMaggio 1988), with a direct correspondence between institutional logics, organizational actors, and organizational practices. Though institutional logics enable and constrain, the correspondence between these logics and organizational practices is more complex, as actors in organizations struggle over meanings and resources, shifting the contours of these logics (Lounsbury, Ventresca, and Hirsch 2003). Yet the new institutionalism lacks a theory of action to understand this correspondence, and all we are left to see is a “picture of ‘disembodied forces’ inexorably creating and maintaining institutions” (Creed and Scully 2001). Despite the fact that organizations are staffed by people, this line of work often ignores the concrete doings of these people, even as they pertain to the operation of the organization (Stinchcombe 1997, Barley 1986).

For example, while cases of institutional isomorphism abound, it is hard to understand how this process occurs on the ground level (Fligstein 2001: 211), or the emergent micro political battles that result from competing institutions (Heimer 1995, 1999). The notion of symbolic power developed here can help us to see how institutional processes occur through actors, actors who possess symbolic power. For example, cases of mimetic isomorphism occur to the extent that those who possess symbolic power view

some other organization as relevant and successful,<sup>70</sup> and use their own symbolic power to shape their organizations along similar lines, but also based on their own interests and the aesthetics of relevant audiences.

In other words, the social order within an organization is not simply a reflection of the “institutional logic of professional autonomy,” or the “institutional logic of bureaucratic accountability,” or any other logic for that matter. Rather, a social order emerges as people struggle with these logics in their interactions with each other, interactions infused with symbolic power. Likewise, the coupling between policies and practices is negotiated in these interactions. As such, people are not simply the carriers of institutional forces. Rather, through interaction, they are the shapers of those forces (Creed and Scully 2001). Social structures shape the contours of interaction, but it is through interaction that these structures are propelled forward, and the interactions themselves have a constitutive role in the emergent social order.

Symbolic power also reiterates the view that, instead of resembling a formal bureaucracy, organizations are better categorized as a “patrimonial bureaucracy” (Antonio 1979, Jackall 1988). Instead of being attached to a position, influence is attached to a relationship with a person and all the features of that interpersonal relationship, especially the attribution of credibility based on valued forms of capital. Position aside, when people possess forms of capital that are valued by others, they acquire credibility that can later be deployed as the symbolic power to define the

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<sup>70</sup> You could say that this other organizational form has its own “symbolic power” based on perceptions of validity, even if its success is actually a “rationalized myth” (Meyer and Rowan 1977).

situation. Rational-legal authority does not walk alone in organizations; it is joined by symbolic power. As we have seen, particular uses of rational-legal authority may damage an administrator's long-term symbolic power. However, administrators may be most effective when they have both the subtle symbolic power to define the situation and the obvious positional authority to impose an order.

This dissertation also joins work that places increasing attention on the "dark side" of organizations (Vaughan 1999), offsetting the sanguine conceptions of mainstream schools of management (Meyerson and Martin 1987, Martin and Meyerson 1988, Meyerson 1991). This dark side is made visible in turmoil. Though turmoil is visible, the symbolic power relations that organize it are hidden by the complex interactions between people, and the struggles for symbolic power are a form of covert political conflict (Morrill, Zald, and Rao 2003), particularly in the case of those who use their symbolic power to define lines of resistance and articulate turmoil.

*The Micro Politics of Leadership.* "Leadership" is a euphemism for power. The application of the "leadership" moniker to situations where "leaders" influence "followers" to do things while circumventing possible resistance is a means through which symbolic power remains hidden. To be sure, I am not the first person to associate leadership with power. French and Raven's influential model of leadership incorporates leaders and followers at different times and associates them with different forms of power (French and Raven 1959, Bass 1990). Where expert, reward, and coercive power are defined in terms of the leader's characteristics and resources, referent and legitimate power are defined based on the characteristics of followers (Patchen 1974). While

“leader-centric” studies that focus on the thoughts, actions, and traits of leaders abound (White and Lippitt 1960, Likert 1967, Stodgill 1950, Yukl 1981), there is a growing interest in “follower-centric” approaches that emphasize how followers conceptualize leadership (Meindl 1995).

However, in focusing on people, “leader” and “follower” centric models frequently miss the relationship between the two (Ehrlich 1998), ignoring the *actual substance* of leader-follower interactions (Schneider 1998, Lord and Maher 1991). In this sense, for all the countless studies of leadership, it remains a black box. The symbolic power approach helps us to recognize the *micro politics* that lie inside of this box. Leadership is eminently micro political. It involves an ongoing but unrecognized interactive struggle: a dynamic process through which leaders *first acquire* credibility in the eyes of followers, and then deploy it as the symbolic power to define the situation and influence the practices of followers. By studying the complex interactions between leaders and followers, we can open the black box of leadership and analyze the micro politics that are hidden inside.

*Contentious Politics.* Since the publication of McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly’s influential book Dynamics of Contention (2001), increasing attention has been focused on the contentious politics (power struggles) between groups, usually in regards to “the state” or national governments. However, what remains to be examined are the micro political struggles between people within those groups. These struggles affect who has the credibility and symbolic power to make particular claims and to initiate the dynamics of contention that McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly go on to describe. For example,

McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly argue that the structural factors associated with resource mobilization remain

subject to attribution (and emergent construction). No opportunity, however objectively open, will invite mobilization unless it is (a) visible to potential challengers and (b) perceived to be an opportunity. . . *Attribution of opportunity or threat* is an activating mechanism responsible in part for the mobilization of previously inert populations. (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001: 43 *emphasis added*).

The discussion of the attribution of opportunity or threat is an important corrective to structural theories of mobilization and contention. The process of attribution threat is a process of definition, and it involves symbolic power, which begs the question, “what claims-makers have symbolic power, and why?” To answer this question we must delve into the interactions between members that occur within the groups in question.

A focus on interactions embedded within these groups remind us that symbolic power, like contentious politics, is a dynamic social process, and it is eminently political. However, the deployment of symbolic power need not involve a claim against a government, as is typically associated with contentious politics. Brenda Donalds and Frances Drew mobilize their symbolic power to make claims against Mrs. Koh and her organizational authority, and not against “the state” per se. Even so, this use of symbolic power is still contentious. In this way, a consideration of symbolic power pushes us to broaden the definition of contentious politics to encompass “collective challenges to systems or structures of authority” (Snow 2002). Though these challenges may be directed towards state authority, they may also be pointed towards the structures of authority in non-governmental, for-profit corporations, as well as non-governmental, not-

for-profit organizations, and even established cultural beliefs and understandings (Snow 2002). Regardless of the target towards which these challenges are aimed, dynamics of contention involve dynamics of symbolic power.

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## Appendix A

### **Into and Out of Symbolic Power: Anastasia Cygnar's Journey**

At various times in this dissertation, I have mentioned that symbolic power does not presume intent. In other words, one need not intentionally seek symbolic power to acquire it. To support this argument, this appendix examines Anastasia Cygnar's unwitting journey into and out of symbolic power. In teaching art at Costen School, Anastasia displayed cultural and human capital that the many in the school value, and the teachers and administrators at Costen attributed credibility to Anastasia even though Anastasia never consciously pursued credibility. Though Anastasia never deployed her credibility as the symbolic power to define the situation one way or the other, people in the school were aware of her potential. Because Anastasia had acquired credibility in the eyes of the teachers, Mrs. Koh made an effort to co-opt her into the administration. Lacking her own symbolic power, Mrs. Koh may have been able to benefit from Anastasia's. However, this effort backfired, as Anastasia's connection Mrs. Koh diminished Anastasia's credibility in the eyes of the teachers. In her relationship to Mrs. Koh, Anastasia lost the credibility that she never intentionally sought. Unable to mobilize her own symbolic power or Anastasia's, Mrs. Koh can do little to quell the turmoil at Costen School.

A white woman in her late 20's, Anastasia's resembles Alanis Morissette, the former child actress turned reflective rock star, but with a rounder face, fuller figure, and

shorter hair. In her demeanor, Anastasia replaces Morissette's angst with a frequent smile. Anastasia began her tenure as Costen's art teacher the semester before Mrs. Koh arrived.

Anastasia is laid back in her interactions with others, an embodied way of being acquired in her youth growing up and working in a small resort community in Michigan, a manner that she has come to take for granted. For example, when the Chief Executive Officer of Midwest City Schools visited the campus, Mrs. Koh selected Anastasia as an escort (paying for a substitute teacher to take over the art classes for the day). Given Anastasia's biography and experience living in a tourist town, Anastasia would seem to be a logical choice to give the CEO a tour of the school, but this logic was lost on Anastasia. She told me she was afraid that the CEO would be thinking "shouldn't you be teaching?" Anastasia said she felt out of place, and she laughed at herself as she invoked the voice of a stereotypical cheerleader to say she was the CEO's "groupie" for the day. But then she sighed, "I'm just not a schmoozer, I'm not a kisser upper" (Field notes 1/26/01). The oblivious ease with which Anastasia carries herself provides an additional charm and a sense of sincerity to her interactions with others. Where some must consciously work to manage the impressions of others, Anastasia's success is largely unintentional. Though Anastasia does not intend to do so, in her interactions with others Anastasia exhibits cultural and human capital that both the teachers and the administration value as a basis of credibility.

I learned of Anastasia's increased involvement in the school during my first year of fieldwork, when Mrs. Koh suggested that I talk to Anastasia because she had written the "Mission Statement" for Costen's "School Improvement Plan" (A Midwest City accountability requirement). When I asked Anastasia how she became involved in writing the mission statement, she indicated that it was largely accidental. Laughing, she explained:

I opened my big mouth last year. We were at a meeting and Mrs. Koh was talking about the mission statement. Everybody was complaining that they thought it was awful and I piped up, I said "We should have a contest and the teacher's class that writes the best mission statement should get a prize." That's what it was. (Interview 4/17/00)

Almost a year later, and unprompted by me, Anastasia reiterated that her increasing involvement in the school was not intentional. She reflected:

We needed a new mission statement. Nobody liked the one they had. This was at a teacher meeting. And I put my two cents in. I said, "We should have a contest. Whoever writes the best mission statement gets a prize." You know? Something like that. "We'll just have it like at a teacher institute day or something." *So that was just a suggestion. I didn't think we should do it. You know?* So Mrs. Koh somehow remembered that I put my two cents in about vision mission. (Interview 3/23/01 emphasis added)

Anastasia went on to explain that the teachers never wrote their own versions of the mission statement, so she wrote two different versions, and then the teachers chose one. In this way, Anastasia accidentally became the yearly author of the mission statement for the School Improvement Plan.

Though Anastasia had not intended to do so, she demonstrated a willingness to perform extra work, and Mrs. Koh seized the opportunity to ask Anastasia to help compile a staff handbook during the summer prior to the 2000-2001 school year. When

Anastasia completed the handbook successfully, Mrs. Koh decided to schedule Anastasia to teach art classes on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday, freeing Anastasia to complete administrative paperwork on Thursdays. Yet in her zeal for teaching art, Anastasia decided to complete the paperwork at home in her spare time, and then use the Thursdays to schedule assemblies and field trips to various museums, musical venues, and dance performances.

In teaching art, bringing in assemblies, and leading fieldtrips, Anastasia exhibits capital that many find of value. To quote Stan Feierman, the LSC chair:

Anastasia is really quite a phenomenal individual. And she models behavior that is badly needed in a school like this. I mean she's taken kids to the opera and the symphony and talks to them about art, you know, in a very adult way.  
(Interview11/01/00)

In teaching art at the school, Anastasia draws from her own skills, knowledge, and expertise about pedagogy (human capital). But there is also a cultural component here, and DiMaggio has gone so far as to operationalize cultural capital as exposure to art in school (DiMaggio 1982). Stan values how Anastasia transmits this cultural capital to students, by taking them to the opera and the symphony. In a school that has a high percentage of working class immigrant students, Anastasia exposes them to middle class cultural tastes that she herself "models," and Stan values Anastasia's human and cultural capital.

While the teachers may disagree with the Local School Council in their regard for Mrs. Koh, they agree with Stan in his regard for Anastasia. My field notes are littered with brief interchanges in which the teachers applaud Anastasia for the different cultural

events to which she exposes students. For example, at the start of a leader team meeting, Brenda Donalds and John Pearl congratulated Anastasia on a “great job” brining in a musical troupe for a recent assembly. Likewise, at the end of the meeting, a student came into Anastasia’s room and gave her a note from another teacher. The note had a computer generated smiling face and exclaimed, “Keep up the good work” and “Art is that which reveals life” (Field notes 1/12/01). A month later, after another music assembly, a teacher popped in to Anastasia’s room to ask, “You got a lot of good comments about the music, right?” Anastasia smiled yes in response. At lunch later that day, another group of teachers similarly thanked Anastasia (Field notes 2/16/01). Through these acts of deference the teachers attribute credibility to Anastasia based on the human and cultural capital she exhibits while teaching art and exposing the students to different cultural events.

It is often that case that people become involved in things unintentionally. What I want to stress is not simply that the origins of Anastasia’s increasing involvement in the school were unintentional, but also that the credibility she acquired was an unintentional byproduct of how people in the school valued Anastasia’s actions. Moreover, this unintentional line of action continued onwards. The more Anastasia succeeded in juggling teaching and administrative tasks, the more Mrs. Koh leaned on Anastasia to complete administrative work. For example, when Mrs. Koh began to withdraw from interactions with the teachers, she had Anastasia direct the weekly leader team meetings. Since Anastasia had been willing to work with Mrs. Koh and at the same time had acquired credibility in the eyes of the teachers, she was a logical mediator. As Mrs. Koh

explained to me in an interview: “She has the understanding of the teachers and she’s also very friendly” (Interview 8/3/01).

Once again, Anastasia did not seek this additional labor. The first time Mrs. Koh asked Anastasia to direct a leader team meeting, Anastasia was caught off-guard. On the day in question, Mrs. Koh was going to miss the meeting, and everyone involved thought the meeting was cancelled. But then Mrs. Koh called into the office and told the secretary to have Anastasia direct the meeting. As I was signing in for the day in the main office, the secretary was erasing the cancellation notice from the grease board, and Anastasia was trying to make some copies for the meeting. Brenda Donalds entered and asked Anastasia “Are you leading the meeting?” Anastasia laughed (conveying surprise), “I guess!” (Field notes 11/03/00) Then, at the meeting, Anastasia was at somewhat of a loss:

Around 8:18 most of us are settled in, and Anastasia starts the meeting by smiling and saying “Ummm. . .” Then Mr. Mondello (the school counselor) grins and says dryly “You’re starting the meeting at 8:15 to see if grade level teachers have any concerns.” Anastasia smiles and laughs “OK!”

As with the mission statement, Anastasia’s expanding role was not the result of an intentional plan on her part.

Though Anastasia had acquired a measure of credibility with the teachers, her increasing link with Mrs. Koh (though unintended on her part) began to threaten this credibility. During the time that Anastasia began to take an increased role in the leader team meetings, I asked Brenda Donalds to reflect on some of the problems the school was facing. She replied:

Too many - too few teachers doing too many things. That's another problem. God bless Anastasia Cygnar. Mrs. Koh found her "yes" person. Anastasia is a lovely young woman and I said to her, "Didn't your mother teach you to say no?" (Continues after an aside) And every time I look, Anastasia is doing something else. And she is a really good woman. A good young woman. And—but boy her art projects are so tremendous we need Anastasia teaching the kids. We need her in the building. And I don't mean that she shouldn't be out on these school field trips and taking kids. Everything that she does is wonderful, but you know she's being used for Mrs. Koh's purposes and that's denying kids one of the best art teachers we've ever had. You know Anastasia's terrific. And she's good with - patient with the kids. They need - and they only get art once a week. (Interview Transcript 11/16/00)

Like so many others, Mrs. Donalds attributes credibility to Anastasia based on the cultural and human capital that she exhibits as an art teacher. However, Mrs. Donalds is wary of Anastasia's growing connection to Mrs. Koh. Mrs. Donalds *does not* value this social capital, especially as it may threaten the students' exposure to the cultural learning Anastasia provides as she is "used for Mrs. Koh's purposes."

The leader team meeting the next morning provided another example of Anastasia's increasing connection to Mrs. Koh, her involvement in administrative tasks, and a lack of intent on Anastasia's part. The group was discussing how to best reward students for their attendance and academic achievement before the winter break (this exchange is prior to the very contentious meeting around this issue in the spring as discussed in Chapter 4). Once they had devised a plan for the award assembly, I recorded the following:

*Mrs. Koh:* That, that sounds good, Anastasia will coordinate it.

*Anastasia Cygnar:* (Surprised) What am I doing? (The group laughs)

*Mrs. Koh:* (Laughing) You're coordinating the assembly, well, since you're coordinating the (cultural) assemblies you have all those things.

*Anastasia:* Um . . .

*Mrs. Koh:* So Anastasia will-

*Anastasia:* (Interrupting) So what time is the assembly?

*Mrs. Koh:* The week after the, the Thanksgiving break.

*Anastasia:* Okay.

*Mrs. Koh:* Find a day that's good, for everybody. (Video Transcript 11/17/00)

Though Anastasia was surprised that Mrs. Koh delegated this administrative task to her, Anastasia completed the work.

Although Anastasia is willing to take on these tasks, she is also able. Confronted with what is often an overwhelming workload, Mrs. Koh delegates to Anastasia not only because Anastasia will do the work, but also because she does the work well. In performing this administrative labor, Anastasia exhibits a set of skills that Mrs. Koh values. For example, early in the 2000-2001 school year, Mrs. Koh told me about the staff handbook that Anastasia had put together over the summer, and she said of

Anastasia:

Now Anastasia is very good, it's too bad that um, I would actually have wanted to look into hiring a new art teacher and free her up as a second (administrator). Except she doesn't have enough regular classroom experience to be qualified as a curriculum coordinator. (Continues after an aside about a lack of qualified people for administrative positions) But Anastasia has outstanding skill; she can really meet the type of things that, she's very efficient, very intelligent. So she will be a good person if we can't, if we in the event we can't find people, she would be a good candidate for us. (Interview 9/18/00)

Mrs. Koh cites Anastasia's skills in completing administrative tasks, and later in the interview she said of Anastasia's contribution to the mission statement "That proves you

the skill that she has. I mean, she has demonstrated enough skills to let us know that she can help us in the critical immediate areas.” Mrs. Koh values these skills, and attributes so much credibility to Anastasia that she wishes she could hire Anastasia as a second administrator (in addition to the assistant principal). Though Mrs. Koh could not hire Anastasia as a curriculum coordinator because she does not have the requisite experience, she was able to schedule Anastasia’s classes in a way that provided increased time for administrative work.

As Anastasia successfully completed different administrative tasks, she made her human capital visible as a basis for the attribution of credibility, and Mrs. Koh continued to explore ways to bring Anastasia into the administration. Once all the teachers had departed at the closing of a leader team meeting in November of 2001, Mrs. Koh shared the idea with Anastasia:

*Mrs. Koh:* (Looking into Anastasia’s eyes) I know, if I can find an art teacher in (inaudible), I want you to be free up; I told Stan (The LSC Chair) I need someone who can help me to get the job done.

*Anastasia:* Are you gonna get, um. . .

*Mrs. Koh:* An AP? (Assistant Principal)

*Anastasia:* (Laughing) Yeah.

*Mrs. Koh:* Well then you know who—an AP can’t go into the classroom and do observation.

*Anastasia:* Hm. . .

*Mrs. Koh:* The AP can’t do everything, it you know, just like the teacher who’s having difficulty with the discipline, teachers have to develop some strategies.

*Anastasia:* (Wistfully, slight frown) Would I ever be able to teach art again?

*Mrs. Koh:* You will (Anastasia laughs in a suspicious tone). (Video Transcript 11/17/00)

Though Anastasia had been performing an increasing administrative workload, she is unsure about becoming a formal administrator (“Would I ever be able to teach art again?”). In demonstrating her human capital by completing administrative tasks, she has unwittingly acquired so much credibility that Mrs. Koh considers her a candidate for an administrative position.

A few weeks later, Anastasia and I chatted about her increasing administrative workload during lunch. Anastasia said that Mrs. Koh had been giving her more and more work, especially scheduling. “I don’t mind doing it but. . .” Then she repeated her thought from the leader team meeting, “do I get to be an art teacher?” (Field notes 12/01/00).

Though Anastasia has some concerns about becoming a part of the administration, Mrs. Koh was increasingly excited about the possibility. Take this excerpt from a Local School Council Meeting. After the school had hired a second assistant principal, there was still money left over to hire a full time administrative assistant, and the LSC discussed what should be done:

*Stan Feierman:* Can we buy somebody starting in the summer with something like that?

*Mrs. Koh:* We are. I’ve decided that (pause), I hate to pull the, Anastasia out of the art department, but she is very competent, very capable. If you notice that she does the school newspaper on her own time, she also coordinated many student competitions on her own time.

*Fred Josten:* Does she really?

*Mrs. Koh:* She's very willing to do that.

*Fred:* Willing to take on this other responsibility.

*Mrs. Koh:* Right, what I want to do is to free her, because, this is such a large school. Even with two assistant principals in the building, for three people to go in and out of the classrooms constantly to support the teachers. We need somebody on hand to coordinate student competitions. We have nobody going to Academic Olympics this year because nobody is free to go. (Continues after a lengthy aside and an example) You really need a general assistant. And, we uh, talked about a curriculum coordinator throughout the year, really her title should be, "Administrative Assistant," or slash, "Student Program Coordinator."

(The group discusses what would be the proper title for a while, settling on "Student Program Coordinator," then continues on how Anastasia would fill the position)

*Fred:* You don't need to hire an administrative assistant, then, you need to hire the art teacher.

*Mrs. Koh:* Right.

*Stan:* That's correct.

*Mrs. Koh:* And the advantage of having Anastasia is that she's familiar with the school and the teacher's needs. She has done scheduling for the school last year if you recall, she has completed the student handbook, I mean-

*Fred:* (Jumping in) Let me, let me, that's great.

*Mrs. Koh:* (Continuing) - You have a person who is knowledgeable about the coordination of student programs. (Interview Transcript 4/12/01)

In this excerpt, Mrs. Koh speaks prematurely. Though she mentions that Anastasia is "willing" to take on extra responsibilities, she stretches this willingness to include a position in the administration. Next, Mrs. Koh publicly legitimates Anastasia to the LSC, stressing her skill and her knowledge of the school, scheduling, and student programs. After some creative labeling, the LSC agrees to extend Anastasia a position. However,

Anastasia still had concerns because she did not want to sacrifice teaching art, a job she loves.

In contrast, a number of teachers had a different concern about Anastasia's increasing administrative role. For example, in an interview with Martha June, I asked her for her impressions of the leader team meetings. Martha said that she "hated" the meetings, and she said that she and a number of other teachers "resent" how Anastasia had been "put in the role of the next leader of our school for whatever reason." I asked, "By who in particular?" Martha responded:

By Koh. For I - and I don't know how that - over the summer she volunteered to help on scheduling so I know Mrs. Koh - because Mrs. Koh asked for teachers to come in and work on scheduling. And I only did it because I needed my 100 hours done (to complete her type 75 certification). But Anastasia offered to come in and starting then it was kind of like - I think Mrs. Koh felt she had a friend. And when she (Koh) feels she has a friend, she clings on to you. (Interview Transcript 2/23/01).

Echoing Brenda Donalds, Martha is wary of Anastasia's increasing connection to Mrs. Koh, and though the teachers value Anastasia's human and cultural capital for teaching art, Anastasia's growing social capital with Mrs. Koh damages her credibility in the eyes of some. In telling me about her own experience, Martha is cognizant of the credibility problems that arise from a connection with Mrs. Koh. She mentions that she "only" worked with Mrs. Koh over the summer so she could complete the requirements for her type 75 certification. With this certification, Martha has the credentials to be an Assistant Principal. Later in the interview, Martha discussed how, once the school year started, she stopped doing administrative work for Mrs. Koh, and when teachers began to joke that Martha would be the next assistant principal, she told them "no way." In contrast to

Anastasia, Martha made a conscious effort to distance herself from Mrs. Koh as a means to protect her credibility with her fellow teachers.

The teacher's frustration with Anastasia's growing connection to Mrs. Koh became most visible during the leader team meeting in which Brenda Donalds used her symbolic power to define Mrs. Koh's absence as "ridiculous" and "absurd" (discussed in Chapter Five, Video Transcript 3/09/01). Just prior to the announcement that Mrs. Koh was not coming and Anastasia was to lead the meeting, Brenda questioned Anastasia about an item that had not made its way onto the meeting agenda (special education screening):

*Brenda Donalds:* I mean, obviously, Anastasia, you don't know anything about it, it doesn't have anything to do with you, but, that third item (missing from the agenda). . .

*Anastasia Cygnar:* She (Koh) said that she'll, you know, she has referred, or will address or has addressed those things, but she wasn't going to talk about them in the, meeting today. I don't know, I don't wanna talk about her if she's coming.

*Brenda:* So much for saying turn in your agenda item on Thursday (a teacher laughs off-camera).

*Anastasia:* It was . . .

*Brenda:* 'Cause you apply-, the third one (the missing item) applies to everybody.

*Anastasia:* Um-hmm.

*Brenda:* If she's gonna' use you as her mouthpiece, the third one applies to everybody.

*Anastasia:* Sss, She's not, using me, as her mouthpiece, I just told her what we talked about, and, and we talk about what the agenda is going to be, and to-, and today she wanted to start talking about the reading and math program, we need to develop a survey, of what's being done already so that we can start a new program. (Video Transcript 3/09/01)

Given Brenda's symbolic power, it is particularly damaging that she labels Anastasia Mrs. Koh's "mouthpiece." Shortly after this exchange, the announcement was made that Mrs. Koh would not be in attendance, prompting Brenda to define Koh's actions and the meeting as "ridiculous" and "absurd."

A few weeks later, when I had the opportunity to interview Anastasia, I asked her for her impressions of the previous leader team meetings. Though she appeared to remain calm in the meeting, as we talked she revealed her inner dismay. She recalled how the secretary "got on the intercom and said, 'Mrs. Koh's not going to be here, so Anastasia, you run the meeting.' And it was awful." Then she remembered how Brenda "called me a mouthpiece and I really hated that." I asked Anastasia "What did you dislike about being associated with being the mouthpiece?" Anastasia replied:

Well kind of that, you know, that there was negative energy pointed toward being somebody who's willing to work with Mrs. Koh. Because I'm willing to work with her. And on—I think that she does have good ideas. You know everybody has problems. But I think that—that they don't want that. Because everybody and their sister that wouldn't—you know how is that possible? How could somebody work with her? (Interview Transcript 3/23/01)

Once Brenda had publicly labeled Anastasia as Mrs. Koh's "mouthpiece," Anastasia felt the "negative energy" directed towards her growing connection with Mrs. Koh. When I asked Anastasia if she could "speculate on why people find it so appalling to want to work with Mrs. Koh?" she cited how Mrs. Koh had violated the negotiated order the teachers had established with the prior administration: "Mrs. Koh came in and she made all kinds of changes and she was the evilest person in the whole wide world according to a lot of people" (Interview Transcript 3/23/01). Anastasia's growing connection to Mrs.

Koh damages the credibility she had acquired in the eyes of the teachers. As Anastasia became increasingly alienated from her fellow teachers, she decided to take the position as “Student Program Coordinator,” becoming a full time administrator the following year. This culmination of events is ironic in Anastasia’s unintentional rise into the administration completed her unwitting journey out of symbolic power with the teachers.

When Anastasia had credibility, she never used it as the symbolic power to intercede into the negotiated order, or to articulate turmoil in response to a disruption by others. Nonetheless Anastasia’s journey into and out of symbolic power has implications for the turmoil at the school, especially in her relationship to Mrs. Koh. When Mrs. Koh disrupted the negotiated order she damaged her credibility in the eyes of the teachers, credibility that was further spoiled by the teachers’ negative response to her way of being during social interaction. Wounded, Mrs. Koh chose to withdraw from interaction, but in doing so, she exited from the very means through which she could acquire credibility and symbolic power. With little credibility and few prospects to acquire it, it may have been a strategy by Mrs. Koh to co-opt Anastasia into her administration. After all, Anastasia was willing to work with Mrs. Koh, and she had acquired some credibility in the eyes of the teachers. Lacking her own credibility, perhaps Mrs. Koh could have used Anastasia’s, and perhaps Anastasia could have been an effective buffer and mediator between Mrs. Koh and the teachers. If this were Mrs. Koh’s intent (though Koh did not indicate to me that it was), it would have been a good plan in theory. However, in practice, many teachers found Mrs. Koh’s violations of the negotiated order so unsettling, and her way of being so offensive, that co-opting Anastasia into the administration had a

reverse effect: instead of improving Mrs. Koh's credibility and her relations with the teachers, it damaged Anastasia's credibility with a number of teachers. In her relationship with Mrs. Koh, Anastasia lost the symbolic power that she never intended to gain. Moreover, Mrs. Koh continues to lack credibility and the symbolic power to circumvent the resistance of the teachers (resistance that is articulated by teachers who do have credibility and symbolic power), and the turmoil continues.

Figures and Tables

Figure 1. The Attribution of Credibility and Deployment of Symbolic Power









