Money, Love, and Sacredness:
Generalised Symbolic Media and the Production
of Instrumental, Affectual, and Moral Reality*

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Abstract: A central and long-standing theoretical problem in sociology concerns how differentiated social units are integrated. This problem, however, has been peripheralised since the decline of functionalism, while legitimation and regulation/power-differentials have moved to the forefront. This article argues that by reconceptualising the concept, *generalised symbolic media*, a robust theory of integration can be posited that does not sacrifice the importance of regulation (control) or legitimation (meaning). This paper extends both the Simmelian and functionalist versions of media by: (1) precisely defining the concept; (2) examining its two forms—a specialised institutional language and an external referent of value; (3) elucidating the three modes of orientation various media impose; and (4) extending the function of media beyond (social) exchange to include other institutional processes such as communicative action, performance, and ritualised interaction. Ultimately, a reconceptualised theory of generalised symbolic media offers sociology a mechanism that simultaneously highlights the diversity found across institutional spheres, as well as the limits humans have in dealing with the problems posed by differentiation.

Keywords: generalised symbolic media, institutions, integration, emotions, cultural sociology, morality

Introduction

The problem of social order, or the Hobbesian question, is perhaps the most essential to the sociological project; a project which found its birth in the seemingly rapid transformation of human societies from traditional, pre-modern, small groupings to large, heterogeneous, urban clusters. At the heart of the issue, for nearly every classical theorist, was what appeared to be the differentiation of var-

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ious spheres of social reality and the dilemma of how these spheres, or in Weber's terminology, social orders could be integrated despite the obvious conflicts of interest. Clearly, this question is multi-level as it is not simply the regulation of two competing spheres of interest, but also how individuals and groups embedded in one are integrated with those in another, as well as how these actors traverse the boundaries of one to another. While most theories have relied on focusing on one level or another, this paper stakes out the position that there are ways to think of mechanisms that bridge or connect macro to micro and meso. One such structural mechanism, proposed by Parsons but worked out most clearly by Ralph Turner [2001] was roles. But, structure is nothing without culture.

As such, it is proposed below that by rehabilitating the concept *generalised symbolic media*, one possible route to conceptualising how these levels may be culturally linked. Though often considered a functionalist concept because of its popularisation by Parsons [1963a, 1963b, 1968] and then Luhmann [1976], generalised media as an idea is found prominently in Marx's [(1867) 1990] *Capital* and Weber's [(1927) 2002] economic sociology, and had its most extensive treatment in the phenomenological work by Simmel [1907]. Not surprisingly, these insights were never used by Parsons or Luhmann, or by Habermas [1985], whose work was in dialogue with Luhmann's [Chernilo 2002]. The concept, thus, remains pregnant with possibilities in part because of the overly abstract accounts of systems that Parsons, Luhmann, and Habermas employ, and because a whole set of ideas, not just from Simmel but also from the anthropology of Mauss [1967] and Levi-Strauss [1969] remain under-examined. Thus, while it might seem plausible to abandon the concept in favour of something new, it appears to have tremendous value as an underdeveloped idea worthy of attention.

In many ways, media share some semblance with Bourdieu's [1986] capital: they are 'currencies' in various forms that are fungible across spheres, or fields in Bourdieuian [1992] analysis. Yet, in other ways media may be superior. For one, economic capital acts as the great arbiter of social relationships and fields, and all other forms are easily converted into it. If the mechanism of integration is capital, then, Bourdieu has reduced all social exchanges to economic exchanges despite the historical and sociological evidence to the contrary. Parsons, of course, is guilty of over-economising media in that he saw *money* as the prototypical medium, from which he derived the properties of the others; a choice that had unfortunate consequences in that many others followed his lead [Coleman 1970; Baldwin 1971; La Valle 1994]. In either case, this decision ignores the fact that economic exchanges are a form of social exchange, and that, when looked at through an historical lens, there are times and places in which other media are far more valuable and integrative than *money*.

Moreover, by moving away from *money*, a move that was begun by Luhmann and followed by Habermas, and embracing both an actor-based model and an historical framework, a more expansive and empirically accurate theory of media may be sketched. On the one hand, media can be divorced from systems and

pure communication and instead be seen as bridges between abstract cultural systems and the deep cognitive-cultural schemas that some sociologists argue are significant forces of action, attitudes, and emotions [Vaisey 2009; Vaisey and Lizardo 2010]. That is, media may be understood as tangible manifestations of culture; a sort of updated form of Durkheim's external representations. On the other hand, an historical perspective prevents us from having to invent new types of capital through *ad hoc* means—for example 'religious capital'. If economic capital is really a synonym for *money* as a cultural bundle of economic meanings, values, objects, and actions, then political capital is really a convenient way of talking about *power* [Parsons 1963b] or religious capital about *sacredness/piety* [Abrutyn 2014b].[1] By moving away from 'capital', we move away from unnecessarily describing and explaining media strictly through a modern capitalist lens, and allow the historical context shape the dynamics of the particular medium.

Hence, I draw on an evolutionary and historical framework that treats as its basic unit of analysis institutional spheres [Turner 2003], or structural and cultural milieus comprised of individuals, collectives, and clusters of collectives distributed across a core-environment ecology [Abrutyn 2014b]. Each level of social reality (e.g. fields, niches, organisations, encounters) is distinct from the next in so far as it exhibits unique properties and dynamics, yet remains nested in other levels. As these spheres become more autonomous, new mechanisms of regulation and integration become important to sustaining a sense of shared reality, facilitating and constraining interaction, exchange, and communication between increasingly impersonal actors, and distinguishing status unique to the sphere [Abrutyn 2014b]. It is argued below that one solution to these 'problems' is the production and circulation of an institution-specific generalised symbolic medium. To illustrate the argument, we draw specifically from examples related to religion and its media (*sacredness/piety*) in addition to *love/loyalty* (kinship) and *money* (economy). Furthermore, while generalised symbolic media are one of the central sources of *intra*-institutional culture [Abrutyn and Turner 2011], it is argued below that 'indigenous' culture can circulate into 'foreign' spheres (and thus bring institutional spheres culturally closer). As such, this paper further contributes to a theory of generalised media by offering a range of dynamics related to integration within and between distinct social realities. This includes the fact that some spheres can become more powerful in 'steering' society, and thus their media may be coveted, and thus, in circulating alongside indigenous media, create the possibility of pollution, corruption, and, though less emphatically and in Habermas' terms, colonisation. On the other hand, media may be able to 'fuse' together in ways that offer or impose *meta*-ideologies that become broader, societal ethos transcending the *intra*-institutional sphere.

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[1] To Luhmann's [1976] credit, he suggests doing just this, yet Luhmann, like Parsons, Habermas, and Bourdieu, all suffer from over-emphasising the distinction between modernity and other historical periods [Calhoun 1993; Abrutyn and Turner 2011]; often unnecessarily dichotomising everything that occurred before the 19th century as pre-modernity.

At the heart of this paper, then, is both the elucidation of a theory of generalised symbolic media and its extension away from functionalism. This includes defining the concept and doing two very important tasks. The first is to move beyond Parsons' vague treatment and Luhmann/Habermas' communicative-linguistic conceptualisation, while also building on them. Media are not just specialised languages or sets of codes/messages/binaries: they also manifest in *tangible* objects that have value, can be touched and smelled, and, thus, can be visible indicators of culture, self-worth, and moral order. Durkheim's insights into totems have been too often ignored, but humans are visual creatures and integration and regulation are most easily achieved where people can tangibly pursue, use, own, and exchange real things. Second, in regulating and integrating actors, as language and objects, media orient people's and group's lines of action. Generally, speaking, this has been taken as instrumental orientation. We add moral and affectual orientations to capture the diversity in media, in orientation, and in how they are not just objective products of institutional culture, but also have a phenomenological-subjective dynamic. Thus, *doing* kinship or religion is rooted in *doing* love/loyalty or sacredness/piety through the discourses and objects that represent 'value' to the actor and the audience. The paper begins by reviewing the dominant literature on media, and then considers, more specifically two questions that move us beyond the functionalist paradigm: 'why *money* is not the prototypical medium' and 'why language or communication is not the principle or sole dynamic of media'. From here, we offer a definition of generalised media within the framework of an evolutionary-institutionalist theoretical framework, and consider some of the central aspects of media such as the linguistic/objectified dichotomy, the tri-partite orientations, and the circulation of media within and across domains.

Rethinking media

The concept of *generalised symbolic media* remains pregnant with possibilities for understanding and explaining some aspects of social reality, yet a review of contemporary sociology reveals it is almost completely ignored or unused [Lidz 2001, 2009]. Part of this reason stems from its unfortunate association with Parsonsian sociology, and part of it, as is argued throughout this paper, is due to its vague, abstract, and over-economised usage. We begin by first revisiting Parsons and Luhmann's usage, as well as others who borrowed from them, to establish what is worth keeping and what must be left behind.

Media of exchange?

Parsons and Smelser [1956] revived the concept *generalised symbolic media* (GSM) from the German economic and philosophic school. Their initial use of the term was in delineating the interchanges between the economy (biological system) and

the polity (the goal attainment system); that is, *money* and *power*. Later Parsons would explore *power* [1963b] more fully, and then add two more media of exchange to meet his model's four systems and four needs: *influence* [1963a] and *value-commitments* [1968]. For these three other media, he modelled their properties on the medium *par excellence*: *money*. He noted [1963a: 39ff.] that to be a medium it must have: (a) *value*, or be a symbolic embodiment of the objects it signifies, (b) *interest*, or a close and clear connection to this object, (c) the means to *define the situation* (e.g. knowing which objects have utility), and (d) a *normative framework of rules*. At times, Parsons referred to media as currency guiding exchanges, while other times he talked about it as 'a very specialized language, i.e., a generalized medium of communication through the use of symbols given meaning within a code' [1963a: 39]; and, as noted above, he also conflated this analysis with system-level interchanges as if the systems themselves were exchanging the medium [cf. La Valle 1994; Chernilo 2002]. The problem with Parsons' treatment is that media take on too many different meanings across his writings, with no one meaning being emphasised more than the other.

Luhmann's [1976: 515–516] critique was twofold. First, he dismissed *influence* and *value-commitments*, arguing all media contain the codes and messages for influence and commitment and thus the two concepts are components or separate concepts altogether. Second, he argued that media were not objects to be exchanged, but *modes of communication* that resolved problems associated with communication in autonomous or independent subsystems. *Money*, then, was a mode of economic communication that acts as a mechanism 'for narrowing choices which linguistically remain open' [ibid.: 511]. To Parsons' *power* and *money*, Luhmann added *truth* (science) and *love* (kinship), thus raising the possibility that other spheres of social reality could have their own medium. Luhmann's account, however, is problematic on two accounts. First, his historiography is unnecessarily limiting: other 'systems' have been autonomous in the past that he ignores, such as religion [Eisenstadt 2012; Abrutyn 2014a], and thus there is no need to 'induce' only four media; this limited view of history, rooted in 19th-century German idealism, also ignores one of the most ubiquitous media of kinship: *loyalty* in favour of (romantic) *love* [Levi-Strauss 1969]. Second, the emphasis on communication was an important shift in thinking away from the economised version Parsons offered, yet it bundled all sociological phenomena associated with encounters as communication.

From these two, the vast majority of work on GSM has descended. Habermas [1985] famously talked about *money* or *power* as mechanisms 'colonising' other lifeworlds, and imposing economic logic (rationalisation) where non-economic logic should be. Others, like James Coleman [1970] and David Baldwin [1970] sought to more clearly understand *power* as analogous to *money*. Terrence Turner [1968; also Carlson 1990] returned to the insights of Mauss [1967] and Levi-Strauss [1969], expanding the Parsonsian exchange dynamic to non-literate societies. Most recently, Vandenberghe [2007] and Abrutyn and Turner [2011]

have tried to move away from the functionalist perspective by (a) considering the cultural and phenomenological side, forgotten but deeply embedded in Simmel's [1907] *Philosophy of Money*, (b) reconsider how media are integrative, (c) raise the possibility that they are also a source of stratification, and (d) elaborate a more useful conceptualisation.

It is along these latter lines that this paper draws its insight. First, the notion that language is deeply related to media is accepted, and thus Luhmann and Habermas' push to shift away from Parsons' over-economised model seems a good starting point. But, with some important modifications: media, for instance, are more than just a specialised language that contains codes and messages, themes of discourse, and instructions for hermeneutics. To make it a useful concept, GSM also have a physical, externalised side. Furthermore, because they are tangible things that can be touched, seen, and tasted, GSM have phenomenological dimensions that can only be seen by dropping the abstract system-level approach and bringing actors back in. Hence, systems defined by communication remains vague and unworkable, but seen in performance and ritual, GSM as language and as objects becomes a more powerful concept to both supplement communicative theory and to extend beyond it. An insight, incidentally, that allows for dialogue with dramaturgy [Goffman 1967] and cultural pragmatics [Alexander 2004].

Second, Parsons' insistence on media shaping exchange is also accepted, but with some modifications. As noted above, GSM must be seen as extant in *real* relationships and groups. There is no need to talk about 'systems' exchanging, but rather people and groups, and when patterned, flows of exchange. Parsons must be further modified by moving away from economic models of exchange that he explicitly and implicitly adheres to, and bringing a theory of media into dialogue with contemporary social psychology that pays close attention to emotions [Lawler, Thye and Yoon 2008; Turner 2010; Abrutyn and Mueller 2014b] and the interrelationship between identity, emotions, and morality [Stets and Carter 2012], as well as to cultural sociology that considers the links between culture and morality [Vaisey 2009]. Thus, GSM are not merely instrumental resources, but also have affectual and moral-evaluative loadings.

Third, this paper agrees that GSM are 'macro'' level phenomena in so far as they contain the cultural elements of the institutional sphere (more on this below). But, because they manifest in language and objects, they are best viewed at the meso- and micro-levels of social reality. No one individual has access to the total culture of an institutional sphere, and thus GSM become truly powerful in how they distribute culture unevenly. It is the common cultural elements that promote integration, while it is the inequitable access to quantitative and qualitative amounts of GSM that promote unique intra-institutional stratification patterns; patterns often obscured by sociology's concern with the classic big three—wealth, power, and prestige—and more common nominal categories of inequality (race, class, gender).

Fourth, Luhmann's 'closed systems' approach is rejected on empirical and theoretical grounds. No institutional sphere is an island, but rather indigenous GSM often circulate beside 'foreign' GSM, generating some of the most fascinating and relevant dynamics shaping social life. Moreover, some GSM can become more valued in ways that can lead to more general patterns of societal inequality and cultural integration. Thus, while Habermas may overstate the problem of lifeworld colonisation, understanding the dynamics of GSM circulation sheds light on this problem, as well as the more common processes of pollution and/or corruption.

Fifth, by introducing GSM-as-object and intra-institutional stratification, we can move beyond the static notions of GSM by returning to the Marxian insight regarding the shift from C-M-C to M-C-M. Any GSM can become an *end in itself*, and thus it is not simply a means to facilitating exchange or communication, but a coveted resource in symbolic and material form. To my knowledge, neither Luhmann, Habermas, nor Parsons deign to consider this facet of GSM and, as such, miss out on the fact that *money*, *sacredness*, *love*, *truth* and so forth are all resources people can pursue for themselves. Moreover, each one of these examples of GSM has a cultural narrative that fits the ideal pursuer: the miser or 'Mr. Moneybags' (in Marx's terminology); the ascetic; the romantic; and the pure scientist. Because people can seek any GSM for itself, however, means that they are resources that can be hoarded, used as weapons against others, and act as symbols to the possessor and the observer of a person or group's presumed relative institutional position; and, with GSM that is circulate in other spheres as well as in its own indigenous sphere, this status marker can be societal and not just intra-institutional.

In short, GSM are defined as intra-institutional clusters of symbolic and material resources that act as mechanisms by which institutional culture can be acquired, used, developed, and transmitted. They are a product of an elite institutional entrepreneurial class who have managed to secure some independence vis-à-vis other elites [Abrutyn 2014a, 2014b; Abrutyn and Van Ness 2015], the carving out of an autonomous institutional core [Shils 1975], and the purposeful and unintentional search for solutions to problems related to integration, regulation, and legitimation—or, reducing internal conflict and promoting trust among impersonal actors, maintaining and expanding authority, and generating a sense of shared reality that supports this authority and makes collective action increasingly taken for granted. As Vandenberghe [2007: 312] described GSM, they are 'conveyer belts [facilitating] systematic linkages between … social positions and ideas on the one hand, and interpersonal or intergroupal relations on the other … [They] allow people and groups that are not physically co-present…to enter into contact and communication'. Or, in Abrutyn and Turner's [2011] conceptualisation, they are the source of institutional culture—that is, they organise talk and cognition; they are exchanged as Parsons presumed; they are not just placeholders of value, but valued things in themselves, and thus resources to be pursued; and, as such, they work to formulate

worldviews and ideologies that make economy different from polity different from religion both mentally, but also in physical, temporal, and social space.

Elaborating a theory of GSM

A question as old as sociological theory asks: in the face of large, heterogeneous, complex societies, how is social order constructed and maintained? Answers abound. In many of Weber's [cf. 1978: 374–380] essays he argued that money came to be an essential mechanism for regulating and, importantly, legitimating *indirect exchanges* where direct exchanges—barter, patrimonial, or other traditional, ascriptive ties—were either impossible or were fewer than those between impersonal others. Simmel [1907] extended this to argue that money reduced the physical, social, and cultural distance between people. It was a placeholder of standardised, formalised, divisible value. That is, *money* became the force of cultural integration where economy had grown physically, temporally, socially, and symbolically distinct vis-à-vis kinship; and, as Weber [(1927) 2002, 1978] and others [Berman 1983] have shown in discussing the site of the genesis of modern capitalism—the medieval city—relatively autonomous from the polity, the religious sphere, and other spheres like law. Because sociologists often characterise the beginning of the end of pre-modern or mechanical societies with the rise of the west, *money* and the emergence of markets has continued to be both explicit and implicit in theorising about the question of social order.

Yet, archaeologists and historical sociologists who have studied the rise of the state 5,000 years ago have used, not surprisingly, similar language to characterise the urban revolution in Mesopotamia, Egypt, China, and the Indus Valley. Instead of speaking of economic autonomy, the processes were political in nature and the 'market was in *power*, not in *money*. That is, it was the political sphere that was becoming disembbeded—but no less deeply intertwined in contradictory ways—from kinship, physically, temporally, socially, and symbolically; and, it was *power* as a specialised language and in various externalised forms such as 'titles' or 'offices' that came to be the 'currency'' most important to understanding and explaining social reality. In Joyce's [2000: 71–72] words, by 'creating different kinds of [physical] space within sites [public space] served to create spatial arenas with restricted access, a constantly visible form of exclusivity', which 'gave members of new polities a ready-made store of understanding'. This was subsequently echoed in the reconfiguration of the daily rounds through imposition of annual rituals meant to re-create the world, to orient the attention of the 'distant' village to the new political centres, and in pilgrimages and other festivals, to make and remake political identities that previously had no equivalent. These new social identities were understood not through the reality of kinship, nor could they be 'activated' in thought, exchange, ritual, or communication, by means of the language or objects of *love* and, especially, *loyalty*. Instead they were rooted in *power* as these societies were marked by 'the key development' of 'militaristic groups' and, thereby, the 'transformation of a social solidary organization composed of ascriptive elements into a hierarchically, increasingly' power-dom-

inated one [Adams 1966: 133]. Finally, we can see the symbolic differentiation of polity, as political goals came to be perceived and understood 'as different from other types of goals or from goals of other spheres or groups in society' and, true to form, their creation, 'pursuit, and implementation became independent of other groups, and were governed mostly by political criteria and by consideration of political exigency' [Eisenstadt 1963: 19]. To be sure, autonomy is never complete. Just as Zelizer [1997] has noted that even in highly autonomous economic spheres, *money* is never always or totally economic, the earliest political spheres relied on patrimony (and, thus, *loyalty*). But, given the changes predicated on the urban revolution [Abrutyn 2013a], it is difficult to argue it was less important to human history than the industrial revolution and capitalism. And, just like the economic transformations that began in the 14th and 15th centuries in Europe, political evolution was marked by the emergence of *power* as a discrete GSM that reduced physical, cultural, and social distances in linguistic and objectified form.

One more example may suffice, as it is central to the goals of this paper. In the first-millennium BCE, the same processes described above occurred for the first time in the religious sphere in Israel, Greece, India, and China [Eisenstadt 2012; Abrutyn 2013b, 2014a]. To be sure, the so-called Axial Age [Arnason 2005] did not give witness to *highly* autonomous religious spheres, but it was efforts by religious entrepreneurs during that time that opened 'new possibilities of *disembedded* religion [in which individuals could seek] a relation to the [sacred] in new kinds of sociality, unlinked to the' secular order [Taylor 2012: 37]. Like political actors two millennia before, religious autonomy meant 'freeing' religious 'activities and organizations from relatively closed ascriptive, above all kinship and territorial, units or frameworks' [Eisenstadt 2012: 278]. In short, the new religious models transcended political boundaries, were supra-kin in their construction of group members and identity, and thus, like polity before and economy later, required new mechanisms of cultural integration. Hence, the generalisation of *sacredness* and *piety* [Abrutyn 2013b], and the emergence of an autonomous religious sphere that bared itself in new physical, temporal, social, and symbolic arrangements and in new, indirect systems of exchange, patterns of impersonal and generalised ritual, messages, codes, and themes of discourse (and textualisation), and a set of objects that could be collected [Abrutyn 2015a, 2015b].

Institutional spheres, not systems

Before diving deeper into the various properties and dynamics of GSM worth understanding, a brief aside on institutions is necessary. In the more conventional discussion of GSM, their circulation has been associated with maintaining the integrity of a subsystem and/or facilitating interaction between them [Chernilo 2002]. Systems theory is burdened with too much baggage, and instead we draw from the evolutionary-institutional tradition [Turner 2003; Nolan and Lenski 2010; Abrutyn 2014b]. Institutional spheres are macro-level structural and

Table 1. Generalised symbolic media of institutionalised domains

Kinship	*Love/Loyalty*: language and external objects facilitating and constraining actions, exchanges, and communication rooted in positive affective states that build and denote commitments to others
Economy	*Money*: language and external objects related to actions, exchanges, and communication regarding the production and distribution of goods and services
Polity	*Power*: language and external objects facilitating and constraining actions, exchanges, and communication oriented towards controlling the actions and attitudes of others and obeying superordinates
Law	*Justice/Conflict Resolution*: language and external objects facilitating and constraining actions, exchanges, and communication oriented towards adjudicating social relationships and invoking norms of fairness and morality
Religion	*Sacredness/Piety*: language and external objects related to actions, exchanges, and communication with a non-observable supranatural realm
Education	*Learning*: language and external objects related to actions, exchanges, and communication regarding the acquisition and transmission of material and cultural knowledge
Science	*Applied Knowledge/Truth*: language and external objects related to actions, exchanges, and communication founded on standards for gaining and using verified knowledge about all dimensions of the social, biotic, and physico-chemical universes
Medicine	*Health*: language and external objects related to actions, exchanges, and communication rooted in the concern about the commitment to sustaining the normal functioning of the body
Sport	*Competitiveness*: language and external objects related to actions, exchanges, and communication embedded in regulated conflicts that produce winners and losers based on respective efforts of teams and players
Art	*Beauty*: language and external objects related to actions, exchanges, and communication founded on standards for gaining and using knowledge about beauty, affect, and pleasure

Note: These and other generalised symbolic media are employed in discourse among actors, in articulating themes, and in developing ideologies about what should and ought to transpire in an institutional domain. They tend to circulate within a domain, but all of the symbolic media can circulate in other domains, although some media are more likely to do so than others.

cultural milieus in which a series of nested levels of social reality are embedded such as communities, organisations, and encounters. Most sociologists are familiar with the most ubiquitous spheres such as kinship, polity, economy, religion, and law [Turner 2003]. Others recently identified as 'secondary' spheres, or those evolving towards greater autonomy more recently, include education, science, medicine, sport, and art [Abrutyn 2009; Turner 2010a]. Spheres are compared synchronically and diachronically by way of their level of institutional autonomy—or, the degree to which they have developed distinct structural and cultural mechanisms of integration and regulation, in addition to being physically, temporally, socially, and symbolically discrete. Autonomy, being measured in *degree* and not *kind* implies a compartmentalisation of social reality, but never a closed or bounded social reality. And, as institutional spheres grow increasingly autonomous, their architects, institutional entrepreneurs [Eisenstadt 1964], work to expand their influence over greater proportions of society, protect their position vis-à-vis other entrepreneurs and intra-institutional competitors, and stabilise (and expand) their flow of resources. They also deal with more pragmatic problems related to integration, regulation, and legitimation. Spheres are not abstract systems, but rather defined in the actual actions, decisions, goals, and strategies their constituent actors deploy, as well as in the structural relationships between individuals, groups, and clusters (fields) of collectives lodged within the institutional environment.

GSM *circulate* within a given institutional sphere. The specialised language is manifest in entrepreneur's espoused value-orientations and ultimate ends, the ideologies—sometimes mutually opposed—that concretise these intangible cultural directives, the norms that pattern and regularise attitudes, emotions, and action, and, of course, most simply in the official language that is encoded in texts, themes of discourse, and so forth. Objects, however, circulate too. Dollars literally circulate within the economic sphere, acting both as symbols communicating exchange-value and commodities, but also being tangible things that children can hoard as they learn about buying power, grandparents can slip into cards to give to their children, and families can divide in ways that have little to do with the linguistic capacity and everything to do with kinship dynamics [Zelizer 1997]. Thus, we build on Luhmann's assertion that there are as many GSM as there are autonomous systems by (1) replacing systems with institutional spheres—and thus, modifying the functionalist imagery and (2) emphasising the fact that each GSM-institutional sphere relationship is an historical fact, but value is highly dependent on (a) how autonomous a given sphere is, (b) how autonomous other spheres are, and (c) what foreign GSM circulate alongside the indigenous GSM.

Thus, above we discussed the evolution of economic autonomy in relationship to historical processes preceding it leading to political and religious autonomy. In all three cases, we see the monopolisation, by different entrepreneurs, of new GSM as both cause and consequence of increasing institutional autonomy. On the one hand, this process is similar to what Bourdieu or Marx would call con-

trol over the legitimate vision of reality or means of mental production, while, on the other hand, it is about generalising a cultural reality that imposed their reality on others, but also sought to reduce distinctions between potential consumers of the institutional sphere and, thereby, increase their influence and resource base.

In a sense, GSM mirror the idea of institutional *logics* [Friedland and Alford 1991; Thornton, Ocasio and Lounsbury 2012]: that is, spheres of social reality are definable by their unique 'practices and beliefs'. But, we diverge from this insightful branch of neo-institutional theory in several important ways: institutions, in our conceptualisation, are not markets, capitalism, or democracy [Friedland and Alford 1991]. They are real milieus of which markets, capitalism, and democracy are aspects [Turner 2011]. In addition, 'logic' is too vague a word used by neo-institutionalists and Bourdieuians alike, whereas GSM refer to cultural 'bundles' of language and objects that are tangible in so far as they are actually used in interaction, ritual, exchange, and communication. Moreover, our institutionalism is evolutionary and, therefore, historically bound: Bourdieu and neo-institutionalists lack a sense of historicity [Calhoun 1993; Fligstein and McAdam 2011], which delimits their theoretical generalisability and, hence, their utility for studying *all* societies such as Mesopotamia, Rome, or a Polynesian chiefdom. We know that kinship is universal to all societies, as are economy and polity [Johnson and Earle 2000]. We also know that the latter two vary tremendously in terms of their level of autonomy vis-à-vis kinship [Maryanski and Turner 1992], and because of this, we know that (in nearly 90% of all known human societies)] *love* and, especially, *loyalty* (kinship GSM) have generally had greater value and meaning to social organisation and relationships than *money* or *power*. Bourdieu's theory has no answer to this fact, whereas neo-institutionalists struggle to move beyond the common cultural patterns of modernity like capitalism, democracy, the nation-state or market, and so forth.

Why media matter

Two forms

As symbolic creatures, it is true that languages—both in verbal and non-verbal significant gestures—shape and constrain perception, interpretation, and action. For our purposes, GSM as *specialised languages* can be broken into four component parts that are mobilised in exchange, interaction rituals, and communication: (1) *Value-orientations*, or the abstract, substantive goals and beliefs that give meaning and evaluative criteria for concrete, micro-level phenomena like emotions, attitudes, actions, goals, decisions, and motives. Where religion, for instance, has become autonomous, learning the language of *sacredness/piety* implies internalising religious-specific ultimate ends like soteriology (salvation) [Weber 1946]. (2) These oft-intangible goals and beliefs are generally realised in the *vocabularies of motives* supplied by the specialised language and which provide implicit and explicit di-

rectives, interpretations, justifications, and expectations regarding actual situations; three types can be identified: *instrumental-cognitive*, *affective*, *moral-aesthetic*. On the one hand, these different vocabularies provide the 'rules' or guidelines for emoting, thinking, acting, strategising, and evaluating others. On the other hand, they impose the actual grammatical logic that, in its form, imparts rules of deference and authority, reinforces the dominant class, and assumes a set of disposition [Bourdieu 1991]. (3) The first two components are cause and consequence of the third: *cosmology*. That is, GSM, through the value orientations and the dominant vocabularies help erect and support a worldview that gives depth and texture to the physical, temporal, and social space. Though this worldview or cosmology is deeply internalised, as Vaisey [2009] has cogently stated, it is ever-present in taken for granted ways as the social world—in various forms such as encounters, representational collectives, architecture, texts, rituals—is saturated or drenched in the symbolic residue of the GSM and, thereby, reflect and act as manifestations of value-orientations, vocabularies, and signs and signifiers of a shared cultural memory—even if manufactured by elites. The latter, then, is the fourth component of GSM's linguistic side: (4) *cultural memories*, or generalised narratives, myths, aphorisms, and the like provide actors with idealised and crystallised references that make values, vocabularies, and cosmologies taken for granted and simplified and which build a sense of collective identity [Olick 2008; Assmann 2011].

GSM are also manifest in tangible, physical forms that will be called *external referents of value* (ERV). ERVs can be objects people can literally own and use, or they can also be things that belong—in terms of true property relations or as part of a collective history—to a collective. Thus, having a dollar or one's bank statement are ERVs; a Priest's collar or having the right translation of the Bible are ERVs of *sacredness/piety*; an athlete's statistics are his or her ERV of *competition*. On the other hand, buildings and/or their architecture are ERVs (e.g. columns on courthouses or crosses on churches), and cities (Jerusalem or Mecca), nations (Israel or Iran), or regions (Western Christendom or the Middle East) can be deemed ERVs. The meaning and value of an ERV comes from two sources. First, it can be imposed from above by its use and accreditation by elites in rituals or communicative acts, or through their regulation (e.g. standardisation) of the distribution of said GSM. Second, both subjective and intersubjective value can emerge within localised rituals, crystallised into traditions that often shift the vocabulary of motives from instrumental to affective/moral. A tension, sometimes subtle, sometimes highly contested, exists between the official right to determine a 'quality' ERV and the local contexts in which an ERV becomes woven into the fabric of a particular time and space; that is, struggles to truly monopolise value and meaning is inherent in hierarchical systems, and because GSM circulate unevenly, particular values and meanings can arise in smaller units of social reality such as ritualised encounters between two intimate others, small informal groups, or local neighbourhoods. In either case, ERVs become saturated with value derived from their transfer during exchanges (e.g. tithing as the donation dish is passed around), use as instruments

in routine and ceremonial interactions (e.g. a priest's collar, a cross around a congregant's neck), objects drawing common foci and eliciting emotions (the Ark and Torah in a synagogue or the city of Mecca for Muslims preying throughout the day), and as repositories of cultural memory that people can draw from at later times and places (a holy text or the Vatican as a building and an idea).

The two forms are analytically distinct, but very often are indistinguishable in real life. Given that objects are both symbols and signs, that is, they contain a linguistic element, while also becoming externalised indicators of identity, value, and meaning. For instance, (1) ERVs are objects that either symbolise the highest values of the group or cluster of groups or act as indicators of a person's or group's 'closeness' to these values. As such, they become crucial to the integrative and regulative power of institutional spheres, as they act as self-reflexive indicators of an individual's self-concept and thereby allow him or her to self-verify and elicit positive or negative emotions [Burke 1991]; as markers for others to see, they become signs of social identity and membership and one's esteem and competence [Ridgeway 2006]. (2) The use of ERVs can serve instrumental, affectual, or moral motives. A person can leave the Koran out on the kitchen counter when they know certain company is coming over, while it can also elicit reminders of past rituals and collective effervescence, or one can read it for guidance in daily life. In all three cases, the Koran serves as a placeholder indicative of a person's possession of *sacredness* and *piety*, and effects the types of exchanges, interactions, and communication these people engage in. (3) ERVs also thematise physical, temporal, social, and symbolic space—e.g. churches become physical manifestations and signs of *sacredness* [Eliade 1959] and reminders of what it means to be pious; on Passover or the Sabbath, family time is converted into differentiated *sacred* times in which the focus is supposed to be less on *love/loyalty*, and more on *piety* and the collective production of *sacredness* [Assmann 2011]; a congregant running into his or her priest, minister, rabbi, or imam at the grocery store approaches him or her with a very different mode of orientation and attention to appropriate demeanour than if it were a neighbour or fellow parent; finally, a religious person's home can become 'drenched' in an ERV to display authenticity and signal to others the identity he or she prefers—e.g. multiple crosses on the wall. Indeed, these examples are no different from a professor filling his office with books, papers, and other objects he has come to believe are ERVs of *learning/knowledge/truth*, or an artist showing up in clothes that have faint, but noticeable, specks of paint. Finally, (4) objects are often valuable because they either contain the narratives and myths, or because they are a part of the narratives and myths—e.g. again, the Ark and Torah are both the *living* embodiment of Yahweh, but also derive their value from the 'formation of the Israelite/Jewish identity' story in Exodus (24), which is *re*-presented every year in Passover [Abrutyn 2015b].

One quick aside: the material side of GSM is an important contribution in that it allows us to build on, yet extend, the simplistic instrumental exchange of Parsons' earliest work and the overemphasis of communicative action found

in Luhmann and Habermas. External representations imply another process or form of circulation: interaction rituals in their sacred [Durkheim (1915) 1995] and, more importantly, mundane forms [Goffman 1967; Collins 2004]. That is, Luhmann, Parsons, and Habermas all rely on internalised theories of social control and integration: GSM are language that delimit our cognitive and linguistic choices. Tangible, physical objects, however, are visible, touchable, and present the person with a real symbol of the intangible aspects of specialised language. And, as William James argued long ago, they also become a part of the self—an indicator of one's self-concept. As tangible things, they serve as reminders of past interactions, relationships, the social and moral order, and successes and failures. Indeed, they become sources of pride and esteem when used appropriately in interaction rituals in the form of intrinsic reward of competence [Goffman 1967; Turner 2001] and extrinsically from others who deem the performance authentic, give deference or attention or other emotional rewards, and from the possibility of deriving prestige and influence [Alexander 2004]. Finally, as external representations of identity, ERVs become physical symbols and reminders of social relationships and their emotional and moral attachments [Lawler 2002; Collins 2004] as well as one's rightful inclusion in groups (or, for those lacking access, their exclusion) [Bourdieu 1991].

Three modes of orientation

One of the most important insights offered by Abrutyn and Turner [2011] is in terms of GSM possessing 'temperature'. GSMs that are 'hot' carry particularised and local symbolic meanings and ERVs, generally heated by being 'steeped' in socio-emotional and/or moral loadings; conversely, GSMs that are 'cool' are the opposite: universal codes and values, impersonal or depersonalised social relations, and instrumentally rational. Parsons generally thought of media, generalised as they are, as always 'cool': *money* and *power* easily circulate across institutional boundaries carrying the dominant economic and political codes and messages; and, in our analysis, 'foreign' ERVs. Indeed it was their universality that led Habermas to overemphasise the notion that *money*, in particular, colonises the lifeworld and objectifies it. What these scholars have missed, however, are two key aspects of 'hot' GSM: on the one hand, social attachments to abstract institutional systems (and the specific relationships that make them real phenomenologically) in addition to external objects are always anchored in *socio-emotional* moorings [Lawler 2002; Turner 2010b]. On the other hand, where people grow deeply attached to a role-identity because it is rooted in recurring, intimate social relationships [Stryker 1980], a system which provides a significant amount of reward [Turner 2001], and a set of objects nearly indistinguishable from the person, a *moral-evaluative* orientation emerges. In short, some GSM are inherently affectual and/or moral-evaluative (e.g. *love/loyalty* and *sacredness/piety*), and others are instrumental (*money* or *power*).

Furthermore, the hotter a GSM becomes, the more likely it is affectual and moral in terms of how it orients us symbolically and materially, whereas the cooler it becomes, the more instrumental the GSM. This proposition suggests two key dynamics. First, a GSM can change temperature based on a number of factors, the most important of which is its institutional sphere's level of autonomy and, therefore, the degree to which the GSM likely circulates inter-institutionally. Second, all GSM have a subjective, or perhaps intersubjective, side which means that the 'official' language and set of ERVs may be instrumental in their orientation, but on the local level—that is, within a specific relationship, a small group, a formal organisation, or even a small community—the GSM may take on affectual and/or moral loadings given the socio-cultural context in which it circulates. These local dynamics clash with the 'global' meanings in ways that are not easily reconciled, but which are the fundamental source of misunderstanding, distrust, dissension, and resistance found in various spaces in a given institutional sphere.

For example, GSM like *sacredness*, which is 'modally' moral, can become instrumental. At the height of the Holy Roman Empire, for instance, *sacredness/piety* was *the* currency of Western Europe; it was the only mechanism capable of shrinking physical and cultural distances across political boundaries. The Catholic Church produced a universalistic language and standardised the value of *sacredness* [Southern 1953]—a process aided, of course, by its bureaucratic structure. Locally, *sacredness/piety* continued to be 'hot', or carry strong moral loadings. And, as we would expect, this contradiction across levels of social reality can become a source of resistance, reform, and rebellion. The point, of course, is that all GSM can become 'hot' on the local level, thereby altering the predictability and calculability expected by the elite. *Money* can become deeply 'irrational' as some families, communities, or status groups (e.g. Evangelicals) come to conceptualise *money* in ways very different from economic entrepreneurs do (Belk and Wallendorf 1990).

Some dynamics of GSM

Inter-institutional dynamics

Because GSM circulate in cultural and material ways across institutional boundaries, several important dynamics can be identified. The first set examines what happens when 'indigenous' GSM interact with 'foreign' invading GSM.

Corruption, pollution, and colonisation. Generally speaking, in an ideal world, GSM would circulate alongside each other with little tension: Priests are paid a salary, and thus *money* in the form of wages would circulate alongside *sacredness/piety*, but would maintain a reasonable and safe distance. Religion, in other words, would never acquire the logic of economics. Of course, in reality, we know this is not the case. Drawing from Habermas' idea of lifeworld colonisation and Durkheim's work on the sacred and profane, as well as from the distinctions we

made in regards to the different modes, GSM can orient institutional action, attitudes, and behaviour.

First, where two GSM with the *same* mode of orientation circulate beside each other, and the foreign GSM dominates the indigenous GSM, we can talk of *corruption*. When politics or law is tainted by *money* instead of *power* or *justice/conflict resolution*, we talk of corruption. Political goals and decisions, strategies and lines of action become economic, and observers can identify them as illegal or illegitimate. Second, where two GSM with different modes of orientation circulate beside each other, with the instrumental one threatening the 'purity' of the moral one, we may speak of *pollution*. *Money*, or ERVs connected to it, like toys, can be advertised to working mothers as a solution to the time crunch preventing them from giving *love* and *loyalty* to their children in the prescribed normative way. *Love*, in this situation, becomes a servant of *money*, as the cultural and material components of the latter compete or supplant the former in real social relationships [Pugh 2005; Zelizer 1997]. This point is a central difference between systems-level approaches and an actor-based model: whereas Luhmann's [2012] theory relies on *closure* in communicative terms, we know that ontological messiness is much more common. Toys, *money*, and *love* in Pugh's [2005] work, demonstrates how language and ERVs struggle for phenomenological supremacy and clarity. Hence, while the toy may be a symbol of *love*, it may also be conceptualised as 'buying' a child's *love*, which, in turn, may become a patterned action within the kinship sphere that has introspective or externally sanctioned negative consequences for the women (and men) who do so. That is, their kinship identity may remain caught up in the moral-evaluative standards of kinship and not economy.

Third, where a foreign GSM becomes institutionalised as the dominant source of culture, we would call this *colonisation*. Much rarer than the other two processes, colonisation involves the subjugation of indigenous GSM in so far as it becomes secondary or even unrecognisably fused with the dominant foreign GSM. The most notable difference between corruption and pollution vis-à-vis colonisation, is that the latter is linked to the majority of social relationships, collectives, and clusters of collectives in an institutional sphere adopting goals and decision-making processes, strategies and lines of action that are 'foreign' to the institutional sphere; the former two refer to individual cases where some individuals, collectives, or, rarer, clusters of collectives come to do things differently from the norm. In Berman's [1968] analysis of the former Soviet Union's legal profession, he demonstrates that *justice* and *conflict resolution*—instead of being rooted in legal criteria and norms as one would expect in a relatively autonomous legal sphere [Luhmann 2004; Abrutyn 2009]—were totally colonised by the political spheres unique blend of *power* and *loyalty* [Huskey 1982].

Sources of resistance. Colonisation, however, is rare because affectually and morally loaded GSM provide actors with powerful cultural tools of resistance. Rituals of purification are available, ideologies of resistance can be activated,

and the possibility of subjugating the 'cool' foreign GSM to the logic of the hot GSM is very real. For instance, ERVs that are often associated with economy and *money* like land, income, and wealth, can become the servant of *sacredness* and *piety* by being sacralised [Belk and Wallendorf 1990; Walsh 2009], or *love/loyalty* when given as gifts or tokens of affection [Pugh 2005]. That is, 'the financial gifts of congregants' can be ascribed new, non-economic 'phenomenological meanings' [Mundey, Davidson and Herzog 2011: 304] and, thereby, become ERVs of *sacredness* and *piety*, thereby imposing moral modes of orientation on its exchange relationships. Do these strategies strip *money* of its objective value? Not unless the entire economic sphere loses autonomy, but it does not matter because the people using *money* in the religious context orient themselves in ways that reduce the instrumental efficacy of *money*.

Another strategy is to valorise the purity in the pursuit of the indigenous GSM, while providing cautionary tales that highlight shaming rituals for transgressors. In Becker's [1963] ethnography on jazz musicians, he demonstrates how artists moralise the choice of being the starving artist but being perceived and lauded for doing art for art's sake or 'selling out' and making a living; the latter brings shunning within the artist's reference group, and thus forces him/her to adjust his/her self-concept if he/she is to receive verification.

GSM that are hot also can be 'fused' together to create meta-ideologies and meta-narratives that serve as counter-ideologies to cool, penetrating GSM. In the world economy, for instance, *money* and *power* (emanating from diffuse transnational corporations, core powers like the United States, various global organisations like the International Monetary Fund, and other national-level sources) tend to 'fuse' together in the contemporary meta-ideology of human societies (global capitalism and democracy). Consider, however, the most common anti-western, anti-democratic, anti-capitalist social movements throughout the globe: conservative religio-kin movements [Almond, Appleby and Sivan 2003]. Though in some cases, they are co-opted by political parties [Brint and Abrutyn 2009], the fight begins in localised contexts where *sacredness* and *love/loyalty* are fused together in movement ideology and goals as a way of resisting the impersonal, universal, a/immorality of *money* and *power*. Indeed, one of the two most polluting acts that highlight the moral boundaries of sports is gambling, which calls into question the purity of *competition* (cf. Pete Rose or the Chicago 'Black' Sox as cultural memory); the other act, cheating—e.g. using performance-enhancing drugs—also challenges the outcome of competitions, and sometimes is deeply tied to instrumental economic motives (an athlete is looking to get a bigger contract).

As final recourse, collectives can either struggle to create new autonomous institutional spheres, protected from foreign GSM or extant entrepreneurs can try to reduce the autonomy of an instrumental institutional sphere. In terms of the former, we find the Axial Age (*c.* 800-200) as one example in which religious entrepreneurs formulated codes and messages that were part social protest against imperialism and economic injustice and political visions of better societies [Ei-

senstadt 1986]. Though they had varying successes, the Israelite and Indian cases highlight the disembedding on the religious sphere from the political sphere, and the erection of a generalised system of moral exchanges, interactions, and communication [Abrutyn 2014a]. On the other hand, autonomous spheres and their entrepreneurs can become their biggest rivals; like jealous gods, they can try to enroach and weaken opponents [Weber 1946]. Some have characterised the mobilisation of Evangelical Christians in the US and, subsequently, their tenuous, but real, merger with the Republican Partyas an example of efforts to moralise an instrumental medium, *power* [Brint and Abrutyn 2009]. A similar conflict has been underway in the western world, especially the U.S., between religious and scientific entrepreneurs—the latter of which usurped the legitimate claim to produce and distribute *truth* [Abrutyn 2013a]. Religious entrepreneurs have struggled against scientific ones, and in a surprising shift in strategy, have recently fought on science's turf using scientific language—e.g. creationism has become 'intelligent design'. In any case, modes of orientation channel actors to adopt and display appropriate elements of the specialised language or use certain ERVs. Instrumental modes, for example, sanction purposeful impression and emotion management [Thoits 1996], rational means-ends strategies and decision-making, cool and calculating attitudes and disinterestedness, and goals rooted in individual needs and self-interest; the proverbial parts are greater than the whole. Conversely, affective modes orient people to 'spontaneous' *deep acting* or *play* in role performance and impression/emotion management and collective actions, decisions, and altruistic, self-sacrificial goals [Geertz 1972]. Finally, moral modes orient people to a transcedental authority, who can be exchanged, interacted, and communicated with, and thus, who is the fount of emotions, attitudes, actions, goals, and motives.

Intra- and inter-institutional stratification

Patterning stratification. One of the insights offered herein, is that GSM come to create stratification systems that are often ignored or go unnoticed. In part, this is a result of the power/prestige/wealth trinity that, no doubt, structures most people's life chances and opportunities. Yet, for many people removed from the polity or alienated from the economy, *power* and *money* have less immediate and phenomenological consequences for their daily lives, as well as in terms of where they derive resources and, thereby, self-worth. Instead, most of us find ourselves in kinship stratification systems rooted in the distribution of and access to *love* and *loyalty*. Religious individuals find their marketplace in *sacredness* and *piety*. And, while these GSM are not divisible like *money*, they can be 'quantified', and 'qualitative' differences discerned, such that intra-institutional systems of stratification emerge.

A second dimension of intra-institutional stratification comes from the ecological dynamics of autonomous institutional spheres [Abrutyn 2014b]. The insti-

tutional core represents the central site of production and distribution. Those in the core have the unique claim over developing and disseminating the official language as well as shaping the value that ERVs come objectively to have. This same dynamic can be found at other levels of social reality in slightly different ways. Clusters like fields or niches are also arranged hierarchically. So, for instance, we can imagine that the higher educational sphere in the US is constituted by several fields comprised of universities and/or colleges. We call these fields 'Ivy League', 'Small Liberal Arts Colleges', and so on. Some fields possess greater access to *knowledge* and *truth*, and are able to control how these circulate. This is achieved practically and symbolically. A recent study found, as an example, that 50 percent of all assistant professor hires in political science came from 11 schools, leaving more than 100 other schools and their graduates to compete over the other vacant positions [Oprisko 2012]. Not only does this ensure isomorphism from one field to another, but it symbolically reinforces the claims made by these elite fields to produce and distribute educational and scientific GSM. One could identify these dynamics *within* fields as well, as a hierarchy emerges between the Harvards and Dartmouths. And, as social psychology teaches us [Abrutyn and Mueller 2014a], prestige-biases serve as sources of cultural diffusion between individuals, small groups, and sub-groups within an organisation (e.g. some departments at Harvard will impact the structure and culture of the campus than others).

It bears repeating that it is true that larger patterns of wealth, prestige, and power matter. But, as Weber, and more recently Randall Collins [2000, 2004], argue: cultural dimensions like religion, ethnicity, family, and occupation often affect people's lives in tangible ways. Professors compete with other professors in their department, university, and discipline. While *money* matters to all people because its tangible form in salary or wages is a requisite for living in a capitalist society, *knowledge* and *truth* often consume the daily goals and behaviours, attitudes and emotions, and sense of self-worth and efficacy for academic—and, thus, moral and affectual orientations shift toward different sets of values, ideologies, and norms [Turner and Stets 2006]. There are few other explanations for why they would willingly peer-review articles. Likewise, kinship conflicts are rooted in real or perceived struggles over *love* and, for much of history, *loyalty*. Indeed, it is the languages of kinship or religion, and their tendency towards affectual and/or moral orientations, that give life to the role-identities and, therefore, the *status positions* embedded in these particular institutional spheres.

Inter-institutional patterning. GSM, of course, circulate into other spheres, and thus stratification patterns in one sphere can become *inter*-institutional in two ways. First, regularised human, material, and symbolic resource flows can be established that link the quantity and/or quality of a foreign GSM with the value attributed to an indigenous GSM. Second, institutional spheres, like their own fields or collectives within fields, can become hierarchicalised with some GSM being the coolest (most universal) and, as such, fused into meta-ideologies and meta-stratification patterns. In both cases, historical and socio-cultural context matter.

The professor carrying the symbolic and material forms of *knowledge* and *truth* from the Ivy League field into the economic, political, or even kinship spheres is advantaged over her counterpart from a state or community college. Abrutyn and Turner [2011] refer to this as regularised mobility. These patterns require, in the first place, regularised exchanges between two spheres: *knowledge* (skills) exchanged for *money* (in the form of salary), *money* (tuition) exchanged for *knowledge* (learning). Once established, intra-institutional patterns can be reproduced between institutional spheres. And, an inter-institutional 'memory' can emerge that comes to impose the belief that this is the way it was, is, and should always be. Even in the face of objective realities, these inter-institutonal resource flows become institutionalised within the linguistic elements carried from one sphere to another, and fused so that Harvard = wealth.

In addition, this simple fusion can become a part of a societal meta-ideology that imposes an ethos and a narrative. *Money* and *power*, for instance, are fused into an American ethos that also draws from other institutional GSM: from sport, it draws *competitiveness* in the form of individual success against others; from education it draws *knowledge* from the 'right' university; and from religion it draws *piety* in the form of church attendance and *sacredness* in the form of belief in (the Judeo-Christian) god. These elements come to create the specialised, generalised American language and imbue certain ERVs with generalised, objective value. To be sure, this meta-ideology is met with resistance in various forms: regional, intra-political party, sub-group/sub-cultural, intra-institutional, and, individual/ local community. Yet, the resistance is directed towards the meta-ideology which implies its diffuseness and its strength.

Of course, it goes without saying that intra- and inter-institutional stratification around GSM may overlap with other nominal categories [Blau 1977], thus creating unique or perpetuating existing intersectional forms of inequality. While the racial or gender inequalities related to, say, access to *money* and *power* are known and extensively discussed forms of stratification, it is plausible to not only suggest *love* and *sacredness* may be unevenly distributed at the group, organisational, community, institutional, or even inter-institutional level. The relative warmth of those GSM implies the underlying dynamics of kinship or religious stratification are likely different in many ways than those of cool GSM. This is an area worth exploring using qualitative methods, but far beyond the reach of our discussion.

Conclusion

The paper below has revisited and reclaimed *generalised symbolic media* as a concept with far more extensive value than the narrow functionalist theories of Parsons and Luhmann, and the critical use of Habermas. By turning to Simmel and many of the British functionalist anthropologists like Mauss—as well as those

who have explicitly or implicitly laid claim to these traditions—a more robust and coherent theory of social order was offered. Media act as the *vehicles of institutional culture* where institutions have become autonomous to some degree. They circulate and bring a sense of shared culture to embedded individuals, collectives, and clusters of collectives in two ways. First, in linguistic form GSM can be pursued, acquired, employed, and transmitted. Language is the source of symbolic-cognitive culture: value-orientations; vocabularies of instrumental, emotional, and moral-evaluative motives; cosmologies/worldviews; and collective cultural memories. Second, GSM have a tangible material form in external referents of value. These can be physically exchanged between people; serve as the totems or external representations of a group that rhymically entrains them during performance and ritual; they may be procured in initiation rituals; strategically displayed; touched, embraced, and longed for; or manipulated for various reasons.

In both forms, GSM *make institutional culture real*—both consciously and unconsciously. They integrate actors by providing real shared culture for all actors who acquire or desire them, as well as a perception of shared culture that may be objectively false. They regulate actors by delimiting themes of discourse, meaningful behavioural repertoires, emotion and impression rules, claims of authenticity in performance, and so forth. They also serve as signs of a person's or collective's relative value vis-à-vis others; as such, they become a key source of intra-institutional stratification and, because they circulate across institutional boundaries, a potential source of inter-institutional stratification. To be sure, GSM are not the only mechanism of importance. There are structural mechanisms [cf. Turner 2010; Abrutyn and Turner 2011], as well as other cultural mechanisms. But, as relatively blank slates, GSM offer a fresh take on the social order and one that makes use of cultural and conflict sociology and appeals to the phenomenological side of social reality.

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