

The shallowness of deep culture or the deepness of shallow culture? Six ways culture can be internalized

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Introduction

Culture From the Outside-In

A vital issue in cultural analysis is whether culture becomes a causal factor in social action as an internalized force “from the inside-out” (Strauss and Quinn 1997; Vaisey 2008) or as part of the external environment; “from the outside-in” (Swidler 2001a). One of the most persuasive arguments for the causal role of culture in action from the outside-in has been put forth by Swidler (1986, 2001a, 2001b). In one of the most recent statements (Swidler 2001a, 160–180), Swidler argues that culture is most relevant to the explanation of action when it is constitutive of the external environment regardless of how “deeply” the culture has been internalized or held, either as a normative commitment or as a conceptual presupposition. The most common external forms of culture are public “codes,” “contexts,” and “institutions.” Swidler thus provides a powerful skeptical counterpoint against equating the causal power of culture with the cognitive-emotional “depth” at which it has been internalized by actors (Vaisey and Lizardo 2016; C. Smith 2003; Spiro 1987).

Despite the clear promise of Swidler’s outside-in approach, the concept of *cultural depth* remains too convenient a foil and an underdeveloped explanatory resource in her account. In Swidler’s rendering, the notion of “depth” refers to the degree to which available cultural understandings have become an inherent, pervasive component of a person’s cultural endowment, corresponding to the notion of “internalization” in classical cultural theory (e.g., Parsons 1951; Lizardo 2021b). As Swidler (2001a: 160) has noted, “[o]ur usual metaphors for thinking about culture’s influence involve ‘depth.’ Some culture is deeper, more embedded, closer to the core of a society or a self.” For Swidler, the conceptual metaphor of depth invites the (misleading) inference “that the deeper the culture—either deeply internalized in the self or deeply embedded in society—the more powerfully it will affect action.” One of the primary goals of Swidler’s intervention is precisely to force us to reexamine this automatic equation of depth with the level of influence culture is presumed to have on

action.

Swidler's main proposal is that externalized culture in the form of codes, contexts, and institutions can modulate action from the outside-in regardless of the "depth" at which it has been internalized. Because of this, we do not need to use "depth" to explain how culture works. Instead, people can take cultural conventions, rituals, and public expectations as taken-for-granted objectified, and sedimented realities, revealing the more plausible courses of action available to them (Berger and Luckmann 1966). For instance, public codes (modes of dress, widespread norms) constrain action from the outside-in when the public meaning of a possible course of action (or inaction) is widely shared by others, creating what the philosopher John Searle (2003, 170) calls "desire-independent reasons" for the performance of an action, without requiring deep internalization of a normative commitment to that line of activity.

To take a variation of one of Swidler's favorite examples, the existence of holidays like Mother's Day creates perceived external expectations for people who live far away from their parents to give their mother a phone call, regardless of whether they feel like it or not. Failure to call on Mother's Day has desire-independent semiotic import; not calling "means" you do not appreciate your mother, regardless of your actual feelings. The result is that most people make the call on Mother's Day. Culture has the same effects for those who have internalized calling on Mother's Day as a "deep" norm and for those that have not. In this type of case, which Swidler takes as paradigmatic, the causal effect of culture on action comes from what public codes mean to *others* (possibly about us), not what they mean to us (Correll et al. 2017). Thus, regardless of your stance towards an institution or set of codes, your actions will carry meanings *independently* of those feelings or stances, and this consideration will be decisive in the course of action you take. Culture works like a traffic light rather than an internal engine, directing us hither and thither from the outside.

Culture from the Inside-Out: Two Variations

Even though Swidler's model privileges "outside-in" mechanisms in cultural

explanation, it would be a mistake to think this is because a coherent conception of how culture can operate from the inside-out is lacking in her account (as suggested by C. Smith 2003, 133–134). Instead, Swidler’s extended argument contains a more or less coherent formulation of how culture can operate as an internalized force, going beyond the limitations of classical attempts to develop one in American Sociology. Accordingly, one of Swidler’s main contributions has been to provide a more variegated conceptualization of how people use internalized culture than that inherited from the normativist-functionalist tradition (e.g., Parsons 1937, 1951).¹ Swidler’s point is not that people cannot internalize culture because of memory limitations, as proposed by Martin (2010). Instead, her point is that pure inside-out mechanisms are *insufficient* to account for the most interesting behavioral outcomes. People internalize quite a lot of culture, but typically this trove of internalized culture is causally inert compared to the power of extra-personal culture (Swidler 2001b). In this way, Swidler uses the “inside-out” conception of culture internalized by people to ultimately support the “outside-in” argument as the main explanatory game in town.

For Swidler, the classical story is limited because it conflates questions of cultural acquisition, learning, and exposure (“internalization”) with both questions of cultural *process* (the way culture “works”) and questions of cultural *effects* on action (Swidler 2001b). In the classical account, either culture is internalized as deeply held beliefs and affectively-laden understandings and thus plays a role in action, or it fails to be internalized and thus does not influence action. The only way people can fail to use culture in action is if they do not have it available in the first place; this can happen via “faulty” or “incomplete” internalization. Because the external cultural system is conceived as systematic and coherent, it is presumed that people have no choice but to use the culture they internalized, as the internalization of a

¹ By normativist functionalism, I refer to the theoretical system developed by Talcott Parsons from the late 1930s until he died in the 1979. Parsons’s functionalism is *normativist* in that norms, internalized by people and institutionalized in the social and cultural systems, provide the parameters guiding action. It is *functionalist* in that the theory is concerned with explaining equilibrium states of social order, with norms functioning as the higher-level control parameters via which deviations from social order are detected and corrected (Heritage 1984). For more extended (and accessible) expositions of Parsonian normativist-functionalist, see Joas and Knobl (2011 chaps 2 and 3), Heritage (1984, Chap 2), and Swidler (2001b).

fragmentary or incoherent cultural system is thought of as a pathological state. The classical approach led to an empirical program in which analysts compared whole “groups” or “societies,” that presumably internalized distinct normative or value systems (Parsons 1951; Inkeles 1969; Schwartz 2012). Differences in typical patterns of action across societies or historical eras were then traced to differences in distinct value configurations and institutionalized norms at the level of the social system.

Swidler goes beyond the normativist-functionalist legacy in three significant ways. First, external cultural systems, namely, the public reservoirs of cultural understandings, beliefs, and symbols potentially available for internalization, are not coherent, systematic wholes. Instead, even within the same “society” culture is composed of fragmentary and only loosely coherent domains (DiMaggio 1997; Sewell 2005). This situation is hardly a pathological or dysfunctional state because the internalization of loosely coherent cultural systems, rather than being a roadblock to the use of culture to forge lines of action, provides people with much-needed flexibility and leeway to deal with practical problems in everyday life as they arise (Swidler 2001a). Empirically, this implies that cross-individual (or even within-individual across situations) and cross-group comparisons within the same society are as analytically central as the cross-societal or historical comparisons inspired by normativist functionalism (Harding 2010).

Second, Swidler separates the internalization question from questions of “strength of commitment” to those internalized cultural elements. Yes, people can indeed and do deeply internalize beliefs and understandings in the form of “faith, commitment, and ideological conviction” (Swidler 2001a, 7). Nevertheless, people also internalize many cultural elements to which they are not that deeply committed. In this respect, “[p]eople vary in the ‘stance’ they take toward [the] culture [they have internalized]—how seriously versus lightly they hold it.” Some people are Parsonian true believers, but most people’s stance toward the culture they have internalized is more likely to range from ritualistic adherence to repeated expression of platitudes and clichés taken to be “common sense” to indifference, cynicism,

and even insincere affirmation (Swidler 2001a, 43–44). Superficially internalized culture, thus, takes the form of *familiarity* with well-established beliefs, norms, and cultural practices. While this superficial culture does not elicit deeply held private acts of commitment, it may elicit public acts of conformity, thus having a causal effect on action uncorrelated with the depth of internalization. Because deeply internalizing culture is complex and labor-intensive and superficially internalizing culture is easy, people carry around more superficially internalized culture than deeply internalized elements.

Third, Swidler separates questions of cultural availability from questions of use. The critical observation here is that people “know much more culture than they use” (Swidler 2001a, 160), meaning there is no one-to-one mapping between internalization and use. For Swidler, constraints on cultural use in the normativist-functionalist tradition were mainly *social-psychological*. People were forced to use the culture they had deeply internalized after a history of socialization because this culture functioned as a pervasive motivational force; not using the culture was associated with both internal sanctions (in the form of guilt) and external sanctions from significant others and institutionalized authorities (Wrong 1961). In contrast, constraints on cultural use in Swidler’s model are *pragmatic*. People select the culture they use from a larger (and not necessarily coherent) repertoire of potentially available options depending on external conditions (Vaisey 2008). These last take the form of recurrent problem-solving situations brought forth by certain institutional arrangements or elicited by strongly structured interaction contexts (Gross 2009). Availability and proficiency are arguably the only inside-out mechanisms Swidler gives some partial autonomy. According to Swidler, “[t]he cultural repertoire a person has available constrains the strategies...[they] can pursue so that people tend to construct strategies of action around things they are already good at” (Swidler 2001a, 7). In this way, Swidler’s conceptualization of culture from the inside-out leads, in an analytically elegant fashion, to outside-in mechanisms as having explanatory prevalence in the explanation of action.

Ambiguities in Swidler's Outside-In Model

Swidler's "outside-in" model is a significant advance over classical models of the causal role of culture in action as emanating exclusively from the inherent "motivational force" of deeply internalized commitments (Lizardo and Strand 2010). That said, Swidler's outside-in model suffers from at least two pivotal sets of ambiguities, which limit its potential to provide a unified account of the relevant empirical phenomena.

First, Swidler does not specify which *type* of internalized "cultural elements" the outside-in argument applies to, with the implication being that the argument covers all cultural elements capable of being internalized. However, as has been noted by other analysts in cognitive sociology and anthropology (Lizardo 2017; Patterson 2014; Strauss and Quinn 1997), "culture," even at the personal level, is a motley notion referring to internalized beliefs, norms, values, frames, narratives, schemas, practices, skills, and the like (for a recent discussion of this issue in sociology, see C. Smith 2016). Swidler acknowledges that culture can be internalized in multiple ways, sometimes speaking of "understandings," "beliefs," "conceptions," and "worldviews" and in other occasions speaking of "skills," "habits," "strategies," and "capacities." However, because this implicit distinction is never explicitly elaborated, Swidler mixes differently internalized modalities of what Strauss and Quinn (1997) call "personal culture." By resorting to the over-generalized notion of "cultural elements," Swidler introduces, critical ambiguities in the model due to a reliance on an implicit culture concept that is never fully explicated.

Second, the concept of "cultural depth," while better developed than classical notions, remains under-theorized and under-specified. As a result, it is unclear what Swidler is trying to get at when arguing that some cultural elements are either deeply or superficially held. As such, Swidler operates with a largely implicit, or "folk" theory of cultural depth (Sewell 1992), or what in contemporary psychological anthropology is still called cultural "internalization" or "enculturation" (Strauss and Quinn 1997; Quinn, Sirota, and Stromberg

2018; Lizardo 2021b).² However, it remains unclear what precisely this dimension is referring to, especially in terms of empirical and conceptual criteria to consider a cultural element to be “deeply” versus “superficially” internalized (Miles 2014). Due to the first ambiguity, it is also unclear whether the criteria for counting something as “deeply” versus “superficially” held are presumed to be the same for all types of internalized cultural elements. Ultimately, a coherent theory of the effects of culture on action requires clarifying what is meant by the *depth* dimension of culture.

I propose a reconceptualization and elaboration of the notion of cultural depth that resolves these two problems. To deal with the first ambiguity, I propose a more differentiated account of how people internalize culture. To deal with the second ambiguity, I develop analytically distinct models of cultural depth and levels of internalization for each type. As such, this paper advances theory and research in cultural analysis by linking recently developed understandings of how culture is internalized (Lizardo 2017; Patterson 2014; Quinn, Sirota, and Stromberg 2018; Lizardo 2021b) with a novel, more refined conceptualization of cultural depth.

Clarifying Conceptual Gaps and Ambiguities in Swidler’s Approach

Two Modes of Internalized Culture

Recent efforts in cultural theory insist on distinguishing between two broad types of internalized cultural elements (Lizardo 2017; Patterson 2014). These analysts propose that different forms of internalized culture operate according to different principles, with people acquiring and connecting them to their experience in distinct ways (analytically and empirically). Because personal culture does not operate from the inside-out in only one way, this means that Swidler’s negative arguments concerning the muted explanatory status of

² In sociology, the term “internalization” fell into disrepute with the rejection of the functionalist theory of socialization, something that Swidler’s work (e.g., 1986) had a big hand on. This does not mean that cultural analysis in general, or Swidler’s model in particular, can do without some version of this notion (Guhin, Calarco, and Miller-Idriss 2021).

inside-out mechanisms can apply to one form of personal culture but may not apply to the other. For instance, it could be that culture internalized as *declarative* conceptions, beliefs, or norms is less relevant than external codes or conventions without the argument applying to *nondeclarative* competencies, skills, and know-how. This distinction has been central to recent theoretical, empirical, and methodological contributions to cultural analysis (e.g., Lizardo 2017; Patterson 2014; Cerulo 2018; Rinaldo and Guhin 2019). I will argue that Swidler's main propositions do not apply to these two types of cultural elements in the same way and that, therefore, a restricted outside-in model, especially one disallowing the independent role of nondeclarative culture to operate from the inside-out, faces severe explanatory limitations.

Declarative Culture

Following Lizardo (2017), I refer to internalized cultural understandings that can be expressed or externalized explicitly in discourse as *declarative culture*. The primary symbolic medium through which people are exposed to declarative culture is thus spoken or written language (Tomasello 2005). However, other public non-linguistic semiotic systems (e.g., audiovisual codes, iconic symbols, ritual performance, and the like) may also serve as a conduit for its transmission and internalization. Declarative culture thus comprises the total stock of “know-thats” stored in a “semantic” memory system (Patterson 2014, 11), thus making up (lay or folk) *knowledge* in the phenomenological sense (Berger and Luckmann 1966). This knowledge is experienced as “impersonal” and thus capable of being stated as propositions about the “world,” at varying degrees of abstraction, without necessary reference to individual experience (e.g., “in the United States, doing well in school leads to better jobs”). However, as Swidler notes, this cultural knowledge can also be “personalized” by individuals and used to construct and make sense of experience (e.g., “If I do well in school, I will get a good job”). In the limiting case, previously impersonal declarative culture can become so personalized as to become part of an individual's identity as an “owned” attitude, worldview, belief, or value (Swidler 2001a, 87) strongly linked to identity and autobiography (e.g., “I've been successful in life because of my commitment to hard work”).

As emphasized in contemporary dual-process models (Lizardo et al. 2016), declarative culture is accessed in a deliberate (“slow”), linear fashion (as in the construction of life narratives or motivational justifications). It can be used for reasoning, evaluation, judgment, and categorization tasks. In using declarative culture to guide action, people are aware of applying deliberative criteria or “rules” or linking particular means to well-specified goals (Parsons 1937). Declarative culture is also involved in the chaining together of a series of cultural chunks (as in the “logical logic” of deductive reasoning) to produce a judgment (Gawronski and Bodenhausen 2011). Examples of such judgments are evaluating actions as proper or improper (e.g., moral judgment) or deciding that an individual object or person belongs to a certain category (e.g., social inference). People also use declarative culture when producing “offline” justifications for their public stances and commitments, spinning out vocabularies of motive and generating justificatory rationalizations for their actions, when publicly reporting on their normative commitments, in deliberating about different courses of action, or forming explicit expectations about their future projects (Swidler 2001a; Vaisey 2009, 2008).

Nondeclarative Culture

On the other hand, people may internalize culture via a “slow learning” pathway in the form of implicit cognitive-emotive associations and dispositions built from repeated long-term exposure to consistent patterns in experience (Lizardo 2017). This culture retains little of the detail of each of the exposure episodes keeping only the experiential structure common across each episode. The resulting knowledge produced by this enculturation process is not structured according to logical links among explicit symbolic elements but by associative linkages based on patterns of physical and perceptual similarity patterns and spatial and temporal contiguity (E. R. Smith and DeCoster 2000; Strack and Deutsch 2004). This form of cultural knowledge comprises the total number of “know-hows” stored in a “procedural” or “associative” memory system; accordingly, I refer to it as *nondeclarative culture* (Patterson 2014, 11).

The internalization and use of nondeclarative culture differ from its declarative counterpart in analytically important ways. In terms of the mechanisms of internalization, people can only acquire nondeclarative culture via slow learning (habituation and enskilment) mechanisms after a relatively large number of repeated exposures; this differs from declarative understandings and beliefs which may be acquired via fast memory binding even after a single experience (E. R. Smith and DeCoster 2000). Furthermore, nondeclarative culture may be internalized without explicit symbolic mediation directly via experiential correlations or manipulation of the body (Cohen and Leung 2009); this differs from the bulk of declarative culture, which generally requires a symbolically (linguistically) mediated interaction to be internalized and expressed. Nondeclarative culture is stored as a complex multimodal and multidimensional network of associations between many subsymbolic elements each of which has a close link to experience; this differs from declarative culture which can be internalized in relatively abstract linguistic formats removed from direct experience (Bloch 1991). Finally, nondeclarative culture has the potential to be accessed and deployed, ultimately affecting action, cognition, emotion, and judgment via “automatic” pathways (Lizardo et al. 2016). However, some forms of nondeclarative culture, such as high-level skills, may also be used in a “controlled” manner (Lizardo 2021a).

Skill acquisition is the prototypical example of the nondeclarative internalization of culture (Wacquant 2013). Similar internalization mechanisms lie behind the acquisition of much nondeclarative knowledge about the social world, such as the implicit associations and implicit attitudes that have become the bread and butter of social and cognitive psychology in the last two decades (Gawronski and Bodenhausen 2006; Gawronski, Peters, and LeBel 2008; Nosek, Hawkins, and Frazier 2011). Once internalized, nondeclarative culture subsists as a potential resource applicable to action in contexts similar to those in which it was acquired, as long as context activates it.

Ultimately, the two forms of internalized culture reflect two ways people relate to the cultural knowledge they acquire. Declarative culture consists of (potentially) *reflective knowledge*

in the phenomenological sense (Heiskala 2011); that is, people not only “know” declarative culture, but they also “know that they know it” and therefore can report this fact in a survey or an interview. By contrast, nondeclarative culture consists of *tacit knowledge* extracted from experience (Reber 1993), reminding us that people internalize more culture than they can linguistically report (Polanyi 1966).³ Systematic, repetitive experiences leave traces as nondeclarative skills, dispositions, and associations (both conceptual and affective). This is culture that people “have” and even “deeply hold” without *necessarily* having reflective access to this having or holding (Nosek and Hansen 2008; Gawronski, Peters, and LeBel 2008). In this respect, this culture may retain a phenomenologically “impersonal” cast and thus not be part of an individual’s reflexive identity, even though it can be implicated in action.

Types of Culture and Cultural Depth

As noted, a crucial part of Swidler’s conceptualization of culture centers on its phenomenological status as either deeply or superficially held. Swidler’s talk of people “holding” culture in either of these forms is central to the argument for the relative preponderance of outside-in mechanisms in linking culture and action. Despite its pivotal status in Swidler’s discussion, the distinction between deeply versus superficially held culture is stated at a mostly impressionistic level (Swidler 2001a, chaps. 3 and 8). In this section, I bring analytical clarity to this critical issue.

One thing to note is that the distinction is multidimensional, encompassing a variety of intentional stances that a person may have toward the culture they internalized. One of these is *cognitive*, encompassing how central beliefs and practices may fit within a belief system or ideology. Another is *affective*, dealing with how emotionally committed they may be toward certain beliefs and practices. Some are *metacognitive*, and reflect the level of conviction with which a person may hold a belief or the degree to which they endorse a habit or practice. I distinguish between two broad criteria implicit in Swidler’s discussion, which I see

³ Lizardo (2021b) introduces a third type of internalized culture, referred to as “knowledge-what” consisting of general conceptual knowledge, partaking of both reflective and tacit components. To keep matters from getting overly complicated, I restrict myself to Lizardo’s original declarative/nondeclarative typology.

as most important, via which we may conclude that a given cultural element is deeply or superficially held. These criteria converge nicely with recent work aimed at rethinking the notion of cultural internalization from the perspective of psychological anthropology and cultural models theory (e.g., Quinn, Sirota, and Stromberg 2018).

Availability versus Accessibility,

The first dimension of cultural depth, is cognitive and has to do with the relative pervasiveness with which a given cultural element, such as a value, belief, or practice, is “ready to hand” to be *potentially* used by people, I refer to this dimension of depth as the *accessibility* of the cultural element for the person. A cultural element is accessible if it is “first in line” regarding its probability of being drawn upon by the person for a particular purpose (Higgins and Brendl 1995). Accordingly, Swidler’s (2001a, 70) approach to culture from the “inside-out” distinguishes *availability* and *accessibility*, noting that “people keep ‘on tap’ much more culture than they use. Thus people possess culture of very different sorts—that which is actively part of current experience and that which is held in reserve, so to speak.” Culture in reserve is available, while the subset of available culture that gets used is accessible. While all accessible culture is available culture, the reverse is not the case; the storehouse of potentially *available* elements is more extensive (Higgins and Brendl 1995). Accordingly, we cannot conclude that because a cultural element is available (e.g., has been internalized by people as part of cultural learning) that it will play a role in action; only elements that are also accessible will do so. Analytic attention then shifts to the mechanisms determining the accessibility of internalized cultural elements.

We may refer to the subset of available cultural elements so repeatedly used by people as being in a high state of accessibility for further use as *chronically accessible* (Higgins and Brendl 1995). Chronically accessible culture is that subset of internalized cultural elements that, because used repeatedly and recently, are also the most likely to be used in the future, allowing us to develop an analytical criterion defining different points in the cognitive dimension of cultural depth. Cultural elements that are merely accessible but not chronically

so are less deeply held than ones that are chronically accessible, while cultural elements that are merely available but not accessible are only superficially held. The chronic accessibility criterion for cultural depth applies to declarative and nondeclarative cultural elements.

Chronically accessible declarative culture consists of those beliefs, values, and explicit precepts that first come to mind when people reflect on their experiences (or are queried about those experiences by the survey research or qualitative interviewer). Thus, they are most likely to be drawn upon to make sense of everyday events and occurrences, plan for the future, justify a course of action, or produce a vocabulary of motive (Mills 1940). Merely available declarative culture consists of the entire panoply of “dispositional,” beliefs, stances, opinions, or normative orientations that may only come to mind in exceptional or unusual circumstances (DiMaggio 1997). Chronically accessible declarative culture is deeply internalized, while that which is only available but not accessible is superficially internalized in Swidler’s sense.

Similarly, chronically accessible nondeclarative culture consists of those practices, skills, and dispositions that are most likely to be activated and drawn upon in context for purposes of everyday coping and problem-solving (Dreyfus and Spinoza 1999); that is, this is nondeclarative culture that is *habitual* in the sense of being repeatedly used by the person in similar contexts (Lizardo 2021a). Note that the storehouse of skills and dispositions that is chronically accessible does not exhaust a person’s total “know how,” since the person may keep in store as merely available a whole panoply of nondeclarative skills. Thus, the distinction between availability and accessibility also applies to nondeclarative culture. A person may know how to play the piano (and thus have the skill available to them) without being in the *habit* of playing the piano regularly.⁴ Accessible skills are those we rely upon often; chronically accessible skills become part of those nondeclarative dispositions. people regularly manifest across many contexts and situations as part of their general “personality.”

⁴ Note, however, that since nondeclarative culture has a “use it or lose it” quality, nondeclarative culture that is only available but seldom drawn upon may likely degrade regarding proficiency and subsequent ease of use.

Reflective Endorsement

The second dimension of cultural depth is *metacognitive*, having to do with how close a cultural element is to an individual's identity and the extent to which that element is deemed to have personal validity (Miles 2014). This reflective "personalization" of culture allows people to "name their own experience in cultural terms" (Swidler 2001a, 44). As such, I propose we consider cultural elements that are *reflectively endorsed as emanating from or "belonging" to the person* as deeply internalized in this dimension (Gawronski, Peters, and LeBel 2008).⁵ All the other indicators of cultural depth Swidler alludes to (e.g., affective intensity, conviction, subjective centrality, sincerity, and the like) are better understood as correlates of reflective endorsement and proximity to self-identity. All else equal, reflectively endorsed culture is more affectively salient, sincerely held, and elicits stronger commitment.

When declarative culture is deeply internalized in this way, people appropriate explicit cultural understandings initially encountered in the form of "extra-personal" beliefs, sayings, norms, precepts, and the like and make them their own (Spiro 1987; Quinn 2018); declarative culture relevant for making sense of everyday experience and constructing a sense of self. By the same token, superficially held declarative culture comprises cultural understandings not endorsed as valid, deemed irrelevant to the typification and specification of everyday experience, or even thought of as antithetical to self-conceptions. This culture may consist of well-worn platitudes, mores, cultural beliefs (even stereotypes) about a variety of domains of life and social groups; virtually the entire panoply of overt "prejudices" that constitute "common sense" (Geertz 1983). People are repetitively exposed to these platitudes to the point that they become chronically accessible and even automatically elicited in context. Despite being chronically accessible cultural knowledge, people may fail to *subscribe* to these tenets as a matter of personal belief, speaking to the analytical independence of the two dimensions of cultural internalization.

⁵ This is stated here as a binary for argumentative simplicity. Elements can exist on a continuum in this dimension, with the midpoint being those (declarative) elements that people are "ambivalent" about (Cunningham et al. 2007).

For instance, a person may hold as an abiding, identity-relevant, chronically accessible belief the idea that “hard work leads to success,” counting as a reflectively endorsed belief, thus more “deeply” internalized than if a person were to report that “*other people say* hard work leads to success, *but* in my experience...” This formulation gives us a more precise way of stating Swidler’s point that cultural depth is not necessarily correlated with how strongly culture affects action. In essence, Swidler is pointing to systematic instances in which chronically accessible (e.g., due to high levels of publicity and institutionalization) declarative culture, such as the precept to give mom a call on Mother’s Day, can have strong effects on action, *independently* of its depth of internalization in the reflective endorsement dimension (Swidler 2001a, 160–166).

Reflectively endorsed declarative culture (e.g., precepts, beliefs, norms, values, and the like) that is also chronically accessible comes close to the ideal-typical “deeply internalized” elements of the normativist-functionalist tradition. This personal culture can be central for people to construct and make sense of their experiences and lives (Swidler 2001a, chap. 3). By the same token, declarative culture can be readily accessible while not being reflectively endorsed or central to experience and identity. This culture may comprise collectively established (and thus non-negotiable from the perspective of the individual) understandings of what it is right or wrong to believe, what are the best ways of doing things, and the like. This internalized culture may also be composed of a host of “third order beliefs” about what “most people” believe or deem appropriate (Correll et al. 2017), even if these differ from personal (reflectively endorsed) beliefs. In this sense, while this culture is personal (in the sense of being internalized), it can feel “extra-personal” in terms of relevance to self-identity (Gawronski, Peters, and LeBel 2008). When these codes (or narratives, scripts, schemas) are also chronically accessible, they are potentially “powerful” in structuring the way individuals construe their experiences and situations independently of how proximate they are to their self-conceptions (Swidler 2001b).

As noted earlier, internalized nondeclarative culture consists of those practices, tastes,

skills, and dispositions that the person has picked as part of cultural learning. When these practices are also reflectively endorsed by the person being central and representative of their most cherished identities, we may speak of deeply internalized nondeclarative culture. People are motivated (either intrinsically or extrinsically) to foster, cultivate, and enhance their mastery of the nondeclarative culture that they have deeply internalized in this sense. Reflectively endorsed nondeclarative culture may thus be considered as either personal “talents” or even personal *virtues* in the moral sense (Guhin and Klett 2022). These are the “cultured competencies” people are proud to have mastered and which play a central role in securing membership in formal and informal groups and associations that are key to identity and belonging, such as churches, occupations, recreational groups, and the like (Simmel 1949; Eliasoph and Lichterman 2003).

Notably, there may be forms of deeply internalized nondeclarative culture, in the sense of being chronically accessible, *not* deeply internalized in the reflective endorsement sense; namely, nondeclarative culture regularly elicited and activated in context (due to its chronic accessibility) but which the person would not endorse as valid or reflective of their identity. This type of internalized nondeclarative culture may even be *antithetical* to the declarative culture that has been deeply internalized in the sense of being reflectively endorsed and identity-relevant. Nondeclarative culture high in chronic accessibility but low in reflective endorsement may seem like a paradoxical entity (Gendler 2008). However, these are precisely the nondeclarative cultural elements that have captured the imagination of social and cognitive psychologists for the last two decades in the wake of the so-called “implicit-measure” revolution (Nosek, Hawkins, and Frazier 2011). The now well-established distinction between “self-reports” and “implicit measures” reflects the realization that people may internalize discrepant versions of declarative and nondeclarative culture. That is, everyday experience, and the nondeclarative culture internalized from it, can push in a different direction from the explicit cultural teachings transmitted via symbolic media and internalized as declarative commitments (Bloch 1998; Nosek and Hansen 2008). This

phenomenon typically appears in so-called “dissociations” between explicit self-reports and implicit measures in research on attitudes and stereotypes in cognitive social psychology (Gawronski and Bodenhausen 2011).

For instance, a self-identified white person raised in the United States may report favorable attitudes towards Black people at the declarative level. These affective and cognitive states, in turn, are chronically accessible (the first ones to come to mind) and reflectively endorsed as central to the person’s identity as a tolerant individual. These cultural elements are, in Swidler’s terms, “sincerely held” and thus “personalized” as reflective of an individual’s self-conception as tolerant and unprejudiced; this is declarative culture that is “deeply internalized” by the criteria previously outlined. However, the same person can be shown to implicitly associate Black people as a group, as do large swaths of white people in the U.S. (Melamed et al. 2019; Nosek, Banaji, and Greenwald 2010), with a host of negative concepts (such as violence and laziness) at the nondeclarative level. Presented with such evidence, most white Americans would reject the implicit associations as not reflective of their “personal” values, thus counting as culture that has been internalized, perhaps as the inevitable result of everyday cultural experience in a racist society, but which is phenomenologically experienced as “extra-personal.”⁶ This culture is only “weakly coupled” to the deeply internalized declarative commitments espoused by the person.⁷ It is important to note that, despite such dissociations existing in a subset of the population, the normal state of affairs is *correspondence* (positive correlations) between self-report and implicit measures (Gawronski and Bodenhausen 2011), speaking to the fact that for most people, the culture they reflectively endorse at the declarative level is consistent with that enacted nondeclarative in the form of habits and practices.

We get an even more complex situation if “outside-in” processes of familiarity with

⁶ For a discussion of the measurement problems and conceptual issues, this poses for attitudes research see Gawronski et al. (2008).

⁷ Accordingly, it is thus a fundamental mistake to treat implicit measures as reflecting people’s “true” selves. The opposite is the case; while implicit measures reflect the outcome of systematic exposure to racialized experiences, when these experiences clash against reflectively endorsed conceptions, they are unlikely to be thought of as “true” of the self (regardless of their effects on behavior).

an external cultural code perceived as binding but *not* reflectively endorsed drive the initial declarative statement of value or belief. For instance, let us say another white American person is queried about their attitude towards Black people, and they were to respond in ways indistinguishable from the case considered earlier (e.g., “unprejudiced” responses reflective of positive attitudes) while, when tested using indirect measures, showing the traditional negative nondeclarative associations held by most of the white population. In this case, the person produced the explicit response not by drawing on deeply internalized cultural commitments but by recognizing the situation as one that required them to submit to the externally imposed self-presentational strictures of a code of “political correctness” (Plant and Devine 2001). Here, the existing declarative commitments that the individual holds are falsified for self-presentation in context, with people having internalized and even reflectively endorsing, as private beliefs, a panoply of anti-Black attitudes. Here, the revelation that the person also harbors nondeclarative dispositions to view Black people negatively counts as both weakly coupled, relative to the “insincere” and even “cynical” allegiance to the public code of political correctness, and strongly coupled to the person’s deeply internalized, but covert, cultural commitments.

Table 1. Analytic typology of internalized cultural elements.

	Reflective Endorsement?	(Chronically) Accessible	Available
Declarative Culture	Yes	Deeply Internalized Declarative Culture	Superficially Internalized Declarative Culture
	No	Strongly Binding External Code	
nondeclarative Culture	Yes	Deeply Internalized Nondeclarative Culture	Nondeclarative Culture In Abeyance
	No	Loosely Coupled Nondeclarative Culture	

A Typology of Internalized Personal Culture

The different ways people internalize culture can be summarized as in Table 1. The table distinguishes six types of internalized cultural elements by cross-classifying the reflective endorsement dimension (yes/no) against the availability/accessibility dimension for both declarative and nondeclarative culture, as discussed earlier. The most deeply internalized cultural elements are reflectively endorsed by people as part of their identity and stated commitments which are *also* habitually and reliably deployed in action with regularity across settings and situations. In an interview setting aimed at observing declarative culture, these would be the first ones to come to mind (accessibility) and endorsed by people as their true convictions (reflective endorsement). In ethnographic, experimental, or focus group settings aimed at observing nondeclarative culture in action, these would be those actions, gut reactions, or competencies, skills, and dispositions people would endorse as part of their identity.

By contrast, weakly internalized cultural elements are those not reliably and habitually deployed in action and talk. Note that because these weakly internalized cultural elements are in the “background,” the reflective endorsement dimension is less important. Thus, in the case of declarative culture, this is the storehouse of merely available sayings, half-hearted (usually contradictory) beliefs, stereotyped vocabularies of motive, and the like, that people *could* draw on but seldom do in their everyday life. The subset of reflectively endorsed declarative elements merges into the ones superficially internalized as part of the larger cultural “commonsense.” Similarly, weakly internalized nondeclarative culture consists of skilled abilities and cultured competencies people acquire via the slow habituation and enskilment pathway, which are seldom used or drawn upon. These are encultured abilities that people *could* use but seldom *do* use, given their current life circumstances. Note that because these dispositions are infrequently manifested (or skills practiced), reflective endorsement matters less here since they are, by implication, less central to personal identity (so even a disposition that a person may find noxious and reject as reflecting their

commitments seldom rears its ugly head). Drawing an analogy from social movement theory (Taylor 1989), we may call this “nondeclarative culture in abeyance.”⁸

Finally, the typology accommodates cultural elements of problematic, ambiguous, or “in-between” internalization status. So-called “implicit” racist, homophobic, transphobic, misogynist dispositions and practices enacted by people who see themselves as tolerant are clear examples of contradictorily internalized cultural elements (Schwitzgebel 2010). Dispositions to behave contrary to declaratively professed beliefs are chronically accessible (and thus deployed in action habitually) without being reflectively endorsed by the person. The same goes for declarative beliefs chronically deployed in talk by people in public situations requiring particular forms of self-presentation or motive justification but which are personally rejected as part of their self-identity. Both cases feature powerful effects of societal context on action, but via different mechanisms.

In the case of the “implicit” prejudiced actions and judgments produced by reflectively unprejudiced people, we find the imprint on practice resulting from being tacitly enculturated in sexist, racist, homophobic, transphobic social systems (Payne, Vuletic, and Lundberg 2017). Here culture comes from the “outside in” but, as a result of tacit learning and implicit habituation (Arseniev-Koehler and Foster 2020), becomes the sort of nondeclarative practice that operates from the “inside out” as in the influential “strong practice theory” formulation of Bourdieu (1990). In the case of a person who expresses a commitment they do not personally abide by, we see a more Swidlerian “outside in” impact of highly codified and consensually established social codes that create “conformity” to their expectations even when there is no “deep” internalization of declarative culture in the form of reflective commitment and centrality to identity. “Speech codes” or “public norms” in specific institutional settings may have this effect on some members (producing stereotyped declarations of conformity with public codes), but *not* for the true believers or enforces of

⁸ Note that if there is a change in context, it is possible for some cultural elements to “travel” from the weakly internalized boxes to the more deeply internalized one. Accordingly, cultured competencies seldom put to use, can become habitual elements (a skilled singer can join a church choir), or a half-hearted or superficially internalized belief can become a central part of personal identity after joining a particular group that deems it non-negotiable.

the norms for whom it counts as deeply internalized in the traditional sense.

Note that insofar as conformity with some public codes—as in Swidler’s example of gift-giving during prescribed holidays like Valentine’s Day—have both declarative *and* behavioral implications, public codes may also generate a type of reflectively non-endorsed, but intentionally produced practice (e.g., routinely buying chocolate for a spouse every year even if “romantic” is not a highly valued part of personal identity). This is a type of weakly internalized nondeclarative culture produced by classic “outside in” mechanisms, is distinct from that manifested as implicit prejudice by reflectively tolerant people (which are reflectively unendorsed practices that are *also* partially independent of intention).

Concluding Remarks

In this paper, I have outlined the strengths and limitations of Swidler’s “outside-in” model of how culture comes to affect action. This model presents itself as an attractive and parsimonious alternative to classical understandings of how culture can be powerful in bringing systematicity to action, emphasizing its functional role from the “inside-out.” A key contribution of the outside-in perspective is to point to recurrent social mechanisms that can account for systematic patterns of action without “deep” internalization in the form of pervasive declarative commitments central to personal identity. The model can also account for another puzzle besetting the normativist explanatory tradition: that sometimes we can find people have deeply internalized personal culture without this leading to its having systematic or consistent effects on action.

I argued that, as initially formulated (Swidler 2001a, 160–180), the outside-in model suffers from fundamental ambiguities preventing the analyst from ascertaining the overall applicability of some key propositions to critical empirical phenomena. Mainly, Swidler was ambiguous as to what exactly was meant by the notion of “deep” internalization and, relatedly, regarding whether we need to emphasize different dimensions of this notion when dealing with the two distinct ways in which culture can be internalized. This approach

clarifies some of these issues, synthesizing Swidler's ideas with recent work in cultural analysis and culture and cognition studies providing a more differentiated view of how people in different modes internalize culture.

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