How Do Elites Define Influence? Personality and Respect as Sources of Social Power

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How well do theories of elites' sources of social power match the reality as perceived by the elites themselves? Using data from interviews with 312 elites from a large midwestern American city, and employing an inductive coding method situated in grounded theory, we use the constructivist approach in listening to elites' definitions of their sources of social power. Integrating Weber's notion of charisma and the interactionist literature on power, we hypothesize that interpersonal attributes can be crucial in micro-level power negotiations. Our analyses reveal that along with mentioning economic and political resources, institutional and organizational position, and connectedness in influence networks—themes common in elite theory— elites also identify the interpersonal attributes of personality and respect as sources of social power in their own right. Projection of positive personal attributes assists in the exercise of power; exposing traits with negative connotations can be a detriment. Elites display personal attributes while employing impression management, thus developing a social identity used to manipulate interpersonal relations. We conclude by offering a series of sensitizing principles to guide an understanding of how interpersonal sources of social power are used in elite power negotiations.

How well do theories of elites' sources of social power match the reality as perceived by the elites themselves? In the elite theory literature, sources of social power are typically and primarily defined as having access to resources, occupying strategic positions, and operating in networks of influence (Domhoff 2002; Form and Miller 1960; Mills 1956). However, surprisingly few researchers have asked the elites themselves what they consider important sources of social power. As such, some sources may be missing from traditional definitions, waiting to be revealed by the elites themselves.

We use a form of the constructivist approach to understanding power in listening to elites' definitions of their sources of social power (Harris 2006; Schwalbe et al. 2000). Common to the constructivist approach is that people live within socially constructed realities where interactions with friends, strangers, co-workers, and family determine the meaning of social things (Hall 1972, 1995; Lemert 2005). In a reciprocal relationship between methods and theory-building, constructivist methods allow for actor-led improvements to social theory (Charmaz 1983). By listening to actors' definitions of reality, researchers discover how actors create their social world. Some constructivists argue that mainstream sociology's reluctance to explicitly integrate the constructivist program not only perpetuates the misnomer that constructivist-minded theories such as symbolic interactionism have nothing to add to debates on power and social inequality, but that theoretical development in these major subdisciplines can remain stunted as a result (Dennis and Martin 2005; Schwalbe et al. 2000).

As both elites and the researchers who study them work in an environment of imperfect information, the constructivist approach has both advantages and disadvantages. Much like any actor embedded in a social milieu, elites are likely to define reality as they have personally experienced it. In the midst of their power networks, elites may not recognize all potential sources of social power; insider's knowledge can act as blinders to the entirety of the social scene. However, insider's knowledge also enables unique insights that are hidden from outsiders' views. Moreover, analysis of elites entirely guided by researcher's definitions of power sources can serve to reinforce preconceptions that should be redefined (Charmaz 1983:110–111). In this sense, the advantages of the constructivist approach outweigh the disadvantages.

While symbolic interactionists engage in power theory, the extent to which they have done so is unclear: some, like Dennis and Martin (2005), claim that "far from neglecting the phenomena of power, much interactionist work is actually about power relations and their enactment" (197–8), and others, such as Prus (1999), argue that, "interactionists hadn't said much about power in any sustained or systematic fashion" (xiv).[1] We take a step beyond the debate by acknowledging that symbolic interactionism has much to say about power. Prus (1999) argues that the interactionist viewpoint is both "amenable to considerations of the ways in which power is brought into existence" and provides a unique methodology for analyzing power (10); we agree. What is missing from the literature is an accounting of actors' personal attributes that enable them to exercise power in microsituations.

We contribute both to elite research and to a constructivist, symbolic interactionist understanding of power in two main ways. First, by analyzing a dataset of community elites, we empirically demonstrate how constructivist methods can be a superior way of identifying sources of social power. Second, by interpreting our empirical results with symbolic interactionist theory, we specify the mechanisms through which differentially resourced actors are able to define situations. In using a symbolic interactionist framework and by allowing the elites themselves to define power sources as they have grown to understand them, we provide new directions for elite research.

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Power is inherently relational (Dennis and Martin 2005), requiring at least two actors: one to wield and one to yield. Classic elite theorists define power in the Weberian sense as the probability a person or a group has to realize their will despite the resistance of others (Weber 1946a). Some argue that power is a capacity of one actor to change the behavior of another (Dahl 1961) or is a relationship in which one actor is disproportionately able to avoid negative sanctions (Rossi 1957:425). According to all definitions, power operates within microsituations (Collins 2004:112–115; Dennis and Martin 2005; Prus 1999).

Theories of elites' sources of social power focus on the interrelated themes of resources, positions, and networks. By "resources," elite theorists generally refer to wealth ownership and political capital, whether through being in the upper class (Domhoff 2002) or as a captain of industry (Mills 1956). By "positions," elite theorists generally refer to organizational and institutional locations in the influence system, such as being part of policy think tanks, or simply being a leader of an organization with large sums of political capital (Domhoff 2002). By "networks," elites are known to other elites and operate within elite systems where personal ties, or social capital, allow elites to realize needs and wants (Knoke 1994). Elites forge influence networks through face-to-face interaction (Collins 2004:258–296).

For elites working at the community level, participation in community affairs also acts as a source of power (Form and Miller 1960; Hunter 1953). For community elites, sustained and meaningful participation is necessary for the creation and maintenance of their sources of social power—generating income, keeping their organizational position, and forging networks. Even for community elites with strong ties to the national elite—such as CEOs of national or multinational organizations—maintaining ties to the community by serving on various arts boards and local charities enhances and entrenches their power sources.

Though often coexisting and cooperating, these sources are also unequally distributed in the elite population. For example, managers of community civic organizations may not have great wealth at their disposal, but are nonetheless necessary for facilitating community projects. Resources may be a source of power without an organizational position, as in the case of a billionaire retiree of whom others solicit donations. Cultural elites such as clergy may have neither the resources nor the position in powerful organizations, but they may be key nodes in an influence network because well-connected elites consider them important. In all cases, to be considered elite, each must possess resources, occupy a strategic position, or be included in influence networks.

In addition to these, Weber (1946a) discusses charisma as a potential source of social power. Defined as "an extraordinary quality of a person, regardless of whether this quality is actual, alleged, or presumed" (295), charisma is used to legitimate rule. Through explaining the uses of charisma, Weber concludes that personal attributes are means through which one can seize power. To maintain power, charismatic figures

find it necessary to continually put on a performance that displays these personal attributes (Collins 1975:302).

In the day-to-day life of American community elites, charisma works in concert with resources, positions, and networks, but the importance of charisma in relation to the other sources depends on the context of the interaction. In situations where personal ties are paramount—such as in ad hoc organizations—charisma is of great importance (Collins 1975:292–3). However, charisma is a placeholder for times when traditional or rational-legal forms of authority (re)emerge. As Weber states: "It is the fate of charisma, whenever it comes into the permanent institutions of a community, to give way to powers of tradition or of rational socialization" (1946a:253). Where interactions are structured through tradition or rational-legal observance, charisma is of lesser importance (Collins 1975:286–347).

INCORPORATING THE SYMBOLIC
INTERACTIONIST PERSPECTIVE

In symbolic interactionism, actors at the microlevel produce a socially constructed reality by forging social objects subject to negotiation and renegotiation under varying contexts; in recent years, symbolic interactionism has seen a resurgence of critical debate on how these interactions create meso- and macrolevel structures that, in turn, become the contexts in which microlevel actors negotiate social objects (Blumer 1969; Harris 2006). Thus, symbolic interactionism provides theoretical links between the micro-, meso-, and macrolevels (Hall 1995; Schwalbe et al. 2000).

We embrace this resurgence; our perspective comes from the interactionist literature that considers power as a (re)negotiation between differentially resourced actors who have divergent interests (Bourdieu 1991; Dennis and Martin 2005; Hall 1972; Prus 1999). Hall (1972) analyzes politics as an aspect of negotiated order, thereby arriving at a uniquely symbolic interactionist definition of power: "Power . . . is achieved by controlling, influencing, and sustaining your definition of the situation" (51). Prus (1999) argues that power is best seen as an "intersubjective accomplishment" between unequal actors negotiating reality. Prus takes an extreme position on the subjectivity of power, arguing that it exists only when actors define the situation as a power negotiation. While not symbolic interactionist, Bourdieu's (1991) notion of symbolic power is akin to it, as it refers to control over others' perception of reality.

Interactionists rarely attempt to identify the sources with which actors wield power. While Hall (1972) and Schwalbe and colleagues (2000) agree that power is interaction based, they do not explicitly discuss the sources of these differential abilities. Schwalbe and colleagues (2000) theorize how microlevel interactions within the negotiated order shape inequality across institutions; in analyzing the political arena, Hall (1972:49–69) argues similarly. Like the classic elite theorists, they infer these processes without using the constructivist approach in asking power wielders about their sources of social power.

We build on interactionist theoretical work by identifying the sources of social power within the negotiated order. Identifying the interpersonal attributes noted by

the actors themselves engenders a more thorough understanding of how power operates at the microlevel. To demonstrate how power source identification enhances elite research and the interactionist perspective, we focus on power processes in which interactionist sources are at their most dominant.

Following Hall (1995:51–52), we too invoke Goffman's impression management as a mechanism through which actors define the situation in the face of resistance. Considering the work of Goffman, interactions may be viewed from a dramaturgical perspective as a performance, shaped by the environment and audience, and constructed to provide others with impressions that meet the desired goals of the actor (Goffman 1959:17). During the performance, the actor presents a social face, that is, a self-image that lives up to the audience's expectations (Goffman 1967:9).

For our purposes, the most important aspect of this perspective is that the individual develops an identity as a function of this interaction with others. These identities are social objects subject to (re)negotiation, comprised of personal attributes and used in social negotiations including the wielding of power.

Two kinds of personal attributes—personality and respect—can be regarded as sources of power in their own right. Personality traits are akin to the Weberian notion of charisma; they are positively regarded personal attributes used to wield power. Empirical evidence suggests that personality traits contribute to status attainment, particularly in negotiating the labor market (Bowles and Gintis 2002:10–12).

Of the elite theorists, Hunter's (1953) study of community elites comes closest to an analysis of personality as a base of social power. Hunter (1953:171–206) examined the "more private aspects of power" displayed in business luncheons, club meetings, and similar informal interaction rituals of the elite. In considering Hunter's vignettes, we suggest a shift from the Weberian focus on positive personal attributes used in charismatic authority relations to an emphasis on the interactional connotations of positively *and negatively* perceived personality traits. Both kinds influence position within the elite network and, ultimately, the ability to define the situation.

To illustrate, we recall Hunter's (1953:171–206) tale of a community elite who "was a powerful leader" and "very influential in the legislature" (197). Within his elite network, the man "had been considered crude by many of the leaders in the community," continuing to "'bully and browbeat' his way in matters" (197–8). Angling for the chairmanship of the large company in which he worked, he was passed over. Eventually, he lost his overall position of power in the community: "The writer asked [another community elite] if [the man's] position had changed in community affairs because of his being 'eased out' . . . and the reply was affirmative" (198). The implication was clear; negatively perceived personality traits within that elite network formed the basis of ostracism and a decline in social power.

Bourdieu's (1991) notion of symbolic capital can be read as an elaboration of Weber's concept of status honor, of which respect is a close relation. We regard respect as a form of symbolic capital that can shield one from harm and extract deference rituals during power negotiations (Anderson 1999:66–106). Respect becomes a source of power in two ways: it can precede the actor when entering into power negotiations, serving as a form of background knowledge shared by the participants, or it may

emerge during the course of the interaction under the employ of impression management, possibly as a result of participants perceiving positively viewed and communally accepted personality traits.

The relative importance of personality and respect depends on context. Interpersonal attributes of personality and respect must be recognized as legitimate by other actors during power negotiations. In the rational-legal negotiated order, where rules are codified and patterns of association firmly established, personality and respect are of lesser importance. In situations where the form of social organization is based on personal ties—for example, Hunter's luncheons, club meetings, and similarly informal social situations—charisma wins the day and personality and respect grow in importance.

OUR THEORETICAL MODEL AND HYPOTHESIS

An outline of our theoretical model is as follows. We assume that the elite are comprised of actors who negotiate power relations by displaying a social face and identity. Fellow members of the elite within their sphere of domination witness and recognize the interpersonal attributes within these displays. To define the situation through impression management, the elite members display their personality traits. Respect is a quality that either precedes the elite member or is generated during the interaction. While thematically distinct concepts, personality and respect can be related so that positively viewed personality traits are respected commodities.

As an illustration, let us take the example of a local real estate developer seeking to win a lucrative construction contract in the university district of a large midwestern city. Winning the bid means negotiating with other elites, including the president of the university and members of city council who have the power to grant zoning and influence the decision of the committee that decides who gets what contracts. In such a city there are usually multiple bids, a number of which come from equally qualified rival real estate developers. They must negotiate in various staged encounters, making deals and producing winning boardroom presentations, all the while using their resources, positions, and networks. If bids are relatively equal, the line between winning and losing may be the real estate developer's personality and cache of respect. If his or her personality is looked upon favorably by the elites and if the developer has a reputation as a person who can "get things done" or "be a leader," these seemingly intangible and extraordinary qualities become ascendant as sources of power in their own right. In the end, the winning real estate developer realized his or her will, despite the concerted efforts of rivals.

Our main hypothesis is that *elites identify personality and respect as sources of social power in their own right.* We assume that elites recognize and acknowledge the legitimacy of these interpersonal attributes within microlevel power negotiations. We do not expect to find personality and respect as sole sources of power, but rather that they operate in conjunction with resources, positions, and networks.

DATA AND METHODS

We use the River City Area Study (RCAS), a representative sample of 312 community elites who live and work in a large midwestern city with an MSA population of over one million. River City is one of the most populous and prosperous cities in the state. The state government is the single largest source of employment in the area. River City is also the headquarters of numerous national and international corporations, including insurance and financial institutions, clothing, chemical and steel industries, and restaurant and other food service chains. In addition, River City is home to one of the largest universities in the United States. Because River City supports a diverse range of large and powerful industries, it provides an ideal setting to study community elites.

RCAS is a unique data set with individuals in positions of influence within the local community as the units of analysis. While studies of community elites typically focus on the business and political sectors (Dahl 1961; Hunter 1953), these data contain information on individuals from these and the civic, cultural, and religious sectors as well.[2] In comparison to prior efforts, RCAS data contain detailed social background information on community elites, including family of origin, educational and work histories, and wealth, income, and family status. Our definition of community elite is adapted from Mills (1956), Domhoff (2002), and Form and Miller (1960): an individual who, through their resources, positions in organizations and institutions, and status in elite-centered networks can initiate, facilitate, or terminate local projects.

With a team of researchers, we used the positional and reputational methods to determine our population of local elites. In the positional method, researchers use directories and periodicals as a sampling frame. In the reputational method, researchers ask informants to identify individuals whom they believe are the most influential members of the community. Each method is employed extensively in community power research; employing both generates a more comprehensive list than using either alone (Knoke 1994).

For the positional method, we compiled a list of organizations using local news and business magazines, newspapers, and city information booklets (Perrucci and Pilisuk 1970). With these sources we identified the top ranked organizations in River City in three of the sectors: economic (business—including hospitals, finance, and real estate), political (including city council and partners from the largest law firms), and civic (education boards, social services, and labor unions). From the top ranked organizations we obtained the names of individuals occupying the uppermost positions.

When formal ranking was difficult, and for cases in which the person was more famous than their formal organizational position would suggest, we used the reputational method (Hunter 1953). We sent team members into the field to ask community-based experts to list the major players in their domains (D'Antonio and Erickson 1962; D'Antonio et al. 1961). We used this informal panel of local knowledgeables to identify members of the elite in the media (radio, television, and newspapers), cultural (arts, hospitality), and religious sectors (leaders of the largest places of worship, from

churches to synagogues). The RCAS team gathered these data in face-to-face and telephone interviews during 2001 and 2002 using a semistructured survey instrument.[3]

RCAS has an overall response rate of 34 percent; considering the difficulty of reaching this population, this rate is standard for elite studies.[4] Obtaining an interview from an individual in a position of power is a difficult task. In general, community elites are not open to personal interviews for media or sociological inquiry, unless they feel it will benefit them. Further, individuals in positions of influence maintain several layers of gatekeepers—secretaries, assistants, and automated phone systems—responsible for monitoring and censoring information. Negotiating these barriers that insulate potential respondents from social researchers can be difficult and is one of the reasons studies of this nature suffer from low response rates. In the end, sheer persistence may have played a role in the success of the data collection.

Our methods are based on the Chicago school of symbolic interactionism, emphasizing the need to "get inside the actor's world and . . . see the world as the actor sees it" (Meltzer and Petras 1970). In contrast with the Iowa school, which attempts to understand the individual through a series of researcher conceived categories, our constructivist-minded approach allows the respondent to guide the researcher (Harris 2006).

To identify community elites' sources of social power we coded an open-ended question from the RCAS survey instrument that simply asks, "In your opinion, how would a person be considered influential in the local community?"

While we recognize the potential for a theoretical difference between influence and power, following Rose (1967:301–02) we feel justified in blurring the distinction since our purpose is to capture the thinking of highly educated yet nonacademic elites for whom the theoretical distinction is not personally relevant.[5]

Eschewing the variable analysis of the type derided by Blumer (1956), we began our analysis by using an inductive coding method situated in grounded theory (Charmaz 1983). We initially identified nine main themes of the elites' perceived sources of power that continuously emerged throughout the interviews. After we exhausted the list of possible themes, we used inter-rater reliability methods to validate the initial coding. Next, to facilitate the retrieval of the coded information, we entered the data into NUDIST. We compared the themes of power acquired through inductive observation of the data to those identified in elite theories.

FINDINGS

The composition of River City's elite are dominated by economically secure, white, middle-aged men who acquired advanced degrees, hold managerial jobs, came from an advantaged social class background, and profess to some denomination of Christianity (see Appendix 1). Our population is overwhelmingly male (78 percent men and 22 percent women) and white (84 percent white and 16 percent nonwhite). Our respondents' average age is between 49 and 51 years of age. As for education, 56 percent have a graduate degree. As an indicator of class background, 46 percent had a father whose highest educational level was a bachelor's degree or greater (of whom

about 22 percent had a graduate degree). In those surveyed, 44 percent are Protestant, 25 percent are Catholic, 6 percent are Jewish, and 25 percent claim "none" or "other." About 40 percent affiliate most with the Republican Party, 34 percent with the Democrats, and 26 percent claim "Independent" or "other."

River City elites are well placed in terms of resources and positions. As for resources, half report a net family income of $200,000 or more, with 4 percent reporting one million dollars or more. About 70 percent hold high-level managerial positions within their organization.

As measured by sector composition, elite networks are largely composed of the economic (36 percent), political (14 percent), civic (29 percent) sectors, and, to a lesser extent, of the cultural (11 percent), the religious (8 percent) sectors.

The Sources of Social Power

We identified nine power source themes: *ability to effect change, resource control, political clout, strategic position, being well-known, connections, community participation, personality,* and *being respected.* On average, respondents stated two of the nine themes. The main description of the nine themes appears in Appendix 2. Table 1 shows that elite theorists discussed seven of the nine themes identified by the elites themselves. Elites talked in general about the ability to effect change, which is a principal component of the definition of power but is not itself a source of power. Other themes match elite theorists' conceptions of power sources. Mills (1956) and Domhoff (2002), speaking mainly about national power elites, focus most on the sources of power pertaining to resources, positions, and networks. Elites in our sample also mentioned these themes in the form of resource control, political clout, strategic position, connections, and being well-known. Form and Miller (1960) include all of these elements, but— since they study community elites—their definition of networks is what the elites in our study refer to as community participation.

Because we are concerned here with the microsituational bases of power, we focus on *personality* and *being respected* (for a list of descriptive quotations, see Appendix 3). Confirming our hypothesis, elites identified personality and respect as important means to exercise power. *Personality* includes personal characteristics that make them appear more or less attractive. *Being respected* pertains to having earned the respect of the local community and community leaders. These interpersonal attributes have not been emphasized as power sources in the elite literature.

Considering themes common to both personality and respect serves to confirm and enhance the interactionist perspective. First, as theorized, power sources are unevenly distributed in the elite; some have certain qualities, others not. Thus, power negotiators within microsituations are differentially challenged in their attempt to define the situation. That elites understand this is in evidence by the way some phrased their response. For example, one said that, "they *can be* personally motivated enough and charismatic enough to draw public attention to an issue," noting that not all are "charismatic enough" [emphasis the authors']. In analyzing power negotiations, researchers must understand that each participant will attempt to define the situation in the manner in which their personal store of resources will allow.

Table 1. Theorists, Definitions of Elites, and Theme Types

Theorists	Definitions of Elites	Theme Types
Mills (1956) *The Power Elite*	"The power elite is composed of men whose positions enable them to transcend the ordinary environments of ordinary men and women; they are in positions to make decisions having major consequences. . . . Immediately below the elite are the professional politicians of the middle levels of power, in the Congress and in the pressure groups, as well as among the new and old upper classes of town and city and region . . . hierarchies of state and corporation and military."	Ability to effect change, resource control, political clout, strategic position, connections
Domhoff (2002) *Who Rules America?*	"Members of the upper class who have taken on leadership roles in the corporate community and the policy network, along with high-level employees in corporations and policy network organizations."	Same as Mills
Form and Miller (1960) *Industry, Labor, and Community*	"Public spirited leaders . . . locally powerful people who could get things done in the city or who could kill local projects . . . the most influential persons in city-wide affairs."	Same as Mills and Domhoff, but includes community participation and being well-known

Second, within an elite network, elites understand the perceptual bases of social power in which interpersonal attributes must be recognized as legitimate by other elites. Thus, someone who is influential is someone "whom business leaders trust and respect," or one who "give[s] people the impression that [he or she is] credible, respectable, etc."

Third, as Collins (1975) and other interactionist-minded theorists suggest, mainte-nance of interpersonal attributes as sources of social power requires constant perfor-mance. Consistent with this argument, elites often phrased their responses to convey present effort: "*being* effective, hardworking, and persistent" [emphasis the authors']. Status as a respected leader is tenuous, requiring constant impression management and maintenance of identity. If the elite member stops giving good advice, his or her status as a respected leader dwindles, even if wealth or political clout does not.

Finally, traits such as the ubiquitous "work ethic" can be read as self-serving and rather as an attribute used by both elites and masses. Examples of this include, "being effective, hardworking, and persistent," and having "commitment, passion, follow

through." Non-elite-specific attributes are universally recognized personality prerequisites: If someone is viewed as lazy and uninterested, he or she cannot count on personality or respect as a source of social power. Negatively perceived attributes can be a detriment, particularly in cases where other sources do not compensate.

Subthemes peculiar to personality and respect provide nuances to the interactionist perspective on power wielding. Within the personality theme, two subthemes emerged: desirable vs. undesirable traits and personality as employed in impression management. In regard to desirable vs. undesirable personality traits, Hunter's (1953) vignette proved instructive fifty years on. One respondent described in detail the value of desirable personality traits when pursuing influence in the community: "[It is] like building a house, you start with the foundation—credibility and good reputation. Even with good ideas you won't get anywhere. Personal integrity and a consistent honest message. People know they can count on you." In the same breath, this person also mentioned undesirable traits: "Not egotistical or self centered—hurts credibility."

Elites also recognize the value of impression management through displays of positively viewed personality traits. One put it plainly: if you want to be considered influential in the community, "give people the impression that you are credible, respectable, etc." Thus, personality must be viewed by others as positive to be successfully used in impression management.

In the identification of respect, three subthemes emerged: respect as dependent on the perception of others, personal and professional respect, and the connection between respect and personality. Respect's perceptual base was frequently noted by the elites; for example, to be influential, you "need peers that respect you." Like personality, respect must be recognized by the other participants in the power negotiation; unlike personality, respect is sometimes dependent upon whether influential subgroups within the elite network recognize it. Again, someone who is influential is "someone whom business leaders trust and respect."

Dispensing desired knowledge or advice is often a way to obtain respect, but elites in our study focused on respect as generated through personality displays. For instance, someone is respected because they are "trustworthy." Influential members of the community are "respected for work ethic and character, not material success. Respected for truthfulness." Another mentioned that elites are those who have "respect from others by good follow-through, honest[y]." Elites can also be respected for what they do in their professional lives: "First, you and your business have to be respected." Since professionals' personal and work lives are often intertwined (see Hochschild 2001), River City elites rarely made the distinction between personal and professional respect.

DISCUSSION

Using constructivist methods we find that the elite theorists' themes of resources, positions, and networks are also mentioned by the elites themselves. However, elite theorists typically ignore symbolic interactionist concepts, and as such they missed two crucial bases of power: personality and respect.

As Machiavelli ([1532] 1981) thought, personal attributes can be key sources of social power. Through impression management and the force of personality, elites project a competent and successful identity. The projection of positive personal attributes assists the elites in wielding power within the community; negatively viewed traits can be a detriment. Elites display personal attributes and employ impression management within a variety of encounters, developing social identities used to manipulate interpersonal relations.

To summarize our contributions to the elite and interactionist literatures, we postulate six sensitizing principles that guide an understanding of how sources of social power are used in power negotiations:

Principle of recognition. For power sources to lead to one actor defining the situation despite the will of other actors, these sources must be recognized as legitimate by others in their sphere of domination.

Principle of unequal distribution. Power sources are unevenly distributed in elite networks.

Principle of context. In the rational-legal negotiated order, personality and respect are of lesser importance. Where the form of social organization is based on personal ties, personality and respect grow in importance. Joining these three principles, we argue the following: Actors engage in power negotiations using different power sources. They will attempt to define the situation using their most prominent power sources, so long as those sources are legitimated by others within that context. Actors will seek out those interactional contexts in which their most prominent power sources can be deployed; if their power is based on organizational position, they will seek out rational-legal contexts; if they have a well-respected identity and a personality to match, they will seek out informal, socially loose contexts.

Principle of constant performance. To maintain interpersonal attributes as sources of social power, actors must constantly display them.

Principle of personality. Personality traits can be either beneficial or detrimental in power negotiations, depending on how these attributes are viewed by others.

Principle of respect. Actors tend to focus on respect as a trait generated through personality displays.

As we consider community studies of the past, we believe that what our respondents did *not* say suggests that what elites consider as sources of social power changes over time.[6] Weber, in studying communities in the beginning of the twentieth century, found that religious affiliation and membership in certain civic clubs were prerequisites for becoming influential (1946b). Weber interpreted this as a sign that affiliation and membership in certain groups are markers of positively viewed personal attributes, for example, morality and holding the "proper" values. Such affiliations bestowed social legitimation on the would-be elite—that they were moral,

upstanding members of the community—but did not necessarily legitimate them as professionals. In this twenty-first-century study, River City elites did not mention religious or civic affiliation as a prerequisite. As for morality, they made only a few passing mentions. For example, elites are those who "[have] credible insight, command respect, [and have a] political and *ethical* response to [a] situation." Note that religious and civic affiliation differ from the previously mentioned "community participation" in that local elites have greater leeway in choice of venue; there is little cost in the choice between serving on children's hospital boards and with philanthropic organizations.

In this study, when elites speak of personality or the generation of respect, we are clear that these are traits in addition to resources, positions, and networks, but are unable to determine exactly which traits are valuable or detrimental. Some of the respondents mentioned positive traits: being honest, truthful, ethical, credible, reliable, diplomatic, helpful, articulate, a good listener; and some mentioned negative traits: being egotistical, self-centered, and dictatorial. Others provided possibly self-serving and nonspecific traits such as commitment, passion, good worker, hardworking, and persistent that are not peculiar to the wielding of power. However well personality can be measured, status attainment research has not been able to determine the extent to which personality is a proxy for some unmeasured skill (Bowles and Gintis 2002:12). Specifying particular personality traits that enhance power—by themselves or in the generation of respect—is a subject for future research.

Are the interpersonal attributes of personality and respect universal sources of social power, or are they only used by the elite? To properly address this question, we encourage replications of this study in other contexts and for other populations. A similar study to ours focusing on national elites can be done by coding autobiographies of elites—for example, CEOs and politicians—for how they describe power negotiations.[7] Most important, we encourage using the constructivist approach to foster actor-led improvements to social theory.

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Appendix 1. Selected Demographics of River City Elites (%)

Gender		Political party	
Male	78	Republican	40
Female	22	Democrat	34
Race		Independent or other	26
White	84	Age	
Nonwhite	16	25–40	17
Religion		41–50	34
Protestant	44	51–60	36
Catholic	25	61 and older	12
Jewish	06	Sector	
None or other	26	Economic	36
Father's education		Political	14
High school or less	48	Civic	29
College	24	Cultural	11
Graduate degree	22	Religious	8
Respondent's education		Income	
High school or less	8	$99,999 or less	23
College	35	$100,000–$199,999	25
Graduate degree	56	$200,000–$499,999	26
Marital status		$500,000 or greater	26
Married	81		
Single	19		

N = 312

Appendix 2. Typology of Elite Perceptions with Definitions and Descriptive Quotations

Perceptions	Description
Ability to effect change[a]	The aptitude to make things happen and to see that tasks are accomplished inside and/or outside one's sphere of influence. "Making things happen, being active instead of just conceptualizing a fundraising project, putting wheels under the project."
Resource control	Having control over general community resources. "Power and money: that is how people are seen as influential," and "economic power, power of their organization, political power."
Political clout	Includes having influence within the political realm of the community including either direct or indirect involvement with the local government. "Involved in administration of city, political organizations, or municipal development," and "ability to impact the political process or have political influence on the elected officials."

continues

Appendix 2 continued

Perceptions	Description
Strategic position	The possibility of holding a notable position of influence within the community, within one's own organization, or within one's influential family. "Leadership position like president of a bank." "Their position in their organization. Their activity in outside local groups like on the board of [a local museum]."
Being well-known	Includes being recognized and having a high level of visibility within the community. "Known by community, good reputation, and good track record" and "visibility, viability, credibility."
Connections	Having network links and personal relationships with other influentials within the community. "Being able to have the ear of major decision makers—continually socialize with them— aggressively engage with them."
Community participation	Being committed to one's local community through involvement. "Work with a variety of community agencies. Work closely with other leaders. Understand the needs of the community and lobby those with power to educate local community and area leaders."
Personality	Personality traits that a person may possess that will make them appear more or less attractive to other people. "Knowledgeable, truthful, diplomatic, collaborative, interested in solution…not dictatorial" and "credibility, trustworthy, effective, articulate."
Being respected	Pertains to one having earned the respect of the local community and community leaders. "If they are respected, knowledgeable about issues, make recommendations people would listen—people turn to for advice—if the community recognizes them as having influence."

[a] The ability to effect change translates into the aptitude to facilitate community projects and to see that tasks are accomplished inside and/or outside one's sphere of influence. Ability is an attempt by the respondent to define influence without citing a specific source of it; as such, we do not consider it as a source of social power.

Appendix 3. Quotations Describing Personality and Respect

Personality

"[It is] like building a house, you start with the foundation—Credibility and good reputation. Even with good ideas you won't get anywhere. Personal integrity and a consistent honest message. People know they can count on you. Not egotistical or self centered—hurts credibility."

"They can be personally motivated enough and charismatic enough to draw public attention to an issue."

"To prove yourself as reliable and helpful."

"Credible insight, command respect, political and ethical response to situation."

continues

Appendix 3 continued

Personality

"Commitment, passion, follow- through ... well liked"

"Credibility, demonstrate good leadership, good worker"

"Being effective, hardworking, and persistent."

"Gives people the impression that you are credible, respectable, etc."

"Articulate, good listener."

Respect

"Have gained [others'] respect for their opinions, and people are willing to listen to them, and they get people to listen by gaining respect."

"Respected for work ethic and character, not material success. Respected for truthfulness."

"Respect from others by good follow through, honest, showing commitment and passion for what you do."

"First, you and your business have to be respected."

"Need peers that respect you."

"Well respected by other local leaders."

"If they're listened to and their opinion is respected."

"By their reputation and accomplishments and making suggestions to decision-makers."

"Either by having their views and thoughts accepted or sought when issues are under consideration."

"Someone whom business leaders trust and respect."

NOTES

1. Our debate is not necessarily with power theorists, per se—though their contributions are important—but with elite theorists who have identified sources of social power. The search for sources of social power in all human relations has a long history (Piven and Cloward 2005:36–37). Power theorists engage in defining power, but do not often identify the sources used to wield it (e.g., Lukes 2005), while elite theorists focus mainly on the sources and typically adopt someone else's definition of power (with the exception of Dahl 1961). We engage symbolic interactionist power theories insomuch as they allow us to understand how power wielders in the elite use their sources of social power—defined here as interpersonal attributes—to define the situation.

2. Assignment to a sector category was based on various factors, including the source that identified the person as a member of the elite (e.g., if the person's name was pulled from a roster of local politicians, they were categorized in the politics sector), occupation, the function of the person's organization (e.g., if the organization for which the person worked was primarily responsible for distributing aid for impoverished families, they were categorized in the social services sector), and the best judgments of the RCAS organizers.

3. A few respondents could only manage, or only agreed, to complete the interview over the telephone.

4. The response rate per sector was as follows: 29 percent for economic, 37 percent for political, 41 percent for cultural, 55 percent for civic, and 47 percent for religious. We attribute

distinctions in the response rates of sectors to differences in the quality of gatekeeping. The economic sector had many effective gatekeepers, while we experienced limited to no gate-keeping in the civic and religious sectors. It may be that the organizational culture in various sectors influences access to their elites. For statistics on response rates where top managers are the target population, see Baruch (1999:431); for a discussion on problems with securing interviews with politicians, see Maisel and Stone (1998). The respondents in the RCAS received no material incentive or compensation for their interviews.

5. Some argue that influence differs from power in that the influencer does not use sanctions to alter the behavior of the influenced (Form and Miller 1960). For the debate on influence versus power, see Bachrach and Baratz (1963), Polsby (1980:Chapter 11), and Stone (1989).

6. We thank one of the journal's anonymous reviewers for this insight.

7. This was suggested by one of the journal's anonymous reviewers.

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