GUJARAT NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY
GANDHINAGAR
Course: **Introduction to Sociology**
Semester- II (Batch: 2019-24)

End Semester Online Examination: February 2021

Date: 05th February, 2021
Duration: 8 hours   **Max. Marks: 50**
Instructions:
- The respective marks for each question are indicated in-line.
- Indicate correct question numbers in front of the answer.
- No questions or clarification can be sought during the exam period, answer as it is, giving reason, if any.

Answer all the questions (in 1000-1500 words)   **Marks**

Q.1 Critically review the article "Theory and Methods in Indian Sociology" written by   (10)
     Maitrayee Chaudhuri and Jesna Jayachandran focusing on the growth and expansion of
     Sociology in the contemporary times. (Attachment Number 1)

Q.2 If all facts relevant to social research are value laden, what does it mean for social   (10)
     research to seek to be objective? Can there be any social research that does not seek to
     be objective? Answer the question after reviewing the article "An Introduction to
     Sociological Theories". (Attachment Number 2)

Q.3 Write the review of the article written by Geoff Walsham, titled, "Cross Cultural   (10)
     Software Production and Use: A Structurational Analysis". Also explain the work of
     Geert Hofstede cultural analysis and also focus on the issue of cultural homogenization
     and glocalisation. (Attachment Number 3)

Q.4 Elucidate the statement, "The media is being considered as the fourth pillar of the   (10)
     society. It is also being referred as the watchdog on every activities occurring in the
     society and need to report all such news without any biases or prejudices. The media
     should work to strengthen the social order whereas the very stuff of news is the creating
     disorder, breakdown, mayhem, and injustice."

     Discuss the relationship between crime, media, law and society? Answer with the help of
     suitable references.

Q.5 Socialization is the process of the emergence, formation, and development of the human   (10)
     personality in dependence on and in interaction with the human organism, on one hand,
     and the social and ecological living conditions that exist at a given time within the
     historical development of a society on the other.
     Discuss the debate of nature versus nurture to understand the process of socialization.
     Also focus on various theories related to the same. Answer with the help of suitable
     references.

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2

Theory and Methods in Indian Sociology

MAITRAYEE CHAUDHURI AND JESNA JAYACHANDRAN*

This chapter is an attempt to review the broad trends within Indian sociology[1] on theory and methods, approximately between 2000 and 2010. At one level, the task was simple enough—to survey extant literature of the period concerned, identify the ones on theory or on method, and review them. At another level, the task was daunting. The challenges were many and the introductory remarks are to reflect on the challenges that we faced, which perforce led us to clarify what exactly we understood by theory and methods in Indian sociology. This understanding or conceptualization was critical to decide what kind of writings we ought to be looking for. A schematic recounting of the practical and theoretical issues that was faced, is therefore not extraneous to our central object of investigation but constitutive of it.

The many and necessary linked issues were: (i) the paucity of writings either exclusively on theory or exclusively on method; (ii) therefore the need to cull what kind of theory and methods were at work from research in varied substantive areas, such as gender, culture, caste, religion, nation; (iii) while it is a given that theory and methods are inextricably linked, in actual practice this link is rarely addressed or even taken cognizance of; (iv) the prevalence of a widespread view that Indian sociology has had little to offer in theory and method; (v) an influential view that we need not bother too much with theory, for sociological knowledge resides in the field; (vi) a related view that continuous accumulation of data would finally throw up 'theory',

which is an occasional event, and most of us need not unduly fret about it—views which augment the unstated idea that there is a pre-theoretical 'field' and the question of theory is really an option that we have to dwell in or not; (vii) the sociological community's own self perception that they do not 'do theory'; at best they apply theory and method derived from the west; (viii) hence the angst, differently expressed either as a question about the misfit between alien concepts and 'Indian' reality, or a search for indigenous categories.

We pose the above questions schematically in order to review trends in theory and methods in Indian sociology. In the above set of issues, a special mention has been made about the tendency to delink 'theory' and 'methods' in Indian sociology. We would however like to draw attention to a 'distinction that should be made between the dominant attitudes towards theory and those towards methods. If theory appears as something extraneous to dominant sociological practices in India, the same cannot be said about methods.' Indeed, too often methods appear as the defining feature of the discipline. This holds true whether it is the standard sociology textbook model of research that begins with the mandatory hypotheses, proceeds with the sample size and techniques deployed, collates the research findings, and ends with the final outcome. Recent years have also seen what one can describe as a mainstreaming of ethnography, an emphasis on narratives and 'voices' that needs both to be taken note of and accounted for.[2] In other words, despite the centrality accorded to methods as a defining feature of sociology/social anthropology, one rarely comes across scholarly works on methods and its necessary link with theory (Mukerjee 2000; Srivastava 2004). This absence may be read as a preponderant acquiescence, though not consciously, of a propensity towards abstracted empiricism and a deeper belief in the existence of a pre-theoretical starting point.

If the unstated belief in the pre-theoretical marks one end of theoretical and methodological practices in Indian sociology, at another end is the angst that Indian sociology has not witnessed theory building and concept making. We began with a feeling that we would have little to do simply because there was so little literature that engaged with the theoretical and methodological. Significantly, a very similar response had greeted the idea when an attempt was made to delineate a conceptual history of feminism in India (Chaudhuri 2004). For Indian feminists, it was argued, have never sought to theorize. More

recently we have been witness to similar expressions of angst and anxiety among Dalit scholars who rue the fact that Dalits have not theorized the specificity of their predicament. In other words, there is a pattern in the manner that the matter of theory has been addressed within social sciences in India, a point more sharply and acutely articulated within sociology. 'Indeed compared to their colleagues in other disciplines, it seems that Indian sociologists and social anthropologists are unusually afflicted by disciplinary angst' (Uberoi et al. 2007: 2). This self reflexive propensity within sociology, we would like to argue, is 'angst'; not incidental, nor extraneous, but central to the reflexive nature of the discipline.

It is not so much a lack as much as it is a critical mark of its intellectual orientation. Such an orientation demands a necessary examination of not just knowledge as an end product, but an exploration of the conditions and modes of knowledge production. This emphasis is marked in the disciplinary history of sociology in India, partly because of the reflexive nature of the discipline in general, partly because the colonial experience demanded a constant interrogation of the grounds of knowledge in general, and of theory in particular. We argue, therefore, that debates around indigenous or western theory,[3] social theory or sociological theory, sociology or social anthropology, survey or ethnography in part can be read as theoretical and methodological debates. Such an understanding of some of the persistent debates in Indian sociology allows us to examine the many accounts on and about the discipline that has marked the trajectory of sociology/social anthropology in India over many decades as an engagement with theory. It allows us to read the 'angst' not as a failing, or an unwarranted preoccupation, but a more circuitous route to debate theory and disciplinary projects and possibilities. This matter of circuitous, meandering, and even extravagant mode of exposition in contrast to a tradition of parsimonious theory building that marks western social science later needs taking into account rather than an outright dismissal as outside the purview of 'respectable theorizing'.

A point we also seek to make here is that what has been seen as disciplinary 'outpourings' has not been confined to mere expressions of angst, but also developed into some systematic mappings of the discipline (Das 2004; Chaudhuri 2003a, 2010a) as well as some self-conscious history of the disciplines. (Uberoi et al. 2007; Patel 2010a, 2011). Studies that have interrogated the discipline and its changing

contours therefore fall well within the ambit of a survey of trends of theory and method in Indian sociology.

The issue of lack of theory, as mentioned earlier was a matter of concern. We had two choices here: (i) to take this as an unfortunate given, or (ii) to take it as a claim that may need careful perusal to find out whether it tells us more about what kind and form of theory are we talking about. This we decided was a more productive path to take. A survey of trends in theory and method in Indian sociological works therefore would, for that reason, shed light on broader questions pertaining to extant ideas of theory and theory building, relationship between social thought and sociological theory, and our hermeneutic right to read western theory, interpret and use it as we deem productive.

We were also wary of the view about a lack of theory for another related reason. The large body of work done on caste, class, community, family and kinship, religion and politics, culture and rituals entails distinct and serious theoretical engagements. What therefore was required was a certain clarity about what would be considered theoretical and methodological engagement. First, sociologists in India have had to perforce deal with theory—sometimes explicitly as theory, sometimes implicitly, in hands on manner as they set about their task of understanding India. Expressions of this can be read in many of the early and later writings as part of a continuing debate carried as part of discussions 'For an Indian Sociology' in the *Contributions to Indian Sociology* (CIS). Expressions of this can also be read in the oft-repeated refrain of 'paucity of theory' and 'concept building' on the one hand and alien concepts on the other.

In more recent decades there is an increasing presence of sociologists/social anthropologists located, and more often than not trained, in the west, mostly in North American universities. We have a growing and influential body of work that needs attention and commenting upon. These are usually marked by a certain professional gloss and usually a certain kind of theory and methods, a well-honed use of language that is in currency in western dominated global academia. Even as they speak the language of post-colonialism and self-reflexivity, they are more a product of the universities that they are trained in rather than of the societies where they draw their origin from. This is in sharp contrast to the early sociologists/social anthropologists who were an inalienable part of the struggles and

ambiguities of a colonized society and then of a national process of 'nation building'—processes not so easily swept under the broad sweep of the term post-colonial. (Chaudhuri 2012: 20–2)How should one read this development? Should we now be happy that at last, like the academic world in developed societies, we are properly 'professional' and not caught within nationalist and social reform frames? Or should we be askance, appreciative, and yet prepared to unpack elements that have constituted a new professional academic brand, at once professional, seemingly radical—as it almost necessarily invokes the values of multiculturalism and diversity—whether of sexual orientation or colour, even as it shies away from any systematic analysis of persisting inequalities. Surveying trends in theory and method in Indian sociology therefore need looking afresh to our relationship to western theory, itself a reconfigured entity. At the same time we need to look more carefully at the idea that writings from the west are more theoretical and our own works less so. It's easy to be carried away by the idea, simply because of the packaged fashion that western trained writings appear in as compared to a more laboured form of articulation evident in our works. Whether that is a question of language, both in its limited and widest sense of culture is a question that has to be taken seriously. It is also easy to ignore and fail to recognize the repeated quest for 'indigenous' categories, the return to an idea of the 'cultural' and 'civilizational', the basic questioning of what constitutes 'Indian' as theoretical questions for a sociological community deeply entrenched in understanding theory as 'generalization'.

This manner of understanding the sociology of theory and methods allows us to look at both explicitly articulated theoretical writings as well as those that would, so to say, need excavations from the substantive work being done. If we push our understanding of theoretical explorations thus, we can discern new theoretical and conceptual interrogations emerging from substantive analysis in areas such as caste, gender, religion, and community. Further, new areas such as women's studies and post-colonial studies also imply that new forms of analysis—gendered analysis of social institutions, new theoretical privileging of subjectivities, and new methodological emphasis on autobiographies and narratives—gain ground, thereby reshaping ideas of both theory and method. Challenges from diverse social movements have also brought back the question about why does one practice sociology or social anthropology, or for that matter any social science.

This manner of posing also allows us to explore what is understood as 'theory' generally within sociology in India, a point already made before. In other words, one can make explicit the domain assumptions that lie beneath the expressed term 'theory'. It is imperative to make explicit what actually is being referred to: theory as generalization; theory as a set of concepts articulated within a system; middle range or grand theories. The task of reviewing 'methods' in sociology raises a different set of issues: 'Do we look at works discussing methodological questions per se or do we review the broad trends in the methods used in sociological research? Works of the first kind are few and far between. One would thus necessarily look at the general trend in the methods used in the wider body of work in Indian sociology/social anthropology.' Such a treatment will necessarily be illustrative and not exhaustive. Indeed it is important here to insert the caveat that this study does not seek to be a comprehensive review but does attempt to reflect on the contemporary trends in theory and method,

Any treatment of theory and methods almost invariably brings in disciplinary questions. Questions such as 'what is sociology' or 'what is a sociological perspective' remain, even as the terms and content of debate change from the 'book view' to 'field view' framework, to more fluid issues of interstices and cultural in an intellectual world marked by post-modernism. Significantly Indian sociology like India is deeply unequal and very diverse. High-end 'global' academic products, therefore, co-exist with bazaar notes and writings informed of a sociology produced by such notes. A survey of research trends ought to at least mention this, even as this review exercise focuses more systematically on the writings in major recognized journals such as *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, *The Sociological Bulletin*, *Economic and Political Weekly*, *Current Sociology*, and *International Sociology* over a decade starting early 2000, and books of sociological relevance published in the same period.

THE CONTEXT

Twenty-first century India is a world apart from both its colonial past and its first fifty years or more of independence (Abraham 2000). The global ascendancy of India as a global economic power, notwithstanding its deep internal inequalities, means that India and Indian social science matters more than ever before in terms of global academia

and sociological research. Twenty-first century west too is a different world, and the buzz in western academia is the imperative need of 'internationalization of the curricula' and global 'research collaborations'. Non-western approaches and knowledge are in vogue and sponsors of research projects require 'authentic' Indian social science practitioners. It is at such a juncture that Sujata Patel can ask whether a dominant international sociology with universal particulars can contain non-dominant universals assimilated from research in other parts of the world (Patel 2010). A likely danger of this global interest, attention, and collaborative resources is that we become ready partners and work in the topics chosen, apply methods suggested, use concepts given, and quickly move on to a 'new' universal practice of sociology/social anthropology, albeit always 'in a language that privileges the local, difference and diversity'.

Markedly present in the last decade has been a rich body of work produced by scholars of Indian origin, but with institutional locations and professional training in the west. At one level this may not appear so different from a time when founding figures of Indian sociology like G.S. Ghurye and M.N. Srinivas too were trained in the west. We contend that there are significant differences, not just of biographical trajectories of the point of entry into the western academia, primarily Great Britain, but also of the broader epoch and its spirit, not to mention the sheer scale of the North American trained social scientists today, which invariably shape studies in and on India.[4] The 'spirit of the epoch' of an earlier generation of Indian sociologists was the nationalist framework. 'Academic colonialism' and the need for 'swaraj' were inspiring motifs (Uberoi 1968: 27). How relevant are these issues today when we speak confidently about 'provincial universalism'? (Baber 2003).

There is no one answer to that. Critiques of a nationalist framework have been strong in Indian sociology, and not necessarily from the same vantage point. Globally, the post-modern, post-national turn in global academia in the last part of the twentieth century led to an overt recognition of diversity. The critique of universal rationality and ideology of progress and meta-narratives, be they nationalism or socialism, overturned the spirit of earlier times. Discernible influences from this broader theoretical and methodological turn, evident most tangibly in the rise of cultural studies in post-cold war North American academia are evident in sociological theory and methods

in the last decade, even though in terms of spread it may be confined to specific centres and intellectual circles.

Closer home, critiques of nationalist framework emerged from the margins, whether caste or religion, region or tribe. They expressed both the dangers of cultural nationalist hegemonies as well as posited 'professionalism' as against 'nationalism'; an interesting formulation, but one that begs an enquiry into both terms. How ought we to read T.K. Oommen's observation that 'the capital concern of the *pioneers* of Indian sociology, who had started practicing their profession by the early twentieth century, the heyday of the anti-imperialist struggle, was to *Indianize* and not to *professionalize* sociology' (Oommen 2007: 122). This would be a productive entry point to discuss broader questions of nationalist frameworks, post-national conditions, and perhaps the limits and possibilities of professionalization.

Twenty-first century India is also marked by competing sites of knowledge production, other than universities, primarily state-funded research institutions. Corporations and developmental sectors are active producers of sociological knowledge, primarily responding to a certain formulation of research problem, seeking data for specified purposes, whether of developmental organizations or corporations. Theory in such contexts would retreat while innovative methods may flourish. Some evidence of that would be discernible in sociological research emerging outside the formal academic institutions.[5] Research emerging from international institutions (IIs), from the many evaluation reports of projects, and even from corporate houses would demonstrate the use of a wide array of methods—surveys, focused group discussions, narratives, and even visuals. In keeping with our basic emphasis on contexts, one can claim that the current context is more fruitful for methods. It is a context marked by a focus on the practical, the do-able. Data collection and analysis would be the priority rather than what could be considered empty theorizing. One has already mentioned the very deep roots of a belief in the pre-theoretical.

At the same time another trend is also evident in a more assertive claim to theorization, even as the old anxiety of a lack in theory remains. Here too contexts matter. The rise of post-modern and post-colonial theory has to be understood in a context of a changed world where not only has old style colonialism ended, but where we now have western academia peopled by a significant presence of people from the erstwhile colonies. We dwell on this at greater length in

the sections on cultural studies and the implications of the Indian diaspora on sociology. Our effort in the first two sections has been two-fold: (i) to delineate the manner in which we conceptualize this review exercise on theory and methods in Indian sociology—enabling discussions on disciplinary practices and histories; and (ii) foreground the new global context wherein questions of knowledge are produced and where concepts travel.

PRACTICES, HISTORIES, ORIENTATIONS

This section would look at some of the concerns that sociology has been actively engaging with—namely practices, histories and orientations. One would further seek to identify the central themes that are addressed in these writings. The last decade saw the emergence of a body of work that has engaged with 'disciplinary practices' of which theory and methods form a critical part. We have already made the point that this propensity to reflect upon the epistemological and ontological grounds of knowledge is intrinsic to the intellectual making of sociology. Thus sociologists over the last decade have repeatedly engaged with questions of disassembling knowledge and foregrounding disciplinary locations. New conceptual critiques of methodological nationalism, a crucial underpin of sociology, have emerged from two diverse sources: local movements—tribal, caste, gender, environment—on one hand, and at another end from the global dynamics of capitalism (Chaudhuri 2003a, 2010a).

The discipline has seen not just rethinking of knowledge production but also of the challenges of communication. Pedagogic questions have received considerable attention and efforts to draw out connections between changing social composition of the classroom to questions of syllabi, and modes of learning have been consciously made. Significantly the pedagogical and theoretical are not seen as delinked issues (Chaudhuri 2003a: 3). For instance efforts were made to '...consider the importance of learning to practice reading a text about society backwards to discover and unveil the processes of its making' (Talib and Savyasaachi 2003: 77–8).

At the same time, it was also felt that there was too much of reflection on current practices and too little of a 'backward glance', of historicizing (Uberoi et al. 2007: 2). A collection of twelve biographical essays on some of the founding figures in the history of Indian sociol-

ogy and social anthropology has been put together on the assumption that an informed critique and appreciation of the work of previous generations should be a prerequisite for the building of sound disciplinary traditions in India (ibid.: 4). A set of themes have been woven out of these biographies that shed important, though not entirely unexpected, light on the themes that have been central to sociology/ social anthropology in India. A key issue was the matter of 'academic colonialism', the 'colonization' of the non-Western mind through the imposition of Western education, Western categories of thought, and the value-frame of modern (Western) science. This vexed issue of the west and us remain a motif in discussions of the last decade, even as more complex critiques of the nationalist framework emerge. Further we wish to argue that much of the disciplinary debates, even of the persisting theme of the relationship between sociology/social anthropology, have to be considered from the vexed west and us relationship, or differently articulated—our colonially mediated entry into modernity.

A recent volume edited by Sujata Patel provides a critical disciplinary history of the different ways in which ideas, practices, and traditions of sociology grew, were organized, and institutionalized in India from the mid-nineteenth century till present times. The interplay of three themes—time, space, and power—which makeup the arguments here 'highlight two separate but connected dominant positions that have structured the formation of sociological traditions in India-colonialism and its practices, and ideologies of nationalism and notions of nation and nationhood' (Patel 2011).

In doing a disciplinary history, Patel also raises theoretical and methodological questions and draws attention to the manner in which the two are so closely linked. She begins with the rise of the discipline in India in early 1919, and draws a quick history to its massive rise in disciplinary status, research work, and presence in Indian universities. She writes:

The 'crisis of sociology debate', I argue, relates to the many diverse ways the community is trying to clarify, evaluate and reconcile the contradictory claims concerning its identity as it has historically developed. These can be examined at four levels: Its *disciplinary point* of reference—Is it affiliated to theoretical traditions of social anthropology or sociology or is it an interdisciplinary social science? Its *theoretical direction*—Will it follow sociological traditions constructed in Europe

and North America or will it create its own indigenous perspectives? Its *professional orientation*—Is it an academic discipline whose main role is restricted to teaching and research within academic institutions or is it a discipline committed to public and/or radical political concerns? And its *geographical compass*—Is it concerned with relating its identity to global and/or national issues and processes or regional and local ones? Or should it combine all four. (Patel 2010a: 281, emphasis added)

Placing the debate on the nature of Indian modernity centrally, Patel argues that Srinivas's sociology[6] asserted civilizational continuity, focused on the caste system and assessed this 'traditional structure' through the prism of the village. In Srinivas one can see an amalgam of the principles of colonial modernity with the theories and methodologies of Radcliffe-Brown and the Malinowskian tradition of social anthropology. Srinivas's theoretical architecture re-emphasized the disciplinary identity of sociology as anthropology. He also used theories and methods crafted within Europe (as done by his predecessor) and thereby affirmed the continuous linkages of his social anthropology with the principles of colonial modernity and its binaries (ibid.: 284). Srinivas's sociology created a theory and methodology that carved it out from the discourses of economics and politics (both of which emphasized classes together with notions of power and domination in the context of democratic processes). The village acquired in Srinivas's oeuvre a spatial, territorial, and structural significance. A localized setting became representative of a whole nation, a whole society. The microcosm came to represent the macrocosm. Not surprisingly class analytics was and remains a relative weak paradigm in Indian sociology.

However Srinivas departed from Ghurye's Indological view of caste to initiate an empirical method of participatory observations (the 'field view') to study caste in the Indian village. Patel argues that the village is seen as a space to examine 'tradition' (equated with 'society') and hence gives in to colonial influences prevalent at that time. Empirically, Srinivas examines the population of the village by caste and by occupation in connection with agriculture. She argues 'that the adjustment of the structural–functionalist approach with the colonial modernity leads to methodological confusion between caste and village...'. In such a formulation, 'tribes, religious and ethnic groups (other than caste), as well as new emerging interest groups that did

not conform to the caste principles in their ways of everyday living, did not figure in his work' (Patel 2010a: 284).

If Patel's contention is a neglect of interest groups, T.N. Madan's remarks point towards an obverse trend. He writes:

....Indian sociologists generally have been more concerned with social forms and processes rather than cultural traditions, with *interests rather than values*. The separation of sociology from cultural anthropology (a Western import) has been mainly responsible for this. (Madan 2011: xiv)

While there is no agreed upon understanding of what the orientation of sociology ought to be, there are some clearly stated positions. One much repeated position has been that one has to 'insulate the practice of sociology from the demands of ideology'. Béteille argues that:

Sociology... is an empirical and comparative discipline, devoted to the systematic study of society through the application of a distinctive body of concepts and methods, and here ...*sociology is an empirical rather than a normative discipline*....The primary aim of an ideology is not to understand or interpret society, but to change it by acting politically on it. Sociology as an intellectual discipline does not have any definite or specific political agenda... (Béteille 2009: 196, emphasis added)

In sharp contrast, Sharmila Rege argues that there is indeed an ideology that marks mainstream sociology; even as the norm of the dominant ideology, it speaks a language of neutrality and objectivity. One can, however, discern what constitutes this ideology by examining its response to the challenges raised by gender studies, a body of work it either ignores or seeks to discipline:

Strategic exclusions/inclusions of the 'feminist challenge' have to be managed in order to avoid *the perennial questions about the sociological nature of the content and methodology*. An engagement with the issue being studied is met with the reminder of the divide between the diverse interest in the 'social' of the activist and the sociologist in the 'social'. ... Thus, boundaries of 'good sociology' are drawn around general laws, scientific method, and a segmentalizing of human reality. The core of the discipline is sustained through the taken-for-granted ways of perceiving social reality—despite an expansion in the subject matter—often to include the marginalized subjects. *The marginalized, be they women, dalits, adivasis, or the labouring classes, despite their inclusion in the substantive areas, remain on the periphery of the cognitive structures of the discipline.* The intellectual and practical base of the

core is sustained through several dichotomies: social/political, social world/knower, reality/knowledge, objectivism/subjectivism (Hegde 1989), book-view/field view, macro/micro, all of which firmly keep out praxeological issues. (Rege 2003b: 17, emphasis added)

Sociology in India has been challenged by diverse theoretical interventions which have questioned a dominant assumption of the role of sociology as a discipline engaged with 'what is' rather than 'what ought to be' from women studies, dalit studies, cultural studies, environmental studies, and poverty studies to identify some of the main counter currents (Heredia 2000; Kumar 2005). Sundar draws from the old understanding of social anthropology as seeking to understand human existence across all cultures to call for a reformulated role of the discipline to move towards elements of a common morality. We quote:

> *Equally important, if we understand anthropology's raison d'etre as one that expands our notions of human existence across cultures and countries, how do we use this occasion to arrive at elements of a common morality?* I suggest that one way to do this is to engage in what one might call an 'anthropology of culpability,' defining culpability as guilt in a larger moral, and not merely legal sense, to try and understand when and how and to what extent people become culpable for acts of violence they have committed or that are committed in their name— while at the same time exploring the inequalities in attributions of culpability that are an essential part of the new world order. Throughout history, judgments (by dominant groups or persons) of a person's, or a people's, or a country's degree of culpability for violations of some 'natural' order have influenced notions of what can be legitimately done to them. (Sundar 2004: 145, emphasis added)

Sundar thus argues that rather than attempting to save the souls of others, an anthropologists' primary task today must be to widen public understanding of what it means to be human. This involves turning the same lens by which we examine others on ourselves, wherever we stand in the global contours of the discipline. To do this Sundar feels we must put bricolage, juxtaposition, and comparison—between the 'West' and the 'rest'—at the heart of the ethnographic research and teaching enterprise. Although this idea was mooted at least two decades ago and 'hybridity is the name of the fashionable identity game, in fact very little has been done in the direction of exploring cultures refracted in the common light of globally traveling discourses of terror, war, economic rationality, or even human rights'. She therefore

suggests ways in which anthropologists might understand the logic of culpability as it operates in the world today.

This resonates with Shiv Vishwanathan's observation that 'there is something antiseptic about Indian sociology. It has been marked by a search for competence, even exactitude but without achieving a deeper sense of the problematic. One can read twenty years of *Contributions to Indian Sociology* and think that Mandal, Narmada, Bhopal, or the turmoil in Punjab were all events that have not touched our social imagination' (Vishwanathan 2001: 3123). Other scholars too have voiced similar concerns, even if expressed in a different language (Menon 2006; Thakur 2006).

DISCIPLINARY ORIENTATIONS, OBJECTS OF ENQUIRY, AND METHODS

The constant negotiation with the west is a part of our historical trajectory. Both colonialism and nationalism, therefore, are constitutive of the theories and methods that have dominated Indian sociology. This relationship impinges on the manner that the broader debates about sociology/social anthropology, modernity and tradition, nationalist or professional are conducted. Further, as the discussion below would suggest, this therefore would also spill into questions of method, survey or participant observation, qualitative or quantitative data and debates on why sociology needs to take indigenous categories seriously.

The relationship between the two cognate disciplines is a recurrent theme in Indian sociology. This debate is closely bound to the ambiguous relationship, which we have had with the west—both politically and intellectually. It has an important bearing on the identity of the discipline, which in turn decides the choice of methods and objects of enquiry, a point we shall see different scholars across generations raise, though differently. T.K. Oommen makes the point that 'Asian sociologists are of two types: those who are sociologists everywhere (at home as well as in the West), and those who are sociologists at home but are labeled as social anthropologists in the West ... This has precious little to do with the initial training of these scholars...' (Oommen 2007: 2). He further argues that:

The source of this ambiguity, however, is to be located in the origins of sociology and social anthropology in the West and their transplantation in the colonies. ... *In the West, anthropology and colonialism were*

inextricably intertwined; anthropology was perceived as the child of colonialism. In contrast, sociology is cognized as the offspring of modernity. Pursuantly, anthropologists studied 'other cultures' which were 'pre-modern' and sociologists investigated their own societies which are designated as modern. (Oommen 2007: 2, emphasis added)

The sane route to cope with these irrelevant controversies is to recast the discipline so as to transcend particular historical contests. Thus, one can legitimately think of sociologies of 'pre-modern', 'modern', and 'post-modern' societies. However, this did not happen in Indian sociology/social anthropology. If in the 1930s and 1940s an Indological approach and exegetical analyses were preferred, during the 1950s and 1960s the 'field view' and participant observation were privileged to study villages, family and kinship, caste and religion (ibid.: 4).

Satish Deshpande in his essay on modernization argues that notwithstanding numbers, it is the social anthropological methods that remain influential even in the recent decade. Emphasizing the connection between disciplinary orientations, objects of enquiry, privileged standpoint, and methods of enquiry, he observes:

In Indian social anthropology the distinction between sociology and anthropology has been refused at least since Srinivas (that is since the mid-1950s or so). This is an unexceptionable refusal in so far as the convention of the former studying 'complex' and the latter 'simple' societies could not really be followed in India and is no longer the rule elsewhere either. However, *the well-established Indian practice of referring interchangeably to sociology and anthropology hides the fact that the latter is much better developed than the former.* Because the social anthropology of India was heavily oriented towards 'tradition'- that is towards institutions like caste, tribe, kinship and religion, and towards rural rather than urban society- modernization studies here were also biased in this direction. Had urban sociology, economic sociology, social history, or political sociology been better developed, the content of modernization studies may have been more balanced, with the new and emergent getting as much attention as the old and traditional. As it happened, most studies of modernization in India located themselves in the world of tradition and looked out upon modernity from that vantage point, with its attendant strengths and weaknesses. *Indian sociology failed to cultivate intensively those methods (such as survey research or quantitative techniques) and research areas (such as industry, the media, or the class structure) of sociology proper which fell outside*

its usual zone of interaction with anthropology. This in turn affected the manner in which the discipline dealt with the question of modernization, particularly since this question privileges generalization from a macro-perspective, something which anthropology is neither theoretically inclined towards nor methodologically equipped for. (Deshpande 2004: 194, emphasis added)

Deshpande makes the perceptive observation that Srinivas began his career in India in the 1950s with the opposite view—that is by advocating the cause of participant observation as a much-neglected method contrary to the popularity of survey research. At the end of the century, the shoe would certainly seem to be on the other foot; regardless of the numbers involved, there is a clear mismatch in terms of influence. It would not be easy to cite even five survey-based or quantitatively oriented studies that have had a major impact on the misnamed discipline of Indian 'sociology' during the last fifty years (Deshpande 2004: 194).[7] Bina Agarwal, comparing sociology with economics, observes that 'Indian sociologists and political scientists tend to be less quantitative than their American or British counterparts. ... economics in India is becoming more like it is in the west. She then makes a curious comment that 'other disciplines remain more rooted in the Indian tradition' (Agarwal 2001: 390, emphasis added). This however is not the place to follow this up.

T.N. Madan's recent volume returns to this question of tradition. We would like to quote from, to buttress, our initial argument that we in India need to reconceptualize what we mean by theory, and also to aver to the West and US intellectual relationship. This is:

...a book about tradition—about *dynamic cultural traditions* as subjects of study and about *intellectual traditions* as evolving approaches to their study—in the context of the sociology of India. *I do not employ the term 'tradition' to suggest the completeness or closure of a stock of ideas and perspectives, or an unthinking adherence to particular styles of thinking.* In his celebrated book, The Sociological Tradition (1966), Robert Nisbet did indeed suggest that a set of core concepts (namely, community, authority, status, the sacred, and alienation) may well be said to constitute the sociological tradition. *Needless to emphasize that, for him, the Western sociological tradition is universal.* I do not follow that trail in this book, although I am very much concerned in it with *the idea of the sacred in non-Christian cultural traditions and the crafting of appropriate methods for its study.* (Madan 2011: xi, emphasis added)

From a very different vantage point, Sujata Patel critiques the contested nature of both 'tradition' and 'values'. She elaborates on the lasting impact of the linked processes of colonial modernity, the historical context of anthropology, the caste class hegemony of Indian nationalism, the subsequent influence of functionalism, and the choice of ethnography. In the colonial period:

> .... we also see a challenge emerging to this discourse with the growth of an indigenous sociology rooted in 'Indian' values. The second phase coincides with the formation of the nation-state, the expansion of the higher education system and the standardization of a 'national' sociology. *Sociology now became 'social anthropology', utilizing the methods of ethnography and 'field view' to study the defining character of the Indian structure—the caste system. The focus was to analyse the micro-perspective—the village, its tradition(s); and to assess incremental change within a civilizational perspective from an upper caste and class perspective.* (Patel 2010a: 281, emphasis added)

Patel argues that Srinivas studies the structure of Indian society in terms of an adjustment mechanism that adapts to macro changes. This perspective examines the 'traditional' features of Indian society in a frame of dominant colonial modernity. Despite the difference in theory and approach, sociologists in India have since adopted a similar perspective in practicing sociology (Oommen 2008). According to Patel, a 'lack of criticality' in Srinivas' ethnographical inquiry rooted in the 'functionalist paradigm' called for a distinction between the object that was studied and the subject/social scientist who had to maintain that distinction. 'The method of ethnography within a functionalist paradigm was rooted in the principles of the British liberal ideology of the nineteenth century where state, market and other entities were seen as distinct domains. Epistemically it creates a 'distance between the subject and the object. Functionalism does not accept that the object is the creation of the subject and is always in a dialectical relationship with it. In these circumstances ethnography merely mirrors the subject's ideology and research, and presents an empiricist perspective on the one hand and creates theoretical and methodological ambiguities on the other' (Oommen, 2008). Participant observation is thus an eminently flexible methodology (Saberwal 1983: 307–8). It could be deployed anywhere and utilized without the need for an analytical framework. Research can become a 'soft experience' (Patel, 2010: 285).

On the other hand we have the influence of new anthropological methods in India and Meenakshi Thapan's work is an early attempt to reflect on questions of locations and subjectivities (Thapan 1998). In many ways it is indicative of a post-modern influence, which has had an enormous influence in social anthropological work in North American academia, besides post-colonial and gender studies. It privileges locations and reflexivity but remains shorn of any serious engagement with either history or deeper analytical framework, the point made by Satish Saberwal and addressed differently in Nandini Sundar's argument of moral culpability. One could argue that often this reflexivity gets reduced to obsessive engagement with the 'self' rather than a critical engagement with self and society, politics and economics, power and property.

The issue of scale and methods, of quantitative and qualitative approach has been an issue of concern within Indian sociology, clearly reflected in the writings of the last decade. N. Jayaram warns of the dangers of methodological fundamentalism:

> … one should recognize that quantity and quality are two dimensions of a thing, one amenable for measurement and the other can only be described to capture its essence. As such, *they could be viewed as complementary rather than being opposed to each other.* It is true that quantitative methodology is rooted in positivist epistemology, whereas qualitative methodology is grounded in non-positivistic, if not necessarily anti-positivistic epistemology. Which methodology a researcher adopts, obviously depends on his/he ontological and epistemological assumptions vi-a-vis the reality being studied. Failure to recognize this and blindly adhering to 'quali' or 'quanti' methodology for its own sake results in methodological fundamentalism. *As all fundamentalisms do, methodological fundamentalism puts blinkers on the eyes of a researcher.* (Jayaram 2006: 7, emphasis added)

Dalia Chakrabarti feels a purist attitude towards paradigms is not appropriate to qualitative research. The essence of this methodology, she feels, lies in its flexibility (Chakrabarti 2006: 162). Yogendra Singh returns to this matter with the important remark that 'the explanatory power of concepts is often by mistake treated as being a function of the scale of the units of observation'. (Singh 2009: 179). He argues:

> …*the power of generalization that a sociologist gains from her/his study of a single village does not as much depend upon the unit character of the village but upon the nature of the methods and conceptual formulations*

employed by him for the study. Whether one is focused on the simplicity or complexity of a single village as a social system depends less on the substantive features of the village. Rather, most of it is derived from premises about its nature inherent in the frame of reference contained in the instruments of study. For a statistician interested in the head-count of population of the village, it offers itself as a simple social system. But a sociologist or a social anthropologist finds in the village society an example of a system of enormous complexity where the contemporary realities go beyond 'mere appearance' and present themselves as phenomena that inheres enormous complexity. *The social facts and institutions in a village have congealed historical existence through time, India being a civilizational society with multiple pasts. In cultural as well as social structural domains, a village has not only internal complexity, but also linkage with outside social and cultural systems which impinge upon its nature.* (Singh 2009: 180, emphasis added)

The above observations are particularly important in a context where much of sociological research is empiricist. They too often do take the reality as it appears and conflate statistical co-relations as sociological explanations.

This review, as mentioned earlier, has framed this discussion on theory and methods in Indian sociology within a matrix of the West and non-West, with its colonially mediated modernity and nationalism. The last decade, as we saw in the preceding sections, has seen a theoretical critique of both the persistence of a colonial theoretical legacy and the limits of a nationalist framework. At a time when the modernization paradigm loomed large in Indian sociology, it was assumed that there would be a natural progression towards the secular and rational. Since the late 1980s and the 1990s, however, we see an increasingly liberalized Indian economy in a globalized market that has witnessed the rise of the religious right in politics and communal conflicts on the one hand, and evidence of growing assertion of dalits and backward castes, of tribals and ethnic groups on the other. Identity politics made its presence felt more than ever, raising serious questions about an unmarked nation and a secular modernity.

It is in this context that Sujata Patel writes that 'some sociologists have drawn from an engagement with other disciplines and their theorizations, such as subaltern studies and post-colonial studies, to question Indian modernity (Gupta 2000; Deshpande 2003/04). Others have aligned to theoretical positions emerging from feminist thought and Dalit studies, to question the *savarna* orientation of mainstream

sociology (Oommen, 2008). New nations have been discovered, such as the *adivasis* (Sundar 2007 [1997])' and the Dalits, and this development has led to a refashioning of the very basic categories of sociology, whether caste or gender, religion or tribe. Important questions have emerged from north-eastern India about 'Indian sociology' and its understanding of a range of concepts—from nation to caste, kinship to culture (Nanda 2010). 'Simultaneously, older areas have been reconstituted, such as those of the sociology of family and marriage (Uberoi 2006) and that of urban India (Patel 2006b). Additionally, new specializations have developed, such as feminist sociology, environmental sociology, and labour studies have helped to push into the background the Srinivasian project of sociology'. (Patel 2010: 289). Yet she points out that majority of these works do not sufficiently challenge the crux of colonial modernity, the creation of the 'other'. She argues for an interdisciplinary perspective that is inclusive of subaltern perspective if it has to break the binaries of anthropology as the 'other' of sociology.

Questions of the modern and traditional in India has been a constant motif of Indian sociology. However in the new global context, of a time marked both by local assertions of identities and global demands of a consumer and cosmopolitan identity, new questions about this relationship have emerged. Likewise, questions of secularism and the possibilities of models other than the western modern are debated anew. It is in the context of rising religious fundamentalism that the idea of secularism has been revisited and theorized, with greater urgency. But here too the central question with which we have to start is whether 'Indian secularism is the Indian version of a universal conceptual category' (Madan 2011: 3). Madan therefore proposes to study Indian secularism in its specificity rather than generality, with the theoretical view that whatever is 'historical' is because it is 'significant in its individuality' (ibid.: 3–4). While modern ideologies of secularism provide one way of thinking about religious difference, Madan argues that there were other ways embedded within different traditions that could accommodate and (sometimes celebrate) difference within their designs of life. There are scholars who would contest Madan's reading of the history of secularism in the West, and others who would argue that secularism is primarily a legal concept dealing with citizenship in the modern state. Yet others, such as the anthropologists Talal Asad, argue that we need anthropological

explorations into the very question of 'what accounts for the practices through which modern subjects are produced and that secularism in this sense is not only about law but also about deep transformations in subjectivity' (Asad 1993). The growth of identity politics in the 1980s is analysed in some detail in Veena Das's *Handbook on Indian Sociology*, which asks how forms of religiosity have been transformed thus, bringing questions of 'transformations of subjectivity' under regimes of modernity, political citizenship, and religion within the same framework of analysis (Das 2004: 7–8). We will notice in the following sections a renewed but differently articulated attention to subjectivities in gender and caste studies.

Meenakshi Thapan examines gender from a different perspective when she examines women's lived experiences of embodiment. The perspective of embodiment locates women in a physical and psychological space as well as the social and cultural domain. Her endeavor is concerned with the development of a 'sociology of embodiment, rather than a sociology of the body, in the context of women's lives in contemporary, urban India … understanding of this focus on embodiment is mediated by gender and class, two critical elements, that constitute identity in relation to embodiment' (Thapan 2009: xiii).

The lived everyday experiences of women are placed in a larger context, which stems from a mixed heritage and the post-colonial situation, where modernity is a troublesome construct because it has to contend with a legacy of both a tradition that must be changed, even as it must also be valued. This contradictory experience indicates a constant movement between defining and redefining old and new social and political constructions of womanhood in the changing and markedly fluid social and public discourses of 'modern' India. This complex nature of the modern in India has seen multiple ways of theorizing from Indian social scientists. Within Indian sociology we have seen it being theorized as 'civilizational society', as congealed with multiple pasts, as mistaken, as hegemonic, as colonial, as fluid (Gupta 2000; Oommen 1999; Pathak 1998, 2006; Saberwal 1996, 2000; Singh 2009). This, we would argue, has been a productive site of theorization.

To return to Thapan's articulation of 'embodiment', one would also like to refer to other works that have looked at the micro-political level of bodily practices. One is not entering it in any great detail but this theoretical and methodological trend needs recognition. McDonald argues that the increasing absorption of Kerala into the

capitalist global order has resulted in the differentiation of a previously composite system of *kalarippayattu*. The analysis offered is not intended as a narrative of decline from some mythical 'pure state' of kalarippayattu. Rather, it emerges organically and is constantly subject to change, adaptation, and development, thus rendering problematic any normative contrast between an authentic and inauthentic practice (McDonald 2007). Reena Patel's work of women in the call centre also uses the idea of body politics as one of the many theoretical bases to understand the experience of women in the call centre industry in India. The focus is on how women experience the 'second shift' (night shift) in the global economy where 'physical mobility (getting to and from work) and temporal mobility (going out when one is expected to stay in) are job requirements' (Patel, R. 2010). She draws on the concept of 'mobility-morality narratives' of family honour, chastity, and purity in family, and how society pressure women's physical mobility and spatial access. In drawing out this matrix, Patel shows the ways in which women experience working the night shift—be it backlash for going out at night or liberation through earning their own money—are linked to larger structural forces such as global labor relations and nationalism (Patel, R. 2010).

Our reference to Patel's Asian American identity and emphasis upon 'the larger structural forces such as global labor relations and nationalism' are deliberate. Studies post 9/11, particularly in North America, has shifted focus from a pre-9/11 celebration of fluid borders and hybridity to very different kinds of questions. The contexts have clearly changed from the time one wrote about the academic interest to study 'bricolage' and cultural mixes in music, food, and popular culture (Chaudhuri 2003a: 370–402). That was a time when an unabashed celebration of a booming capitalist western world, with endless consumer choices and possibilities, led to a blackening out of the constraints of structures. Real threats of terror and lived experience of unemployment and retrenchment altered an earlier imagination—that was 'reaginized and yuppified', where there were no 'migrant workers, no Chicano barrios, no Central American refugees, or Asians, not even blacks...' (Chaudhuri 2003a: 389). Writings in the last decade are decisively different. Critique of neo-liberalism, the centrality of capital, and its logic to understand contemporary thus acquire ascendency. This trend, however, remains weak in Indian sociology, even as questions of inequality are subsumed within a

far stronger discourse of caste, exclusion, and inclusion, themselves concepts with a different trajectory, but now institutionalized spaces within the Indian academia.

The very visible absence of any serious engagement with Marxist theory and methods has always been a feature of Indian sociology (Patel 2007). However, its absence at a time when new trans-national capitalist formations redefine questions of nationalism appears a strange omission. In this regard the recent volume by Herring and Agarwal (2009) that maps the decline of Marxist analysis within South Asian studies in the North American academia deserves special mention.

CULTURAL STUDIES: NEW OBJECTS OF INQUIRY AND METHODS

The debate about sociology/social anthropology, discussed earlier in this chapter, has a long history in India. However, as we saw, sociologists of different generations have continued to revisit the debate even in the last decade, albeit with new questions. The influence of cultural studies on sociology is a far more recent development (Derné 2005). Though numerically it may not have a widespread presence within India, it has had an influence on the theory and methods of sociology in India. In the new global context, theories and concepts travel not just much faster, but at a far larger scale. Cultural studies had a very strong presence in post-colonial and South Asian studies in North American universities. A quote from Arjun Appadurai, one of the foremost proponents of such an approach about sociology of India, would be instructive:

> The sociology of India since the 1950s has been dominated by one of two major interests. The first pertains to *overarching ideologies of civilization, of tradition, and of cultural genius*. The second has been a preoccupation with the *workings of caste, ritual, and rank at the village level*. ...On the whole they have proceeded in parallel until recently. This dual focus has meant that *certain spaces, institutions, careers and practices have fallen outside the disciplinary gaze. Such spaces include streets, bazaars, and restaurants. Neglected institutions include the state, legal, and non-governmental organizations. Careers and occupations, such as those of bus conductors, grain dealers, truck drivers, and stockbrokers have paid scant attention. And such practices as life insurance,*

blood donation, well irrigation, and moneylending, have received little
sustained analysis. Many of these interstitial practices, spaces, and insti-
tutions span villages and cities, isolated communities and state organi-
zations, informal and formal occupational strategies. They are neither
about the Indian village-as such- or about Indian civilization, con-
ceived as an integrated cultural design...Even where such studies have
been conducted, they have been empiricist or institutional, rarely plac-
ing them within a wider framework of cultural analysis. (Appadurai
2004: 256, emphasis added)

Writings informed of such an approach are very visible in the
Contributions to Indian Sociology (CIS) in the decade under review.
Some of the works are by scholars of Indian origin and sometimes not.
What binds them is a certain intellectual and institutional training/
influence by American universities, in particular at a time when both
post-modern ideas and cultural studies approach made their pres-
ence felt—roughly from the mid-1980s onwards. Significantly, at the
fiftieth anniversary celebrations of the *CIS*, a real fear was expressed
that non-resident Indians (NRIs) or foreigners writing about India
will soon outpace the number of Indians researching themselves; that
NGOs and research institutes dominate output at the expense of uni-
versities, and that research output is project driven rather than long
term, empirical, and micro-sociological rather than theoretical and
comparative (Baviskar *et al.* 2008: 4). This is, of course, one change
that sets apart the first decade of twenty-first century sociological
writings on India—a change that needs serious theoretical question-
ing, not simply of locations,[8] but a certain deployment of concepts and
tools, not to mention the object of inquiry itself.

We would notice an abundance of terms such as racialized, classed,
sexualized, but no critical questions of what these terms mean and
what a mandatory invocation of such terms imply, and what could be
the theoretical and methodological assumptions of not historicizing
these terms. Could this be a fall out of a very local North American
intellectual product exported globally as a model sensitive and con-
stitutive of the idea of 'difference'? They appear to be often though
not always used as ornamental rather than explanatory terms. They
are presented as unproblematic terms, boxed empirical/conceptual
entities, rather than historically constituted efforts to grapple with
extant distinct realities. We suspect that a reason for this is the man-
ner that literary critical studies have often taken a lead in setting the

theoretical fashions in the West. Texts and society are related, but not coterminous. This issue needs further explorations, but here, one would simply like to flag it as worthy of further examination.

Linked to the ascendancy of a cultural/textual turn was of course a concomitant decline of Marxist theory. The following paragraph of the retreat of class analytics in South Asian studies is instructive;

> Post-modern theory from the humanities undermined class analysis through rejection of both causal theory based on demonstrable mechanisms—the core of class analytics—and empirical referents as a measure of truth value of statements of fact—the core of positivism. (Herring and Agarwal 2009: 8)

We need not dwell here for too long but as would be evident below, developments within the North American academy and the ascendency of Indian studies therein were not delinked from the broader retreat of class analysis and the shift towards cultural analysis. The rise of identity politics on the American university campus and a decline of the New Left coincided with an increased prominence of Indian origin intellectuals. Most significantly and paradoxically, as matters of social oppression were entering the mainstream of scholarly production, the concern with capitalism and class began to wane. In this context it would be productive to look at the key concepts of 'popular' and 'public culture' in cultural studies. Arjun Appadurai elaborates:

> While the term 'popular culture' has a clear set of referents and associations, 'public culture' is a newer conceptualization. Popular culture draws our attention to the everyday practices of ordinary people and, as a category, emerged in the social history of Europe as an antidote to the study of elites, of grand events, and of official sources and perspectives....prior studies of popular culture were often descriptive accounts of specific traditions, practices and cultural forms, and the perspective of these studies tended towards the 'salvage' mode, seeking to record cultural practices that appeared to be in the process of disappearing. (Appadurai 2004: 257–8)

Starting in the mid-1980s, the study of popular culture began to witness a shift away from a strict interest in the expressive practices of specific sub-cultural groups and to recognize that *popular cultural expressions are inevitably tied to contests over power, value, and meaning.* This period coincided with a waning interest in the studies of kinship, rank, and stratification among younger anthropologists working on India. The reasons for this shift are complex: in part, it

was a response to a global drift away from studies of kinship and social organization in anthropology as a discipline; there was also a recognition that the study of rural India, especially at the village level, needed to include wider networks of regional, state, and national processes and policies; and finally there was a growing sense that the study of larger forms of turbulence in Indian society and politics required fresh approaches to caste, class and identity.' (Appadurai 2004: 258, emphasis added)

We would like to make two observations on the seemingly radical shift that Appadurai delineates. The *first*, that indeed there was a shift of focus to everyday lives of people, and their ordinary culture and lives. The remark that culture was now seen as a site of power and contestation is entirely valid when pitched against the dominant anthropological mode of looking at it from the 'salvage' mode. But if one pitches the remark against the body of scholarship that was emerging from India on caste, gender, religion, violence, tribe, his reading of Indian sociology appears inaccurate. A careful reading would also show that the theoretical movement away from class analysis towards a cultural framework brought in questions of power, but emptied it of a materialist analysis. In other words, while capital rode with renewed vigour and new property relations were being put in place across the globe, analysis of capitalism retreated.

The *second* alludes to Appadurais' mention of a global shift in anthropology, away from kinship, rank, and stratification. In India, it is at this time that important new works on kinship emerged and feminist interventions on kinship opened up an entirely new mode of investigation (Dube 2001; Kaur 2004; Palriwala and Uberoi 2008; Uberoi 1999). Caste and gender analysis reopened analysis of kinship, gender, and caste in completely new and radical ways. We make this point to indicate how centrally important contexts, even national contexts, are in a globalizing world for marking issues in sociology/social anthropology. This underscores how important it is not to be carried away by claims which may be valid in one context but not in another. In a way, this actually throws light on the politics of recognizing theory unless it is rendered in a familiar language.

Scholars have gauged the influence of cultural studies differently. Taking note of the impact which cultural studies was making, particularly in disciplines such as English Literature in India in the late 1990s, Niranjana and Hedge writes in the context of sociology:

What an encounter between sociology and cultural studies can suggest, therefore, is to problematize older accounts of culture by drawing attention to cultural practices as shaped and located historically.... As a kind of counter-thesis to sociology's generalizing universalisms, the field of contemporary cultural studies does endeavour to build, or extend, differential understandings of cultural processes, a task that requires a coming to terms with heterogeneity, both within and between cultures. (Niranjana and Hedge 2003: 346–7)

Chaudhuri's take on the impact in the same volume was a bit different. While recognizing the role that cultural studies had in interrogating an essentialist notion of culture, she draws attention to the political economic on one hand and the persisting significance of international boundaries, particularly in a context where diasporic Indian writings blur with home grown sociological work (Chaudhuri 2003b).

...I may not have fully appreciated the appropriation of India (which is probably entirely incidental and an unintended consequence) by post-colonial 'Indian' diasporic intellectuals. I perceived a difference between the West and me. But I also perceived a distinction between the diasporic Indian and my location. Post-colonialsim for me (as for them) did mean an interrogation of 'my' cultural identity and rethinking of what seemed to be the persisting fixity of 'nation state' in constraining cultural identity (Chaudhuri 1998). But for me post-coloniality was still embedded by my Third World location.' (Chaudhuri 2003a: 395)

The cultural turn made sense in a context marked by a global retreat of Marxian theory after the collapse of the Soviet Union and ascendancy of capitalism as the only possible option of development. Yet, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, in the background of global recession, we may yet witness a shift towards political economic analysis. A recent work which examines the decline of class analysis in South Asian social science in this regard is perhaps portend of things to come (Herring and Agarwal 2009). This should, however, not suggest that there is a necessary dichotomy between the 'cultural' and political economic, or that they are mutually exclusive.

It is more relevant here to veer away from both economic and cultural determinist explanation. There is a concern about the limits of the political and economic, and therefore the need to explore the cultural. This tension reappears in some new ethnographic works. One example is Ciotti Manuela's analysis of the ethnohistories of *Chamar* weavers living on the outskirts of the city of Banaras (Ciotti 2007).

It seeks to contribute to the understanding of the industrial working classes in South Asia and, thereby, to redress the lamented absence of studies on this subject (see Parry 1999). Manuela argues:

> At the same time, the analysis of these ethnohistories responds to the call to focus on 'culture'; how Indian workers think and act differently from others located elsewhere (ibid.: xiii). As Parry notes, one precursor of the cultural approach has been Dipesh Chakrabarty's 1989 study of jute mill workers in colonial Bengal, where he argued that 'a theoretical understanding of the working class needs to go beyond the 'political-economic' and incorporate the 'cultural''. (1989: 65). According to Parry, there is a tension between explanations 'based on a universalistic logic intrinsic to industrial capitalism itself and explanations of a more culturally specific kind. (Parry 1999: xv; Ciotti 2007:322)

It is likely that in the next decade we may have greater engagement between the two perspectives. The widely used term neo-liberalism, within many who have been deeply located within a cultural studies perspective, is an indication of things to come.

CASTE AND GENDER: NEW ISSUES, THEORIES, AND METHODS

Caste and Post-colonial Analysis

It has been argued that perhaps the most devastating deconstructions of traditionalist notions of caste have, however, emerged in the context of post-colonial analyses. At one level there can be little disagreement with this; at another we need to rethink the sources of this post-colonial critique. Our discomfort is that post-colonial theory principally addresses the needs of Western academia. 'What post-colonialism fails to recognize is that what counts as "marginal" in relation to the West has often been central and foundational in the non-West' (Gandhi 1998: ix). One needs, therefore, to reiterate the point made earlier in the context of Appadurai's reading of Indian sociology that while significant convergences have taken place, it is important to historicize the distinct contexts within which the Dalit and the Indian women's movement arose in India, from which emerged critical interrogations and new conceptualization of caste and gender. This is separate from the context of western academia and its own story of cultural studies and post-colonial theory (Chaudhuri 2003b). We need to understand

this in the light of the broader argument we make of a certain North American construction of the post-colonial that seeks to subsume diverse global trends within its 'local', but hugely powerful, and therefore 'universal' conceptual framework.

For the moment let us return to the two main arguments in the post-colonial deconstruction. The *first* is that caste is an orientalist preoccupation that has often functioned as a 'foil to build up the West's image of itself'. By defining the South Asian 'other' as unjust, despotic, and governed by religious prejudice, Western scholarship has been able to reinforce a self-serving view of the West as secular, rational, and fair-minded. The *second* argument is more radical, and holds that caste is, in fact, a colonial invention (Dirks 2001). This is not to say that caste was fabricated out of thin air, but rather that what was a flexible and indeed often theoretical system became consolidated into a rigid and actual one as a result of British processes of government, enumeration (for example the Census that was a key aspect of knowledge production during the colonial period), and scholarship.

Such arguments have not gone uncriticized. It has been pointed out that the so-called 'orientalist' view of caste coincides with the one held by reformers like Ambedkar, who have fought for the social rights of Dalits in India, and that the idea that the British 'invented' caste serves to perpetuate the notion that Indians were passive entities in the colonial process (Gupta 2004). As Gupta scathingly writes, such a point of view not only makes the Hindus appear bigoted, which they are, but also stupid, which may not always be the case. 'It is as if the inhabitants of India had no identity worth the name prior to colonialism, and were one large undifferentiated mass. The British changed all this, or so the story goes, and Hindus were calmly driven into all kinds of caste, religious, and sectarian corrals at the behest of colonial machinations.' (Gupta 2004: viii).

What is clear then is that the issue of caste continues to evoke controversy, debate, and a deep feeling in South Asian anthropology and sociology, despite vigorous attempts by many to 'put it in its place'. (Nadkarni 2008). This probably has much to do with the fact that, despite predictions and many decades of reformist policy, caste has stubbornly refused to disappear from the landscape of modern Indian society.

We are going to engage at greater length with the now very developed critique of caste and gender perspective. The last decade has also

been witness to the most intense critique of what is perceived as an 'upper caste' understanding of Indian society and also a critique of Hinduism as a religion that purportedly justifies the heinous caste system. Kancha Illaiha's powerful book *Why I am not a Hindu* (1996) perhaps marked a whole body of critiques that emerged from within India.[9]

Gender Studies

Gender studies has in some ways had greater impact than cultural studies theoretical and methodological orientations in mainstream sociology. It may not be an exaggeration to argue that gendered analysis have, in a major fashion, re-conceptualized key sociological concepts within sociology, whether of marriage, family and kinship, caste and community, work and leisure, or social processes such as migration, urbanization, modernization, or globalization.

From the mid-1970s, when women studies emerged as a visible presence to this point, sociology has, in many ways, been recast, sometimes in the manner of tokenism, an add stir approach, which now makes gender a mandatory topic in sociology at all levels, to a more fundamental interrogation of what has been seen as a mainstream and malestream discipline. The process has not been easy (Chaudhuri 2010d; John 2001; Rege 2003a, 2003b).

> Born out of women's struggles for equality, women's studies have challenged the process of knowledge construction in social sciences and humanities. *Indicating the politics of knowledge generation, feminist scholarship has contended that mainstream social sciences/humanities do not articulate women's knowledge or their experiences of reality. This struggle to integrate women's voices/experiences raises serious epistemological* questions that fundamentally alter our understanding of social reality. Further, as there is an intimate connection between theory and method, feminist research has in its quest for recovering and articulating women's experiences experimented with innovative research techniques. (Poonacha 2004: 389, emphasis added)

Poonacha's article demonstrates how attempts to recover women's historical presence fundamentally alter our understanding of history. Rajni Palriwala in her case study of the teaching of gender in the Department of Sociology in the Delhi School of Economics (DSE), Delhi University, shows how difficult it was for gender studies to

be taken seriously within the institution. In her words '...questions regarding the absence of a gender dimension can be labeled as 'group and identity claims', rather than as issues of epistemology and methodology' (Palriwala 2010: 321, emphasis added).

While the term intersectional in western scholarship is in great circulation now, what has been distinctive in Indian gender studies is an almost mandatory intersectional analysis which would necessarily understand gender in its inextricable connection with caste and class, state and nation, family and community, labour and culture. Thus studies such as Uma Chakravarti's analysis of widowhood can be seen as one of seminal worth in sociological understanding of Indian caste society, even though extant institutionalized disciplinary divisions would place her within history (Chakravarti 1995). A focus on the manner in which both caste and gender structures have simultaneously reproduced have also led to new approaches and the deployment of new methods.

Caste and Gender

Sharmila Rege's *Writing Caste/Writing Gender* marks a refreshing and clear break with conceptual captivities, whether of the more domestic 'upper caste' captivity of categories and concepts, or of the western kind. This is a break she explicitly theorizes. Rege argues:

> ... dalit life narratives are in fact *testimonies*, which forge a right to speak both for and beyond the individual and contest explicitly or implicitly the 'official forgetting' of histories of caste oppression, struggles and resistance. (Rege 2006: 13)

In presenting these testimonies as political acts, she veers away the reader who may be tempted to reading these narratives as objects of pity and pathos instead of seeing them as stories of struggles and resistances. Stories of the 'hateful past' of the Dalits, Rege contends, is 'one of the most direct and accessible ways in which the silence and misrepresentation of dalits has been countered' (ibid.: 13). For many of us, these testimonies are eye openers. For too long have we been captive of 'ignorance in which we are complicit through the privilege of class and education'.

We would like to return to that matter of 'captive theorizing', for these testimonies are critical in helping us to break from them. Many

Theoretical interventions by gender and caste studies have also made its presence felt within the choice and use of methods. Mention can be made here of two instances: use of autobiographies and use of multiple voices in ethnography. The use of autobiographies deserves special mention here.

> Autobiographies address the ways in which people account for and express the experience of living within particular sets of circumstances, particularly those constrained by structures of domination. They challenge the received notions of dichotomies of public and private, knowledge and experience and thus disrupt hegemonic models of teaching and learning. The issue is not one of exposing the multitude of experiences but to move towards a standpoint by mapping life stories onto broader social processes. Critical autobiographies, that is autobiographies which make use of individual experience, theory and a process of reflection and attention to politically situated perspectives provide a basis to move away from false universalizations inherent in mainstream courses. Such critical autobiographies underline the processes or mechanisms through which different groups are embedded and reproduced in structures and identities. *Caste, class and gender do not then emerge as static and experience may be presented in a way that contributes to theoretical understanding.* The pedagogical challenge is one of ensuring that all participants stay open to new perspectives without collapsing either into narratives of guilt or lack. (Rege 2003b: 39, emphasis added)

INDIAN DIASPORA, A GLOBAL ACADEMIA, AND INDIGENOUS CONCEPTS

At the very start of this chapter, we sought to emphasize the very distinct context in this second decade of the twenty-first century. We have argued that social science today is witnessing a theoretical critique of methodological nationalism from both the local social movements, as well as the imperatives of global capital. The role of the Indian diaspora has to be located within this. A premier debate in the present conjuncture of globalization has been the prospect of 'post-nation' and the obsolescence of patriotism at the horizon of transnationalism. In an ethnographically rich and discursively sharp intervention, R.K. Jain articulates the contribution that diaspora studies can make to this debate. It offers a fresh insight into the dimensions of Indian social institutions viewed from the vantage point of diaspora (Jain

2010). Mention has to be made here of the increasing multi-sited ethnography, a point not entirely unlinked to the visible presence of the Indian diaspora (Gallo 2005). One, however, needs to problematize the diasporic locations. Nation states continue to matter even as they are transformed as do cultural contexts, a matter which Supriya Singh addresses. She argues that westeren economic sociological theory has neglected to understand the role of kinship and culture in diasporic remittances (Singh 2006).

Analogies are never adequate. Yet one is tempted to draw an analogy between Hindi films and Indian sociology. As Uberoi put it, the diaspora has come home (2006). The increasing visibility of Indian diasporic communities in the production of sociological knowledge in turn raises new questions and new formulations of theory and method. We have already drawn attention to both the possibilities and limits of 'western' post-colonial theory and cultural studies.

When discussing the diaspora it is important to remember its differentiated nature. Thus while Dalit diasporic communities may foreground questions of caste and discrimination in overseas Indian communities, others in North American locations may debate cosmopolitanism. We choose to illustratively compare two works: Inderpal Grewal's work situated in North America with Vineeta Sinha's situated in South-East Asia. As mentioned earlier, this chapter does not seek an exhaustive review. But it does hope to sociologize the current trends in knowledge production and journey, even if illustratively.

Feminism, Nationalism, Cosmopolitanism

Inderpal Grewal argues for a different perspective of feminism in the transnational context. Theoretically the work examines feminism, nationalism, and cosmopolitanism, and borrows from cultural studies. The method reflects the challenges of her theoretical take and examines 'transnational connectivities' in the production of gendered, transnational, neoliberal subjectivities. Grewal builds her argument of how feminism has historically operated in a transnational context by relying on a rhetoric of 'choice'. Theoretically, she combines a postcolonial perspective with social and cultural theory to argue that contemporary notions of gender, race, class, and nationality are linked to earlier histories of colonization. The neoliberal subject—middle-class Asian Indian and American subjects—emerges through moments of

converging geopolitical and biopolitical interests. American multicultural nationalism post 9/11 relies on gendered, racialized technologies of governmentality that emerged out of a continuity that is rooted in colonial and post-colonial capitalism (Grewal 2005). She argues that knowledge formations and subjectivities cannot be drawn out in a linear transnational trajectory, or that societal forces be compartmentalized into those that are part of 'civil' society, and those that emanate from state power.

Her method is rooted in a cultural studies perspective. In the earlier section on cultural studies, we have already referred to the possibilities abounding therein, but noted the limitations to capture the dynamics of society—of structure and agency, of double hermeneutics, and of unintended consequences, which form the crux of a sociological perspective.

'Hindu' Categories and Communities among the Diaspora

The growing body of work emerging from the diasporic Indian academia has its own distinct influence. If cultural studies get re-routed to Indian contexts in one way, diasporic writings from older diasporic communities raise other conceptual and methodological questions. Vineeta Sinha writing from the south east Asian context thus seeks to problematize a number of categories that constitute the intellectual heritage of students of Hinduism. 'Social science approaches to analysing Indian society, including religion in general, and Hinduism in particular, have generated an anthology of sense-making tools—a body of categories, concepts, schemas, and dichotomies. It is instructive to ask if these received categories continue to be appropriate'. She questions the categories 'folk Hinduism' and 'sanskritization' which have been pivotal in sociological and anthropological accounts of India and continue to provide an analytical framework for studying Hinduism today. Yet, these categories have been neither historicized sufficiently, nor received rigorous, intellectual attention, but continue to be accepted rather uncritically. 'The categories 'folk Hinduism' and 'sanskritization' share a historical and analytical relationship and thus must be appraised jointly'. In these discussions, it is also important to historicize the category 'folk' and assess its conceptual utility. The author's approach is to deconstruct these categories, utilizing ethnography to raise questions about the continued value of using the named

categories for making sense of empirical, everyday manifestations of 'Hinduism' in contemporary societies, especially among Hindu communities in the diaspora' (Sinha 2006). This question of indigenous categories is, however, of wider significance. Within India, sanskritization has witnessed critiques from both a gender and dalit perspective.

Indigenous Categories

The problematic yet defining relationship that we have with the West necessarily implies a vexed engagement with the idea of the 'indigenous'—itself a term that is open to contestation (Mukherjee 2004). The use of indigenous categories has been a key theoretical and methodological issue within sociology (Pollock 2008). This is evident in V. Sujatha's argument in the context of traditional health system that anthropologists accord differential treatment to folk conceptions, or the understanding of lay people, in different spheres of life.

> In the domain of religion, folk conceptions are regarded as legitimate and valid and are treated with appropriate gravity. But in domains deemed to be 'scientific', such as medicine, physiology, agriculture and architecture, folk conceptions tend to be treated mainly as 'subjective' beliefs and not as valid forms of knowledge. This is a pity because *sociological engagement with folk knowledge in precisely these 'scientific' domains can provide insights into alternative conceptions of epistemological categories such as the 'body', 'space', 'habitat' and 'natural forces'. Such an approach can open up an arena of conceptions other than the formalized and professionalized systems of knowledge in the same domain.* It may also illuminate the structure of knowledge and the politics of its dispersion. Health is a domain par excellence in which the confluence of practical needs, inherited knowledge and people's ingenuity is clearly demonstrated. (Sujatha 2007: 169–70, emphasis added)

A recent reprint of Ákos Östör's early work, reveal a 'caution' even while reiterating the significance of indigenous categories. Östör writes in the context of his working on rituals in Bengal:

> Foremost in my mind was working with indigenous categories; the terms, concepts, ideas in and through which people act. Relations among domains formed by such ideas and actions proved to be the kernel of my approach. The configuration of domains is given by

categories in structure, event, locality and time. The search for cultural categories (which are, for anthropologists, ethnographic ones, elicited through the dialectic of field work) necessitates a comparison among societies.. .... *I do not want to reify method and theory here—methods are merely the way I go about my work as an anthropologist, something visible and accountable, so that others who wish to follow may come to similar or different conclusions.* (Östör 2004: 6, emphasis added)

While the debate on indigenous categories has been a running theme in Indian sociology, the manner and the levels of analysis within which it is debated are uneven, often conducted at very different planes. It ranges from the relevance of 'cultural categories' to 'folk knowledge' to questions of hegemony and intra-indigenous debates. We also have the idea of knowledge as not just active but meditative, of efforts towards a 'spiritual' critique that transcends the necessary dichotomy of the 'material and spiritual' in western epistemology (Giri 2002, 2010).

The idea of indigenous reappears in other kinds of work, returning to a contrast between the oriental and occidental. Chatterjee, for instance, has a critical take on this. He argues that a relative abundance of scholarly intervention in the 'development process vs. indigenous people's rights' issue is paralleled here by a near absence of relevant social science literature on people's concern for pollution and degradation of the physical environment. An attempt is made to comprehend environmental concern in an Indian situation, taking into account some contextual issues that possibly differentiate Indian experience from the West. Indian tradition, in contrast with western tradition it is argued in general, stresses asceticism where frugality is more positively valued than extravagance. Different variants of self-denial and self-restraint features are embedded in every major Indian religion and worldview. The notion of *Dharma*—the stabilizer of an unstable life, the urn of life and existence (a Sanskrit equivalent of 'religion')—represents Indian psyche and occupies the central place in Hinduism, the predominant Indian religion. It can be argued that different brands of a Promethean view of human life underlie much of western thought. It can also be argued that due to relatively lower levels of development of science and technology, oriental people typically have not developed such usual occidental exuberance—or 'modern arrogance toward nature' (Chatterjee 2008: 8). Such a dichotomy can be easily questioned. Weber's Protestant Ethics would only be a

small part of this story just as the profligacy of globalized India's rich would be another.

<center>***</center>

As one draws to the end of this trend report on theory and methods in Indian sociology, one would like to reiterate again the close connect between contexts and theory—the point from where I began. I would also like to repeat how distinctively different a twenty-first century academic world is. While scholars may gauge this moment differently, few would disagree that geopolitical considerations have brought both India and knowledge about India to the fore. Over the decades Indian sociological research has evolved from one with a distinct colonial intellectual dominance to a discipline that has opened up its episte-mology, to involve the diversity of social experiences both within and outside India, subaltern perspectives as well as one that reflects upon dominant theories and practices (Patel 2010). Yet this very visibility of India and Indian studies, of Indian diasporic academia raises new and difficult questions about theory and methods (Assayag and Bénéï 2003, 2005). A niggling doubt remains about new power questions in this transformed context.

This context is radically different. It is marked by a rapid and intense flow of knowledge and images. Theories and concepts travel thick and fast as we rapidly download PDFs. Intellectual centres which produce theories, and legitimize new academic standards and measures, do persist, even if it is articulated by our own South Asian post-colonial theorists located in American universities. Clad more often than not in radical post-colonial and post-modern language of difference and plurality, a sociology of knowledge perspective cannot gloss over the fact that historical and spatial locations matter. Taking a cue from the same theories one can argue that if identities are not fixed and given, then identities of scholars too are made and remade in a dialectical relationship with the state, societies, and academia of which they form an integral part. We need to take the claim about contexts not being simply a background, but constitutive of knowledge seriously.

This equivocal invocation of all diversities—race, sex, class—render a curious emptying of their historical and theoretical complexity, rendering them simply as the current package of political correct-ness, in circulation within North American academia. Importantly

for Indian sociology, which has its own history of the 'book view', a ready willingness to textual analysis is not such a difficult shift. Both historical sociology and material analysis were weak currents as Dhanagare's elaborate review of historical sociology in India shows (2007a, 2007b). The first category of sociologists he refers to are those who have used classical texts—for instance Indological sources—in understanding contemporary social structures, institutions, statuses, roles, values, and cultural practices by tracing their origins to one or more Sanskrit texts, and then reinterpreting or rationalizing them in the present day context. In the second category were those sociologists who narrate the historical background of social reality, either of the past or contemporary ones, which they are researching for. The concern is that too often such a historical account does not form a part of the researcher's explanatory scheme, nor is it integrated with their sociological analysis. In the second category, what is involved is mostly a metaphoric use of history. What Dhanagare however sees as most significant is the substantive use of history for sociological purpose—a broader level of explanation, generalization, and theoretical abstraction without which the sociological mission would remain incomplete.

His argument is that it is the potential of the substantive use of history, whether for a macro- or for a micro-analysis, whether by consulting secondary or primary archival sources, that needs to be fully exploited further by Indian sociologists. Indian sociologists need to rediscover the intrinsic value of history and historical method by creatively using it in their researches and by using them in their pedagogic practices. This indeed is being done within India as teachers and researchers negotiate with the daily issues and concerns that constitute the 'social' here and now. The global academia, however, has seen the rise of other influential trends that run against both historical and material analysis, some of which have already been discussed at length. The discussion would however remain incomplete without taking note of the ascendency of 'social constructivism' in the last decade.

Hedge notes how the positivist dispute, which shaped the debates in the philosophy of the social sciences for much of the twentieth century, has been overshadowed by the debates centering around 'constructivism', which appear 'to radically challenge established views and 'truths', even seeking to subvert what has been characterized as

His point is that if lack of meta theory has been India's weakness, the solution can be neither the normative complaint, nor a normative motivation for theorizing outside the dominant European and North American metropolises. The necessary step will be deconstructing the 'West', for Western sociology is less homogeneous than assumed in Indian sociology. 'Antithetically, contemporary sociology as a discipline is universally fragmented. Tensions in Indian sociology are also tensions in other sociologies. The distinction of theory and empirical research, the debate on quantitative and qualitative approaches and the question of whether sociology should follow the rational-actor model derived from economics or better contextualize its models are important themes across the globe (Welz, 2009).

Global sociology too is faced with broad questions of what ought to be the objective of sociology today. In a world where the focus increasingly is on the practical application of knowledge, there is a need for a serious engagement with theory and method The question however is which orientation will be promoted by Indian sociology? Will it go towards the study of social problems, or will it seek to analyse the larger social field that creates those problems and our knowledge of them? (Baviskar 2008: 431).

NOTES

1. Sociology throughout this chapter necessarily includes social anthropology.
2. This is evident in a wide variety of work emerging from new sites of knowledge production—whether the corporate or developmental sector.
3. This trend, of course, marks most non western societies. See Alatas 2006.
4 A recent work by Vivek Chibber on the decline of class analysis in South Asian studies comments on both the North American and Indian context thus:

> ... the traditional, Indological approach ... was heavily oriented towards culturalism. This in turn made the field a hospitable ground for the entrance of post-structuralism, which, like mainstream Indology, not only eschews materialist analysis, but is largely hostile to class. Finally, I argue that the decline of class analysis is now visible in Indian universities too, and this is largely caused by the overwhelming influence that U.S. universities have come to exercise over Indian elite academic culture. (Chibber 2009: v–vi)

5 Ready examples from evaluation research in the developmental sector are the use of Rapid Appraisal and Focus Group discussions. For a more detailed review of research in the developmental sector, see Kumar (2010). Ethnography of how

1 AN INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES

Introduction

Humans are social beings. Whether we like it or not, nearly everything we do in our lives takes place in the company of others. Few of our activities are truly solitary and scarce are the times when we are really alone. Thus the study of how we are able to interact with one another, and what happens when we do, would seem to be one of the most fundamental concerns of anyone interested in human life. Yet strangely enough, it was not until relatively recently – from about the beginning of the nineteenth century onwards – that a specialist interest in this intrinsically social aspect of human existence was treated with any seriousness. Before that time, and even since, other kinds of interests have dominated the analysis of human life. Two of the most resilient, non-social approaches to human behaviour have been **'naturalistic'** and **'individualistic'** explanations.

Rather than seeing social behaviour as the product of interaction, these theories have concentrated on the presumed qualities inherent in individuals. On the one hand, naturalistic explanations suppose that all human behaviour – social interaction included – is a product of the inherited dispositions we possess as animals. We are, like animals, biologically programmed by nature. On the other hand, individualistic explanations baulk at such grand generalizations about the inevitability of behaviour. From this point of view we are all 'individual' and 'different'. Explanations of human behaviour must therefore always rest ultimately on the particular and unique psychological qualities of individuals. Sociological theories are in direct contrast to these

'non-social' approaches. Looking a little closer at them, and discovering what is wrong or incomplete about them, makes it easier to understand why sociological theories exist.

Naturalistic theories

Naturalistic explanations of human activity are common enough. For example, in our society it is often argued that it is only natural for a man and a woman to fall in love, get married and have children. It is equally natural for this nuclear family to live as a unit on their own, with the husband going out to work to earn resources for his dependants, while his wife, at least for the early years of her children's lives, devotes herself to looking after them – to being a mother. As they grow up and acquire more independence, it is still only 'natural' for the children to live at home with their parents, who are responsible for them, at least until their late teens. By then it is only natural for them to want to 'leave the nest', to start to 'make their own way in the world' and, in particular, to look for marriage partners. Thus they, too, can start families of their own.

The corollary of these 'natural' practices is that it is somehow *un*natural not to want to get married, or to marry for reasons other than love. It is equally unnatural for a couple not to want to have children, or for wives not to want to be mothers, or for mothers not to want to devote the whole of their lives to child-rearing. Though it is not right or natural for children to leave home much younger than eighteen, it is certainly not natural for them not to want to leave home at all in order to start a family of their own. However, these 'unnatural' desires and practices are common enough in our society. There are plenty of people who prefer to stay single, or 'marry with an eye on the main chance'. There are plenty of women who do not like the idea of motherhood, and there is certainly any number of women who do not want to spend their lives solely being wives and mothers. There are plenty of children who want to leave home long before they are eighteen while there are many who are quite happy to stay as members of their parents' households until long after that age.

Why is this? If human behaviour is, in fact, the product of a disposition inherent in the nature of the human being then why are such deviations from what is 'natural' so common? We can hardly put down the widespread existence of such 'unnatural' patterns of behaviour to some kind of large-scale, faulty genetic programming.

In any case, why are there so many variations from these notions of 'normal' family practices in other kinds of human societies? Both

history and anthropology provide us with stark contrasts in family life. In his book on family life in Medieval Europe, *Centuries of Childhood* (1973), Philippe Ariès paints a picture of marriage, the family and child-rearing which sharply contradicts our notions of normality. Families were not then, as they are for us today, private and isolated units, cut off socially, and physically separated from the world at large. Families were deeply embedded in the community, with people living essentially public, rather than private, lives. They lived in households whose composition was constantly shifting: relatives, friends, children, visitors, passers-by and animals all slept under the same roof. Marriage was primarily a means of forging alliances rather than simply the outcome of 'love', while women certainly did not look upon mothering as their sole destiny. Indeed, child-rearing was a far less demanding and onerous task than it is in our world. Children were not cosseted and coddled to anywhere near the extent we consider 'right'. Many more people – both other relatives and the community at large – were involved in child-rearing, and childhood lasted a far shorter time than it does today. As Ariès (1973) puts it, 'as soon as he had been weaned, or soon after, the child became the natural companion of the adult'.

In contemporary non-industrial societies, too, there is a wide range of variations in family practices. Here again, marriage is essentially a means of establishing alliances between groups, rather than simply a relationship between individuals. Monogamy – one husband and one wife – is only one form of marriage. Polygyny, marriage between a husband and more than one wife, and polyandry, between a wife and more than one husband, are found in many societies. Domestic life is also far more public and communal than it is in industrial societies. Each family unit is just a part of a much wider, cooperating group of mainly blood relatives associated with a local territory, usually a village. As in Medieval Europe, therefore, child-rearing is not considered the principal responsibility of parents alone, but involves a far greater number of people, relatives and non-relatives.

Clearly, then, to hope to explain human life simply by reference to natural impulses common to all is to ignore the one crucial fact that sociology directs attention to: human behaviour varies according to the social settings in which people find themselves.

Individualistic theories

What of individualistic explanations? How useful is the argument that behaviour is the product of the psychological make-up of individuals? The employment of this kind of theory is extremely common. For

example, success or failure in education is often assumed to be merely a reflection of intelligence: bright children succeed and dim children fail. Criminals are often taken to be people with certain kinds of personality: they are usually seen as morally deficient individuals, lacking any real sense of right or wrong. Unemployed people are equally often condemned as 'work-shy', 'lazy' or 'scroungers' – inadequates who would rather 'get something for nothing' than work for it. Suicide is seen as the act of an unstable person – an act undertaken when, as coroners put it, 'the balance of the mind was disturbed'. This kind of explanation is attractive for many people and has proved particularly resilient to sociological critique. But a closer look shows it to be seriously flawed.

If educational achievement is simply a reflection of intelligence then why do children from manual workers' homes do so badly compared with children from middle-class homes? It is clearly nonsensical to suggest that doing one kind of job rather than another is likely to determine the intelligence of your child. Achievement in education must in some way be influenced by the characteristics of a child's background.

Equally, the fact that the majority of people convicted of a crime come from certain social categories must cast serious doubt on the 'deficient personality' theory. The conviction rate is highest for young males, especially blacks, who come from manual, working-class or unemployed backgrounds. Can we seriously believe that criminal personalities are likely to be concentrated in such *social* categories? As in the case of educational achievement, it is clear that the conviction of criminals must somehow be influenced by social factors.

Again, is it likely that the million or so people presently unemployed are typically uninterested in working when the vast majority of them have been forced out of their jobs, either by 'downsizing' or by the failure of the companies they worked for – as a result of social forces quite outside their control?

Suicide would seem to have the strongest case for being explained as a purely psychological act. But if it is simply a question of 'an unsound mind', then why does the rate of suicide vary between societies? Why does it vary between different groups within the same society? Also, why do the rates within groups and societies remain remarkably constant over time? As in other examples, social factors must be exerting some kind of influence; explanations at the level of the personality are clearly not enough.

Variations such as these demonstrate the inadequacy of theories of human behaviour which exclusively emphasize innate natural drives,

or the unique psychological make-up of individuals. If nature is at the root of behaviour, why does it vary according to social settings? If we are all different individuals acting according to the dictates of unique psychological influences, why do different people in the same social circumstances behave similarly and in ways others can understand? Clearly there is a social dimension to human existence, which requires sociological theorizing to explain it.

All sociological theories thus have in common an emphasis on the way human belief and **action** is the product of social influences. They differ as to what these influences are, and how they should be investigated and explained. This book is about these differences.

We shall now examine three distinct kinds of theory – *consensus*, *conflict* and *action* theories – each of which highlights specific social sources of human behaviour. Though none of the sociologists whose work we will spend the rest of the book examining falls neatly into any one of these three categories of theory, discussing them now will produce two benefits:

- it will serve as an accessible introduction to theoretical debates in sociology; and
- it will act as useful reference points against which to judge and compare the work of the subject's major theorists.

Society as a structure of rules

The influence of culture on behaviour

Imagine you live in a big city. How many people do you know well? Twenty? Fifty? A hundred? Now consider how many other people you encounter each day, about whom you know nothing. For example, how many complete strangers do people living in London or Manchester or Birmingham come into contact with each day? On the street, in shops, on buses and trains, in cinemas or night clubs – everyday life in a big city is a constant encounter with complete strangers. Yet even if city dwellers bothered to reflect on this fact, they would not normally leave their homes quaking with dread about how all these hundreds of strangers would behave towards them. Indeed, they hardly, if ever, think about it. Why? Why do we take our ability to cope with strangers so much for granted? It is because nearly all the people we encounter in our everyday lives do behave in ways we expect. We expect bus passengers, shoppers, taxi-drivers,

passers-by, and so on, to behave in quite definite ways even though we know nothing about them personally. City dwellers in particular – though it is true of all of us to some extent – routinely enter settings where others are going about their business both expecting not to know them, and yet also expecting to know how they will behave. And, more than this, we are nearly always absolutely right in both respects. We are only surprised if we encounter someone who is *not* a stranger – 'Fancy meeting you here! Isn't it a small world!' – or if one of these strangers actually does behave strangely – 'Mummy, why is that man shouting and waving his arms about?' Why is this? Why do others do what we expect of them? Why is *dis*order or the *un*expected among strangers so rare?

Structural-consensus theory

One of the traditional ways in which sociologists explain the order and predictability of social life is by regarding human behaviour as *learned* behaviour. This approach is known – for reasons that will become apparent – as *structural-consensus* theory. The key process this theory emphasizes is called *socialization.* This term refers to the way in which human beings learn the kinds of behaviour expected of them in the social settings in which they find themselves. From this point of view, societies differ because the kinds of behaviour considered appropriate in them differ. People in other societies think and behave differently because they have learned different rules about how to behave and think. The same goes for different groups within the same society. The actions and ideas of one group differ from those of another because its members have been socialized into different rules.

Consensus sociologists use the term *culture* to describe the rules that govern thought and behaviour in a society. Culture exists prior to the people who learn it. At birth, humans are confronted by a social world already in existence. Joining this world involves learning 'how things are done' in it. Only by learning the cultural rules of a society can a human interact with other humans. Because they have been similarly socialized, different individuals will behave similarly.

Consensus theory thus argues that a society's cultural rules determine, or *structure*, the behaviour of its members, channelling their actions in certain ways rather than others. They do so in much the same way that the physical construction of a building structures the actions of the people inside it. Take the behaviour of students in a

school. Once inside the school they will display quite regular patterns of behaviour. They will all walk along corridors, up and down stairs, in and out of classrooms, through doors, and so on. They will, by and large, not attempt to dig through floors, smash through walls, or climb out of windows. Their physical movements are constrained by the school building. Since this affects all the students similarly, their behaviour inside the school will be similar – and will exhibit quite definite patterns. In consensus theory, the same is true of social life. Individuals will behave similarly in the same social settings because they are equally constrained by cultural rules. Though these **social structures** are not visible in the way physical structures are, those who are socialized into their rules find them comparably determining.

The levels at which these cultural rules operate can vary. Some rules, like laws for instance, operate at the level of the whole society and structure the behaviour of everyone who lives in it. Others are much less general, structuring the behaviour of people in quite specific social settings. For example, children in a classroom are expected to behave in an orderly and attentive fashion. In the playground much more license is given them, while away from school their behaviour often bears little resemblance to that expected of them during school hours. Similarly, when police officers or nurses or members of the armed forces are 'on duty', certain cultural rules structure their behaviour very rigidly. Out of uniform and off duty these constraints do not apply, though other ones do instead – those governing their behaviour as fathers and mothers, or husbands and wives, for instance.

This shows how the theory of a social structure of cultural rules operates. The rules apply not to the individuals themselves, but to the positions in the social structure they occupy. Shoppers, police officers, traffic wardens, schoolteachers or pupils are constrained by the cultural expectations attached to these positions, but only when they occupy them. In other circumstances, in other locations in the social structure – as fathers or mothers, squash players, football supporters, church members, and so on – other rules come into play.

Sociologists call positions in a social structure *roles*. The rules that structure the behaviour of their occupants are called *norms*. There are some cultural rules that are not attached to any particular role or set of roles. Called *values*, these are in a sense summaries of approved ways of living, and act as a base from which particular norms spring. So, for example: 'education should be the key to success'; 'family relationships should be the most important thing to protect'; 'self-help should be the means to individual fulfilment'. All these are values, and they provide general principles from which norms

directing behaviour in schools and colleges, in the home and at work are derived.

According to this sociological theory, socialization into norms and values produces agreement, or *consensus*, between people about appropriate behaviour and beliefs without which no human society can survive. This is why it is called structural-consensus theory. Through socialization, cultural rules structure behaviour, guarantee a consensus about expected behaviour, and thereby ensure social order.

Clearly, in a complex society there are sometimes going to be competing norms and values. For example, while some people think it is wrong for mothers to go out to work, many women see motherhood at best as a real imposition and at worst as an infringement of their liberty. Children often encourage each other to misbehave at school and disapprove of their peers who refuse to do so. Teachers usually see this very much the other way round! The Tory Party Conference is annually strident in its condemnation of any speaker who criticizes the police. Some young blacks would be equally furious with any of their number who had other than a strongly belligerent attitude towards them.

Consensus theorists explain such differences in behaviour and attitude in terms of the existence of alternative cultural influences, characteristic of different social settings. A good example of this emphasis is their approach to educational inequality.

Educational inequality: a consensus theory analysis

Educational research demonstrates, in the most conclusive fashion, that achievement in education is strongly linked to class membership, gender and ethnic origin. There is overwhelming evidence, for example, that working-class children of similar intelligence to children from middle-class backgrounds achieve far less academically than their middle-class counterparts.

To explain this, consensus theorists turn to stock concepts in their approach to social life – norms, values, socialization and culture. Starting from the basic assumption that behaviour and belief are caused by socialization into particular rules, their explanation of working-class underachievement in education seeks to identify:

- the cultural influences which propel middle-class children to academic success
- the cultural influences which drag working-class children down to mediocrity.

The argument usually goes something like this. The upbringing of middle-class children involves socialization into norms and values that are ideal for educational achievement. Because of their own educational experiences, middle-class parents are likely to be very knowledgeable about how education works and how to make the most of it. Further, they are likely to be very keen for their children to make a success of their own education. These children will thus grow up in a social setting where educational achievement is valued and where they will be constantly encouraged and assisted to fulfil their academic potential.

In contrast, the home background of working-class children often lacks such advantageous socialization. Working-class parents are likely to have had only limited, and possibly unhappy, experiences of education. Even if they are keen for their children to achieve educational success, they will almost certainly lack the know-how of the middle-class parent to make this happen. Indeed, sometimes they may actively disapprove of academic attainment; for instance, they may simply distrust what they do not know. As a result, their children may well be taught instead to value the more immediate and practical advantages of leaving school as soon as possible. For example, boys may be encouraged to 'learn a trade' – to eschew academic success for the security of an apprenticeship in 'a proper job'.

Consensus theory: conclusion

Here is a clear example of the application of consensus theory to the facts of social life. From this theoretical point of view, different patterns of behaviour are the product of different patterns of socialization. It might seem that this contradicts the commitment of these theorists to the idea that social order in a society is the outcome of an agreement or a consensus among its members about how to behave and what to think. But consensus theorists say that despite differences of culture between different groups, even despite opposing sub-cultures within the overall culture, in all societies an overall consensus prevails. This is because all societies have certain values about the importance of which there is no dispute. They are called either *central values* or *core values*, and socialization ensures everyone conforms to them.

In Victorian Britain two central values were a commitment to Christian morality, and loyalty to the Queen and the British Empire. Today, examples of central values in a Western capitalist society might be the importance of economic growth, the importance of democratic institutions, the importance of the rule of law, and the importance of

the freedom of the individual within the law. (Indeed, anything trotted out as 'basic to our country's way of life' at any particular time is usually a central value in a society.)

For consensus theory then, central values are the backbone of social structures, built and sustained by the process of socialization. Social behaviour and social order are determined by external cultural forces. Social life is possible because of the existence of social structures of cultural rules.

Society as a structure of inequality

The influence of advantages and disadvantages on behaviour

Other sociologists argue a rather different theoretical case. They agree that society determines our behaviour by structuring or constraining it. But they emphasize different structural constraints. For them, the most important influence on social life is the distribution of advantage and its impact on behaviour. Where advantages are unequally distributed, the opportunities of the advantaged to choose how to behave are much greater than those of the disadvantaged.

Educational inequality: an alternative analysis

For example, while it is perfectly feasible for two boys of the same intelligence to be equally keen to fulfil their potential in education and to be equally encouraged by their parents, their culturally instilled enthusiasm cannot, by itself, tell us everything about their potential educational successes or failures. If one boy comes from a wealthy home, while the other is from a much poorer one, this will be far more significant for their education than their similar (learned) desire. Clearly, the unequal distribution of advantage – in this case material resources – will assist the privileged boy and hamper the disadvantaged one.

The advantaged boy's parents can buy a private education, while those of the poorer boy cannot. The advantaged boy can be assured of living in a substantial enough house, with sufficient space to study, whereas the disadvantaged boy may have to make do with a room with the television in it, or a bedroom shared with his brothers and sisters. The advantaged boy can rely on a proper diet and resulting good health, whereas the disadvantaged boy cannot. The advantaged

boy can be guaranteed access to all the books and equipment he needs to study, whereas the disadvantaged boy cannot. Probably most importantly, the advantaged boy will be able to continue his education up to the limit of his potential unhindered. For those who are less advantaged it is often necessary to leave school and go out to work to add to the family income. This stronger impulse usually brings education to a premature end.

Structural-conflict theory

So, one primary objection some sociologists have to structural-consensus theory is that where societies are unequal, people are not only constrained by the norms and values they have learnt via socialization. Such theorists argue that it has to be recognized that people are also constrained by the advantages they possess – by their position in the structures of inequality within their society. This emphasis on the effects on behaviour of an unequal distribution of advantage in a society is usually associated with *structural-conflict* theory. Why are such theories called conflict theories?

The kinds of inequality structures in a society vary. Ethnic groups can be unequal, young and old can be unequal, men and women can be unequal, people doing different jobs can be unequal, people of different religious beliefs can be unequal, and so on. The kinds of advantages unequally possessed by such groups can vary, too. Different groups can possess unequal amounts of power, authority, prestige, or wealth, or a combination of these and other advantages.

Notwithstanding the different kinds of inequality conflict theories focus on, and the different kinds of advantages they see as unequally distributed, such theories nonetheless have in common the axiom that the origin and persistence of a structure of inequality lies in the domination of its disadvantaged groups by its advantaged ones. Conflict theories are so-called because for them, inherent in an unequal society is an inevitable *conflict of interests* between its 'haves' and its 'have-nots'. As Wes Sharrock (1977) puts it:

> The conflict view is . . . founded upon the assumption that . . . any society . . . may provide extraordinarily good lives for some but this is usually only possible because the great majority are oppressed and degraded . . . Differences of interest are therefore as important to society as agreements upon rules and values, and most societies are so organised that they not only provide greater benefits for some than for

others but in such a way that the accrual of benefits to a few causes positive discomfort to others. (pp. 515–16)

So conflict theory differs from consensus theory not only because it is interested in the way an unequal distribution of advantage in a society structures behaviour, but also because it is interested in the conflict, not the consensus, inherent in such a society. According to conflict theory, there is a conflict of interest between a society's advantaged and disadvantaged, which is inherent in their relationship.

However, there is another conflict theory objection to consensus theory too. Conflict theorists not only accuse consensus theorists of putting too much emphasis on norms and values as determinants of behaviour at the expense of other influences. They also argue that in any case, consensus theory misunderstands and therefore misinterprets the role of its key concern – socialization into culture.

Ideas as instruments of power

Consensus theory argues that people behave as they do because they have been socialized into cultural rules. The outcome is a consensus about how to think and behave, which manifests itself in patterns and regularities of behaviour. In contrast, conflict theorists argue that we should see the role of cultural rules and the process of socialization in a very different light. For them, the real structural determinants of behaviour are the rewards and advantages possessed unequally by different groups in a society. Other things being equal, those most disadvantaged would not put up with such a state of affairs. Normally, however, other things are *not* equal. Where a society is unequal, the only way it can survive is if those who are disadvantaged in it come to accept their deprivation. Sometimes this involves naked coercion. Plenty of unequal societies survive because their rulers maintain repressive regimes based on terror. However, the exercise of the force necessary to maintain unequal advantage need not take such an obvious or naked form. There are two other related ways in which structures of inequality can survive – and with a surer future than by the naked use of force. First, it can do so if those most disadvantaged by them can somehow be prevented from seeing themselves as underprivileged, or second, even if this is recognized, it can do so if they can be persuaded that this is fair enough – that the inequality is rightful, legitimate and just. According to the conflict view, the way this happens is through the control and manipulation of the norms and values – the cultural rules – into which people are socialized. In effect then,

for conflict theorists, far from being the means to social order via consensus, socialization is much more likely to be an instrument of power – producing social order by means of force and domination.

Imagine the following scenario. It is early morning in a Latin American country. A group of agricultural labourers, both men and women, are waiting by a roadside for a bus to arrive to drive them to work. Suddenly two vans draw up and four hooded men jump out. At gunpoint they order the labourers into the backs of the vans, which then race away deep into the surrounding countryside. At nightfall they are abandoned and the labourers transferred into a large covered lorry. This is driven through the night, deep into the mountains. Before daybreak it reaches its destination – a huge underground mine, built deep into the heart of a mountain. Here the labourers are horrified to find a vast army of slaves toiling away, under constant surveillance by brutal guards. After being given a meagre meal, the labourers are forced to join this workforce.

As they live out their desperate lives within this mountain world, some of the slaves try to escape. When caught they are publicly punished as a deterrent to others. Two attempts to escape result in public execution. As the labourers get older, they rely on each other for companionship, and on their memories for comfort. They keep sane by recounting stories of their former lives. In the fullness of time, children are born to them. The parents are careful to tell these children all about their past. As the children grow up and have children of their own, they, too, are told tales of their grandparents' land of lost content. But for them these are handed-down, historical stories, not tales based on experience. As the years go by, though the facts of life within the mountain remain the same, the perception of life in it by the participants alters. By the time five or six generations of slaves have been born, their knowledge of the world of their ancestors' past lives has become considerably diminished. It is still talked about, sometimes. But by now it is a misted world of folklore and myth. All they know from experience is slavery. So far as any of them can remember, they have always been slaves. In their world, slavery is 'normal'. In effect, to be a slave means something very different to them from what it meant to their ancestors.

A similar process occurs with the oppressors. As the slaves' view of themselves has altered over time, so the necessity for naked force has become less and less. As, through socialization, their subordinates have begun to acquiesce in their own subordination, the guards no longer brandish guns and clubs. Because of this, they no longer see themselves as the original guards did. Both the dominant and the

subordinate, knowing nothing else, have, through socialization, come to see the inequality in their world in a very different light from the original inhabitants.

Though this story is rather larger-than-life, it does allow us to see the role of socialization into cultural rules as conflict theorists see it. Their argument is that we must be careful not to dismiss the presence of conflict in societies just because a consensus seems to prevail. Naked force is only necessary so long as people see themselves as oppressed. If they can be persuaded that they are not oppressed, or if they fail to see that they are, then they can be willing architects in the design of their own subordination. The easiest way to exercise power, and gain advantage as a result, is for the dominated to be complicit in their own subordination.

Conflict theorists tell us that rather than simply describe cultural rules in a society, therefore, we must carefully examine their content. We must ask: 'Who *benefits* from the *particular* set of rules prevailing in this society, rather than some other set?' Cultural rules cannot be neutral or all-benevolent. Of course, consensus theorists are right to say that people are socialized into pre-existing norms and values. But for conflict theorists this tells us only half the story. We must also find out whether some groups benefit more than others from the existence of a particular set of rules and have a greater say in their construction and interpretation. If they do, then the process of socialization into these is an instrument of their advantage – it is an instrument of their power.

Ideas exercising power: the example of gender inequality legitimation

For example, even a cursory glance at the kinds of occupations held by women and the kinds of rewards they receive for doing them clearly indicates the advantages men have over women in our society. Of course, Britain once had a female prime minister, and today has some female civil servants, MPs, judges, and university vice-chancellors as well an increasing number of women in leading positions in business. But this cannot hide the fact that there is still markedly unequal occupational opportunity, and unequal economic reward, based on gender. The facts are that males dominate the best-rewarded and most prestigious occupations and (despite the Equal Opportunities Commission) usually receive greater rewards when they perform the same jobs as women.

Clearly, there is a considerable potential conflict of interests between men and women here. It is in men's interests for women not to

compete in large numbers for the limited number of highly rewarded jobs. It is in men's interests for women to stay at home and provide domestic services for them. If women were to want something different, this would conflict with the desires, interests and ambitions of men.

So why is it that so many women do *not* object to this state of affairs? If women are as systematically deprived of occupational opportunities and rewards by men as this, why do so many of them acquiesce in their deprivation? For example, why are some of the fiercest critics of the feminist movement women? Why do so many women *choose* to be (unpaid) houseworkers for the benefit of their husbands and children? Why is the extent of so many girls' ambitions to 'start a family'? Why do they not wish to explore their potential in other activities instead, or as well?

Clearly, a substantial part of the answers to these questions is that women have been socialized into accepting this definition of themselves. For conflict theorists, this is a clear example of particular norms and values working in the interests of one section of society and against another. Through the ideas they have learned, women have been forced to accept a role that is subordinate to men.

There is one final question to be asked about this theoretical approach. How does the exercise of force by means of socialization into particular ideas happen? Conflict theorists say it can be intentional or unintentional. The rulers of many societies in the world today deliberately employ propaganda to persuade the ruled of the legitimacy of this arrangement. They also often control and censor mass media in their countries, to ensure lack of opposition to this controlled socialization.

The exercise of this kind of force can be less deliberate too. Take our example of the inequality between men and women in our society. To what extent does the image of women presented in advertising promote an acceptance of this inequality? Though the intention is to sell various products – from lingerie and perfume to household goods, to alcohol, cigarettes, cars and office equipment – the images of women used in advertising are so specific that there are other, less intentional effects, too. Two images dominate. One is of the woman as the domestic at home, using the 'best' products to clean, polish, launder and cook. The other is of the woman as a sexually desirable object, guaranteed to either (1) magically adorn the life of any male who is sensible enough to drink a certain sort of gin, drive a particular car or use a specific shaving lotion; or (2) be transformed into an irresistible seductress when she wears particular underwear or perfume, or is given a particular brand of chocolates.

Such advertising socializes both men *and* women, of course. The outcome is a stereotypical view of womanhood and of the place of women in society, embraced not only by those whom it disadvantages, but also by those who benefit from it. There *is* a consensus about such things. However, it is not the kind of consensus portrayed by the consensus theorist. It is an imposed consensus, preventing the conflict that would break out if people were allowed to see the world as it really is.

Conflict theory: conclusion

There are a number of sociological theories that can be called structural-conflict theories, in that they are based on two main premises:

- social structures consist of unequally advantaged groups; the interests of these groups are in conflict, since inequality results from the domination and exploitation of the disadvantaged groups by the advantaged ones
- social order in such societies is maintained by force – either by actual force, or by force exercised through socialization.

Consensus theory versus conflict theory

Structural-consensus theory and structural-conflict theory emphasize different kinds of influences on thought and behaviour. Though both theories see the origin of human social life in the structural influences or determinants of society external to the individual, they disagree about what this outside society consists of. Consensus theory is based on the primacy of the influence of culture – what we learn to want as a result of socialization. Conflict theory, in contrast, pays most attention to the conflict inherent in the relationship between unequally advantaged groups in society and argues that the content of culture should be seen as a means of perpetuating relationships of inequality.

Society as the creation of its members

The influence of interpretation on behaviour

A third kind of sociological theory leads in a rather different direction. It still attempts to explain why human beings in society behave

in the orderly ways they do. But instead of looking for the answer in the influence of a social structure which people confront and are constrained by, this theory argues something else. From this point of view, the most important influence on an individual's behaviour is the behaviour of other individuals towards him or her. The focus is not on general cultural rules, or on the unequal distribution of advantage in whole societies. It is on the way individual social encounters work – on how the parties to them are able to understand and thereby interact with one another. This is not to say that structural theories do not try to explain this, too. In consensus theory, for example, people are role players, and act out parts learnt through socialization. But how do they decide which roles to play, in which social setting? Consensus theory does not try to explain why people choose one role rather than another. It is assumed that we somehow learn to make the right choices. This third theory, however, argues that the choice of role playing is much more complex than in this rather robotized view. It argues that the essence of social life lies in the quite extraordinary ability of humans to work out what is going on around them – their ability to attach meaning to reality – and then to choose to act in a particular way in the light of this interpretation. This is called **interpretive**, or **action theory**.

Action theory

Action theorists stress the need to concentrate on the *micro*-level of social life, the way particular individuals are able to interact with one another in individual social encounters, rather than on the *macro*-level, the way the whole structure of society influences the behaviour of individuals. They argue that we must not think of societies as structures existing independently of, and prior to, the interaction of individuals. For action theorists, societies are the end result of human interaction, not its cause. Only by looking at how individual humans are able to interact can we come to understand how social order is created. To see how this happens, let us reflect on the kinds of action of which humans are capable.

Some human action is like the action of phenomena in the inanimate world – purpose*less*, or lacking intention. We all do things involuntarily – like sneezing, blinking or yawning. We do not *choose* to feel fear, excitement, or pain, or choose to react in certain ways to those feelings. So far as we know, the actions of non-human animate phenomena are purely instinctive (automatic or reflex responses to

external stimuli). It is true that animals, for example, often appear to act in a purposive way by using their brains. They seem to choose to eat or sleep or be friendly or aggressive, or to choose to evacuate their bladders over the new living-room carpet. Nevertheless, the usual zoological explanation is that even these often quite sophisticated patterns of animal action are involuntary. They are reactive and conditioned, rather than the product of voluntary creative decision-making.

In contrast, nearly all human action *is* voluntary. It is the product of a conscious decision to act, a result of thought. Nearly everything we do is the result of choosing to act in one way rather than another. Furthermore, this is purposive, or goal-oriented choice. We choose between courses of action because, as humans, we are able to aim at an end or a goal and take action to achieve this. Nearly all human action, therefore, is *intentional* **action**: we *mean* to do what we do in order to achieve our chosen purposes.

Where do these chosen purposes, or goals, come from? What action theory emphasizes is that we decide what to do in the light of our *interpretation* of the world around us. Being human means making sense of the settings or situations in which we find ourselves and choosing to act accordingly. To use the usual action theory phrase for this, we choose what to do in the light of our 'definition of the situation'. For example, suppose you wake up one summer morning to find the sun shining in a cloudless sky. You decide to sunbathe all day and to mow your lawn in the evening, when it will be cooler. At lunchtime, you see large clouds beginning to form in the distance. Because you decide there is a chance of a thunderstorm, you cut the grass immediately. You get very hot. It does not rain. In the evening, you go for a walk in the country. You come to a country pub and stop for a drink. As you sit outside you notice smoke rising on a hillside some distance away. As you watch the smoke gets thicker and darker. You decide the fire is unattended and out of control. You dash inside the pub and ring the fire brigade. Shortly afterwards you hear a fire engine racing to the fire. You climb a nearby hill to have a better look. When you get there you see that the fire is, in fact, deliberate; it is a bonfire in the garden of a house on the hillside which you had been unable to see from the pub. Shortly afterwards you hear the fire engine returning to its base. You go back to the pub to finish your drink. It has been cleared away in your absence. You have no more money. You decide it is not your day. You decide to go home.

Of course, nearly all of the settings we have to make sense of involve more than this because nearly everything we do in our lives

takes place in the company of others. Most of the situations we have to define in order to choose how to act are *social*; they involve other humans doing things. You see a very large man shaking his fist and shouting at you, and conclude that he is not overjoyed that you have driven into the back of his car. As a result you decide not to suggest that he was responsible for the accident because of the way he parked. You see a traffic warden slipping a parking ticket under your wind-screen-wiper, and decide not to contribute to the Police Benevolent Fund after all. This is *social* action. It is action we choose to take in the light of what we interpret the behaviour of others to mean.

Meaningful social interaction

There is more to social action than interpretation leading to action, however. Most of the time when we interact with other humans, they *want* us to arrive at certain interpretations of their actions – they *want* us to think one thing of them rather than another. The man whose car has just been damaged is not behaving in the rather distinctive manner described above because he wishes the culprit to come round to his house for tea. The man scratching his nose in the auction room is not (usually) alleviating an itch. He is communicating his bid to the auctioneer, and he expects that the latter will interpret his actions as he wishes. Pedestrians in London streets do not wave to taxi-drivers because they are, or want to become, their friends. They do so because they want a lift.

Dress can often organize interpretation just as effectively as gestures, of course. Though the punk rocker, the skinhead, the bowler-hatted civil servant, the police officer and the traffic warden whom we encounter in the street make no *apparent* attempt to communicate with us, they are certainly doing so, nevertheless. They want us to think certain things about them when we see them, so they choose to communicate by the use of uniforms. They are making a symbolic use of dress, if you like; after all, like gestures, garments symbolize what their users want us to interpret about them.

The most effective symbols humans have at their disposal are words – linguistic symbols. Though dress, gesture, touch and even smell can often communicate our meanings and organize the interpretations of others adequately enough, clearly the most efficient – and most remarkable – way in which we can get others to understand us is through language. This is why action theorists are often interested in the way we use language to exchange meanings with each other. Language, verbal or written, is the uniquely human device which we

are able to use to interact meaningfully with one another, and thereby to create society.

From this point of view, societies are made up of individuals engaging in a countless number of meaningful encounters. The result is social order. But this is no *determined* order. It is not the result of the imposition of cultural rules, as the consensus theorist sees it. Nor is it the result of the constraints of a world where advantages are unequally distributed, and where cultural rules legitimate these constraints, as the conflict theorist sees it. Instead, society is an order created, or accomplished, by the capacities of the members themselves. It is the outcome of innumerable occasions of interaction, each one accomplished by interpreting, meaning-attributing actors who can make sense of the social settings in which they find themselves and who choose courses of action accordingly.

The social construction of reality

There is another important difference between structural and interpretive conceptions of society. For structural theorists, the character of a society – its social structure – is not in doubt. It is a 'real' thing that exists outside of its members. For the interpretivist, however, it is much more difficult to describe a society that is the outcome of interpretation as somehow 'true' or 'real' in this structural sense.

For the interpretivist, being human involves interpreting what is going on around one – saying: 'This is what is happening here', and choosing an appropriate course of action in the light of this interpretation. However, such interpretations of 'what is going on here' can only ever be considered 'correct' or 'true' for the particular person doing the interpreting. What is 'really' going on depends on how the individual sees it. Reality is in the eye of the beholder. We act in ways we consider appropriate. What we consider appropriate depends upon what we think the behaviour of others means. It is therefore by no means inconceivable that other people, in exactly the same social situations as ourselves, would have taken the behaviour around them to mean something very different, and would therefore have taken very different courses of action from us.

For example, a car crashes into a wall on a wet winter's evening. The police officer called to the scene discovers a dead driver and a strong smell of drink in the car. A search reveals an empty whisky bottle underneath a seat. Like all humans encountering a social situation, the officer engages in a process of interpretation, defining the situation. Weighing up the evidence, he or she decides

that the crash was an accident caused by the driver being drunk and losing control of the vehicle in difficult driving conditions. Another officer called to the scene might use this evidence to interpret things rather differently, however. He or she might consider the possibility that the driver deliberately drove the car into the wall as an act of suicide, having first given himself courage to do so by drinking the whisky. The second officer would then make inquiries that the first would not. The dead man's domestic and work affairs would be looked into and it might be discovered that he had become severely depressed about his future. The officer would decide that his suspicions of suicide had been sufficiently confirmed by this additional evidence, and that it should be given at the Coroner's court when the inquest was held.

How the death is finally interpreted depends upon the decision of the court, of course, when the evidence is reassessed by a new set of interpreters – particularly the Coroner. The Coroner's decision will define the death as either accidental or a suicide. But is this judgment the 'truth'? Who is to say what the 'reality' of the situation was? What 'really' happened here? In the case of this kind of example, of course, no one will ever know for certain.

Even in more conclusive circumstances, actions still always depend upon the interpretation of the beholder. Suppose you come across a middle-aged man grappling with a young girl in the bushes of a park. What you do depends on what you think is going on. You may decide the man is assaulting the girl, and take a course of action you see fit in the light of this interpretation (and depending how brave you feel at the time). Or you may decide it is horseplay between lovers, or a father admonishing his daughter – or any other interpretation that may spring to mind. What matters is not so much that you are right, that you see what is *really* happening, but that:

- you cannot help but come to some sort of interpretation or other (even if it is that you do *not* know what is happening); and
- what you decide to do will be the result of this interpretation.

Though subsequent events may 'prove' things one way or another, initial action undertaken by human beings in such social circumstances, though always involving a process of interpretation, can never be assumed to be definitely 'true' or 'real'. It can only ever be how we choose to see things. The world 'is' what we think it is. As W. I. Thomas (1966) puts it: 'If man defines situations as real, they are real in their consequences.'

Action theory: conclusion

In contrast to the structuralist view then, social 'reality' is not a factual, objective, unambiguous state of affairs. Reality can only ever be what the actors involved in interaction *think* is real, and what they *think* is real determines what they decide to do. Reality is therefore quite definitely the negotiated creation of individuals in interaction with one another. Furthermore, because the social worlds so created are dependent on the interpretations of particular individuals in particular social settings, they are much more precarious constructions than suggested by the notion of social structures determining behaviour.

Consensus, conflict and action theories thus identify different factors as significant in explaining the nature of social life, and of the relationship between the individual and society. We will look in detail at the work of some of the most significant sociologists of the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries. As we shall see, for most of the time sociology has been in existence as a distinct discipline, the kinds of issues highlighted by consensus, conflict and action approaches have been central to sociological theorizing. Although only some of this theorizing falls neatly or exclusively within one of these traditions alone, they are nonetheless useful as reference points from which to understand differences and debates in sociological thought.

Classical sociological theorizing: analysing modernity

The work of three nineteenth-century sociologists in particular has reverberated through the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and it is for this reason that they are regarded as the classic figures in the discipline. They are a Frenchman, **Emile Durkheim** (1858–1917), and two Germans, **Karl Marx** (1818–1883) and **Max Weber** (1864–1920). Despite the great differences in the content and direction of their sociological theories, the work of Durkheim, Marx and Weber each represents an intellectual and political response to the same historical circumstances. The most powerful set of forces at work in nineteenth-century Europe was unleashed in the eighteenth century during the period historians call the **Enlightenment**; today these forces are summarized in sociology as **modernity**. Sociology came into being because of modernity, and the theories of many of its major figures in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries can be seen as different

kinds of responses to the birth of the modern world. This is particularly true of the classic writings of Durkheim, Marx and Weber.

As we shall see later (chapter 9), there are those today who believe that over the last few decades a new set of social changes has once again transformed the world. According to *postmodernists*, the circumstances in which we live now and the ways in which we think – particularly the ways in which we think about ourselves – are so completely different from those described by the theorists of modernity such as Durkheim, Marx and Weber that we should realize that the world of modernity has been superseded by a new world, of *postmodernity*. However, as chapter 9 will show, the many critics of postmodernism hotly dispute this depiction of contemporary life. Indeed, the debate between modernist theorists and postmodernists has been one of the principal features of recent social theorizing. But we must leave an examination of the ideas of postmodernism and the competing ones of its critics until the end of this book. At this early stage in our journey we need to examine the profound changes to human existence ushered in by the emergence of modern life that gave birth to the discipline of sociology.

Modernity

The idea of the 'modern' originated as an account of the kinds of institutions, ideas and behaviour that grew out of the decline of medieval society in Europe. Although the seeds of modernity had been sown hundreds of years before, it was not until the nineteenth century that modern life became securely established. The changes involved were so momentous that Karl Polanyi (1973) does not overstate the case when he uses the phrase *The Great Transformation* to describe them. Marx and Engels are even more graphic in their famous depiction of modernity:

> All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and men at last are forced to face . . . the real conditions of their lives and their relations with their fellow men. (Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, 1848)

In very summary form, the changes wrought by modernity involved the emergence and establishment of:

- capitalism
- mass production based on the factory
- a hugely increased, and largely urbanized, population
- the nation-state as the modern form of government
- Western domination of the globe
- secular forms of knowledge, particularly science.

Capitalism

In pre-capitalist economies, though there is some manufacturing and some trade, people more usually produce goods for their own consumption. This is particularly true of pre-capitalist agriculture. Capitalism means something very different. Capitalists employ workers to produce their goods for them, in return for a wage. The point of producing these goods is to sell them in the marketplace for more than the costs involved in their production. That is, capitalist production is about the pursuit of profit. The more efficient the production, the more profitable it can be. In the systematic pursuit of profit, what matters most is the market value of a good, the availability of markets, and the efficiency with which an enterprise is organized. In particular, this involves the rational management of the labour force so that costs are kept down.

Capitalism thus involves the establishment of new ways of thinking and acting, largely absent in the pre-modern world. Workers have to sell their labour to employers as a commodity in a labour market. Their survival depends not on what they produce for themselves but on the wages they receive, with which they have to purchase the goods and services they need. As a result, their life-chances are crucially determined by the rewards they receive for the work they do. That is, a system of class inequality emerges, largely based on occupational rewards. In addition, identity becomes intimately linked to work and class membership; how you see yourself and how you are seen by others becomes defined by the work you do and the rewards this work brings. One of the social expressions of this aspect of modernity is the emergence of a labour movement: organizations, such as Trade Unions, become established to represent the collectively held interests of workers in similar occupational groupings. Gender inequality develops too. Not only do male workers tend to receive greater rewards than working women but, over time, and as the mechanization of production increases, women become progressively excluded from the workplace. This produces a separation of life and life-chances into, on

the one hand, a male-dominated public sphere, of the world of work and wages, and on the other, a female-dominated private sphere, of the world of unwaged domestic labour. Women thus become economically dependent on their husbands and defined principally in terms of their role in managing the domestic world.

Agricultural production and trade became capitalized first and then, in the nineteenth century, capitalism became the dynamic behind the huge and rapid growth in industrial production.

Techniques of production

Alongside the emergence of capitalism, the so-called Industrial Revolution allowed new ways of working and producing goods to be instituted. Rapid technological advances led to large-scale manufacturing being located in a designated workplace – the factory – and the organization of production became the object of rational calculation. The factory system involved the workers being systematically organized and controlled, with the separation of the process of production into specialized tasks a distinctive feature of this regulation. Later on, and with further technological advances, modern mass production techniques became ever more sophisticated, culminating in what is known as Fordism – the rational and efficient organization of manufacturing. (The name is derived from the founder of the assembly line in motor manufacturing, Henry Ford.) Fordism involves not only the mass production of a standardized product (Ford is famously remembered for saying that his customers could have any colour Model T Ford that they liked so long as it was black), but rigidly bureaucratic organizational structures, the pursuit of high productivity and collective wage bargaining.

Population change

The Great Transformation included an unprecedented growth in population and its concentration in urban settings. Birth rates rose and death rates fell; according to Kumar (1978), the population of Europe grew from around 120 million in 1750 to around 468 million in 1913. The urbanization of the population was another major feature of modernity; there was mass migration from the countryside to the towns and cities that were springing up around the centres of industrial production. This provided the template for a typical feature of modern twentieth-century life – the urban conurbation.

The nation-state

Modernity saw a new form of polity – the nation-state – come into being. States have a centralized form of government whose absolute power extends over a national territory. Governmental decrees – laws – are passed which apply to all those living on this territory and the state's ultimate power resides in its monopoly over the use of force, for example, by means of its control of the armed forces. The emergence of state government spawns a civil authority too – a system of political administrators and officials whose task it is to enforce state-sponsored decisions across the national territory. By the twentieth century, global political power resided in the nation-states of the West and ideas of citizenship, nationalism, democracy, socialism, conservatism and liberalism dominated political thinking and discourse.

Global domination by the West

The establishment of the power of the nation-state triggered the political, economic and cultural domination of the globe by European states. The rapid economic development of the West in the nineteenth century depended crucially on easy access to raw materials from around the globe. The political and military power of these states enabled them to plunder the material and human resources of weaker global areas and began the process of the unequal development of the First and Third Worlds with which we live today. Later on, this Western domination was cemented politically and culturally by colonialism and economically by the control of global markets.

Cultural change: the rise of rationality and the secularization of knowledge

The Enlightenment provided the cultural shift necessary for the final triumph of modernity. An historical moment of the eighteenth century, the Enlightenment refers to the emergence of a new confidence in the power of human reason. Knowledge production before the Enlightenment typically involved experts translating religious texts or signs. In this way it became possible for people to know what their God or gods had in mind for them. In complete contrast, the Enlightenment promoted the essentially secular view that by using reason, by thinking rationally, humans could, for the first time in human history, produce certain knowledge and could therefore harness this

knowledge in the pursuit of progress. The exemplar of rationality was scientific thinking and scientific activity. The intellectual engine of modernity was thus the belief that nothing could remain a mystery, nothing would remain undiscovered, if reason were made the guide. Moreover, this would allow humankind to not only know things for certain but to know how to make things better – to achieve progress. The pre-modern dependence on the virtues of tradition and continuity gave way to a commitment to the benefits of reason-inspired change, innovation and progress. This way of thinking is called **modernism**. It is the rise of modernism, a cultural change in belief about what constitutes knowledge and what knowledge is for, that directly promoted the rise of sociology and sociological theorizing.

Modernism and sociology

Modernist thinking involves the idea that the purpose of acquiring knowledge is, as Giddens (1987) puts it: 'To influence for the better the human condition.' Modernity implies the constant pursuit of improvement in human lives and of the pursuit of progress. Unlike traditional settings, where virtue lies in things remaining the same, in modern worlds change, development and improvement are the goals. As Cheal (1991) has pointed out, believing in the ideal and possibility of progress means: 'believing that things tomorrow can always be better than they are today, which in turn means being prepared to overturn the existing order of things in order to make way for progress. It means, in other words, being prepared to break with tradition' (p. 27).

How should this progress be achieved? Underpinning the belief in the possibility of progress is a belief in the power of reason – in the ability of humans to think about themselves, their condition and their society reflexively and rationally – and to improve it in the light of such rational thought. The idea that humans can not only think about, and explain, their lives – to produce *social theories* in fact – but can employ them to change society for the better, is a specifically modern notion. The idea that reason can provide an agenda and a set of prescriptions for living, rather than relying on divine intervention and instruction, only began to prevail after the Enlightenment. Summarizing the effects of the Enlightenment, Badham (1986) says:

> It was during this period that faith in divine revelation, and the authority of the Church as interpreter of God's will, were increasingly undermined by this new confidence in the ability of human reason to provide an

understanding of the world and a guide for human conduct. Similarly, the understanding of history as the chronicle of the fall of man from God's grace, with spiritual salvation only attainable in the next world, was largely replaced by a belief in human perfectibility and the increasing faith in man's power and ability to use his new-found knowledge to improve mankind's state. The importance of these two assumptions should not be underestimated. Without the faith in reason, social theory could not be regarded as playing any important role in society. Without the belief in the possibility of progress, whatever reason's ability to understand the nature of society, social theory would not be able to fulfil any positive role in improving upon man's fate. (1986, p. 11)

So sociology is not only a product of modernity – of a belief in the power of human reason to create knowledge which can be used to achieve progress. In addition, the world created by modernity is its principal subject matter: Giddens (1987, pp. vii–viii) has said that in sociology, the 'prime field of study is the social world brought about by the advent of modernity'.

As Giddens (1987, p. 26) also puts it, the very existence of sociology is 'bound up with the "project of modernity"'. The construction of social theories thus reflects a concern not only with *how* we live, but how we *should* live; social theories of modern society try not only to describe and explain our social world, but to diagnose its problems and propose solutions. According to Giddens (1987, p. 17), this places sociology in the 'tensed zone of transition between diagnosis and prognosis'.

The problem, of course, concerns the goal and direction of desirable change. The following chapters attempt to summarize the contributions of some influential nineteenth-, twentieth- and twenty-first-century sociological figures to this enterprise – the contribution of sociology to the **'project of modernity'**.

Further Reading

There are five different kinds of texts included in the Further Reading sections at the end of each chapter of this book. These are:

- the classic texts in social theory
- readers consisting of extracts of classic work by the major theorists
- texts analysing the work of one or more of the major theorists
- readers consisting of commissioned chapters by experts on specific theorists and/or particular areas of social theory
- introductory theory textbooks covering similar ground to this one.

What you use as further reading and how you use these books depends on the stage you have reached in your studies. A-level students will get most benefit from the theory textbooks as will undergraduates in other subjects taking sociology modules. First-year undergraduates reading sociology should try and go beyond a reliance on such texts and also use at least the famous extracts contained in the readers. Second- and third-year undergraduates should consult the original texts themselves as well as the books dedicated to particular theorists and the commentaries contained in the commissioned readers.

Textbooks

Some of these are a lot more difficult than others. Decide for yourself which ones you find most accessible and helpful. In no particular order, I suggest you look at:

Bauman, Zygmunt and May, Tim: *Thinking Sociologically*, 2nd edn, Blackwell, 2001.

Baert, Patrick: *Social Theory in the Twentieth Century*, Polity, 1998.

Bernstein, R. J.: *The Restructuring of Social and Political Theory*, Blackwell, 1976.

Bilton, Tony et al.: *Introductory Sociology*, 4th edn, chapters 17, 18, 19 Palgrave, 2002.

Craib, Ian: *Modern Social Theory*, 2nd edn, Harvester-Wheatsheaf, 1992.

Craib, Ian: *Classical Social Theory*, Oxford University Press, 1997.

Cuff, E. C., Francis, D. W., Sharrock, W. W.: *Perspectives in Sociology*, 4th edn, Routledge, 1998.

Dodd, Nigel: *Social Theory and Modernity*, Polity, 1999.

Fidelman, Ashe: *Contemporary Social and Political Theory: an introduction*, Open University Press, 1998.

Lee, David and Newby, Howard: *The Problem of Sociology*, Hutchinson, 1983.

May, Tim: *Situating Social Theory*, Open University Press, 1996.

Ritzer, George: *Sociological Theory*, 5th edn, McGraw-Hill, 2000.

Seidmore, Steven: *Contested Knowledge*: *social theory in the postmodern era*, Blackwell, 1998.

Skidmore, W.: *Theoretical Thinking in Sociology*, Cambridge University Press, 1975.

Readers including extracts from the classic works

Craig Calhoun et al.: *Classical Sociological Theory*, Blackwell's Readers in Sociology, Blackwell, 2002a.

Craig Calhoun et al.: *Contemporary Sociological Theory*, Blackwell's Readers in Sociology, Blackwell, 2002b.

James Farganis (ed.): *Readings in Social Theory: the classic tradition to post-modernism*, 3rd edn, McGraw-Hill, 2000.

Charles Lemert (ed.): *Social Theory: the Multicultural and Classic Readings*, Westview Press, 1993.

Commissioned readers on theories and theorists

Robert Bocock and Kenneth Thompson (eds): *Social and Cultural Forms of Modernity*, Polity, 1992.
Stuart Hall, David Held and Tony McGrew (eds): *Modernity and its Futures*, Polity, 1992.
George Ritzer (ed.): *The Blackwell Companion to Major Social Theorists*, Blackwell, 2002.
Bryan Turner (ed.): *The Blackwell Companion to Social Theory*, 2nd edn, Blackwell, 2000.

MIS Quarterly

CROSS-CULTURAL SOFTWARE PRODUCTION AND USE: A STRUCTURATIONAL ANALYSIS[1]

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Abstract

This paper focuses on cross-cultural software production and use, which is increasingly common in today's more globalized world. A theoretical basis for analysis is developed, using concepts drawn from structuration theory. The theory is illustrated using two cross-cultural case studies. It is argued that structurational analysis provides a deeper examination of cross-cultural working and IS than is found in the current literature, which is dominated by Hofstede-type studies. In particular, the theoretical approach can be used to analyze cross-cultural conflict and contradiction, cultural heterogeneity, detailed work patterns, and the dynamic nature of culture. The paper contributes to the growing body of literature that emphasizes the essential role of cross-cultural understanding in contemporary society.

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[1]Michael D. Myers was the accepting senior editor for this paper.

Introduction

There has been much debate over the last decade about the major social transformations taking place in the world such as the increasing interconnectedness of different societies, the compression of time and space, and an intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole (Robertson 1992). Such changes are often labeled with the term globalization, although the precise nature of this phenomenon is highly complex on closer examination. For example, Beck (2000) distinguishes between *globality*, the change in consciousness of the world as a single entity, and *globalism*, the ideology of neoliberalism which argues that the world market eliminates or supplants the importance of local political action.

Despite the complexity of the globalization phenomena, all commentators would agree that information and communication technologies (ICTs) are deeply implicated in the changes that are taking place through their ability to enable new modes of work, communication, and organization

across time and space. For example, the influential work of Castells (1996, 1997, 1998) argues that we are in the "information age" where information generation, processing, and transformation are fundamental to societal functioning and societal change, and where ICTs enable the pervasive expansion of networking throughout the social structure.

However, does globalization, and the related spread of ICTs, imply that the world is becoming a homogeneous arena for global business and global attitudes, with differences between organizations and societies disappearing? There are many authors who take exception to this conclusion. For example, Robertson (1992) discussed the way in which imported themes are *indigenized* in particular societies with local culture constraining receptivity to some ideas rather than others, and adapting them in specific ways. He cited Japan as a good example of these *glocalization* processes. While accepting the idea of time-space compression facilitated by ICTs, Robertson argued that one of its main consequences is an exacerbation of collisions between global, societal, and communal attitudes. Similarly, Appadurai (1997), coming from a non-Western background, argued against the global homogenization thesis on the grounds that different societies will appropriate the "materials of modernity" differently depending on their specific geographies, histories, and languages. Walsham (2001) developed a related argument, with a specific focus on the role of ICTs, concluding that global diversity needs to be a key focus when developing and using such technologies.

If these latter arguments are broadly correct, then working with ICTs in and across different cultures should prove to be problematic, in that there will be different views of the relevance, applicability, and value of particular modes of working and use of ICTs which may produce conflict. For example, technology transfer from one society to another involves the importing of that technology into an "alien" cultural context where its value may not be similarly perceived to that in its original host culture. Similarly, cross-cultural communication through ICTs, or cross-cultural information

systems (IS) development teams, are likely to confront issues of incongruence of values and attitudes.

The purpose of this paper is to examine a particular topic within the area of cross-cultural working and ICTs, namely that of software production and use; in particular, where the software is not developed in and for a specific cultural group. A primary goal is to develop a theoretical basis for analysis of this area. Key elements of this basis, which draws on structuration theory, are described in the next section of the paper. In order to illustrate the theoretical basis and its value in analyzing real situations, the subsequent sections draw on the field data from two published case studies of cross-cultural software development and application.

There is an extensive literature on cross-cultural working and IS, and the penultimate section of the paper reviews key elements of this literature, and shows how the analysis of this paper makes a new contribution. In particular, it will be argued that the structurational analysis enables a more sophisticated and detailed consideration of issues in cross-cultural software production under four specific headings: cross-cultural contradiction and conflict; cultural heterogeneity; detailed work patterns in different cultures; and the dynamic, emergent nature of culture. The final section of the paper will summarize some theoretical and practical implications.

Structuration Theory, Culture and IS ▬▬▬▬▬▬

The theoretical basis for this paper draws on structuration theory (Giddens 1979, 1984). This theory has been highly influential in sociology and the social sciences generally since Giddens first developed the ideas some 20 years ago. In addition, the theory has received considerable attention in the IS field (for a good review, see Jones 1998). The focus here, however, will be on how structuration theory can offer a new way of looking

Table 1. Structuration Theory, Culture, and ICTs: Some Key Concepts	
Structure	• Structure as memory traces in the human mind • Action draws on rules of behavior and ability to deploy resources and, in so doing, produces and reproduces structure • Three dimensions of action/structure: systems of meaning, forms of power relations, sets of norms • IS embody systems of meaning, provide resources, and encapsulate norms, and are thus deeply involved in the modalities linking action and structure
Culture	• Conceptualized as shared symbols, norms, and values in a social collectivity such as a country • Meaning systems, power relations, behavioral norms not merely in the mind of one person, but often display enough systemness to speak of them being shared • But need to recognize intra-cultural variety
Cross-cultural contradiction and conflict	• Conflict is actual struggle between actors and groups • Contradiction is potential basis for conflict arising from divisions of interest, e.g., divergent forms of life • Conflicts may occur in cross-cultural working if differences affect actors negatively and they are able to act
Reflexivity and change	• Reproduction through processes of routinization • But human beings reflexively monitor actions and consequences, creating a basis for social change

at cross-cultural working and information systems. The rest of this section develops this analysis. A summary of key points is provided in Table 1.

Structuration theory is described by Giddens as an "ontology of social life" or, in other words, a description of the nature of human action and social organization. At the heart of the theory is the attempt to treat human action and social structure as a duality rather than a dualism. In other words, rather than seeing human action taking place within the context of the "outside" constraints of social structure (a dualism), action and structure are seen as two aspects of the same whole (a duality). This device is achieved in part by a careful redefinition of the meaning of structure. Giddens defines structure as:

> Rules and resources, recursively implicated in the reproduction of social systems. Structure exists only as memory traces, the organic basis of human

knowledgeability, and as instantiated in action (1984, p. 377).

The crucial point here is that structure, defined in this way, is seen as rules of behavior and the ability to deploy resources, which exist *in the human mind itself*, rather than as outside constraints. (This distinction is often misunderstood in the IS literature which draws on structuration theory; see Jones 1998.) The actions, therefore, of an individual human being draw on these rules and resources and, in so doing, produce or reproduce structure in the mind. So, for example, a manager who reprimands an employee for arriving late at the workplace is drawing on the concept of the start time of an employee, the rule that the employee should arrive before or at this time, and the perceived ability for the manager to deploy the human resource represented by the employee, and thus to reprimand the employee for being late. In carrying out this action, the manager and the

employee have the structure of these rules and resources reinforced in their minds as standards of appropriate behavior.

In order to develop a more detailed analysis of the duality of structure, as defined above, Giddens introduced three dimensions concerned with systems of meaning, forms of power relations, and sets of norms. Human action and structure in the mind are composed, according to structuration theory, of elements of each of these dimensions but, as the example of the manager and the employee above demonstrated, the dimensions are inextricably interlinked. So the power to repri- mand is linked to the concept of starting time and the norm of what it means to be late. This may seem obvious, but norms of behavior such as this vary widely between cultures. In our analysis later in the paper, it will be seen that it is precisely some of these differences "in the mind" as to what is appropriate behavior that can cause conflict in cross-cultural working.

Culture, at its most basic level, can be concep- tualized as shared symbols, norms, and values in a social collectivity such as a country. In Giddens' terms, systems of meaning, forms of power rela- tions, and norms of behavior have a more widespread currency than *merely* within the mind of one person. Giddens defines these as *struc- tural properties*, namely "structured features of social systems stretching across time and space." He comments that social systems should be regarded as widely variable in the degree of *systemness* that they display, and he says that they rarely have the sort of internal unity which may be found in physical or biological systems. In other words, related to the focus of this paper, national cultures are composed of many different people, each with a complex structure in their mind, none of which can be thought of as fully shared. For example, there will be all sorts of nuance as to how individuals view lateness, even within the same cultural context. Nevertheless, it will be argued in this paper that the structural pro- perties of cultures often display enough system- ness for us to speak about shared symbols, norms, and values, while recognizing that there will remain considerable intra-cultural variety.

There have been a number of attempts to incorporate information systems within the theo- retical framework of structuration theory (e.g., DeSanctis and Poole 1994; Orlikowski 1992). Giddens himself makes little direct reference to information technology in his development of the theory, so that the IS researcher is left to his or her own devices. This paper draws on the con- ceptualization in Walsham (1993, p. 64), where he argues that:

> A theoretical view of computer-based information systems in contemporary organizations which arises from struc- turation theory is that they embody inter- pretative schemes, provide coordination and control facilities, and encapsulate norms. They are thus deeply implicated in the modalities that link social action and structure, and are drawn on in interaction, thus reinforcing or changing social structures.

In other words, IS are drawn on to provide meaning, to exercise power, and to legitimize actions. They are thus deeply involved in the duality of structure.

There is one further element in structuration theory, which has not been widely referred to in the literature, and certainly not in the IS literature, that is of considerable theoretical value in the study of cross-cultural working. This is Giddens' discussion of conflict and structural contradiction. He defines and discusses these concepts as follows:

> By conflict I mean actual struggle between actors or groups...whereas con- tradiction is a structural concept.... Con- flict and contradiction tend to coincide because contradiction expresses the main "fault lines" in the structural contra- diction of societal systems (1984, p. 198).

Conflict is thus real activity, while contradiction can be thought of as the *potential basis* for conflict, arising from structural contradictions within and between social groupings. Giddens elaborates on this:

> contradictions tend to involve divisions of interest between different groupings or categories of people....Contradictions express divergent modes of life and distributions of life chances...If contradiction does not inevitably breed conflict, it is because the conditions not only under which actors are aware of their interests but are able and motivated to act on them are widely variable (1984, pp 198-199).

This theorizing has immediate application to cross-cultural working and IS. Contradictions include "divergent modes of life," which can be taken to include cultural differences. They *may* result in conflict if actors feel that the differences affect them negatively, and they are able and motivated to take positive action of some sort. We will see examples of this in the later empirical material.

Structuration theory appears at first sight to be focused on reproduction of structure in the mind, and broader social structures within societies, through processes of routinization of activity and thus reinforcement of existing structures. However, Giddens also emphasizes human knowledgeability, and the way in which human beings reflexively monitor their own actions, that of others, and consequences, both intended and unintended. The latter provides an example of the basis for social change as well as social stability. If a human being takes action and he or she subsequently views the unintended consequences of this as negative, then it is likely that different action will be taken in similar circumstances in the future, with related changed structure in the mind. The following empirical sections will analyze stability and reproduction, but will also focus on change processes.

Software Production in a Cross-Cultural Team ■■■■■■

This section is the first of two designed to illustrate the value of the theoretical basis described above, and focuses on a cross-cultural software development team. Software development in the context of a more globalized world is no longer carried out exclusively within the country that needs it, using citizens from that country, but is increasingly outsourced through nonlocal arrangements such as body-shopping and global software outsourcing (Lacity and Willcocks 2001), and the use of global software teams (Carmel 1999) . The case below provides a specific example of this in a Jamaican insurance company, with the cross-cultural element being the extensive involvement of a team of Indian software developers. The description of the case below draws from papers by Barrett and Walsham (1995) and Barrett et al. (1996), but the structurational analysis is new.[2]

Case Description

The case concerns a Jamaican general insurance company, called Abco, which formed part of a broader Jamaican conglomerate, called the Jagis Group. Jamaica is located in the high risk catastrophe region of the Caribbean, but the capital base of general insurers in Jamaica is insufficient for high risk insurance coverage, such as that caused by earthquake and hurricane. Jamaican general insurance companies thus rely on worldwide reinsurers, who underwrite some of these high risks. In 1988, Hurricane Gilbert swept through Jamaica, paralyzing business activities on the island for a couple of months. At Abco, computer records were lost, and claims were made on policies that did not exist on the batch system.

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[2]Readers should refer to the earlier published material for details of the research methodology and data collection methods. As a member of the research team, the author had access to all the field notes from the study and has chosen quotes from these as appropriate to illustrate the theme of the current paper, and the new theoretical analysis carried out here.

After the hurricane and other world catastrophes, reinsurance not only became a problem to obtain, but reinsurers started to demand better quality information from companies such as Abco on risks and levels of exposure.

Responding to this crisis, the Jagis Group's chairman led an investigation as to how IT/IS could be used to provide superior quality service to clients through improved claims handling, as well as providing reinsurers with the more detailed risk and exposure information that they required. The decision was made to develop a new general insurance information system, called Goras. A leading management consultancy was commis- sioned to conduct the requirements study and a group software development company, Gtec, was set up within Abco in order to strengthen existing information technology skills. In March 1990, an Indian software expert, Raj, and other experienced Indian software developers were recruited from software houses in India to form the top management group of Gtec.

After the requirements study, bids were invited for the job of carrying out the software development, and Gtec was selected. However, in the initial stages of development, it became clear that addi- tional expertise in insurance systems was needed, and a selected team of Jamaicans from the Jagis Group was seconded to the project as insurance consultants, including Roberts, the MIS manager of Jagis. The initial stages of the project were marked by some enthusiasm, at least by team members at the programmer level. Drawing from their experience on past development projects, Indian developers provided guidance to the Jamaican members on software development issues. There were weekly awards for the "most helpful member" and "project champion," and cash incentives for meeting deadlines. A key developer at Gtec reflected later:

> Looking back at it now, it was well organized. Every Monday, a memo came out specifying the deliverables and bonus structure for the week. There was a bonus on top of your salary if you met deadlines...but it was so hard to make

your deadlines....Though teams were compliant, deadlines were rather strin- gent, if not unreasonable.

As time went by, conflict started to develop between the Indians and the Jamaicans, particularly at the senior and team leader levels. Raj was viewed by the Jamaicans as having an autocratic approach as he would "lay down the law which was not to be questioned." In contrast, the senior Jamaican on the project team, Roberts, viewed an appropriate management style with Jamaicans as being more consensual:

> If there is a problem to be solved, we would sit down and solve it....It was not a sort of hierarchy....It was a team effort, meet and discuss each project.

Resentment by the Jamaican software developers at all levels had deeper roots than specific conflicts on management style, since some of the locals believed that Indians were not needed in the first place. A key Gtec developer expressed this sentiment:

> The Abco MIS staff felt the whole project had been taken away from them ....They were the natural group to be utilized to develop a new general insurance system for Abco. Instead [the management con- sultancy] who were a bag of Indians again were asked to do the functional requirements and the initial design. Later on, Gtec was formed, staffed by Indians in all the senior posts, and responsible for the Goras project....The Indians had been given power over the Jamaicans.

There are, of course, two sides to these cross- cultural issues. Raj, for example, was critical of the more laid-back attitude the Jamaicans had to deadlines, regarding their formal working hours as being all they were prepared to offer to the project:

> With the Indians, there is no discussion once the deadline is agreed; they will work until 9 p.m. every night, weekends if necessary to have it on my desk at the

stipulated time. However, with the Jamaicans, this is not the case. If the worker recognizes that they cannot meet the deadline, they will call me up and give some excuse as to why they need more time...they expect me to understand and accommodate.

Raj also felt that there were significant cultural differences in the way that project activities were coordinated. In India, that task was handled by the project manager whose job was "walking around and seeing how people are progressing," coordinating and administering activities, while in Jamaica project coordination was seen by him to be inherently problematic. Raj attributed this to Jamaicans' inability to "link hands and do parallel work." To illustrate this point, he offered an analogy of Jamaica's performance at international athletics events:

> They are fantastic runners...they only miss out on medals at international relay races because at the interchange of the baton, it is dropped or it is passed too late outside the permitted exchange... there is no training to coordinate and keep things moving.

In contrast, a Jamaican member of the software team viewed the Indian approach to coordination as representing an adult-child mentality, related also in his mind to the Indian caste structure:

> The strict deadlines seemed impossible, and I was not used to the interpersonal relations of the closely knit teams....I was reluctant to fully integrate myself into the environment which was different to what we [Jagis MIS staff] were used to....It was a school room attitude, with someone senior to me telling me to do as he says....It was hard to relate to their caste system where hierarchy and status were so important.

These comments relate to differences in deep-seated cultural attitudes to hierarchy and authority that were recognized on the Indian side also, but

of course with a different emphasis on their merits and demerits. Raj gave his view of Jamaicans' attitudes in these areas as follows:

> Everybody treats everybody as equal. The boss is viewed as a supervisor but at the same time they expect to be treated as equal. If something is due at the end of the month, don't intervene [as the boss]....the attitude is, "I will tell you if the job is done or not, then we reset the date and keep going....If you feel performance is bad, then fire me with redundancy pay" ....They don't want a monitoring system ....It is demeaning to them if the boss asks about progress of activities in between tasks.

The above quotes from the case study may be thought to reflect racial stereotyping on the part of some of the Indian and Jamaican software developers and managers.[3] They have been reproduced here to exemplify some of the broader issues and problems, which were interpreted by some participants to have arisen from the different cultural backgrounds of the team members. However, not all members subscribed to these views in a simple way, and the importance of individual diversity and difference within the national groups was recognized. For example, the project approach reflected the personality of Raj, in addition to elements derived from his cultural

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[3]A reader of this section may indeed believe that some of the organizational members were engaging in racial or ethnic stereotyping. Regardless of whether this is or is not the case, we need to make it clear that any such stereotyping reflects the values of those particular organizational members. It does not necessarily reflect the values of other organizational members and it does not reflect the values of the researcher who is reporting the organizational members' words. Such stereotyping also does not reflect the values of the editorial policy of the journal publishing the research. We believe it is the responsibility of researchers to report, rather than to cleanse or censure, the data that they collect, where such data include the subjective interpretations that are constructed and held by the organizational members themselves. *MIS Quarterly* stands behind the author of this study in reporting his data, although this does not amount to any endorsement of the organizational members' own opinions.
— Michael D. Myers, Senior Editor

background, and this did not pass unnoticed, demonstrated by his removal from the role in the later history of the case study, as described below.

But first, how successful was the initial project in the cross-cultural team environment? The development of Goras started in 1990. The original plan envisaged a year for completion, but there were significant delays and major project cost overruns. The acceptance testing done by end users showed substantial inadequacies in the design, but the system was finally delivered by Gtec to Abco in August 1992. After further quality assurance, user testing, and system modification, a first attempt at implementation was made in December 1992. The implementation was not a success. System performance was poor in terms of time taken to carry out tasks, and users were critical of the restricted functionality of the new system, partly due to incomplete data conversion from the old system.

In January 1993, a new CEO of Gtec was appointed, also an Indian expatriate. Raj stayed on as technical director, "preferring to work on technical issues rather than organizational ones." The responsibility for further development of the Goras system and user acceptance testing and training was switched to the Jagis group, although Gtec continued to make a technical input. By 1995, the Goras system had still not been fully implemented, but new deadlines were in place for implementation later that year. An increased emphasis had been placed on user involvement. One of the Jagis staff described this involvement:

> Testing started in July [1994] with live data from users. Each module is being tested module-by-module and then issue forms are created which then involve a lot of work on the part of MIS [staff] to implement the required changes.

Five years after project inception, there was general optimism about successful project implementation, but it still remained a promise rather than a reality.

Structurational Analysis

Structure

This subsection analyzes the Abco case using the theory articulated earlier. Key points of the analysis are summarized in Table 2. Structure "in the mind" and its links to action, according to structuration theory, can be analyzed through the dimensions of meaning, power, and norms. Cross-cultural interaction is likely to involve basic differences in these dimensions, and the development of information systems in a cross-cultural team can bring these differences into stark contrast. With respect to meaning, metaphors of team-work used by Abco and Gtec staff can be used as an illustration. A Jamaican software developer described the Indians' approach as a "school room attitude," linked in the mind of this person to the Indian caste system. In contrast, the Indian project leader used the metaphor of international relay races as a way of illustrating his view that the Jamaicans were incapable of working together in a coordinated way.

Turning to the second structural dimension, the case study shows radically different views of appropriate personal and power relations. The Indian team leader was viewed as autocratic by the Jamaican staff, whereas the senior Jamaican staff member thought that an appropriate management style in Jamaica was consensual. In contrast, the Indian team leader felt that the Jamaicans were too equal to make project monitoring and control effective. Related issues arose with respect to the third structural dimension of norms of behavior, for example, with respect to time deadlines for software projects and a sense of urgency. The Indian team leader was critical that the Jamaicans would go home at the "normal" leaving time, whereas the Indian team members would work evenings and weekends if necessary to meet deadlines.

Culture

The above analysis, in order to make some general points, has downplayed individual differ-

Table 2. Jamaica-India Software Development Case: Structurational Analysis	
Structure	• Different meaning systems: metaphor of team-work as a school room attitude or international relay races • Different views of appropriate power relations: Indians too autocratic; Jamaicans too equal for project control purposes • Different norms of behavior: attitude to time deadlines on software projects
Culture	• Strong degree of systemness in terms of different cultural attitudes of Indian and Jamaican groups • But important to note that individual difference also matters • Culture of IS development also different in the two national groups: high productivity/strict deadlines versus working closely with end users/application backlog
Cross-cultural contradiction and conflict	• Structural contradiction arising from different cultural backgrounds • Resulted in conflict since these affected all participants directly, and they had the ability to act: e.g., to enforce deadlines or to resist them
Reflexivity and change	• Increasing recognition on all sides that cross-cultural issues were important, and needed to be managed • Pragmatic actions taken on roles and responsibilities, reflecting changed structure on the part of both Jamaican and Indian participants

ences within the Jamaican and Indian groups. This can be justified on the grounds that there was some consistency of the responses from within each cultural group which supports the argument that there was a strong degree of systemness operating here. In other words, the indigenous elements of Jamaican and Indian national cultures were sufficiently strong in the minds of the individuals concerned to influence their behavior in a broadly similar way to other members of their own culture and, equally important, for this to be perceived as such by members of the other culture. However, as noted in the case description, individuals also matter, and the personality of Raj was given as one example of this.

In addition to the influence of national culture, the word *culture* is often used as a metaphor (Morgan 1986) for shared values and attitudes within a specific organization or other form of social grouping. In the Abco case, Barrett and Walsham (1995) highlighted how the culture of IS development was different in the two countries:

While occupational cultures for Indians and Jamaicans alike originated from software development, the impact of the local work culture at Indian software houses and the insurance company respectively were significantly different. The norms of an Indian software house include high productivity and profitability, the software development being driven from a specification under strict project deadlines. The norms of an insurer's MIS department in Jamaica involve application development by MIS personnel working closely with end users with a backlog of applications being quite acceptable. (p. 30)

Cross-Cultural Contradiction and Conflict

Contradiction reflects differences in structural principles, according to structuration theory, such as those arising from different cultural backgrounds. However, conflict is an actual struggle,

and we have seen that significant struggle did indeed take place in the case. It was argued earlier that this is likely to occur, first, if the differences affect actors negatively. With respect to the Jamaicans, they felt the force of the structural contradictions in cultural attitudes in a very direct way through Indian approaches to project monitoring and control, attitudes to deadlines and working hours, and what they viewed as excessively hierarchical approaches. The Indian management team, in particular the overall team leader, viewed these as the right way to approach software development, and the Jamaicans' attitudes as largely negative to the goal of effective project monitoring and control. The second condition for actual conflict to arise along the fault lines of the structural contradictions is that the participants have the ability to act to support their perceived position. The Indian management team had the recognized authority to control the project and to make the rules, such as time deadlines. On the other hand, the Jamaican team members were able to resist in various ways, such as giving reasons why more time was needed for a particular software task. In addition, the removal of Raj from the CEO role in the later history of the project can be taken to reflect the resistance of some of the software team members to his leadership.

Reflexivity and Change

The analysis so far has focused on the way in which structure in the minds of actors in cross-cultural interaction affects the way they think and behave, and the way in which they perceive others from a different culture, which may result in disagreement and conflict. However, as noted in the earlier theoretical section, human beings reflexively monitor actions and their consequences, creating a basis for social change. In other words, structure and culture are not immutable. This can be illustrated in the Jamaica-India software development project, in that there was an increasing recognition on all sides that cross-cultural issues were important and that they needed to be managed effectively. This resulted, in the later years of the project, in various actions

being taken to mitigate the problems which had occurred. These actions included shifting the role of Raj away from organizational issues to a primarily technical role, and giving increased responsibility for human issues such as user involvement to the Jamaican MIS group. These actions not only reflected a pragmatic interest in getting a better job done, but also changed attitudes, or structure in the mind in Giddens' terms, on the part of the Jamaican and Indian participants.

Technology Transfer of GIS Software ■■■■■■■■

A second way in which software is involved in cross-cultural interaction is through the transfer of IS across borders to different cultural environments from that in which it was initially developed. This technology transfer phenomenon is not a new one, but it is increasingly common in the context of globalization. For example, major software packages such as enterprise resource planning systems have spread extremely rapidly across much of the world, particularly in large organizations, over the last decade (Davenport 1998). The case described in this section will provide a specific example of the technology transfer of another global technology, namely that of geographical information systems (GIS). In particular, the case looks at the transfer of GIS from the United States to India. The description of the case below draws from the paper by Walsham and Sahay (1999), but the structurational analysis is new.[4]

Case Description

The case concerns attempts to develop and use geographical information systems (GIS) to aid district-level administration in India. In particular, the focus is a set of GIS projects that took place under the umbrella of the Ministry of Environment

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[4]See footnote 2 above.

and Forests (MOEF) of the government of India over the period 1991 through 1996. The technical work to develop the systems was carried out by scientists in a range of institutions, including two remote sensing agencies, three research groups within universities, and three other scientific agencies concerned with forestry, space research, and the study of science and technology in development. The systems were intended to be used by district-level administrators. The MOEF initiated 10 GIS projects in January 1991, in collaboration with the eight scientific institutions, with the aim of examining the potential for using GIS technology to aid wasteland development. Wastelands are categorized as degraded land that can be brought under vegetative cover with reasonable effort, and land that has deteriorated due to lack of appropriate water and soil management.

The initiation of the project in 1991 can be traced back to two earlier events. In 1986, the government of India started the National Wastelands Identification Project, involving the mapping of the distribution of wastelands across the various states of India. Detailed maps were produced on a 1:50,000 scale for 147 selected districts using remote sensing techniques. The existence of these maps provided a basis for considering how to develop and manage these wastelands. The stimulus for the possible application of GIS to this issue was provided by a chance meeting of some GIS experts from Ohio in the United States with Indian government officials, in the context of a general USAID mission to India in 1989. This was followed by a visit of an Indian expert team to see GIS installations in the United States in 1990, and then the eight scientific institutions in India were invited by the MOEF to test the efficacy of GIS in wasteland management, using specific districts as research sites.

Phase I of the projects took place over the period 1991 to 1993, and the staff of the scientific institutions saw the objectives to be primarily technological, involving the production of working GIS systems based on real data from the field sites in their particular districts. The detailed models and systems developed by the institutions tended to reflect their view of themselves as scientific

research and development centers. For example, there was a heavy reliance on data obtained by sophisticated remote-sensing techniques, reflecting the nature of the interests of the typical research scientist in these institutions. There was less emphasis on other socio-economic variables relevant to wastelands management, such as population and livestock data. In addition, and of crucial importance to later development of the project, many of the scientists involved in the project saw their institutional mandate to be limited to the development of technology rather than to its transfer to administrators at the district level.

Although the Phase I projects were completed in early 1993, proposals for continuation were not submitted until about a year later, and then only by five of the original eight institutions. This period of transition from Phase I to Phase II was characterized by uncertainty about the objectives and nature of the continuation phase. The project director saw it as involving the transfer of the developed systems to the district level so that they could be used for real management applications. However, the project managers in the scientific institutions did not view their staff skills or resources to be adequate for this task in most cases. The institutions asked for further funding largely to provide more hardware and software, whereas the project director felt that the institutions should concentrate on using the existing equipment and on its transfer to the field.

Eventually, five institutions agreed to terms for Phase II and these continuation projects were authorised by the MOEF. Soon after this, the project director left the MOEF and transferred to another institution, and there was very limited further central direction of the Phase II projects. Despite this lack of coordination from the center, all of the five Phase II projects went ahead, in different ways and with different levels of success in terms of the stated project goals. However, by the end of the project in 1996, although some efforts had been made in some of the sites toward transferring the technology to the district level, there were no actual working systems receiving real use.

Table 3. GIS Technology Transfer Case: Structurational Analysis	
Structure	• GIS embody systems of meaning, such as the representation of space through maps; provide resources; and encapsulate norms, such as the high value of coordinated activity • However, these may clash with the structure in the mind of actors in the different cultural interest groups
Culture	• [U.S. personnel] GIS as appropriate spatial technology; provides means of deploying financial resources; promotes good development • [Indian GIS scientists] GIS as lead-edge technology; provides means of gaining financial resources; is suitable for a scientific institution • [District-level administrators] GIS as alien technology; requires them to provide data; but need not affect normal job role
Cross-cultural contradiction and conflict	• Interests not threatened in Phase I • Some conflict in interim phase between GIS project director and scientific institutions—some of the latter withdrew • Passive resistance in the form of nonuse by district-level administrators in Phase II
Reflexivity and change	• Increasing awareness of maps and map-based systems in India • Resulting in subtle shifts in perception, but major social change over longer time horizons is made up of such minor shifts • Some current evidence of successful use of GIS for land management in India, reflecting changed attitudinal rigidities

Structurational Analysis

At one level, this project can be thought of as another example of a failed technology transfer effort, all too common in the history of aid agencies and their attempts to promote the use of western-origin technologies in Third World contexts. One could argue, for example, of the need for improved training and education, or institutional development. While acknowledging that these may be relevant, the theoretical basis of this paper can be used to analyze more underlying reasons. A principal argument will be that information technologies such as GIS, developed in the western countries, can be thought to reflect and embed western values. These may not be compatible with deeply-held beliefs and attitudes in other cultures such as India. Key points of the analysis in this section are summarized in Table 3.

Structure and Culture

As with the case study in the previous section, it is not possible to analyze in detail the individual perceptions and actions of the many project participants. Rather, the analysis here aims to aggregate to the level of groups who can be taken to broadly share similar structure in the mind. Three such groups consist of the U.S. GIS specialists and USAID personnel, the Indian scientists concerned with GIS development, and the Indian district-level administrators. With respect to the three structural dimensions of meaning, power, and norms, the first group took the view that GIS was an appropriate technology to help with spatial issues, that they had the power through financial resources to sponsor its application in India, and that computer-based applications such as this were the right way forward for development in

India. The Indian scientists saw GIS as a new lead-edge technology which they wished to learn about, that the USAID-sponsored project was a way to obtain the necessary resources, and that this fitted their mandate as a scientific institution. Finally, the Indian district-level administrators thought that GIS technology was something outside their experience, that they were required to provide data for the systems, but that the norms of carrying out their own job in the usual way still applied.

There is clear structural contradiction here, and an analysis of this can be sharpened by looking carefully at the technology itself and the way in which it can be thought to embed structural properties in terms of meaning and norms, and to provide political resources. With respect to meaning, GIS are a way of representing space through the explicit device of maps, a common enough concept in western societies. However, India is not a map-based culture. Typical Indians will rarely, if ever, use maps in their daily life. A GIS project leader in the National Informatics Center (NIC), one of the other institutions in India trying to introduce GIS, said:

> The most difficult part of GIS introduction is getting people to think spatially. There is no simple strategy here. A first step would be to motivate NIC's own people. They must start thinking spatially first.

This remark misstates the core of the issue. It is not that Indians do not think spatially, but that they do not in general use external conceptualizations of space, namely maps, as key aids to spatial awareness. District-level administrators, for example, those concerned with forestry management, are well aware of spatial distributions of trees in their areas. However, they do not normally conceptualize this in terms of maps, whether computer-generated or not.

Sahay (1998) linked Indians' conceptualization of space to fundamental aspects of their identity. He argued that Indians view space as basically "in-here," subjective and inherent to the person, rather than "out-there" as some objective entity.

Sahay summarized the lack of fit between GIS technology and these aspects of Indian cultural identity as follows:

> The objective reality depicted in GIS software is interpreted to represent a disconnection of space from place, a relationship that allows interaction between absent others. In contrast, in Indian society, a strong relation is seen to exist between notions of space and place arising out of political, cosmological, religious and social considerations. These differences between subjective considerations and objective reality (of the GIS) seem to contribute to the discomfort which some Indians feel in relating to the notion of a GIS map (p. 181).

Sahay added that the purpose of a GIS reflects a sense of being able to control space and nature through technology. This need to dominate nature is also not a concept that comes naturally for many Indians, who typically see themselves as part of nature rather than standing outside of it.

A second feature of GIS technology can be seen as reflecting an organizational norm in western societies that places a high value on coordinated activity. The multi-layered nature of GIS systems, where data on different characteristics are brought together as overlays in the same map-based system, assumes that management issues will be addressed in a coordinated way. For example, the management of land resources in any country involves a wide range of disciplinary specialities, including agriculture, forestry, wildlife management, and many others. However, in India, these issues have typically been handled in relative isolation by the different agencies involved. Over 20 separate government agencies operate at the district level in India, each dealing with a particular functional area, and reflecting the wider governmental funding structures that are built around departmentally-based schemes. An employee in a non-governmental organization operating at the district level in India described this as follows:

The main problem is the compart-mentalism of activities. Different depart-ments do not speak to each other. There is a problem of attitude, people do not want to do things. The crux of the prob-lem is not technical but that of sustained coaxing. The district level engineer says that he is interested only in dams, the agricultural scientist in soils, the forester in trees. Everyone says that I am fine and no one sits and talks with each other. There is extreme compartmentalization. There is a mental barrier among the people.

This feature of compartmentalism of role in India is not a simple matter of inefficient bureaucratic organizations, but reflects some deeply-held cultural beliefs. Indian society has traditionally been stratified on functional lines with caste as the basic structural feature. Hinduism, the religion of the majority in India, emphasizes a social frame-work that embodies caste rituals, and these have governed the lives of most Indians for hundreds of years. One of the sacred Hindu texts, the *Bhagavad Gita*, says:

And to thy duty, even if it be humble, rather than another's, even if it be great. To die in one's duty is life: to live in another's is death.

The compartmentalism of role and activity was a clear feature of the GIS projects. Most of the GIS scientists viewed their goal as producing accurate scientific models for the GIS, which they then expected the district level administrators to use.

The GIS can be viewed, therefore, as embodying systems of meaning such as the representation of space through maps, and encapsulating norms such as the need for coordinated action. The systems were thus aligned to the interests and structures in the mind of the U.S. personnel, and can be thought of as *actors* (Walsham and Sahay 1999) introducing those ideas into an Indian context. Another way of expressing this is that the systems provided a political resource for an attempt to use western ideas in Indian district-level administration. No value judgement is being made in this paper about whether this attempt was a "good thing" or not. The point being made here is that there was a marked structural contradiction between the values embedded in the technology and those in the minds of local actors, particularly the district-level administrators.

Cross-Cultural Contradiction and Conflict

Structural contradiction, according to the theory in this paper, does not necessarily result in conflict. Conditions under which conflict is likely to occur are when actors feel that their interests are affected negatively, and when they are able to act to counter this. The relatively smooth nature of Phase I can be explained in that, although the GIS scientists were not map users themselves in their daily lives, they did not feel their interests threatened by the technology. Indeed, it provided a resource for them to learn about a leading-edge technology, with positive career connotations. Although the district-level administrators were, in some cases, required to provide data for the GIS, this did not compromise their normal way of working. The interim period between Phases I and II did, however, start to manifest some con-flict, notably when the GIS scientists felt that they were being asked by the project director to carry out a role which was not theirs, namely working closely with the district-level administrators to implement the systems. Some institutions with-drew from Phase II as a consequence.

Phase II itself saw little overt conflict, despite the stark structural contradictions between the values embedded in the technology and those in the minds of the Indian participants. Yet, there was real potential for some participants to be affected negatively. For example, the district-level staff were having alien systems imposed on them, which they saw as of little value. However, forms of resistance are many and subtle. The district-level staff did not, in general, reject the systems or undertake any form of direct action. Rather, they simply did not use the systems—action in the form of inaction, a type of passive resistance. This provides a nice illustration of what Giddens (1984)

calls the "dialectic of control," namely the ways in which the seemingly less powerful manage resources in such a way as to exert control over the more powerful.

Reflexivity and Change

This passive resistance to the GIS on the part of district-level staff can be taken as an example of reproduction of structure, but change is also inherent in the human actors' reflexivity here. India is not a static culture and there is an increasing awareness of maps and map-based systems in India, not least since private Indian software companies in places such as Bangalore have been very successful in selling their services as GIS developers in the world software market. Structures in the mind do change over time, even with respect to such a fundamental issue as the conceptualization of space. Changes in culture are often imperceptible over short time periods, but major social change over longer time horizons is made up of such minor shifts.

As an example of longer-term shifting attitudes in the development and use of GIS in India, Puri (2002) describes ongoing efforts to use GIS for land management in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. He argues that some indications of successful use are now discernible, in contrast to the earlier work described by Walsham and Sahay (1999). Puri ascribes the later success to shifts in earlier "attitudinal rigidities," and gives examples of new approaches: GIS scientists assuming ownership of implementation as well as development of systems; increasing consultation with local departments and people; and nodal district agencies managing implementation action plans. Puri's research provides a valuable reminder that longitudinal studies of several years length, as carried out by Walsham and Sahay, may still not be long enough to detect the effect of shifting individual attitudes, or structure in the mind, which can aggregate over time to major shifts in national or subgroup cultures.

Theorizing Cross-Cultural Working and IS ████████████

In order to assess the contribution the structurational analysis of this paper can make to the study of cross-cultural software production and use, or more generally to cross-cultural working and information systems, it is necessary to examine the existing literature in this latter domain. A good starting point is the widely-cited work of Hofstede (1980, 1991), which describes cultural difference in terms of scores on five dimensions: power-distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation. Myers and Tan (2002) noted that much of the literature concerned with cultural and cross-cultural issues in the IS field has relied on Hofstede's work. They analyzed 36 studies from the cross-cultural IS literature, and noted that 24 of these used some or all of Hofstede's dimensions.

While the work of Hofstede, and that of similar style such as Trompenaars (1993), has the merit of alerting us to the importance of cultural difference, it can also be criticized as rather crude and simplistic. Myers and Tan note that the very concept of *national culture* is problematic on several grounds. These include the heterogeneity within a given nation-state and the difficulty of relating national cultural values to work-related actions and attitudes. They propose that IS researchers should adopt a more dynamic view of culture—one that sees culture as contested, temporal, and emergent. The rest of this section will examine why such issues are important to the study of cross-cultural working and IS, and what the structurational analysis of this paper has to offer. The discussion is organized under the four headings of cross-cultural contradiction and conflict, cultural heterogeneity, detailed work patterns, and the dynamic nature of culture. Key points in this section are outlined in Table 4, summarizing limitations of Hofstede-type studies and related contributions from a structurational analysis.

Table 4. Cross-Cultural Working and IS: Contribution of Different Theories				
Topic	**Hofstede-Type Studies**	**Structurational Analysis**	**Examples in Jamaica Case**	**Examples in GIS Case**
Cross-cultural contradiction and conflict	Describe aggregate differences between cultures But provide no link to conflict	Detailed way of relating contradiction and conflict	Differences in cultural views about teamwork, power relations, time deadlines Resulting in conflict since perceived negatively and resistance possible	Three different cultural subgroups with different attitudes to GIS Resulted in resistance in Phase II only, when participants perceived negative consequences
Cultural heterogeneity	No description of heterogeneity	Can be used to analyze differences in cultural subgroups and even individuals	Some analysis of individual difference related to the Indian project director	Analysis of different attitudes of Indian scientists and district-level administrators from the same national culture
Detailed work patterns	Aggregate cultural variables do not easily translate to effect on work patterns	Meaning systems, power relations, norms already targeted at the detailed work level	Example of approaches to control of subordinates	Example of different ways of representing space
The dynamic nature of culture	Normally treated as static	Can analyze reflexivity and change	Increasing recognition over time of importance of cross-cultural issues Example of negotiated culture.	Recent work indicates some shift away from the attitudes that characterized the earlier studies

Cross-Cultural Contradiction and Conflict

Hofstede-type studies describe intercultural differences in the selected aggregate variables, and these can be taken as reflecting *contradictions* between different cultures. However, no analytical tools are provided by such studies as to how to analyze whether, and if so how, such contradictions result in actual *conflict*, physical or otherwise. For example, people from different cultures may coexist quite easily despite such differences, but in other cases the differences seem to cause major difficulties. In trying to analyze possible conflict in cross-cultural working and IS, such as in software production and use, the aggregate national variables are of little use.

The structurational analysis in this paper offers a way of addressing the question of both structural contradiction and conflict. It has been argued that conflicts may occur in cross-cultural working if differences in structures in the mind are perceived

to affect actors negatively, and they are able to act to resist or oppose these negative impacts. This was illustrated in the Jamaica-India case by identifying differences in cultural views about approaches to teamwork, forms of appropriate power relations, and attitudes to time deadlines. These contributed to conflict since they affected all participants in the software project directly, and in ways that were largely perceived to be negative. Opposition or resistance was possible, and detailed ways in which this occurred were described in the case.

The GIS case also illustrated the value of a structurational analysis of cross-cultural contradiction and conflict, although in a slightly different way. Three cultural subgroups were identified, with rather different structures in the mind with respect to GIS systems, but no significant conflict occurred in Phase I of the project. This was explained by an analysis of the specific interests of the three groups, which were not negatively affected by the GIS project, although they had different views concerning its merits. However, in Phase II, some resistance did occur, for example when the Project Director wanted the GIS scientists to become involved in local-level implementation, something which they viewed as outside their remit.

Cultural Heterogeneity

By treating the concept of national culture through the use of scores on particular dimensions, as is the case in Hofstede-type studies, the implicit assumption is that national culture shows a strong homogeneity. However, there is much evidence against this view of the world. For example, India provides a good counterexample. Its one billion people come from many and varied cultural, racial, and religious backgrounds, speak hundreds of different languages, and exhibit enormous variety at different hierarchical levels within the society. Within western countries, there is an increasing heterogeneity of history and background, not least due to the existence of ethnic subgroups (see, for example, Appadurai 1997).

An interesting example of work in the IS field which goes beyond the simple attribution of national cultural characteristics is that of Korpela and his colleagues (Korpela 1996; Korpela et al 2000). Korpela criticized the approach of taking West Africa, an area equal in size to Europe, as one culture characterized by Hofstede's aggregate variables such as low individualism and a high acceptance of an unequal distribution of power. In contrast, Korpela pointed out that the country of Nigeria, for example, is a colonial creation and contains many different groups with "sharp cultural discontinuities." One such group is the Yoruba people, numbering some 20 million. Although there are differences within this large group itself, Korpela drew on the extensive literature on the Yoruba to highlight five aspects of the Yoruba cultural heritage that are distinctive. The work of Korpela and his colleagues used these characteristics to illuminate complex issues of IT development problems in the health sector in Yorubaland.

So, what does structurational analysis offer to the study of cultural heterogeneity and its impacts on IS? If we look back to the case studies of this paper, such an analysis does not require that cultures are regarded as homogeneous, but rather that one should be looking for a measure of systemness or homogeneity within particular social groupings. A good example is provided by the GIS case study. As we saw earlier, the subcultures of the GIS scientists and the district-level administrators, both composed solely of Indian nationals, had radically different attitudes toward the GIS and their value. For example, the first group viewed the GIS as providing ways for them to work with lead-edge technologies and systems, whereas the second group viewed the GIS as alien technology of little relevance to their role. A structurational analysis opens up the possibility of examining the heterogeneous systems of meaning, power relations, and norms of different social groupings within the same national culture.

The Jamaican case study did not analyze cultural heterogeneity within the two national groups

directly, but aspects of it can be seen through the discussion of the role of the initial project director, Raj. His interest in organizational issues was limited, and the quotes from him in the text show his tendency to racial stereotyping of the Jamaican software employees. He was later moved to a role dealing with technical issues, leaving the way open for a new Indian CEO with a rather different management and cross-cultural approach. Space and resource limitations provide a natural barrier to case analyses which treat every project participant as an individual person with a different mixture of attributes, but structurational analysis can, in principle, be used to analyze cultural heterogeneity down to the level of subgroups, or even individuals.

Detailed Work Patterns

A further criticism of the use of Hofstede-type national cultural characteristics as a basis for analysis of cross-cultural working and IS is that there is normally a poor link between these characteristics and detailed work-related attitudes and actions. It is one thing to know how the people of a country score on masculinity or uncertainty avoidance, but another to know how this translates into the details of systems development processes, or attitudes to particular technologies. In terms of cross-cultural working, it is not necessarily the case that similarities in national characteristics imply similar work-related patterns. For example, Khare (1999) describes radical differences between Indian and Japanese work patterns, in areas such as commitment to their organization and attitude to time, despite similarities between India and Japan in terms of their scores on individualism, long-term orientation, and power-distance (Hofstede 1995).

In order to analyze detailed patterns in cross-cultural working, it is necessary to go away from the high level of national characteristics to a more detailed focus on behavior at the micro-level of the group or organization. For example, in the general management literature, Lam (1997) described

a fascinating longitudinal study of cross-cultural working between Japanese and British engineers. Her detailed analysis demonstrated how differences in educational background, bases of skills, and approaches to coordination of work resulted in very different attitudes to knowledge sharing by the two cultural groups, and thus major problems in cross-cultural working. In the IS literature, a limited number of authors have carried out cross-cultural studies from this perspective of a detailed analysis of work patterns and attitudes. For example, Trauth (1999, 2000) examined the management of IT workers in an American-Irish cross-cultural work environment as part of a detailed longitudinal study of the information economy in Ireland. Barrett et al (1997) described cross-cultural working on software outsourcing from U.S. to Indian companies, examining detailed work patterns in areas such as forms of partnership and coordination mechanisms.

The structurational analysis described in this paper can offer a valuable theoretical underpinning for studies of this latter type, which otherwise tend to be somewhat anecdotal in nature. Such an analysis, as we have seen, focuses on meaning, power, and norms within particular work groups and how these affect particular work patterns and behavior. For example, in the Jamaica-India case, we saw how the Indian managers of the project were used to hands-on approaches to control subordinates, whereas this was viewed as reflecting an "adult-child" approach by one of the Jamaican participants. In the Indian GIS case, we saw how the different ways of representing space between the U.S. developers and the Indian users resulted in passive resistance to the implementation of the technology. The insights from these studies could not have been obtained by a high-level analysis of cultural dimensions. It may be possible, in theory, to make a connection between Hofstede-type dimensions and detailed work patterns and attitudes, but such an analysis is not easily found in the literature. A structurational analysis, with its focus on meaning, power, and norms, is already targeted at the detailed work level.

The Dynamic Nature of Culture

A final area of weakness of the cultural dimensions approach to cross-cultural working is that culture is not static. For example, we have seen quite dramatic changes in many societies over the last few decades in areas such as attitudes to gender, the environment, race, sex, family life, and religion. In the context of globalization, with increasing contact between different societies, it is increasingly difficult for any group to remain isolated and uninfluenced by other cultures. Thus, in the domain of cross-cultural working, we need theories that reflect change as well as stability, and that are attuned to shifts in attitudes and actions as well as their continuance.

An example of such work in the cross-cultural management literature is that of Brannen and Salk (2000) on *negotiated culture*. They used the case example of a German-Japanese joint venture to show how the attitudes of the two cultural groups shifted over time as they engaged with each other in collaborative work activities. The groups negotiated a compromise between themselves in areas such as styles of decision making and attitudes to time off on weekends and holidays, resulting in a hybrid culture for both groups. This is not saying that the two groups became homogeneous, but that they both shifted in their attitudes from their initial cultural starting point. In the IS literature, Sahay and Krishna (2000) described a similar process in some ways, although they did not use the term *negotiated culture*. They described a case study of a software outsourcing venture over a period of several years from a Canadian multinational to an Indian software house. At first, cultural contradiction produced some conflict, but the authors argued that, later, the relationship "showed signs of maturing" based on both sides gaining an increased understanding of the other's culture. Again, this did not result in the parties becoming the same in terms of attitudes and values, but it certainly supports the view of workgroup culture being dynamic and emergent, and not derived in a static manner from national cultural characteristics.

Although neither of the above studies used a structurational analysis, this would have provided a theoretical framework within which to embed their analyses. Structuration theory, in addition to analyzing structural reproduction, emphasizes reflexivity on the part of human actors and thus changes in structure in the mind. This was analyzed in the earlier case studies under the heading of reflexivity and change. In the Jamaica-India case, we saw this reflected in an increasing recognition over time of the importance of cross-cultural issues, and the necessity for actions to be taken to address such issues. Job roles were changed, people were moved to different positions, and the India-Jamaica team started to function rather better. The negotiated culture concept fits quite well here.

In the Indian GIS case, longer-term attitudinal changes are needed if people working at the local level, such as district-level officials, are to embrace technologies such as GIS in their day-to-day work, or if GIS scientists are to perceive their role as involving implementation as well as technical development of systems. Although such changes are hard to trace in detail in the complexity of a context such as India, the earlier structurational analysis of the case drew on some recent work to indicate, at least in some areas, a shift away from the attitudinal rigidities which had characterized the earlier reported case studies. Indian culture, as with all other societies, is dynamic and emergent, and a structurational analysis can offer insights on such change processes.

Conclusions ▬▬▬▬▬▬

In the more globalized world of the 21st century, working with information and communication technologies is increasingly taking place in a cross-cultural context, but we are short of good theory to analyze such phenomena. A recent article by Goodall (2002) argued that this applies to the cross-cultural management literature more generally, namely that "we are short of both rich

descriptions of cross-cultural interaction, and theoretical explanations of the same." The primary contribution of this paper has been to provide such a theoretical basis, drawing from structuration theory, which was used to analyze cross-cultural software production and use. The theorization goes beyond the relatively simplistic Hofstede-type studies which dominate the IS literature to date. In contrast to such studies, it was shown in the preceding section that a structurational analysis can accommodate elements such as the links between structural contradiction and conflict, cultural heterogeneity, an analysis of detailed work patterns, and the dynamic and emergent nature of culture.

The theory has been illustrated using two empirical examples only, with a focus on software production and use, but it could be used to analyze any case study involving cross-cultural working and IS. Viewed from a more critical perspective, however, any theory illuminates some elements of particular case situations and is relatively silent on others. Structuration theory is no exception, and as noted by Giddens (1984) himself, the use of structuration theory does not preclude the use of other theories in tandem with it. For example, Walsham and Sahay (1999) drew on actor-network theory to analyze elements of the GIS case other than those discussed in this article. In particular, they focused on the detailed processes of human reflexivity, technical adaptation and network building involved in the case. The structurational analysis in this paper can be supplemented with other specific theories, as appropriate to the particular domain of interest.

Moving finally to the issue of IS practice, what conclusions can be offered? The paper lies squarely within the literature which considers that globalization, facilitated by ICTs, is not leading to simple homogeneity of culture and approach. While it has been argued that culture is not static, the relatively enduring nature of cultural norms and values results from processes of reproduction of structure in the mind. Thus, there is a need for practitioners to be highly sensitive to cultural difference when working in a cross-cultural context. Sensitivity to other cultures does not imply the need for practitioners to change their own attitudes and values to those of the other culture. What is needed is some understanding, and ideally empathy, for the attitudes, norms, and values of others. This offers the possibility of mutual respect between cross-cultural partners and the opportunity for a move toward a more negotiated culture of cooperation.

A detailed discussion of ways in which this can be achieved is beyond the scope of the current paper. However, some broad approaches are worth mentioning in conclusion. Cross-cultural education and training can be achieved through such means as reading, formal courses, and on-the-job facilitation. With respect to the latter, open discussions about difficult cross-cultural issues can be valuable starting points to increased understanding in cross-cultural teams. While technologies, such as GIS, have features that reflect their cultural origins, technology has a degree of *interpretive flexibility* (Pinch and Bijker 1987), and can be adapted and used in different ways. For example, Braa (1997) used the metaphor of *cultivation* to describe the process of adapting Scandinavian technologies and approaches to the different context of the development of South African health information systems. In our more globalized world, cross-cultural working is increasingly common, and the information systems field needs to increase its understanding of the problematic issues involved and approaches to resolving them. It is hoped that this paper makes a modest contribution to these goals.

Acknowledgements

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