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1 Models and motives

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Why do people do what they do?[1] To address this question the papers in this volume take a new look at the nature and sources of human motivation. Human motivation has to be understood as the product of interaction between events and things in the social world and interpretations of those events and things in people's psyches. In this introduction I argue that models of motivation need to reject not only psychobiological determinism but also sociocultural determinism, if the latter is taken to mean that private interpretations are replicas of public messages.

This point may seem obvious, but it runs counter to earlier research paradigms in psychology, which have explained motivation primarily in terms of universal needs and drives, and to currently dominant social and cultural theories, which would make human action a direct precipitate of cultural constructs. In contrast to these approaches, the research presented here shows, on the one hand, that motivation depends on cultural messages and is realized in social interaction, but on the other, that motivation is not automatically acquired when cultural messages have been imparted. Knowing the dominant ideologies, discourses, and symbols of a society is only the beginning – there remains the hard work of understanding why some of those ideologies, discourses, and symbols become compelling to social actors, while others are only the hollow shell of a morality that may be repeated in official pronouncements but is ignored in private lives.[2] Our key question thus becomes: How do cultural messages get under people's skin (both literally and metaphorically)?

It is particularly important to address this question now, because anthropological descriptions of culture are changing. In earlier decades it was conventional wisdom to think of cultures as integrated, stable sets of meanings and practices unproblematically reproduced through socialized actors. Now, anthropologists are beginning to stress conflict, contradiction, ambiguity, and change in cultural understandings – the way cultural understandings are "contested" and "negotiated," in current jargon.[3] These new models of culture are driven in part by theoretical currents, but also by the undeniable evidence that the social order is not a master

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programmer in any simple, straightforward way. Even though any two middle-class North Americans are more likely to share concerns than either would be with a Nuer or an Ifaluk Islander, there are enough social resisters and amoral hustlers in any society to show us that culture is not "loaded in" to us the way it is into a computer. As this is being written, at the beginning of the 1990s, examples of both ideological resistance from around the world and of domestic fallout from the continuing modernist crisis – if there are no absolute truths, why be good? – should be enough to give the questions of this volume motivational force for social researchers.

Fortunately, the people whose lives inform these studies show little of the postmodern exhaustion that is currently a subject of much elite intellectual interest. The people we talked to were sometimes torn between conflicting desires, but they did not lack deeply motivating concerns. Their stories urge us to find the missing links that would explain how ambiguous, conflicting, and potentially impotent social messages become a basis for someone's action.

The remainder of this introduction presents a brief discussion of our dispute with traditional psychological studies of motivation, followed by a longer discussion of weaknesses of some other sociocultural approaches to motivation. Next, I summarize the papers in this volume and, finally, outline its organization.

It should be noted from the start that although most of the contributors to the volume are cognitive anthropologists, we do not believe cognition is a realm that is separate from affect. When we speak of "mind" or "cognitive representations" we refer to psychic processes and states in which thought and feeling are linked. New models of mind that are particularly conducive to integrating what nineteenth-century psychology took to be the separate faculties of cognition, emotion, and motivation (Lazarus, Coyne, and Folkman 1984, Isen 1984) will be presented later in this introduction. Taking a suggestion from Wikan (1989), I will use the phrase "thought-feeling" to emphasize the interdependence of these aspects of psyche.

Traditional psychological models of motivation

Psychological theories of motivation have been largely concerned with "the biological needs and psychological drives that influence the behavior of organisms" (Bock 1988:12). Thus, a psychology text might introduce motivation by talking about an animal's physiological *needs* for food and water, the *drives*, i.e., urgent subjective states of hunger and thirst, to which those needs give rise, and the consequent *motivation* animals have to eat and drink because they have learned that those activities satisfy

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hunger and thirst. After this starting point, specifically human needs (e.g., the desire for achievement, affiliation, and self-esteem) would be discussed and proposed to work analogously, producing motives that explain human action across cultures and throughout time.[4] On this model needs and drives built into the human personality can be canalized (that is, steered toward cross-culturally varying ends) and may exert varying degrees of pressure (for example, some cultures foster a high, others a low, need for achievement), but otherwise the motivational pool is the same for all humans.

As D'Andrade's first essay in this volume explains, the tradition of motivation research described above is no longer dominant in psychology because its proponents were unable to specify a limited set of universal motives, identify them in behavior, and explain situational variance in their expression. D'Andrade proposes that a more promising alternative may be to investigate how cognitive schemas learned in specific cultural contexts are linked to one another and to goals for action. To put it in a slogan, *cultural models* (i.e., culturally formed cognitive schemas, Quinn and Holland 1987) *can have motivational force* because these models not only label and describe the world but also set forth goals (both conscious and unconscious) and elicit or include desires (D'Andrade 1981, 1984, 1990). (Note: cognitive schemas are learned, internalized patterns of thought-feeling that mediate both the interpretation of on-going experience and the reconstruction of memories.) This insight is the starting point for all of the papers in this volume, although some of the contributors (e.g., Shweder and Lutz) would not phrase their objections to traditional studies of motivation in quite these cognitive terms.

D'Andrade's essay makes clear that there are many advantages to thinking of motives as embedded in cultural models: we are no longer limited to a small universal set of motives; we can explain situational variation in behavior more easily; and we can study motives the same way we study other cultural models. Particularly important in D'Andrade's account is the hierarchical organization of goal-embedded schemas: at the highest level are schemas (e.g., for love or success) whose goals are easily triggered by a wide range of inputs; at lower levels are schemas (e.g., for joining a dating service or attending a job fair) that direct action only if "recruited" by higher-level goals. This hierarchy of linkages among schemas helps explain the situational variability of action and gives us a way of understanding the cognitive correlates of dominant cultural values.

Since rejection of psychobiological reductionism is not only uncontroversial in contemporary cultural theory but is practically a sacrament of the faith, I will not belabor this point. I should note, however, that while we share a commitment to understanding the cultural bases of motivation,

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we do not necessarily assume that there are no universal needs or drives. D'Andrade (chapter 2), for example, does not see human motivation as *determined* by psychobiological drives, but he retains a theoretical place for universal needs and drives alongside and interacting with cross-culturally variable cognitive schemas (see also D'Andrade 1981). *A fortiori* it follows that we should not reject the possibility of psychic universals of some sort or other (*pace* Shweder 1990). At the very least, the fact that a human baby born anywhere in the world can acquire language and culture anywhere else in the world, while a chimp baby cannot (or cannot in the same way humans do) indicates that all humans have a built-in receptiveness to the form human cultures take, and all human cultures probably share some bedrock commonalities because of these coevolved features of human neurophysiology and morphology.[5]

Traditional sociocultural models of motivation

In the last section I stated that to understand why people do what they do, we have to understand the cultural constructs by which they interpret the world. There are probably few cultural anthropologists who would disagree with this point, which is directed against earlier psychological rather than anthropological models of motivation. In this section I will argue that to understand why people do what they do, it is not enough to know the dominant constructs of a society; it is also necessary to study how actors internalize those constructs. This point may be more controversial.

Focusing on the ways culture is internalized is hardly new in psychological anthropology. A concern with internalization is present, as well, in some critical theorists' studies of social resistance (e.g., Martin 1987, Scott 1985, Willis 1977), for one effective way to critique overly strong theories of social reproduction is to explore the varying meanings individuals assign to the dominant values and practices of their society. The importance of internalization is also a theme in the work of such iconoclastic researchers as Barth (1975, 1982), Bloch (1985), and Sperber (1985). Yet, while this focus is not new, espousing it means rowing against two major currents of sociocultural theory. Riding on the first current are theorists who argue that studies of internalization are misguided in principle. Travelers along the second current accept the importance of internalization in principle but have failed to study it in practice.

Interpretivism is an especially powerful stream in the first current. Although it is not the only stream (French structuralism and many versions of contemporary poststructuralism have also contributed), I will focus on it here because it continues to exert a strong influence on

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anthropological analyses of action. Ricoeur (1979) presents a straightforward argument for an interpretivist position: human social action is like a written text; written texts are most fruitfully analyzed without reference to the psychology of the author; therefore, human social action is most fruitfully analyzed without reference to the psychology of the actor. Ricoeur gives special attention to the first premise, making a distinction between written texts and spoken discourse. He claims that social action is more like a written text than like spoken discourse because, among other reasons, both written texts and social action are inscribed (literally or, in the second case, figuratively on the "historical record") and both have effects or meanings that escape the intentions of their authors.

These claims, central to much current work in literary criticism, require a much fuller response than I can give them here. An outline of a response would go as follows. First, Ricoeur ignores the fact that spoken discourse is also a form of action, with the same kind of metaphorical inscription on the historical record as any other action. Second, from the fact that the effects of all action escape their authors' intentions it does not follow that intentions are irrelevant to an understanding of action. Finally, a hermeneutic interpretation of action in the light of other actions only explains why people do what they do if they have consciously or unconsciously internalized whatever patterns of signification the analyst may find.

Geertz's (1973c) arguments in this vein are not as clear as Ricoeur's, but what they lack in clarity they compensate for by eloquence. Now, almost twenty years after Geertz published "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," the criticisms presented there are still being used as a bludgeon against internalist (e.g., cognitive or psychoanalytic) analyses of action.[6] If we want to advance our understanding of human action beyond the point anthropologists reached two decades ago, we need to examine Geertz's claims in some detail (see also Ewing, in press).

Geertz's primary target is earlier cognitivists' reductions of culture to mental phenomena; he also critiques the reduction of culture to patterns of behavior. Geertz does not deny that desires and thoughts exist, or that patterned behaviors exist. What he denies is that either of those things is culture. Culture "consists of socially established structures of meaning" and "culture is public because meaning is [public]" (1973c:12). By "public" we can assume he means not only *shared* but also *open to view* – out in the world – as rituals and artifacts are, rather than hidden, as people's thoughts and feelings are. Geertz would have to mean "public" in both of these senses to argue against psychological analyses, because psychological anthropologists would agree that culture is public in the first sense of being (in varying degrees) shared, or held in common.

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Geertz's contention that culture is publicly accessible rests[7] on two, by now famous, examples of "structures of meaning," Beethoven quartets and winks. This is what Geertz said about a Beethoven quartet:

no one would, I think, identify it with its score, with the skills and knowledge needed to play it, with the understanding of it possessed by its performers or auditors, nor . . . with a particular performance of it . . . that a Beethoven quartet is a temporally developed tonal structure, a coherent sequence of modeled sound – in a word, *music* – and not anybody's knowledge of or belief about anything, including how to play it, is a proposition to which most people are, upon reflection, likely to assent. (1973c:11–12; emphasis added)

Beethoven's quartets are a sample of culture; what is true of them, therefore, Geertz supposes to be true of culture as a whole.

One way we could interpret this passage is to highlight the phrase "temporally developed tonal structure" and infer that Geertz was suggesting that culture is an abstract entity, hence not the sort of thing that could be in the head. This interpretation makes sense in light of Geertz's further examples of cultural things: "Tantrism, genetics, the progressive form of the verb, the classification of wines, the Common Law, or the notion of 'a conditional curse'" (1973c:13). It also makes sense if, as Geertz proposes elsewhere (1973a:92), culture is like a genetic code (rather than any particular string of DNA molecules). The problem with this interpretation is that abstract entities are not public (in the out-in-the-world sense); abstract entities are neither publicly accessible like artifacts[8] nor private like psychological states.

It may be, however, that Geertz did not mean that culture is an abstract entity, because he also characterized a Beethoven quartet as a "sequence of modeled sound – in a word, *music*." Sequences of sounds are concrete things and "music," according to my dictionary, is "agreeable sound," that is, sound plus a subjective reaction. What makes "a temporally developed tonal structure" *music* rather than *noise* are the internalized schemas that mediate people's responses to those sounds. A Beethoven quartet is not identical with these schemas, but it cannot be music without them.[9]

It is thus not clear what moral we should draw from the example of a Beethoven quartet. The most plausible moral is that culture as a whole is like music: it includes both the public actions, objects and symbols that make shared learning possible (D'Andrade pers. comm., Sperber 1985) and the private psychological states of knowledge and feeling without which these public things are meaningless (Spiro 1987a) and could not be recreated (Goodenough 1981; see also Colby and Colby 1981, Shore 1991). This, however, seems not to be the conclusion Geertz wants us to

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reach. For our present purposes it is not necessary to settle this question, because this debate concerns what *culture* is, not how we should study culturally informed *action*. We could agree that culture is either an abstract construct or a collection of concrete out-in-the-world objects and events and still contend that culturally informed action follows from private, even if shared, thought-feelings.

Geertz seems to want to cut off that possibility as well, for after having devoted the first part of his essay to the proposal that cultural analysis should aim for a "thick (i.e., meaning-laden) description" of things like winks, he goes on to argue as follows: 'Culture is public because meaning is. You can't wink . . . without knowing what counts as winking . . . But to draw from such truths the conclusion that knowing how to wink is winking . . . is to betray as deep a confusion as, taking thin descriptions for thick, to identify winking with eyelid contractions' (1973c:12).

Granted, knowing how to wink is not the same as winking. But what is publicly observable here? Not winking, in the meaning-laden "thick" sense, only eyelid contractions. What makes that eyelid contraction a wink rather than a twitch lies not in the external realm of behavior but in the internal realm of psyche: the winker's intention to deliver a message. That intention is in the winker's head, as is the winker's knowledge of what a wink means, and the knowledge that the winkee should know how to distinguish winks from twitches, and hence know which is which. This knowledge is intersubjectively shared, but it is internal to the actors involved, thus private in the sense we have been talking about here.

What holds for winking holds even more strongly for more complex and interesting forms of social behavior. Consider Beethoven's music again. Tereza, of Milan Kundera's *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, falls in love while listening to Beethoven's music, quite unlike Alex, the antihero of Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*, who commits mayhem while listening to Beethoven. (This is not just a result of the differences between the bleak culture of the future imagined by Burgess and the Czechoslovakia of the 1960s described by Kundera. Compare Tereza's reaction to Beethoven with Tomas's in *Unbearable Lightness* or Alex's with his mates' in *Clockwork Orange*.) To understand why someone acts the way they do it is not enough to know the discourses, objects, and events to which they have been exposed; we need to know the psychic structures that assimilate those things and render them a basis for meaningful action (Spiro 1987a).

In practice Geertz did sometimes take into account the way shared cultural assumptions are internalized: "Ritual and Social Change: A Javanese Example" (1973b) is an excellent example. That analysis is insightful precisely because it leaves the hermeneutic circle to ask ques-

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tions about the meaning of cultural "texts" for their "authors," that is, for the people creating social action.

In the second major current I alluded to at the outset of this section a completely different tack is taken in denigrating the need to study how the public social world is internalized. This second tack was taken by many structural-functionalists and continues in some current versions of practice theory. For Durkheimian structural-functionalists (e.g., Durkheim himself, Radcliffe-Brown, and Parsons) psychological states play an important role but not an independent one, because social values are assumed to be transmitted unproblematically through a society's socialization mechanisms. For societies to survive they need to inculcate dominant values in their members. Whether through sacred rituals or mundane child-rearing practices, these dominant values are imparted, creating the motivational states that will lead to actions that recreate the social order. If all goes well, everyone lives happily ever after in consensual harmony (within a social group; structural-functionalists certainly recognized the presence of conflict between differently socialized groups). According to structural-functionalists, if we want to know why people do what they do, we need only look at what they have been taught.

Given that human action is certainly underdetermined, if not undetermined, by innate drives, we do indeed have to examine the cultural sources of motivation, including the social behavior people observe, the instructions they are given, and the constructed realities they bump up against. But, as every parent will recognize, transmission of values and beliefs is no straightforward matter. This is not a simple problem of "noise" in the fax line from the public social order to individuals' psyches causing imperfect copies. Transmission is more complicated than this because the social order is more complicated than this. If our cultural-ideological milieux were unchanging, unambiguous, and internally consistent, there would be no need to study how social messages are appropriated by individual minds. Early childhood experience would be consistent with adult experience, explicit messages consistent with each other and implicit messages, and the meaning of a society's messages would be clear to anyone who learned them. Yet, as we now recognize, conflicting messages, ambiguity, and change are found in all societies, even "traditional" ones. If we reject structural-functional understandings of society, it becomes all the more important to study how individuals grasp the social order (see also Whitehead 1987). This point needs to be stressed because, paradoxically, at present the very analysts who are most likely to stress ambiguity, contestation, and multiple voices in social life are also most likely to be persuaded (e.g., by Foucault 1977) that we need to "decenter" discourse and behavior away from the individual actor.

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Bourdieu's theory of practice (1977, 1990) is, in many respects, an improvement over structural-functionalism (see also Giddens 1979). Bourdieu retains structural-functionalists' insight that social reproduction must be accomplished through a process by which social facts are internalized. In his model, however, the primary social facts are not social norms but rather practices of everyday life. Everyday behavior is not copied exactly in the child's 'habitus' (Bourdieu's name for the mental structures created through this process of inexplicit learning); instead, learners unconsciously extract from practice a pattern that can be flexibly and innovatively enacted in new situations. This model of the formation of the habitus is remarkable in anticipating current connectionist models of cognition, which are discussed further below.[10]

There are two serious problems with Bourdieu's practice theory, however. Although he does discuss explicit ideological learning, his focus is on inexplicit learning and the unreflective, automaton-like behavior that follows from it. (In fact, in *Distinction* Bourdieu ridicules the pretensions that keep us from agreeing with Leibniz that "'we are automatons in three-quarters of what we do'" [1984:474].) This is a useful corrective to theories that focus too exclusively on self-conscious goal-directed behavior. But Bourdieu goes too far in the other direction, ignoring social action that *is* consciously goal-directed. (Note: "consciously goal-directed" does not necessarily mean "rational" in a narrow cost-benefit [Weber's *zweckrational*] sense. For example, a religiously motivated suicide mission is consciously goal-directed.) Furthermore, Bourdieu's analysis is limited because it is not person-centered. In *Outline* he never analyzes the habitus of any particular individuals, but instead, like all too many social researchers, makes assumptions about the contents of the habitus of his Kabyle informants on the basis of social facts such as the organization of their households or the rhythms of their agricultural calendar.[11] This leads him to ignore the potential for intracultural variation and change that is built into his theory of habitus formation and to stress instead the reproduction of hegemonic relations, at least for "traditional" societies. In other words, although Bourdieu's theory takes us away from what I call "fax" models of socialization, his own practice falls back into them. (The fax analogy is used here to highlight the assumptions about both transmission and copying that are part of these models of culture.)

Not just the fax: complexities in the development of motivation

The papers in this volume suggest a different model, one that is person-centered (LeVine 1982) and takes into account three complexities of the

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socialization process: (1) public social messages may change, be inconsistent, or hard to read; (2) internalizing these messages does not mean copying them in any straightforward way; and (3) motivation is not automatically acquired when cultural descriptions of reality are learned. The next section will describe in greater detail the contributions the papers in the volume make towards a greater understanding of each of these points. Like the recent studies of social resistance referred to at the outset of this section, many of these papers show that social reproduction looks very different from the "bottom" (the actor's point of view) than it does from the "top" (the perspective of dominant institutions and ideologies).

The public social order is complex

The complexity of the public social order is not due simply to the many intentional worlds (e.g., surfing, curing, or performance art) there are in every society. If that were the only problem, each of these micro-worlds could be treated as a community unto itself, with a fax model of internalization working unproblematically within that world. Fax models do not work because even within an intentional world, people receive inconsistent and unclear messages.

Harkness, Super, and Keefer (chapter 7) illustrate this in their discussion of the child-rearing schemas of some middle-class adults in the greater Boston, Massachusetts area. These men and women did not come to parenthood with ready-to-apply theories of child rearing; instead, they have responded to their children's changing behaviors by drawing on memories of how their parents raised them, models provided by friends and acquaintances currently engaged in child rearing, and the advice of "experts." However, the way these parents remember being raised is often not the way their peers raise children, and the experts may suggest still another approach or disagree with one another ("Be strict!" "Be indulgent!"). There is the further problem that some cultural values are vague (e.g., independence is good); it may not be clear how to translate these values into practice. That people can sort through changing, inconsistent, and ambiguous messages like these to arrive at reasonably coherent actions, as Harkness *et al.* show they do, demonstrates one limitation of approaches that assume social facts are simply copied into internal schemas.

Another difficulty for the fax theory of internalization is that social facts take different forms. Information that is given to us as an explicit rule is internalized and acted on differently than information that is only implicit in practice. As Bourdieu (1977, 1990) recognized, skills that are built up through repeated practice have two interesting properties. On the one

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