9 Poststructuralists, feminists, and (other) mavericks

The poststructuralists, feminists, and mavericks described in this chapter have in common a desire to move away from the more formalist ideas of functionalism and structuralism towards a looser, yet more complex, understanding of relations between culture and social action. The growing interest in power is represented in many of the works touched on here as well.

Poststructuralism occupies an ambiguous position in anthropology. On the one hand, it is in essence a critique of structuralist thought played out mainly in structuralist terms. That is, the poststructuralists, who have practised mainly outside social anthropology (in philosophy, literary criticism, history, and sociology), have offered critiques of Lévi-Strauss and other declared structuralist writers. At the same time, poststructuralists have pointed the way to the explanation of action, the scrutiny of power, and the deconstruction of the writer as a creator of discourses. Thus poststructuralism touches on the interests of transactionalists, Marxists and feminists, and postmodernists alike. In a loose sense, poststructuralism is a form of postmodernism, as structuralism is the primary form of 'late modernism' in anthropology (see chapter 10).

Feminism has its main roots in substantive, as opposed to grand theoretical, issues of sex roles and gender symbolism. However, over the last twenty years it has achieved the status of a theoretical paradigm not only in the substantive area of gender studies, but also more widely in anthropology. It has moved from a concern centrally with women and women's subordination *per se* to a more general commentary on power relations, symbolic associations, and other facets of society at large, as well as a discourse on issues such as reflexivity, the gender of the ethnographer, and therefore the place of the ethnographer in anthropological fieldwork. Thus it too has close links with much in the postmodern agenda, though not all feminists claim to be postmodernists nor all postmodernists, feminists.

It is often all too easy to think of anthropology as definable in terms of grand ideas, competing paradigms, and schools of thought. While these

represent a substantial portion of 'anthropological theory' as it is commonly understood, there is nevertheless a place for the maverick. This is true above all on the fringes of structuralist thought, as thinkers have tried to integrate ideas of structure with those of action. Victor Turner and Sir Edmund Leach would certainly be contenders for the status of 'maverick eclectic' (see chapter 6), as would Rodney Needham (chapter 8), David Schneider and Ernest Gellner (chapter 10). For me though, Gregory Bateson and Mary Douglas stand out as especially relevant for treatment here. What they have in common with each other and with much in the poststructuralist and feminist movements is their use of structural (but dynamic) models to explain social action as embedded in culture.

Poststructuralism and anthropology

Poststructuralism, like structuralism, is a mainly French perspective and one which transcends the disciplines. Its adherents sometimes draw heavily on structuralism; indeed, the boundary between the two perspectives is not always a clear one. For me, the most salient feature of poststructuralism is a reluctance to accept the distinction between subject and object that is implicit in structuralist thought, especially that of Saussure.

The idea of 'poststructuralism' is most closely associated with the literary critic Jacques Derrida, whose writings include some direct criticism (and 'deconstruction') of Saussure and of Lévi-Strauss (see, e.g., Derrida 1976 [1967]). Others, more loosely definable as 'poststructuralists', include Marxist writer Louis Althusser, psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, and sociologist-anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu. Finally, there is philosopher-historian Michel Foucault, who, along with Bourdieu, has had a profound effect on social anthropology over the last twenty years or more.

Derrida, Althusser, and Lacan

Although less important for anthropology today than the ideas of Bourdieu or Foucault, those of Derrida, Althusser, and Lacan have all had a marked impact in their own spheres of interest. Within anthropology, their impact has been most marked in feminist and late Marxist theory.

Derrida (e.g., 1976 [1967]; 1978 [1967]) broke with structuralism in an attempt to expose what he saw as the fallacy of any analysis which accepts the totality of a text as a unit of analysis. Any text, he argues, will entail contradictions. The Saussurian notion of 'difference' (referred to by

post-Saussurian structuralists in terms of distinctive features or binary oppositions) is transformed into a complex concept where meaning is both 'different' (through *différence*, 'difference') and 'deferred' (through *différance* [*sic*], Derrida's neologism for this phenomenon). The double meaning of the French verb *différer* ('to differ', or 'to defer until later') captures for Derrida the contradictions entailed both in any synchronic analysis of meaning and in the Saussurian priority of speech over writing. Derrida's break with structuralism is also, in a sense, a break with modern Western thought in general and its quest for universal understandings. Texts refer simply to other texts, not to anything beyond that. The notion of 'intertextuality', or relations between texts, has implications for anthropology, especially in the aftermath of Clifford and Marcus' famous edited volume *Writing Culture* (1986), which will be discussed at length in the next chapter. Derrida's method of deconstructing texts has also influenced feminist attempts to understand cultural differences in the perception of male and female.

Of more direct influence on feminism and feminist anthropology, though, is the work of Lacan (1977 [1966]). His work stresses among other things the importance of language in defining identity, and the complexity of sexual identity through complementary images of male and female, and mother and child. Two famous notions of his have given both inspiration and cause for alarm in feminist circles: that 'woman does not exist' (in that there is no ultimate female essence) and 'woman is not whole' (in that a woman lacks a penis, which in turn symbolizes both all that is lacking in male ideology and the social status of women).

Althusser's writings, especially his *Reading 'Capital'* (Althusser and Balibar 1970 [1968]), present a curious mixture of structuralism and Marxism. He argues for a distinction between a 'surface' reading of Marx and a 'symptomatic' reading, the latter being a deeper and truer understanding of Marx's intention. By the latter sort of reading, it is argued, we can gain better insight into the nature of modes of production. This liberating idea was important for Marxist anthropology because it gave anthropologists greater scope to bend Marx's words while maintaining the premise of being true to Marx's intentions. In *For Marx* (1969 [1965]), Althusser considers the ways in which discourse and power enable modes of production to be reproduced through the generations. Here again, his work has proved useful to anthropologists trying to cope with relations between kinship, gender, and production (see, e.g., Meillassoux 1972; 1981 [1975]). Although perhaps more literally a structuralist than a poststructuralist, Althusser pushed at least some Marxist anthropologists towards a confrontation with (Marx's) texts and away from the latent Lévi-Straussian concerns of the structural Marxists (see chapter 6).

Bourdieu's practice theory

Pierre Bourdieu is Professor of Sociology at the Collège de France. Early in his career, as part of his military service, he taught in Algeria (incidentally, the birthplace of both Derrida and Althusser). This led to his ethnographic research on the Kabyles, a Berber people who live in the northern mountainous-coastal area of that country. He has long maintained two diverse research interests: education and social class in French society, and kinship and family organization in Kabyle society. Some of his work, especially in the former, involves a critique of the abuse of power by state authorities. However, he is best known in anthropological circles for his theoretical interest in 'practice', as exemplified in comments on Kabyle patrilateral parallel-cousin marriage, rituals, and the seasonal cycle. The diverse foci perhaps reflect his own 'practice' as both a sociologist of his own society and an anthropologist of an alien one (Reed-Donahay 1995).

The key texts in practice theory are *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Bourdieu 1977 [1972]) and *The Logic of Practice* (Bourdieu 1990 [1980]). The argument is the same in both. Objective understanding misses the essence of practice, which is an actor's understanding. Structuralists from Saussure to Lévi-Strauss remain at the level of the model, while Bourdieu calls for engagement in the domain of performance. Likewise, distinctions like system/event, rule/improvization, synchronic/diachronic, and *langue/parole* are jettisoned in favour of a new order based on what he calls *habitus* (a Latin word meaning, loosely, 'habitat' or 'habitual state', especially of the body). In Bourdieu's view, the analysis of this should enable the anthropologist to understand the nature of power, symbolic capital, Mauss' 'gift', and more.

Bourdieu is essentially arguing against a static notion of structure. Crucially, habitus lies between the objective and the subjective, the collective and the individual. It is culturally defined, but its locus is the mind of the individual. Habitus is a kind of structure of social action by culturally competent performers. It is analogous to Noam Chomsky's (1965: 3–9) notion of linguistic 'competence', the idea that a native speaker has in his or her mind an intuitive model which generates 'performance' in the speech act. Instead of social institutions, habitus is made up of 'dispositions', which members of a culture know intuitively how to handle. Individuals make choices as to which dispositions to follow and when, according to their understanding of them within the habitus and their own place in the system of events.

Bourdieu variously defines habitus as 'the durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations' (1977: 78) or 'the system of struc-

tured, structuring dispositions . . . always ordered towards practical functions' (1990: 52). Such systems function, he says:

as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representation which can be objectively 'regulated' and 'regular' without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them and, being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor. (Bourdieu 1977: 72; cf. 1990: 53)

Bourdieu's concern is to move social science away from an emphasis on rules, towards a theory of practice. Yet structure is still there, not so much a constraining structure, but an enabling structure (for those who know how to use it), one of choice.

However, individuals do not all have equal access to decision-making processes. This is where power comes in. Bourdieu's theory of power, implicit in his theory of practice, is that those people who can impose their 'practical taxonomy' of the world on others, by definition, wield power (see, e.g., Bourdieu 1977: 159–97). This may be done through teaching the young, through cultural domination, or through the 'symbolic violence' of, for example, entrusting servants with one's property (and thereby instilling in them one's own values). Bourdieu has been criticized, though, for not going far enough in recognizing individual consciousness. According to Jean Comaroff (1985: 5), Bourdieu's actors 'seem doomed to reproduce their world mindlessly, without its contradictions leaving any mark on their awareness – at least, until a crisis (in the form of culture contact or the emergence of class division) initiates a process of overt struggle'.

Such criticisms notwithstanding, Bourdieu has become one of the most widely cited and most admired figures in our discipline. Indeed Comaroff herself, in toying with the interplay between event, culture, structure, transformation, and consciousness, is building on Bourdieu's strengths as much as she is probing his weaknesses. Virtually all fieldworkers today aim to couple their Malinowskian or Boasian methodological basics (participant-observation, use of the native language, search for connections, and gathering of details over a long period) with a quest for the habitus which might explain the actions of their informants. In a sense, Bourdieu has succeeded where the Marxists failed. He has turned anthropological studies as a whole towards an interest in practice, while maintaining an implicit recognition of cultural diversity as at least one essence of the human condition.

Foucault's theory of knowledge and power

Michel Foucault was Professor of the History of Systems of Thought at the Collège de France. He wrote widely on the history of medicine (especially psychiatric medicine), penology, and sexuality. He argued consistently against a straightforward structuralist approach, though his theoretical focus changed in the course of his career. In the 1960s Foucault emphasized the absence of order in history and articulated the significance of Saussurian *parole* over *langue* (e.g., Foucault 1973 [1966]; 1974 [1969]). In other words, structures are not pre-existing, and discourse should be paramount over cultural grammar. What is more, order is created by the historian or social scientist who writes about an event, not by the actor in a given time and place.

In the following decade, Foucault came to focus on the ways in which power and knowledge are linked (e.g., 1977 [1975]). Power is not something to possess, but rather it is a capability to manipulate a system. In other words, neither social nor symbolic structures are to be taken for granted; nor should they be seen as culturally agreed schemata which each member of society understands in the same way. A related notion has been his idea of 'discourse'. While in linguistics, 'discourse' has generally held the meaning of 'continuous' speech (e.g., what might be analogous to a paragraph or longer segment in writing), in Foucauldian usage it is widened. Here it represents a concept involving the way people talk or write about something, or the body of knowledge implied, or the use of that knowledge, such as in the structures of power which were Foucault's overwhelming concern.

Power is a strong and growing interest in anthropology, and Foucault's influence is very wide. His idea of discourses of power is applicable in feminist theory and has also had great impact in studies of colonial and postcolonial domination of the Third World and Fourth World by the West (see, e.g., Cheater 1999). As Bruce Knauft has put it: 'The trend in anthropology has been to invoke Foucault as a dependable and general-purpose critic of Western epistemological domination' (Knauft 1996: 143). Foucault's ideas have struck a chord particularly with the likes of James Clifford, George Marcus, and others part of or influenced by the *Writing Culture* phenomenon. As with Bourdieu's impact, that of Foucault has altered the direction of anthropology in both fieldwork interests and high theoretical analysis.

Feminism in anthropology

The feminist critique concerns both gender relations in particular societies and the idea of gender as a structuring principle in human

society generally (H. L. Moore 1988: vii). While the former may be regarded as essentially a substantive issue, the latter is a theoretical one and therefore merits the same treatment as, for example, Marxism, poststructuralism, or postmodernism – all perspectives with links to feminism in anthropology.

From gender studies to feminist anthropology

In her magnificent overview of feminist anthropology, Henrietta Moore (e.g., 1988: 1) goes to great lengths to point out that although the impetus for feminist anthropology may have been the neglect of women as objects of ethnographic scrutiny, the real issue is one of representation. Women were long represented as 'muted' (as Edwin Ardener put it), as profane, as objects of marital exchange, and so on, and not as prime actors in the centre of social life.

Female anthropologists have been present since the early part of the twentieth century, but through most of that century they did fieldwork as 'honorary males' in small-scale societies. Gradually the significance of females in society became known in the discipline, as more female ethnographers took to describing female roles in activities such as subsistence and (women's) ritual. By the early 1970s, male bias came to be widely recognized: including that of cultures being studied, that of anthropology itself, and that of Western culture generally (H. L. Moore 1988: 1–2). Feminist anthropologists took as their task the deconstruction of these various forms of male bias. So feminist anthropology grew from 'the anthropology of women', the crucial difference being that it is the notion of gender relations and not merely what women do which is central to the feminist enterprise (see H. L. Moore 1988: 186–98). As Moore puts it: 'Feminist anthropology . . . formulates its theoretical questions in terms of how economics, kinship and ritual are experienced and structured through gender, rather than asking how gender is experienced and structured through culture' (1988: 9).

One of the key figures in the early development of feminist anthropology was a man. Edwin Ardener (1989 [1975]: 127–33) argued that dominant groups in society maintain control over expression. Therefore 'muted groups', as he called them, remained in relative silence. Women are the most significant such group in any society, both numerically and otherwise. Even where women are literally vocal, their expression is inhibited by the fact that they do not speak the same 'language' as the dominant group: women and men have different worldviews. Ardener further suggests that anthropology itself is male dominated, but for subtle reasons. Anthropologists are all either male or (in the case of female

anthropologists) trained in a male-biased discipline, itself the product of a male culture.

Feminist writers in anthropology have pointed out problems in privileging women as ethnographers of women (see, e.g., Milton 1979; Strathern 1981; 1987a). Moore (1988: 5–10) analyses these problems, which she groups into three kinds: ghettoization, the assumption of a 'universal woman', and ethnocentrism or racism. The first set of problems stems from the idea of the anthropology of women as almost a subdiscipline. For Moore it is a critique of the discipline as a whole, an all-embracing theoretical perspective, and not a specialized branch of the subject.

Moore's second set is related to the erroneous assumption that women are everywhere much the same, as if biological difference itself were enough to create universal cultural differences between men and women. The category 'woman', she argues, needs more careful scrutiny than that, and the mere fact that an ethnographer and her subject may both be women is not enough to assume that they see the notion of 'woman' in the same way. In short, feminist anthropology should rely on ethnography and not on bland but bold assumptions.

The third set of problems is related to the feminist notion of experience. Just as 'economics, kinship and ritual are experienced . . . through gender' (Moore 1988: 9), so too are ethnicity and race. People have multiple identities, but these are not separate but interrelated. A black woman from London, for example, is not just a black, a female, and a Londoner. Her identity is made up of an intricate and simultaneous contextualization of all these statuses and others. Such a view contrasts, if subtly, with the notion of a complex of multiple but separate identities as understood in the traditional functionalist anthropology, for example, of Radcliffe-Brown:

The human being as a person is a complex of social relationships. He is a citizen of England, a husband and a father, a bricklayer, a member of a particular Methodist congregation, a voter in a certain constituency, a member of his trade union, an adherent of the Labour Party, and so on. (Radcliffe-Brown 1952 [1940]: 194)

Gender as a symbolic construction

Anthropologists writing on gender have approached the subject with two perspectives (which are not necessarily mutually exclusive): gender as a symbolic construction, and gender as a complex set of social relations (H. L. Moore 1988: 12–41). The former view is associated, for example, with Edwin Ardener's 'Belief and the problem of women' (1989 [1972]:

72–85), and Sherry Ortner's 'Is female to male as nature is to culture?' (1974).

Consider Ortner's essay. She argues that women everywhere are associated with nature. Her grounds are that the biological fact that women, not men, give birth, bestows on them that universal association. Since every culture (she says) makes a symbolic distinction between nature and culture, men will therefore be associated with culture. She argues further that women's reproductive role tends to confine them to the domestic sphere. Thus women (and to some extent children) represent nature (and the private), while men represent culture (and the public). It is important to note, though, that it is not *her* belief that women are associated with nature in any intrinsic way. Rather it is a cultural-universal belief founded on the structural opposition between nature and culture. Thus Ortner sets herself apart from her analysis.

While Ortner's essay does not represent the basis of all feminist anthropology, it was a major catalyst for debate. Many feminists have indeed been critical of her model, and some have been able to counter it with ethnographic cases which do not fit. Foremost among these are the 'simple societies' described by Jane Collier and Michelle Rosaldo (1981). They point out that hunting-and-gathering societies in Southern Africa, Australia, and the Philippines do not associate childbirth or motherhood with 'nature'. Nor do they associate women simply with reproduction and its aftermath. These societies are essentially egalitarian, and women share child-rearing with men.

Gender as a complex set of social relations

Collier and Rosaldo's perspective is characteristic of the idea of gender as a complex of social relations. This sort of perspective tends to emphasize the social over the cultural, and often seeks the boundary between egalitarian and male-dominant societies. The problem of supposed universal subordination of women is obviously inherent in it, for if there are egalitarian societies then women are not always subordinate. In an overview of women, culture, and society, Rosaldo (1974) argued simply that association with the domestic sphere, rather than with nature, made women subordinate.

Marxist feminists have pushed this case most strongly (see, e.g., Sacks 1979). Eleanor Leacock (1978) went further than others in asserting that previous writers had ignored history, especially the fact that colonialism and world capitalism have distorted relations between men and women. In this well-argued paper, she suggests that the public/private distinction was absent among foragers in pre-contact times, and women's subordina-

tion only came about with the growth of private property. Her research on the history as well as the ethnography of the Montagnais-Naskapi of Labrador showed many changes in political authority since the earliest, seventeenth-century, reports. Further research has shown that the same is true in other parts of the world too, notably in Aboriginal Australia.

There have been many attempts to explain universal male dominance, and some have combined the idea of gender as a symbolic construction with that of gender as embedded in social relations. One of the most interesting for its extreme stance is that of Salvatore Cucchiari (1981). Like Knight (see chapter 3), Cucchiari argues that it is possible to reconstruct the prehistory of gender relations. Very simply, his model supposes that in the beginning not only was there equality between the sexes, but also a lack of gender distinction (and bisexuality as a norm). The earliest differentiation was between categories 'Forager' and 'Child Tender', not 'male' and 'female'. However, as people became aware of 'proto-women's' exclusive abilities to bear and nurse children, these proto-women were made a sacred category. Child Tenders became proto-women. From this developed exclusive heterosexuality (as an ideal), sexual jealousy, and sexual control – leading ultimately to universal male dominance.

While most feminists would hold back from such speculations, the search for origins remains permissible in the anthropology of gender. Such big questions as the origin of gender hierarchy link up with feminist interests in exposing power relations of all kinds, with gender differentiation taken as the basis for many. Feminism in anthropology has also helped to reorient much in kinship studies, especially in light of Marxist critiques (see Meillassoux 1981 [1975]). On another front, there is much in broadly feminist anthropology to challenge the image of male dominance as portrayed in traditional ethnographies, and new methods of ethnographic portrayal have resulted in quite different pictures of social life, for example those of Lila Abu-Lughod writing on Bedouin women (e.g., Abu-Lughod 1986). Indeed, that same ethnographer, citing feminist critiques and perspectives of 'halfies' (defined as those 'whose national or cultural identity is mixed by virtue of migration, overseas education, or parentage'; 1991: 137), argues that the critique makes the concept of culture itself problematic. She suggests that anthropologists should write 'against culture' in order to battle against the hierarchies it implies.

Embodiment

Coming out of both feminist theory and Foucault's interests has been a new focus on the body as a source of identity, which logically confounds

the separation of sex and gender. The sex/gender distinction actually reproduces some distinctions it serves to question (Yanagisako and Collier 1987).

'Embodiment', even beyond its gender aspects, is an area of increasing interest. In particular, Thomas Csordas (1990; cf. 1994) has built on Merleau-Ponty's (1962) notion that embodiment is indeterminate. His view is much more radical than the notion of the 'anthropology of the body' which emerged in the 1970s. The body is more than the sum of its parts. What is more, one can have 'multiple bodies', for example, physical and social (see Douglas 1969); or individual, social, and body politic (respectively body as self, body as symbol, e.g., of nature, and external control of the body; Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987).

Andrew Strathern and Pamela Stewart (1998) compare embodiment to communication as modes for the understanding of ritual. In their terms, the embodiment perspective emphasizes the putative effects of ritual on the performers, while the communication perspective emphasizes the social context and the context involving the spiritual powers to which the rituals are directed. Their definition is quite straightforward: 'In the broadest sense, we take the term embodiment to refer to the anchoring of certain social values and dispositions in and through the body . . .' (1998: 237). Others have utilized the concept to explore aspects not only of power and gender, but even species. Thus for Donna Haraway (1988; 1991), both gender and feminism are about embodiment, while embodiment is further both individual and collective, the latter in the sense that it defined the collectivity, for example, of all female human (or primate) bodies.

Two maverick eclectics

My focus in this last section is on just two scholars, whose maverick status is heightened by the fact that neither ended their careers in conventional anthropological writings nor even within anthropology departments. All the same, Gregory Bateson and Mary Douglas are both brilliant exemplars of anthropological theory's contribution to social thought. They remain significant for our discipline, while nevertheless neither leading from the front nor following the trends of their times.

Structure and conflict: Bateson on national character

Bateson was one of the most fascinating figures of twentieth-century scholarship. He neither built up an institutional following nor even gained the conventional recognition of close colleagues and students. Yet he was

influential because everyone from Radcliffe-Brown to the postmodernists admired his ability to make sense of what to others was simply the vagary of culture.

Gregory Bateson's father, William Bateson, was a founder of modern genetics, and Gregory's early interests were also in biology. He studied zoology and anthropology at Cambridge, and in 1927 he went off to do anthropological fieldwork with the Iatmul of New Guinea. There he met Margaret Mead, whom he eventually married and with whom he later carried out field research on Bali. Like W. H. R. Rivers, Bateson practised as a psychiatrist, working especially with alcoholics and schizophrenics. He spent much of his later life studying dolphins. He was also heavily involved in the Green movement, and in radical approaches to education at all levels.

Beginning with his ethnographic study of the *naven* ceremony of the Iatmul (Bateson 1958 [1936]), Bateson cultivated a sense of understanding the bizarre through the analysis of form in relation to action. The ceremony lent itself well to such a broadly structural approach, involving as it did transvestism, ritual homosexuality, and the purposeful and (in the ritual context) permissible violation of taboos which (in other contexts) regulate kinship and gender relations. My main example here, though, is drawn from Bateson's essay 'Morale and national character', based on a comparison between aspects of German, Russian, English, and American culture during the Second World War (Bateson 1973 [1942]: 62–79). Let us look at just one of his comparisons: that between the English and the Americans as he (an Englishman working in America) perceived them.

Basically the problem is this: if you put an American in a room with an Englishman, the American will do all the talking. What is more, the American will talk mainly about himself (let us assume, as Bateson did, that these two characters are both male). The Englishman will regard the American as boastful and will resent it. The American will resent the fact that the Englishman appears to have nothing to contribute to the conversation. If the Englishman does talk about himself, he will understate things. He will try to be modest, but in doing that the American will only see in him a false modesty or arrogance. So, both the American and the Englishman are behaving in the way they think is appropriate. However, the Englishman sees the American as boastful, and the American sees the Englishman as arrogant.

Why is this? Bateson's answer rests on two sets of oppositions: dominance v. submission, and exhibitionism v. spectatorship. The dominance/submission opposition, he says, has a clear association with parenthood (dominance) and childhood (submission), while the exhibitionism/spec-

Table 9.1. *Bateson's solution to a problem of national character*

Activity	English interpretation	American interpretation
exhibitionism	dominance (parentlike behaviour)	submission (childlike behaviour)
spectatorship	submission (childlike behaviour)	dominance (parentlike behaviour)

tatorship opposition is variable in the manner in which it is mapped onto dominance and submission. This is illustrated in table 9.1.

By way of further explanation, Bateson suggests this. In England (at least in the upper-middle-class household of the early twentieth century), when the father comes home from work he talks to his children. The children sit and listen. Therefore exhibitionism (doing all the talking) indicates a parentlike role; in other words, dominance. Spectatorship (doing the listening) indicates a childlike role; in other words, submission. In America, says Bateson, the opposite is true. When the father comes home from work, he listens to his children who tell him, and their mother, what they have been up to at school. The parents sit and listen. Thus in America, exhibitionism is associated with childlike behaviour, and spectatorship is associated with parentlike behaviour. These associations are carried through into later life. So, when the adult, male American meets his English counterpart, he tries to show off all his knowledge, abilities, wealth, or whatever. The American, subconsciously perhaps, perceives himself as being submissive and childlike. He treats the Englishman as a parent-figure, which in both cultures is a means of being polite. For the Englishman, exhibitionism is a sign of dominance, and he incorrectly believes the American is trying to be dominant.

Implicit in all this is a distinction between two concepts which Bateson called by the Greek words *eidos* and *ethos*. Culture is made up of both (see, e.g., Bateson 1958 [1936]: 123–51, 198–256). In Bateson's usage, eidos is what we more generally call 'form' or 'structure' (cf. Kroeber 1963 [1948]: 100–3). The sets of oppositions he describes in his study of national character (spectatorship v. exhibitionism; dominance v. submission) are part of the eidos of American and of English culture. Ethos refers to the customs, the traditions, also the feelings, the collective emotions, either of a given culture or of a given event which is defined according to cultural norms. More specifically it refers to their distinctive character or spirit. These concepts are related, and at least in his national-character study ethos seems to depend for its cross-cultural definition on the relation between the eidos of one culture and that of another.

The methods Bateson used seem particularly suited to the analysis of conflict and potential conflict, and he developed a similar approach to understanding conflict between, for example, male and female among the Iatmul, and East and West in the nuclear arms race. Similarly, Canadian anthropologist Elliott Leyton (1974) has analysed conflict in Northern Ireland in terms of direct, eidotic oppositions between aspects of the ethos of Nationalist and Unionist cultures (or Catholic and Protestant) in Northern Ireland. Anthropologists from Northern Ireland have criticized Leyton since then for oversimplifying, as certainly Bateson did on Americans and Englishmen, but the point of this kind of analysis is that conflict is often better understood in terms of structures and processes of interaction than in terms of ethnographic detail alone.

Structure and action: Douglas on grid and group

Mary Douglas' approach is essentially structuralist but played out within a dynamic framework. Like Bateson and Bourdieu, she is interested in the relation between individual actions and the cultural frameworks within which action is interpreted. Douglas read philosophy, politics, and economics at Oxford, and subsequently studied anthropology there under Evans-Pritchard (see chapter 10). She did fieldwork with the Lele of Kasai Province, in the Congo, and taught for many years at University College London. She later became Director of the Russell Sage Foundation in New York and taught at Princeton and Wisconsin, before retiring to London.

Douglas' early work was quite straightforward, with special interests in economics and religion. The latter led her to studies of purity and pollution among the Lele, among the ancient Hebrews, and in Britain. Her first famous book (though not her first book) was *Purity and Danger* (1966). There she examined concepts such as these and hinted at the form of analysis which she was soon to develop in *Natural Symbols* (1969): *Natural Symbols* and most of her many subsequent publications have utilized the framework she calls 'grid/group analysis' (see also, e.g., Douglas 1978; 1982; 1996).

Grid/group analysis is a method of describing and classifying cultures and societies, aspects of culture or society, individual social situations, individual actions, or even individual preferences. The principle is that virtually anything one might want to classify in relation to its alternatives can be measured along two axes, which are called respectively 'grid' and 'group' (figure 9.1). However, Douglas and her followers are not so much concerned with quantitative measurement as with structural opposition,
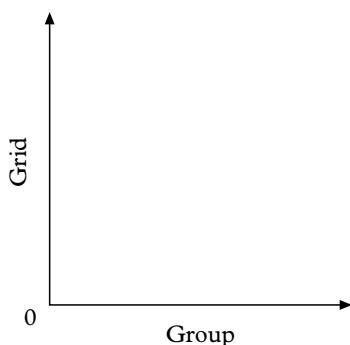
Figure 9.1 The grid and group axes

in other words the presence or absence of high grid or high group constraints.

The *grid* dimension is the measure of 'insulation' or 'constraint' imposed not by group cohesion, but by individual isolation. To be low on the grid scale is to have freedom to act or the scope to interact with others as equals; to be high is to be insulated or constrained in decision-making by the social system. The *group* dimension is the measure of group cohesion, whether people in a group do everything together (high group) or act individually (low group). Douglas' interest lies in determining and accounting for the relative presence or absence of high-grid and high-group features, rather than the establishment of precise co-ordinates along the axes. Thus there are only four logical possibilities, each represented by a different 'box' (figure 9.2). She conventionally labels the boxes with the letters A to D, though unfortunately her usage differs from publication to publication (with no fewer than three different labelling systems). The one shown here is the system used in her booklet *Cultural Bias* (1978), the publication which remains the best introduction to the theory.

Douglas asserts that her method can be used for the study of everything from witchcraft to food preferences (to take examples respectively from her early and recent writings). One which I think brings out the theory particularly clearly is the working environment of research scientists (see Bloor and Bloor 1982). It matters little whether we are talking about astronomers or zoologists, but let us suppose all the scientists are in the same field, say medical research. The differences between them are those of their respective structural positions in their subculture, or their 'sociology' (as Douglas sometimes puts it). They may differ also in the way they

B **High grid** **Low group** Isolation, by choice or compulsion	**C** **High grid** **High group** Strongly incorporated, with hierarchy
A **Low grid** **Low group** Active individualism, often with competition	**D** **Low grid** **High group** Strongly incorporated, without hierarchy

Figure 9.2 The grid and group boxes

see their work environment, their 'cosmology'. Let us call the protagonists Alice, Ben, Carlos, and Deborah (respectively Boxes A, B, C, and D).

Alice is an independent researcher. She goes to work whenever she wants and takes holidays when she chooses. She gets paid according to the amount of work she does, and works on whatever project she wants to. She is not constrained by outside forces; therefore she is *low grid*. She is also *low group* because she is not constrained by group conformity. She belongs to various professional associations, and also to different clubs outside her profession. Sometimes she chooses solitude; sometimes she joins in group activities. Either way, she does not follow the crowd. She is equally free to associate with different groups or with none.

Ben is high grid, low group. He works for a drug company and is on a five-year contract to discover a cure for a rare disease. He has to submit reports to the company every week, detailing what he has been doing. He has to keep accurate records of his activities on a minute-by-minute basis, and is expected to put in exactly forty-eight hours a week. He is therefore constrained by the forces of his high grid predicament. He is also low group. This could mean that he has nobody else working with him. The constraints of time keep him from joining groups, either formal or informal. Unlike Alice, Ben is not low group by choice, but is forced there by the kind of work he does. While all the other boxes have their natural incumbents, Box B is 'unfriendly' (Douglas' term) to almost any personality type, and Ben is not happy.

Carlos is high grid, high group. He works in a hierarchical university

department. Like Ben, he is constrained by the fact that he has a strict timetable. Yet unlike Ben, he is very much a member of the group. His level within the system does not matter, as he is constrained by the system itself. Even if he is the Dean of Medicine, he is constrained by the money he gets from the university or the research councils, and he never gets enough. Being high group, he has lots of activities related to the main group he belongs to: his department. Supposing he is the head of the department, he might have to chair meetings, organize research and teaching, see visiting scientists, perhaps treat patients, and supervise the activities of his staff. Characteristically in a high-group situation, Carlos would mix business with pleasure. He might be expected to referee the inter-departmental football matches every Saturday, or to invite each of his staff to dinner, one a month, in rotation.

Deborah is low grid, high group. She also works in a university department, but it is one which is run on an egalitarian, democratic basis. She might be the professor, or she might be a junior assistant. It does not really matter, because in this case professors and assistants take turns teaching each other, doing experiments together, and washing the test tubes and coffee cups. She is in a low-grid situation because her group is egalitarian and democratic. Unlike Alice, she is also in a high-group situation, one full of group-oriented constraints. Alice belongs to lots of different societies. Deborah only belongs to her strongly group-oriented department. Like Carlos, she spends lots of time in departmental activities, and whatever the group (her department) all want to do, everyone does.

Mary Douglas and her students have compared a variety of situations in this manner. Her method works best when like is compared to like, as in the case just described. However, her early assumptions about comparing whole societies has not borne fruit. Nor is it particularly meaningful to think in terms of hermits and taxi drivers being Box A, prisoners being Box B, soldiers being Box C, and members of religious cults or hippie communes being Box D – though these are all associations she has described. It may be useful, though, to compare different hippie communes, each as being, in a relative sense, higher grid or group than the next. In other words, if within Western society all hippie communes are relatively low grid and high group, then a small set of boxes for hippie communes (A to D) might be envisaged as lying all within a larger Box D in a grid/group diagram of Western society as a whole.

Grid/group analysis was an interesting idea, and it remains one for many social scientists outside mainstream anthropology. Yet it may also have been an idea (like hippie communes) whose time had come and gone before it took off. It remains to be seen whether some new focus within

her paradigm can be made. There may well be hints of poststructuralism and postmodernism hidden in the paradigm, which surely could yield insights into relations between, for example, fieldworkers and their subjects.

Concluding summary

Mavericks, poststructuralists, and feminists possess a diversity of perspectives. Yet these perspectives have in common both roots in structuralist thinking and challenges to mainstream structuralist anthropology, especially in attempts to integrate structure with action and account for relations of power. Functionalism and structuralism had represented both safe perspectives and safe periods for anthropology, indeed in the latter case a period in which anthropology served as a major source for ideas in other disciplines, including literary criticism. Poststructuralist, feminist, and (as we shall see in the next chapter) interpretivist and postmodernist ideas have all challenged the authority of ethnographic reporting and the methods of analysis characteristic of structural anthropology and its predecessors.

If Bateson and Douglas are anthropologists whose thoughts and interests drifted away from the narrow anthropological perspectives of their times, the poststructuralists are just the opposite: practitioners of other disciplines whose insights have offered inspiration for emerging developments within our discipline. Interpretivism in some respects represents the opposite of structuralism – a rejection of meaning as embedded in structure in favour of the intuitive and interactive creation of meaning. In other respects it represents a logical development from poststructuralism, with its breaking down of traditional constructions and opening up of new agendas for anthropology through links with literary criticism and social theory. The last two decades have seen great changes in anthropological perceptions, but they are no greater than the changes which took place in the 1920s or in the 1950s, and the next chapter offers a survey of recent developments in the historical context of a wider interpretive anthropology.

FURTHER READING

Useful commentaries on the leading figures discussed in this chapter include those of Brockman (1977) on Gregory Bateson, Fardon (1998) on Mary Douglas, Jenkins (1992) on Pierre Bourdieu, and Smart (1985) on Michel Foucault.

Among good introductions to poststructuralism is the one by Sarup (1988), which also introduces postmodernism. Ortner's essays 'Theory in anthropology since

the sixties' (1984) and 'Resistance and the problem of ethnographic refusal' (1995), along with Knauft's *Genealogies for the Present* (1996), provide excellent overviews of the impact of feminism, poststructuralism, etc. on anthropology.

The best overview of feminist anthropology is H. L. Moore's *Feminism and Anthropology* (1988), and her *A Passion for Difference* (1994) covers a wealth of issues related to current debates. See also Strathern's essay, 'An awkward relationship' (1987a).