Essays in the Sociology of Perception

Mary Douglas: Collected Works

Volume VIII

MARY DOUGLAS

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VOLUME I
The Lele of the Kasai

VOLUME II
Purity and Danger

VOLUME III
Natural Symbols

VOLUME IV
Rules and Meanings

VOLUME V
Implicit Meanings

VOLUME VI
The World of Goods

VOLUME VII
Edward Evans-Pritchard

VOLUME VIII
Essays in the Sociology of Perception

VOLUME IX
Food in the Social Order

VOLUME X
Constructive Drinking

VOLUME XI
Risk Acceptability According to the Social Sciences

VOLUME XII
Risk and Blame

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ESSAYS IN THE SOCIOLOGY OF PERCEPTION

London and New York

First published in 1982 by Routledge

This edition published 2003
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by Routledge
270 Madison Ave, New York NY 10016

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group

First issued in paperback 2010

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Typeset in Times by
Keystroke, Jacaranda Lodge, Wolverhampton

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

ISBN 978-0-415-29111-8 (hbk) (Volume VIII)
ISBN 978-0-415-60666-0 (pbk) (Volume VIII)
ISBN 978-0-415-28397-7 (set)
ISBN 978-1-134-55743-1 (ebk)

Publisher's Note
The publisher has gone to great lengths to ensure the quality of this reprint but points out that some imperfections in the original may be apparent

CONTENTS

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INTRODUCTION TO GRID/GROUP ANALYSIS

Mary Douglas

Anything whatsoever that is perceived at all must pass by perceptual controls. In the sifting process something is admitted, something rejected and something supplemented to make the event cognizable. The process is largely cultural. A cultural bias puts moral problems under a particular light. Once shaped, the individual choices come catalogued according to the structuring of consciousness, which is far from being a private affair. This book is an attempt to systematize the cultural constraints. The method of exploration derives from anthropology, though very few of the contributors are anthropologists.

I broached the idea in 'Natural Symbols' (1970), which was only an impressionistic account of cultural controls upon consciousness drawn from anthropologically reported examples from all over the world. I tried to refine and to systematize it in 'Cultural Bias' (1978). In this new volume of essays, various contributors unfold the possibilities of the method, each applying it to a different field. The book divides into three sections. The first four essays directly address problems in the method. The second part consists of comparative studies in history and the history of ideas. The last part comes into close focus on selected case histories showing in detail how the method can be used for better insight. We can say that this book is an argument between the authors, and at the same time a book about kinds of argumentation. It starts from plausible assumptions about the sociological effects of arguments going on in social gatherings of all kinds. In families, in churches, in boardrooms, in sports committees, there are discussions of what should be done, and allocations of responsibility. Such argumentation defines social categories. Its outcomes are enforcements or suspensions of rules. The method tried out is devised to trace these arguments to the fundamental assumptions about the universe which they invoke; its objective is to discover how alternative visions of society are selected and sustained. Its first simplifying assumption is that the infinite array of social interactions can be sorted and classified into a few grand classes. The object is not to come up with something original but gently to push what is known into an explicit typology that captures the wisdom of a hundred years of sociology, anthropology and psychology. Then we can hope to ask new questions.

2 Introduction to Grid/Group Analysis

A famous social psychologist, when I mentioned the word typology, shrank in dismay. He sought to defend methodological purity against my concern to make sense of the larger scene. Typologies, he said, allow anything to be fitted into their boxes; they become an over-powerful interpretative tool. Wondering how one is even to make the smallest progress without developing any typology, I could have quoted from Katrina McLeod the Confucian rebuke to those who shirk their obligations in the name of purity. If the methodologically pure psychologist had also read her chapter below, he might have had to confess that he would prefer to be ranked with the 'pure, clean, mixed with nothing; still, unified and unchanging; limpid and inactive'. If we eschew explicit typologies which can be criticized and improved, we may stay in a celestial harmony and escape from having to deal with the relation between mind and society, but the cost of our private purity is to expose the whole domain to undeclared, implicit typologies. Either way, behaviour is going to be fitted into boxes. Take, for example, the common attempt to explain religious movements in terms of relative deprivation. The implied typology of more deprived and less deprived stalks unchallenged in the textbooks for lack of more explicit schemes with better explanatory power. Implicit typologies are also allowed at deeper levels of disagreement, as, for example, between the possibility of an economic determinist explanation of behaviour and an alternative, which (since the term ideational is aesthetically impossible) one can call the free will or voluntaristic set of explanations. Convinced economic determinists treat values and beliefs as epiphenomena, secondary to and dependent on the pattern of economic constraints; their opponents rightly do not wish to see the realm of the spirit and the source of values and thought relegated to a dependent role. A systematic cultural analysis can save the sense in both camps by bringing the implicit typology of explanations to the light of day. The analysis of the relations between individual judgments and perceived economic pressures clearly needs to be improved. The sociologist who focuses only on the outcome of long historical arguments is tempted to adopt the local perception of economic pressures. Yet opportunities depend to some extent upon how they are perceived at the time. Sociology should not naively accept the natives' theories and believe in ghostly vengeance or in the power of a gift to harm the ungenerous recipient. Yet to judge local economic pressures post hoc by the solutions contemporaries thought fit to adopt is to make an error of that type. We do not have to accept the native version of the controlling powers in the universe. We should not adopt a simple economic determinism, judging the pressures by their observed effects. Between the costs and rewards that our ancestors measured and their resulting action there lay the mediating screen of their own perceptions of what their options were. A way of estimating the local perceptual bias would help to resolve the struggle between economic determinists and the free will camp. Grid/group analysis does this by reducing social variation to only a few grand types, each of which generates necessarily its own self-sustaining perceptual blinkers. The fewness of the types is the encouraging simplification. It saves the cherished assumptions of the free will camp by starting from the

apparently free argumentation that allocates responsibility as if it were a real power to be exercised. Beyond that start, this form of analysis does not promote any view of the reality of the freedom of wills. It merely notes that the assumption that persons can be held to account is necessary for interpreting the social argumentation about roles and responsibilities. Consequently, the effective ability to hold others to account must be treated as a necessary assumption for analysing the intellectual strategies in the clash of will that gives rise to society. This approach further protects the favourite tenets of the free will camp by not needing to assume any restrictions upon the individual's freedom of choice. Just because we describe the package of ideas and values that are going to surround anyone once a pattern of social relations is chosen, we do not offer any theory about personal scope for liking or evading the local cultural bias. We only say that this choice between a few social patterns is inevitably a choice between a few kinds of cultural bias. We know nothing in advance that would stop a person who finds the cultural bias uncongenial from choosing another set of social relations - otherwise revolutions would never erupt. The cost-benefit analysis of economic and political power patterns are the factors which lie beyond the scope of this approach. We can only identify what might seem attractive or repulsive about the way of life, seen from a particular standpoint.

The typology can be described as follows. We consider the various minimum forms of commitment to life in society postulated by political theory: the commitment not to interfere with each other, the commitment to mutual protection, other commitments to a larger social unit than the individual, and we decide to start with the possibility of owning or not owning allegiance to a group. For the sake of following this commitment through to all its implications we construct a dimension for group membership. Rules of admission to a group can be strong or weak, making it more or less exclusive; the life-support a group gives to its members can be complete, or partial. For any social context we can recognize appropriate measures of group commitment, whether to ancient lineage, to a learned profession or to a regiment or a church. Once our scheme has incorporated a means of measuring the possible strength of allegiance to a group, the next possibility concerns the extent of regulation, whether within or without membership of a group. For this the possibilities should run from maximum regulation to maximum freedom, the military regiment with its prescribed behaviour and rigid timetabling, contrasted at the other end with the free life, uncommitted, unregulated. If you were to ask people in modern industrial society how they would choose between these polar alternatives many would opt for freedom and against regulation and yet many others are happy and secure in the traditions of army life.

Two dimensions of control over the individual: group commitment, grid control, every remaining form of regulation; combined, these two dimensions give four extreme visions of social life. Each of these essays in first draft had a summary of the grid/group method and the same diagram. To reduce repetition I have been advised to cut out the account of the method of each essay as well as the diagram. It falls upon me to make a clear statement here that will

allow this volume to stand independently of earlier publications and to be read as a whole. Figure 1 presents four possible social environments in which an individual may be found, according to this classification. David Ostrander has suggested the mnemonic titles for each square. Square A (low grid, low group) allows options for

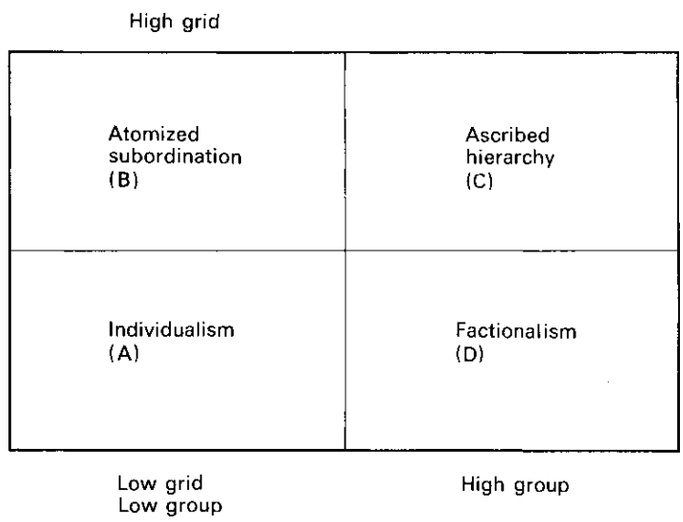

FIGURE 1

negotiating contracts or choosing allies and in consequence it also allows for individual mobility up and down whatever the current scale of prestige and influence. Square B (high grid, low group) is the environment which ascribes closely the way an individual may behave. In any complex society some categories of people are going to find themselves relegated here to do as they are told, without the protection and privileges of group membership. Square C is the environment of large institutions where loyalty is rewarded and hierarchy respected: an individual knows his place in a world that is securely bounded and stratified. Finally, square D is defined by the terms of the analysis as a form of society in which only the external group boundary is clear: by definition all other statuses are ambiguous and open to negotiation. The two-dimensional diagram presents a set of limits within which the individual can move around. Personally, I believe the limits are real, that it is not possible to stay in two parts of the diagram at once, and that the moral justifications which people give for what they want to do are the hard edges of social change. If they wish for change, they will adopt different justifications, if they wish for continuity, they will call upon those principles which uphold the present order. In a serious sense, the grid/group dimensions are exhaustive of certain possibilities. In another sense, since they are abstractions, suggestions for systematic comparison which can be adapted to whatever

level of operations is relevant, they apply to all kinds of social relations, wherever people apply penalties and rewards.

> The reason for focusing upon the social context defined in this way is that each pattern of rewards and punishments moulds the individual's behaviour. He will fail to make any sense of his surroundings unless he can find some principles to guide him to behave in the sanctioned ways and be used for judging others and justifying himself to others. This is a social-accounting approach to culture; it selects out of the total cultural field those beliefs and values which are derivable as justifications for action and which I regard as constituting an implicit cosmology. (Douglas 1978: 6)

Throughout this volume we have all used the term cosmology to include the ultimate justifying ideas which tend to be invoked as if part of the natural order and yet which, since we distinguish four kinds of cosmology, are evidently not at all natural but strictly a product of social interaction.

All the arguments taking place in families, churches and sports clubs are about whether the institution shall draw its group boundary closer, or relax it, apply its rules more strictly, create more rules or relax them all. We draw a square: we indicate increases in group strength along the base line, and increases in the grid of other regulations on the vertical line. We divide the whole into four parts giving increasingly high scores for group from left to right, increasingly high scores for grid from bottom to top. We assume that the arguments around boardrooms and dining tables are about whether the social unit should be pushed more to the right, more to the left, further up or further down the diagram. We assume that for the people who are arguing something is at stake and that the outcome matters. As we harken to the discussion we hear appeals to morality, normative ideas and self-justification, appeals to nature - and finally appeals to heaven. God may be invoked, and curses uttered before a rift, or blessings for a truce. The task of this analytic exercise is to catch the moral bias which arises from each particular corner position which has been taken.

The argument here presented is that amid apparent short-term shifts of opinion there are certain social choices which have long-run effects because they afford tangible rewards and enlist intellectually convincing moral arguments. People who have banded together under a certain rubric or constitution will tend to coerce one another increasingly to develop the full implications of that style of life, or go to all the trouble of mustering support for an alternative rubric or constitution. Whatever else may be changing, the four extreme grid/group positions on the diagram are liable to be stable types, steadily recruiting members to their way of life which is at the same time inevitably a way of thought. This is the strong assumption which justifies exploring the particular method of analysis. If the infinite array of social types were flexibly transformable one into another, the task of analysis would be impossible and not worth the effort. But I claim that four distinctive types (Michael Thompson argues five) are continually present, inexorably drawing individuals into their ambit, delivering to their recruits the choice of thinking alike or suffering the penalties of failure and ostracism. If this claim is in the least

plausible, then the implications must be analysed. The students of social choice who examine the principles of individual choice and conflict of rights have no way of considering the effect of institutional forms upon moral perception. Yet something about institutional forms is generated by elementary choices and the resultant institutions incorporate judgments which reciprocally influence further perceptions of choice. Once any one of those elementary choices has been made, it entails a package of intricately related preferences and secondary moral judgments. Decisions to stiffen the conditions of entry inevitably result in strengthening social compartments, just as the alternative decision to waive admission requirements results in free flows of people and free flows of wealth. Decisions to delegate result in hierarchy; decisions to separate result in fission. But strong insulating boundaries, once set up, control flows of information that might undermine authority, so the very insulations sustain the boundary system by restricting knowledge. Conversely, to open small gates on control densitizes the control centres to flood warnings. Hierarchy once installed develops self-reinforcing moral arguments that enable more unequal steps in status to be tolerated. Fission breeds. If the swirling movements of individual choices were entirely haphazard, all institutions would long ago have become more and more alike. There would be no scope for recognizable typology. Yet one of the claims in favour of this form of analysis is that in any period or place the four extreme types in the corners of the grid/group diagram are recognizable, with their particular rules and justifying cosmologies.

As I see it, three corners exert a magnetic pull away from the middle; individualists extolling a culture of individualism tend to become more and more uncommitted to each other and more committed to the exciting gamble for big prizes. Egalitarian idealists committed to a sectarian culture strongly walled against the exterior, become more and more enraged against the outside society and more jealous of each other. The supportive framework and intellectual coherence of a hierarchical and compartmentalized society nurses the mind in cogent metaphysical speculations vulnerable to disorder and independence. According to this theory religious history does not have to find explanations for sectarianism (square D), nor secularism (square A), nor for hierarchical priesthoods (square C): each of these three corners seduces people who start to use the arguments that establish the type of society capable of being lived upon its coherent sustaining base. The fourth corner, the fully regulated individuals unaffiliated to any group, is plentifully inhabited in any complex society, but not necessarily by people who have chosen to be there. The groups (to the right of the diagram) expel and downgrade dissenters; the competition of individualists (bottom left of the diagram) pushes those who are weak into the more regulated areas where their options are restricted and they end by doing what they are told. The wish not to be forced up grid when the competition gets too hot attracts individualists towards factionalism. Those who are forced up grid have least power to perceive alternatives. The situation of being closely controlled and insulated from free social intercourse stabilizes a perception of having no options. Their passive view inevitably will be

validated by history: however much outnumbering their controllers, afterwards they will seem to have had no choice against superior force. But in accepting that verdict, do not forget that a sense of helplessness is an effect of the condition of being closely regulated.

Here is the place for a note about what this analysis can do. It can expose the normally invisible screen through which culture lets options be perceived. It means that most values and beliefs can be analysed as part of society instead of as a separate cultural sphere. The endless argumentation about rules of admission, penalties and remission ends by filling all the gaps in the conception of the cosmos. Theories of the nature of man and his place in the universe are developed to justify the arguments maintained. There is nothing natural about the perception of nature; nature is heavily loaded with political bias. In so far as there is a consensus about the best kind of society to live in, there is agreement too about the kind of cosmos that the society is found in and consensus about the good life and right behaviour. This does not mean that an individual's values are not freely his own. It does not substitute sociological for economic determinism. As a theory it has very little to say about people's choices between social forms; it does not pre-empt any psychological theory of choice, or psychological theory about personality types that might do well in one social environment and be unhappy in another. It does not say what economic rewards will be strong enough to induce people to change sides in the argumentation and begin to adapt their social environment to a more open individualistic style, nor, conversely, what economic depression will be long and strong enough to deaden initiative and penalize individualism. All that and more has to be filled in for any particular historical case. But what the theory does mean is that the number of cultural packages among which people choose when they settle for any particular kind of social environment is limited. When one chooses how one wants to be dealt with and how to deal with others, it is just as well to be clear as to what else may be unintentionally chosen. Each inhabitable part of the grid/group diagram has got its own miseries and compensations. The theory predicts or explains which intellectual strategies are useful for survival in a particular pattern of social relations, and, facing the other way, it indicates which kinds of cosmology and theoretical style.

Some of the contributors met at a conference which was supported by the Russell Sage Foundation organized by David Ostrander in April 1978. Others had met at an earlier conference supported by the Social Science Research Council of Great Britain in 1976. Others know each other not at all or only by correspondence. The use of the same technical terms and the repeated appearance of the same diagram may give the impression of a private debate. I should hasten to dispel any sense of a small clique of friends in conversation or of players engrossed in a game. The range of subjects discussed and the sheer unlikelihood of such specialists ever coming across each other in their respective departments or learned journals should suggest something of their haphazard and open recruitment.

David Ostrander's chapter is a straightforward attempt to set a historical context. Exploring the properties of the diagram, he distinguishes a stable mainstream thrust in any complex society

between top right and bottom left of the diagram. In the top right are the formal controls, the representatives of group unity and group decisions. The equivalent of any priestly hierarchy is here. If all the decision-making members of society were located behind the barriers which constitute inner compartments and hierarchical layering, they will have a problem of communicating with the outside and so of getting information and adapting to new external conditions. Some important functions can be discharged by entrepreneurial brokers of information who are not full members of the central group but who are trusted representatives, honoured for their successes in pioneering work or delicate negotiations with outsiders. The stable diagonal, as David Ostrander calls it, is comprised of two categories, both involved in exerting large-scale influence. By contrast, the other two segments, top left, highly regulated without privileges of membership in any controlling group, and bottom right, small groups formed in disagreement with and withdrawal from the larger society, are both categories continually recruited by rejects or withdrawals from the main stream. This is a helpful start to tracing the other properties of the model.

Any learned discipline can provide an illustration. At any one time its members will comprise some installed in the citadels of tradition. They are capable of distinguishing who is a true scholar, a worthy member of the profession. Within its boundaries they are capable of grading everyone; anyone outside the boundaries is unclassifiable except as an outsider. The senior of these mainstream traditionalists award the prizes and medals but they cannot in honesty always honour the most loyal of their own kind, much as they would like to. Inevitably sometimes new innovative work has to be recognized and the prize-winners are often among the other half of the stable diagonal. These will be individualist scholars, inter-disciplinary in affiliation, working in the interstices of compartmentalized learning. By their energy and brains they drive the subject forward to new applications. These two kinds of scholars would constitute the two segments of the stable diagonal. Then there will be small groups of protestors, and large categories of isolated workers who rarely get any prizes. Anyone reading this who mentally reviews his own profession can recognize the social characteristics of the four types upon which basis cultural analysis reveals four kinds of cognitive bias, whatever the discipline may be.

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Part One

PERSPECTIVES ON METHOD

INTRODUCTION
Mary Douglas

David Ostrander organized the original conference in 1978. He wrote for it an introductory paper which aimed to introduce grid/group analysis by contrast with famous attempts to typologize social experience. Ingenious and clear, perhaps he oversimplified the great nineteenth-century sociological types and present-day theoretical contrasts. But he succeeds in his mission, which was to lay to rest the nagging sense of familiarity, 'where have I heard this before? How does it differ from what I have heard before?' He sets the effort of this book in a historical context and introduces his persuasive insights on one-dimensional and two-dimensional typologies.

Then follows Michael Thompson's bold improvement and solution to many of the problems which will later be encountered. He asks tricky questions which will be in the following essays: can two cosmologies co-exist in the same social context? How does sudden conversion take place? Where to place the hermit recluse? James Hampton feels that several problems which I would have tried to treat by closer control of focus could be solved by adding a third dimension of 'activity'. The hermit would have the same grid/group position as the individualist entrepreneur, but he would lie at the extreme of the social activity dimension and the entrepreneur at the other. Pusillanimously, I prefer to leave the hermit off the map of social controls, crediting him with full escape. But see how Michael Thompson accommodates him comfortably at a zero centre of his three-dimensional cube, the third dimension measuring the possibilities of exerting power. He uses the third dimension to construct a model which could look like a plane surface laid over an unevenly-carved-out cube. It has four stable plateaux at the same four corners of the two-dimensional diagram, but he locates them at different levels in the third dimension. The impossibility or probability of sliding from one to another could be calculated if certain specified information were given. The distribution of power accounts for the pressures and barriers to change. In the middle of the cube he finds a fifth stable habitable region: it is the hermit's cell, away from power, alone, yet a model and enticement to those in society.

I have a difficulty, common to non-numerates, in finding two dimensions rather much to handle consistently. The thought of a

third boggles me. My instinct is to squeeze as much information as I can out of two. However, these suggestions are intriguing. Michael Thompson uses the methods of typology and the geometry of catastrophe to explain his development of the theory. He uses the description of cusp catastrophe as a powerful metaphor which could be turned into a set of measures for predicting sudden change. He shows that on some places on the undulating surface presented on his cube two cosmologies may be held in suspense. In any particular dilemma each may be equally appropriate, but overlapping alternatives are available as justifying resources to individuals in moral predicaments. Only at his central zero does the option to choose remain continually open. He shows what deliberate action people have to exert to keep their social relations just poised like that, with no exits closed. It is a precarious balance and at any time pressures to slide down the slope or to climb up may shift individuals out of that calm shelter. Then they will perforce choose the appropriate cosmological scheme which makes sense for where they now are. His main argument for the third dimension is that it accommodates the cases of societies which cannot be fitted into any of the four positions which I have suggested. One of the special values of this book is that Michael Thompson illustrates the limitations of a two-dimensional model by working out how to turn it into a three-dimensional one.

In the next chapter James Hampton describes how he conducted and analysed two small surveys in London in 1976. Scoffers had told us that as one descended the grid scale, as first described, one would automatically be slithering towards stronger group. James Hampton demonstrated the two constructed dimensions of grid and group to be really independent. This was a major advance. But unfortunately our samples did not include representatives of very strong group measures. The small differences between rather weak group membership do not show up anything noteworthy. The main interest of James Hampton's work lies in the questions he raises about objectivity, psychology and mismatch between predicted cosmology and social context. He remarks that it seems to be possible for a person to occupy different positions on the map according to social context. Responses to his questionnaires showed that someone might be in a free individualist environment at work and in a compartmentalized and regulated environment at home. At first, I rejected this possibility. If someone could behave as if in a high-group context in the afternoon and a low-group context in the morning, or change his grid/group score between Tuesdays and Saturdays it seemed to undermine the whole value of the method. But reflection on his results made me modify my view. If one knows anyone who works in an intensely competitive business, where no holds are barred, the weakest goes to the wall, great prizes to the swift and so on, one has seen why such a person might try to get his home life working like clockwork so that in every detail it could be absolutely relied upon not to distract from the office jungle. Then such a person would indeed be creating two totally different contexts. Even more than his family life, his office might reflect tight regulative controls that he has imposed. The people subordinate to him are up-grid, the equals he negotiates with are his world of low-grid individualists.

As new illustrative material came in for this volume, the proper

uses of this method received necessary refinement. If we are talking about grid/group values comparatively, we must compare like with like as far as possible. Then the homes of businessmen in a given country could be compared and we could ask how they deal with domestic matters when under severely competitive business pressure. We could compare the women in their domestic or work scenes. We could not justifiably jump from the work to the home as if the scale of operations or the economic or social values were the same. The art of the method is to be very delicate in matching the cases compared, usually sticking to similar ethnographic materials. We will see how Martin Rudwick compares geologists with geologists, Michael Thompson compares Sherpas with other Sherpas, David Bloor compares mathematicians with each other, Celia Bloor compares young post-doctoral industrial scientists. The richest results come when the ceteris paribus rule is most carefully protected. James Hampton's airing of this particular problem leads to a hypothesis: the more hotly competitive the society of individualists, the more those in the front ranks of competition will tend to regulate their followers, driving them up-grid. So we would expect women, cripples and children to be strongly regulated in a strongly competitive society, expressed public sentiments to the contrary notwithstanding. There are two answers to James Hampton's query whether multiple cosmologies may not be lodged in one person's head. The first answer is to be very careful, minutely precise about maintaining the same scale of comparisons, both in the social and cosmological parts of the investigation. The second answer is yes, obviously a person can behave in any one day as an autocrat at the breakfast table and meek as a lamb at the office; but by tracing such cases we can discover further patterns of different parts of the diagram.

James Hampton's other question about how to achieve objectivity in an investigation is partly answered in the later paper he wrote jointly with George Gaskell on styles in accounting. His remarks about individuals launched somehow into a new part of the diagram and facing problems of conversion or dissonance with their fellows point to desirable collaboration with psychologists.

James Hampton also fears that the majority of people surveyed will fall in 'some central grey area of eclectic, loosely integrated cosmologies'. Again, I have my simple faith in the instrument's capacity to be made precise. It only works where the role structure can be clearly identified. In modern industrial society it works well within distinctive professional classes, when objectives and fields of interest can be clearly shown to vary on grid/group criteria.

The most accessible of the attempts to apply grid/group analysis to the sociology of knowledge is Celia Bloor's analysis of her interviews of young industrial scientists. The problems which she and her husband surmounted when they tried to allocate grid/group scores, on social experience and theoretical bias, to the interview records help us to understand how this method can be used. Their sensitive illustrations of how an industrial scientist is likely to think of his measurements and theories if he is situated in one social environment or another are suggestive. More than anything else in the book they raise the question for social psychology: did these types select their social niches or did they, in one year, adapt so thoroughly as to suggest a perfect match?

Chapter 1

ONE- AND TWO-DIMENSIONAL MODELS OF THE DISTRIBUTION OF BELIEFS

David Ostrander

SOCIAL ENVIRONMENTS AS BASES OF COMPARISON

One requirement for a classificatory approach to the analysis of symbolic behavior is the elimination of 'societies' as the units of comparison in favor of the social environments of individuals. This follows from two rather obvious, yet frequently ignored, facts concerning the social and symbolic orders. First, societies do not symbolize - people do. Whenever we treat a society as a single analytic unit, we are quick to ascribe to it a unified, disembodied symbolic order which describes it, justifies it, and prescribes behavioral norms to keep it running smoothly. But the symbolic order exists and articulates with the social order only through the minds and actions of individuals operating for their own purposes within the confines of their own social environments.

Second, even the simplest of societies has a variety of social environments. Societies must adapt to a multitude of particular material and social conditions, thus producing a congeries of social environments, each of which may generate different symbolic associations. This makes classification of societies as wholes impractical. Social environments, in contrast, are at a second order of abstraction from the multi-dimensional impact of the outside world. They can be systematically classified by relatively few dimensions which define sociality itself.

In modern western thought, the dimensions of sociality have been most passionately discussed in the work of Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau and other enlightenment philosophers. For these thinkers, the very existence of social order was a problem to be explained. Individual human beings were products of nature - of observable physical processes. The aggregation of individuals into groups, and the subordination of individual wills to a group will, was not a natural process, and (they argued) had to arise out of some mutual interest, be it profit or survival. Despite their many differences, the enlightenment philosophers agreed in underscoring the idea that sociality involves the subordination of individuals to a supra-individual pattern of interaction and therefore limits freedom of individual action.

The two most general spheres of action limited by social order

are (1) whom one interacts with, and (2) how one interacts with them. In order to classify social environments, we may treat these spheres of action as two dimensions which vary according to the degree to which individual freedom is restricted. Mary Douglas (1978) refers to these dimensions as 'group' and 'grid' respectively.

The grid/group classification is intended to have the sort of general applicability necessary for analyzing the relationship of the social and symbolic orders. A few points should be made concerning the limitations on this applicability.

1 It is a relative rather than an absolute tool, constructed of continuous rather than dichotomous variables. The four cells are primarily of heuristic value; actual distinctions among social environments may be less extreme depending on the scope of the comparison.
2 As it classifies social environments, it is technically incapable of distinguishing (as it stands) whole social systems or pan-system institutions; thus, capitalism, while ideally in square A (low/low), is operationally composed of at least A and B, and probably C and D as well.
3 The grid/group classification is not a causal model; it does not explain, or seek to explain, why a social environment changes, or an individual changes environments. The sources of such changes are the exigencies of the real world to which society and individuals must continually adjust. They are external to the dimensions of sociality and not generated from within.
4 It is not the only classification possible, or extant, which links social structure to symbolic structure; in fact, almost all social classifications make this linkage, if only implicitly. The link here is explicit.

Taking up this final point, we shall turn our attention to a selection of established social classifications in order to show how existing schemes share with grid/group an underlying concern to account for the distribution of beliefs according to variation in social experience. Such a systematic comparison may also help to clarify the kinds of things which we interpret as indices of grid and group, respectively, by relating them to classificatory dimensions with which the reader may be more familiar.

For the purpose of this paper, social classifications may be grouped into one- and two-dimensional schemes. The one-dimensional schemes (being far more numerous) may be further divided into grand dichotomies, special typologies, and evolutionary states.

Grand dichotomies

By grand dichotomies I mean those schemes which divide the entire social universe into two mutually exclusive parts. Durkheim's distinction between two types of social solidarity is an appropriate first example. Durkheim argued that society integrates its members by exploiting either their commonalities (mechanical solidarity) or their differences (organic solidarity). Mechanical solidarity demands a high degree of conformity, in behavior and belief, to the strictures of the common conscience. Deviance from these norms is regarded as a crime against society, and is met with repressive legal

sanctions. Organic solidarity, in contrast, encourages individuality. Integration depends on individuals carving out their own social niches. When deviance reaches a point regarded as criminal, it is usually viewed as an interpersonal action and is met with restitutive legal sanctions.

Durkheim presented this distinction in evolutionary terms, suggestin that mechanical solidarity was characteristic of small, homogeneous, primitive societies and gave way gradually to organic solidarity as size and internal differentiation (the division of labor) increased. A broader view of ethnography than was available to Durkheim makes the evolutionary nature of his scheme untenable. Highland New Guinea for example offers hundreds of examples of primitive societies predicated on the individuality, competition and economic exchange characteristic of organic solidarity.

Stripped of its evolutionary trappings, the mechanical/organic distinction falls into a larger class of dichotomies which, while employing various criteria and terminologies, are frequently reduced to a distinction between conformism and individualism as principles of social life. Sir Henry Maine (1861), primarily through an analysis of ancient Roman law, argued that:

> from a condition of society in which all the relations of Persons are summed up in the relations of Family, we seem to have steadily moved towards a phase of social order in which all these relations arise out of the free agreement of Individuals.

Maine defined this process as a shift from status to contract. For Maine, the transition from status-governed to contract-governed behavior was a logical, irreversible, and definitely progressive movement.

Tönnies's (1887) categories of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft, by his own reckoning, have some congruence with Maine's status and contract, respectively. Gemeinschaft represents a mode of society governed by ties of kinship, friendship, and local tradition; Gesellschaft describes a mode of society governed by individualism, competition, and contract. Tönnies also noted the evolutionary trend from the former to the latter, but for him this was a change for the worse. Gemeinschaft was deemed the natural condition of man; the trend toward Gesellschaft ultimately led to the total dehumanization of society.

Weber's (1930) heuristic typology of traditionalism and rationalism follows the same pattern. Traditionalism holds sway when an individual's decisions are determined by social convention. Rationalism gains ground to the degree that individuals become unfettered by social relationships and are able to make decisions in their own interest. Weber contended that a trend toward rationalism was characteristic of human history.

Linton's (1936) distinction between ascribed and achieved status, while of less global scope, follows the same line of demarcation set down by his predecessors. Ascribed status is a social position conferred upon individuals at birth (or other introduction to society, such as adoption, capture, or purchase). It defines a permanent set of relations, obligations, and expectations vis-à-vis other members of society. An achieved status is just the contrary: a social position obtained through individual effort and possibly at the expense of other individuals.

From different perspectives and biases all of these dichotomies cleave the social universe along approximately the same plane. To the extent that a society is dominated by ascribed status positions, it is clearly of the mechanical/status/Gemeinschaft/traditionalist variety. As the scope for achieved status positions broadens, society moves toward the organic/contract/Gesellschaft/rationalist pole. As seen above, this was regarded as a natural, unidirectional evolutionary progression in the eyes of nineteenth-century Europeans, with worldwide capitalism the glorious (or despicable) end. But the existence of primitive capitalists and modern totalitarian states calls the inevitability of this progression into severe doubt. What remains is a bi-polar classification of societies according to their mode of integration: conformism or individualism.

Grid/group classification is indebted to the polarization of sociological thought between individualism and conformism which is represented by these grand dichotomies. However, in grid/group analysis, the conformist-to-individualist movement is subdivided into two separate dimensions, 'group' defining the choice of interpersonal contacts, 'grid' defining the behavioral options within personal interactions.

The basic conformist/individualist dimension runs along the diagonal through squares A and C where grid and group scores are either both high (C-conformism) or both low (A-individualism). For future reference, this will be labelled the stable diagonal. The B/D diagonal, on the other hand, represents a set of alternative social environments not envisioned in the old conformist/individualist dichotomy: the co-existence of equally strong conformist and individualist pressures in complementary aspects of social action. I shall refer to this as the unstable diagonal.

Special typologies

Special typologies restrict themselves to a particular substantive subset of the social universe. The individual types are always clearly defined, but they may be somewhat unsystematic in their relationship to one another. Durkheim (1951) again provides a good first example in his study of suicide. Durkheim argues that suicide is a social phenomenon triggered by the extreme conditions of various social environments. Egoistic suicide is the hazard of individualism carried to the extreme of isolation from normal social ties. Altruistic suicide lies at the opposite extreme where identification with the social body supersedes the sense of personal preservation. Anomic suicide occurs in response either to severe perturbations in the individual's social equilibrium, or to a general lack of stability and regulation in the individual's social environment. Fatalistic suicide, in contrast, is a response to excessive and unchanging regulations of the individual without social recompense or reward.

A clear congruence of this classification of suicide with the four cells of the grid/group matrix may be established. The egoistic/altruistic contrast falls along the stable diagonal, egoistic suicide occurring at the extreme corner of individualistic square A, altruistic suicide occurring at the diametrically opposite corner

of conformist square C. The anomic/fatalistic contrast falls along the unstable diagonal, anomic suicide in the extreme corner of socially unstable square D, fatalistic suicide in the opposite forner of oppressed and alienated square B.

Other special typologies are less conveniently structured. Ruth Benedict's (1934) delineation of three patterns of culture is intentionally unstructured, yet the 'Dionysian' Kwakiutl, 'Apollonian' Zuñi, and paranoid Dobuans would appear to be easily differentiated by grid and group. The Dionysian conflict, personal ecstacy and aggrandizement conform to our expectations of individualist square A. The Apollonian ideals of structure and social harmony would seem to be characteristic of conformist square C. The treacherous conflict and witchcraft beliefs of the Dobuans would seem to place them firmly with the simple groups in square D.

If we treat Sahlins's (1963) comparison of two types of political leadership in Oceania as a typology, it falls neatly into the stable diagonal of the grid/group matrix. In competitive square A the Melanesian 'Big Man' leads by virtue of his personal charisma and ability to outdo rivals in feasting while providing for his followers. In conformist square C, the Polynesian Chief leads by virtue of his ancestry and according to formula.

Evolutionary stages

Multi-stage evolutionary typologies do not correspond neatly with the grid/group classification, and for good reason. They deal with whole social systems of progressivly increasing complexity, whereas the grid/group categories are social environments within whole social systems and do not necessarily vary or disappear as a function of complexity. A certain grid/group category, reflecting the position of the elite, may predominate at a certain evolutionary stage, but even in this limited sense of correspondence, the progression of categories is not unique. Rather, at each successive evolutionary level there appears to be a spectrum of alternative methods for organizing complexity, ranging from highly individualistic to highly conformist. This is perhaps best demonstrated by fleshing out a well-known evolutionary typology with some contrastive ethnographic examples.

Morton Fried (1967) delineates four stages of human social evolution based upon changing principles of political organization: egalitarianism, ranking, stratification and the state. For our purposes, the last two stages may be combined, since Fried argues that stratification, without the apparatus of state controls, is unstable and either degenerates back to ranking or emerges to statedom.

In an egalitarian society there are as many high-status positions as there are people to fill them. Although all are of equal social standing, certain individuals may through their special abilities and achievements gain differential respect and prestige among their fellows. But none of this respect translates into differential access to material goods or control over others' behavior. In the real world, this simplest of political types is best approximated in populations based upon nomadic hunting, gathering, and, sometimes,

horticulture. In these economies the individual family unit is close to productive self-sufficiency, thus fostering a low-grid, individualistic environment. But the bulk of social interactions are limited to the local co-resident group of families. This local group is important for defense and subsistence security (through food-sharing and co-operative ventures). Thus, Fried's egalitarian societies fall into the class of formalist groups in square D. But notice that, even in this least complex stage, the grid/group category fails to characterize the entire social system. Egalitarianism, in this case, exists among males in the system, but females are almost universally held in lower esteem. Their access to material goods and behavioral options is almost always under the (at least nominal) control of fathers, uncles, brothers, husbands and sons. They exist in a higher-grid world than their male relations, somewhere towards square C.

Ranking occurs when there are fewer positions of high status than there are individuals to fill them. There is a clearly recognized status differential, above and beyond the male/female split noted above. Differential access to resources is a privilege of high rank, but it is accompanied by an obligation to redistribute resources to subordinates. The social value of rank is its stimulation of production and specialization through mobilization demands from above, and consumption demands from below. There are two basic directions an evolving egalitarian system may follow to establish a ranking system: rank, and the lines of mobilization and redistribution, can be predetermined by kinship or they can be achieved and maintained by competing entrepreneurs. The first direction sends the system up-grid to square C, ascribed hierarchy. This was the path of the classic Polynesian chiefdoms organized along the lines of conical clans. The second direction sends the system down-group, towards square A. This was the direction taken in the New Guinea Highlands with Big-Man systems and in Afghanistan with the warring Khans. Of course, the difference between entrepreneurial and ascribed ranking systems is never absolute in reality. In the most rigid of Polynesian chiefdoms there were always avenues for individual achievement (mainly in war) as well as considerable manipulation of genealogies. Among the Khans of Afghanistan inheritance and family tradition played a large part in establishing one's position. None the less, the difference in emphasis is strikingly clear.

Stratification involves a qualitative separation in terms of prestige, wealth, and power between those holding the high and low status positions in society. Whereas in a ranked system high status is dependent upon one's relationship to, and support from, subordinates, in a stratified system high status is a function of control over the resources which subordinates require to survive. The personal and mutual ties of kinship and patronage are junked in favor of class and caste hierarchies maintained by the military apparatus of the state. As in the case of ranking, high status positions may be rigidly determined by social convention, or they may be achieved through entrepreneurial competition. The former results in autocracies of various sorts, the latter in capitalist republics. In the case of capitalism, the competitive upper-class environment (square A) creates an oppressed (square B) lower-class

environment. In autocracies, the upper and lower classes both appear in square C, but exist at different ends of a power differential.

Two-dimensional classifications

These are less common and (aside from the grid/group scheme itself) I will examine only three two-dimensional classifications.

Guy Swanson (1969) has developed a classification designed to discriminate types of political organization. One dimension describes whether participation in the organization is a function of one's status outside the organization, or a function of status gained by virtue of membership in the organization. In the first case, an individual is an 'element', in the second a 'part'. Sex, age, strength and achievements would be criteria for being an element; kinship, caste, class, would establish one as a part.

The second dimension distinguishes between organizations whose participants work primarily for their self-interest, as opposed to those where group interests come first. He labels these as 'associations' and 'social systems' respectively. Combining the two dimensions yields a four-cell classification (see Figure 1.1).

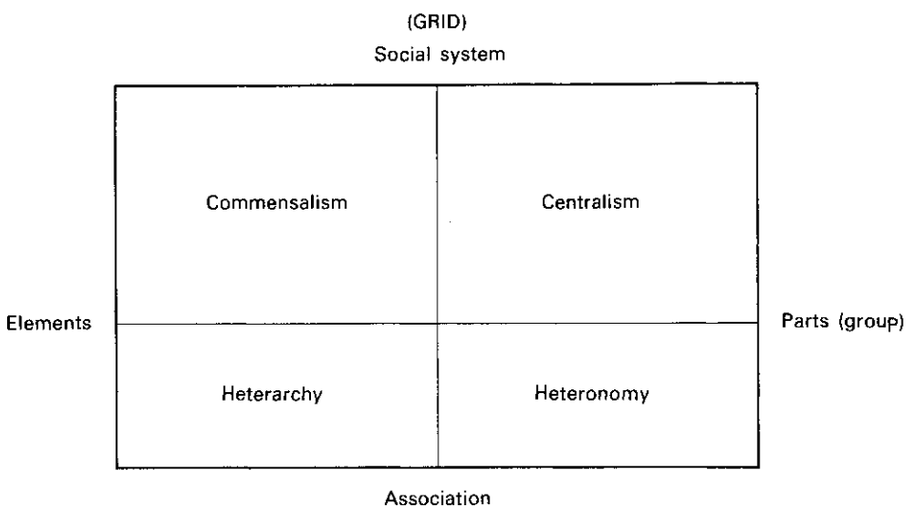

FIGURE 1.1

Valid parallels between the grid/group dimensions and Swanson's organizational dimensions may be discerned. The elements/parts dimension is congruent with the group dimension: to the extent one acts as a part one is limited to the group which defines that part (high group); to the extent one acts as an element one is free to cross group boundaries and establish individual networks (low group). The system/association dimension converges with the grid

dimension. An association provides a low-grid environment where self-interest reigns. A social system constrains individuals in a high-grid fashion to act in the group interest.

The resulting categories are similarly parallel to those of the grid/group classification. 'Heterarchy', an association of elements, is a collection of independent constituents meeting and discussing together with their own interests of primary importance; clearly a low-grid low-group environment. 'Heteronomy', an association of parts, is a group of independent constituents, who are none the less dependent upon membership in the group to maintain that independence; low grid, high group. 'Centralism', the social systems of parts, may be the analogue of 'Ascribed hierarchy'; high grid, high group.

The last category, 'Commensalism', a social system of elements, presents a problem at first glance. It would seem to correspond to the high-grid, low-group category, 'atomized subordination'. This cell tends to be an oppressed and exploited region of social space, usually under the domination of the entrepreneurs from square A. How then can it support its own type of political organization? Swanson (1969: 15) notes that, 'A commensal policy differs from heterarchy in that men participate in making ultimate decisions in their capacity as members-at-large of the society, not as participants in, or as representatives of, special subgroups in the population'. With a similar scheme, Swanson reads a different set of values for each square, and provides a more benign view of their restrictions. I would emphasize, on the contrary, that democracy for all its liberal ideals is indeed the home of the capitalist and proletarian: the former can afford to wage political campaigns, the latter sometimes can scarcely afford to vote.

In a study of Indian ideology and social structure, McKim Marriott (1976) has distinguished four types of inter-caste transactional strategies. There are asymmetrical strategies, ranging from 'optimal' to 'pessimal'. An 'optimal' strategy maximizes giving and minimizes receiving: 'pessimal' strategies reverse this priority. There are also symmetrical strategies which balance giving and receiving. These range from 'maximal', where the number of transactions is maximized, to 'minimal', where the opposite strategy prevails. Marriott associates these transactional strategies with the four Varna: Brahmin (optimal), Ksatriya (maximal), Vaisya (minimal), and Sudra (pessimal) in descending order of rank (see Figure 1.2).

The correspondence of these types to the grid/group categories is less immediate than in the case of Swanson's classification, but none the less may be discerned. Within a system as complex as Hindu caste relations there will of course be a variety of social environments, some tending towards the extreme values of square C, others tending toward A, B and D. Granting this, the correspondence between the two schemes remains illusory because the dimensions used are not congruent, even though the resulting types are. Symmetry and asymmetry are dimensions of exchange; they do not translate directly into dimensions of social space.

However, the possibilities of social interaction are not unlimited in this variety. Marriott's types of strategies have organizational effects which enable us to find congruence by a direct comparison of the derived categories. The 'optimal' strategists, Brahmins, are the

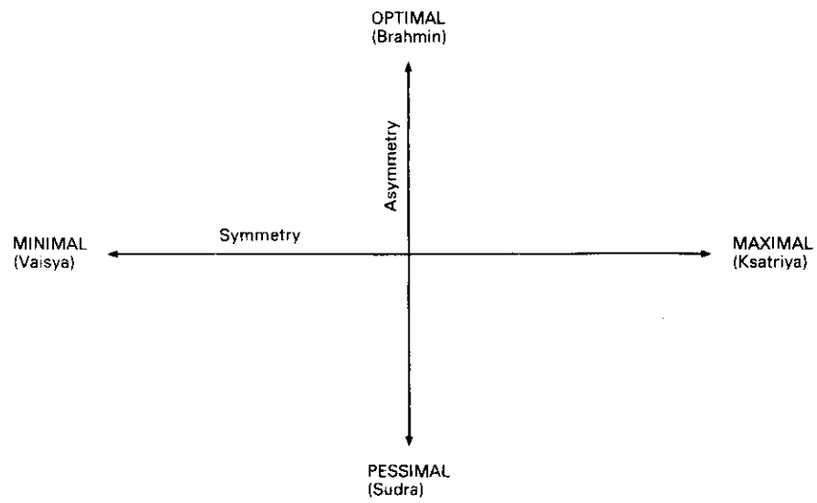

FIGURE 1.2

elite of the caste system and as such can be expected to operate under the strongest constraints of grid and group. The high-grid condition is indicated by the asymmetry of their intercaste exchanges: asymmetry establishes a hierarchical relationship of dependence and obligation. The high-group condition is demonstrated by minimization of receipts: refusing to take gifts from outside groups clearly establishes a group boundary and avoids domination from without.

Following this train of argument, the 'maximizers' (Ksatriya) should tend in the direction of square A (low grid/low group). Symmetry of exchange creates a lower-grid situation by equalizing exchange relationships, while maximization of receipts lowers group constraints by crossing a plethora of group boundaries. The Ksatriya, as it happens, are dominated by warring princes and large-scale landholders. They are easily the most entrepreneurial and competitive of the Varna caste groups.

These two examples seem to have provided us with dimensions with which we can reorder Marriott's types into a format isomorphic with the grid/group classification. The extent of grid constraints on individual behavior is indicated by the degree of asymmetry present in exchange relationships. Total asymmetry equals high grid, total symmetry equals low grid. The group constraints are indicated by the willingness to accept gifts from members of other groups. Minimization of receipts indicates high group constraints, maximization of receipts indicates low group.

Continuing with the last two types, the 'minimal' Vaisya strategy with symmetrical exchanges, minimizing receipts tends toward square

D (low grid/high group). The Vaisyas are mostly merchants and skilled artisans. They are small in population and relatively poor in assets, their primary asset being their specific occupational abilities. They avoid inter-caste obligations that would hinder their (low grid) mobility as contractual skilled workers or traders, and yet depend heavily upon their (high group) caste membership for livelihood. Marriott notes that other minorities, notably various religious sects, also follow the minimal strategy. Behavior in these groups conforms well with the expectations of square D.

The pessimal Sudra strategy, with asymmetry and maximization of receipts, tends toward square B, the zone of the oppressed. This is appropriate as the Sudra form the bottom of the Varna ladder. They are without rank, wealth, or power, and must depend upon patronage from above. The revised classification of Marriott's strategies, therefore, looks as shown in Figure 1.3.

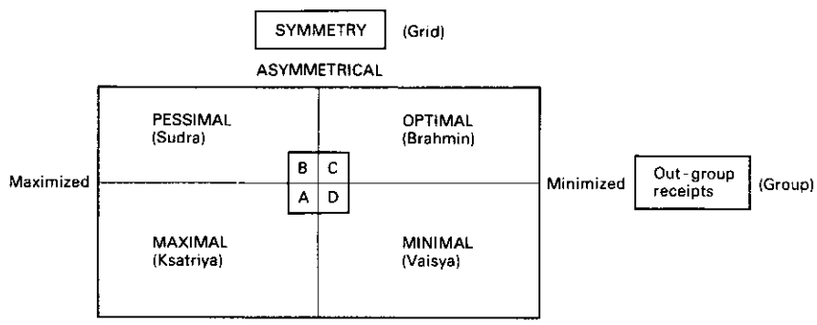

FIGURE 1.3

Whether the changed focus will provide new insights into the caste behaviour and religious cultic practices will depend on new research in this direction.

I now turn to Basil Bernstein's (1971) studies of socialization which use a two-dimensional scheme describing educational environments (Figure 1.4). The 'classification' dimension measures to what degree the pool of information potentially available to the student is divided into unambiguously bounded categories. The 'framing' dimension measures the degree of control over what information will be given and how it will be presented. A school with strong classification and framing represents a highly structured and hierarchical educational environment. Weak classification and weak framing provide

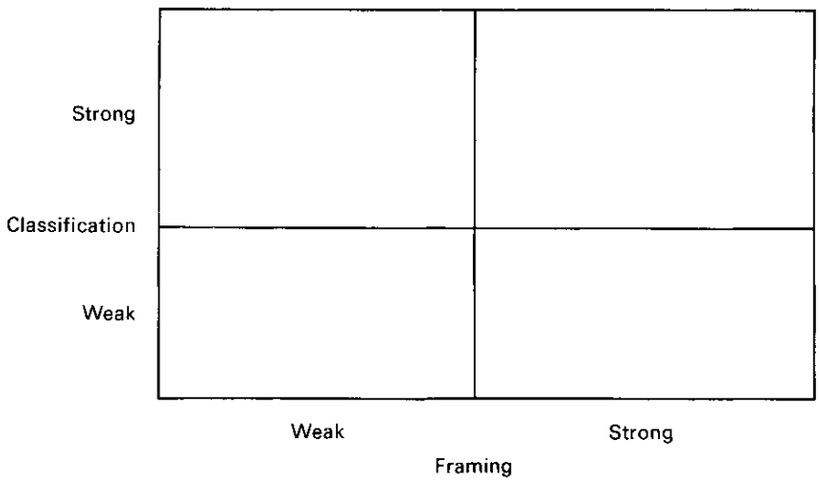

FIGURE 1.4

an extremely unstructured, open educational environment where learning is largely a function of the students' own initiatives and discriminations. Examining just these two cells, there appears to be a reasonable analogy to the stable diagonal of the grid/group classification, ranging from the hierarchical conformism of square C to the individualism of square A. However, the options in question deal with the mode and substance of an individual's education. Any attempt to match the classification and framing with grid and group dimensions is unconvincing. The typologies have in common a focus on boundaries and their permeability. But the group boundaries are between social entities; the classification boundaries are between cognitive entities, fields of knowledge. Thus, while Douglas is using two social dimensions in order to derive social environments with predictable cosmological correlates, Bernstein is placing a social dimension against a cosmological dimension in order to derive socialization environments. Both procedures are appropriate because they are operating within different time scales. Douglas's analysis assumes that, given enough time, cosmology must be flexible enough to adjust to the social environment. Bernstein, on the other hand, is dealing with the relatively short time-period of the socialization process in which the prevailing cosmological system is itself a prominent and relatively unyielding part of the child's environment.

THE COSMOLOGICAL DERIVATIVES OF GRID AND GROUP CATEGORIES

To this point, social classifications have been examined without much

reference to their implications for symbolic variation. Rather, I have attempted to demonstrate that many social classifications, whatever their particular substantive focus, share certain underlying concerns which may be characterized by Mary Douglas's concepts of grid and group. Not all classifications mesh easily with the grid/group format, but the exceptions may prove to be a function of scale. Evolutionary typologies differentiate entities of greater social complexity and longer time span than the social environments of Douglas's scheme; Bernstein's socialization environments deal more subtly with a more limited time scale. Grid/group analysis, along with most other social classifications, operates in the middle ground between socialization and social evolution: the range of social niches to which individuals must adapt.

If we accept the premise, which seems to be shared by the typologies we have been looking at, that the symbolic framework within which an individual views the world is a cardinal aspect of his adaptation to social constraints, what predictions can be made for the grid/group quadrants? For the purposes of this paper it will be sufficient to examine a few basic cosmological elements in order to trace how they may be logically inferred from grid/group categories and used to construct distinct cosmological types. There are three levels of analysis involved in this procedure: dimensional, interactional, and emergent. The dimensional level indicates what aspects of a symbol system vary according to each dimension independently. The interactional level examines those symbolic elements which vary along a secondary dimension created by the covariance of the primary dimensions (i.e., the stable vs. unstable diagonals). The emergent level analyzes the cosmological configurations which arise from the combination of dimensional and interactional symbolic elements in each quadrant of grid/group space.

Dimensional level

Operating under a Durkheimian hypothesis that the structure of symbolism parallels the structure of social life, we would expect symbolic systems to vary along grid and group in much the same way that social environments do. Thus, as the group dimension measures the individual's degree of identity with a specific group, it should also measure the degree to which he views himself and his society as part of the natural universe. Under high-group constraints society and nature are seen as one integrated system. Low-group conditions, since they treat the individual as a separate entity from society, would tend to foster the symbolic separation of society and nature.

The group dimension also distinguishes the goals of symbolic action. The focus of symbolic action in high-group environments is on the preservation and continuity of the group. In low-group environments, the object of symbolic action is likely to be ego-oriented (e.g., personal salvation).

	LOW GROUP		HIGH GROUP
1	Society separate from nature	<——————>	Society part of nature
2	Ego-oriented goals for symbolic action	<——————>	Group-oriented goals for symbolic action

Just as the grid dimension monitors the degree of restriction on how individuals may behave in general, it also applies specifically to symbolic action. In high-grid situations, where behavioral option are relatively few, symbolic action is likely to be extremely routinized in terms of how, where, when, and why it may take place. Low-grid conditions loosen the restrictions on symbolic action. It is able to become more spontaneous, flexible, and personalized.

LOW GRID		HIGH GRID
Personalized means of symbolic action	<——————>	Routinized means of symbolic action

Interactional level

The interaction of the grid and group dimensions produces a contrast between those areas of social space where the dimensional strengths are equal (high grid/high group; low grid/low group) and those where they are unequal (high grid/low group, low grid/high group). There is some justification in labelling these the stable and unstable diagonals, respectively, in that environments dominated by either square A or square C have formed, or can form, an enduring stable social structure. Such a structure is presumed by the high-grid/high-group constraints of square C; it is inherent in the weight of individual assets and abilities brought to bear in square A. The cells of the unstable diagonal are not capable of generating an enduring social structure - in square D because of the inherent trend to fragmentation, in square B because of the constraints on interaction between individuals.

The effect of this stable/unstable contrast on symbolic variation is twofold. First, since the stable diagonal is the home of successful elites, they place a positive value on their cosmological order. In square C, the synthesis of society and nature is viewed as harmonious and necessary to everyone's well-being. In square A, the separation of society from nature is regarded as an improvement upon nature. Man conquers nature through his own ingenuity and for his own benefit. For inhabitants of the unstable diagonal, however, the social order itself is seen as a constant source of danger, and their view of cosmological order relating nature and society will be correspondingly complex and more negative.

The second effect of the stable/unstable contrast is on the degree of elaboration in the symbolic system. Along the stable diagonal we may expect a high degree of elaboration. Long traditions of doctrine, interpretation, and complex codes of symbolic action are likely to develop along with a specialized organization of practi-