

MM12 Theory

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Intercultural communication

This will introduce a non-essentialist approach to interculturality, therefore focusing on undoing the more traditional essentialist separated cultures model. It will look at how cultures are creative, inspiring, figurative and constructed rather than confining, limiting and separating. Rather than inhibiting cultural travel and migration, our existing cultural experience is our best resources. We will explore how the blocks to these threads are the prejudices we meet and bring with us.

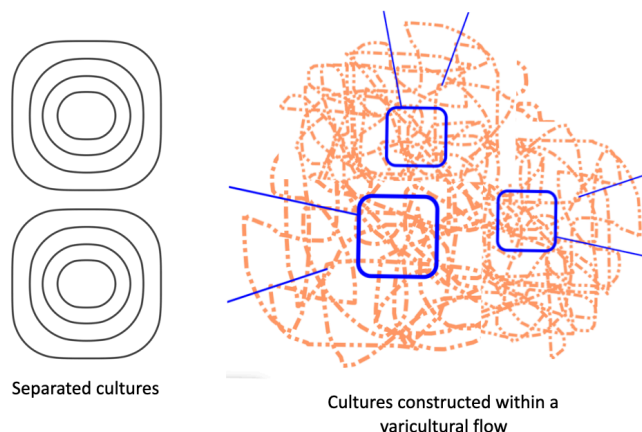
Readings for the seminar: Canagarajah (1993), Holliday (forthcoming)

Theoretical reminder

Separated cultures - positivist - structural-functionalist - essentialist

Postmodern - social construction - social action - non-essentialist

(Ahmed & Donnan 1994; Crane 1994; Dervin 2011; Jordan & Weedon 1995; Morawska & Spohn 1994; Sangari 1994; Sarangi 1994; Schudson 1994; Spears 1999)



Third major social theory

Karl Marx, political **ideology**, and the possibility of **false consciousness** (Engels 1934)

'Us'-'them' grand narratives of nation and civilisation - Orientalism

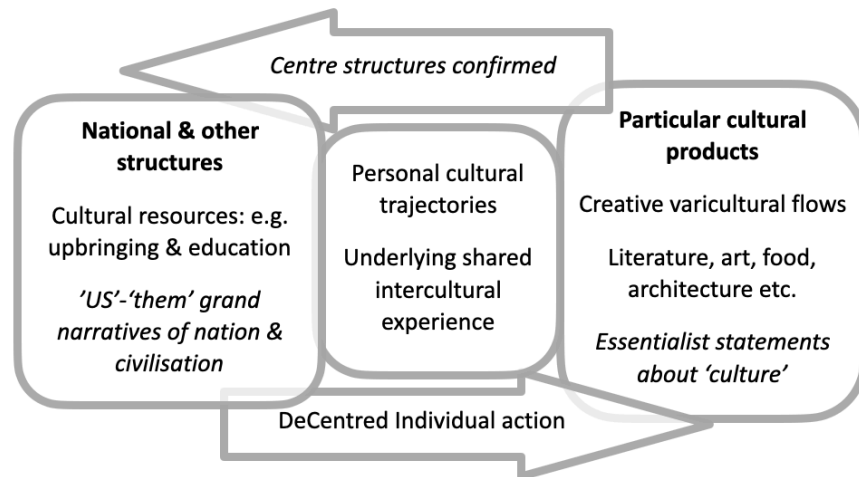
Splintered and normalised into our **personal narratives** (Goodson 2006; Lyotard 1979: 22; Wodak 2021: 106)

False **methodological nationalism** distorts sociology (Beck & Sznaider 2006; Delanty 2006)

C19th European nationalism - one nation, one culture, one language

The **grammar of culture** (Holliday 2019)

inspired by C Wright Mills's (1959/1970: 235) 'grammar of the sociological imagination'



Competing forces acting on the everyday intercultural - **blocks and threads**

Small culture formation on the go

Transient, conforming, challenging, staying, leaving - the family next-door

Not normative 'communities of practice'

Beginning with the small to counter Centre structures - 'bottom up' (Stuart Hall 1991: 35)

Car journey with Chinese colleague and **sitting in a café** in Algiers (Holliday 2016: 322)

Choice - taking deCentred action - to talk about things that connect us

	Chinese colleague	People at the next table
Cultural resources	Knowledge of parenting, work-life balance, institutional life, being managed, relations with parents	... of rules for politeness, formality-informality, cafés and restaurants, personal space, talking to strangers,
Creative varicultural flow Literature, art, food etc	Parenting, toys, playing, universities, cars, hospitality	Cafés and restaurants, street architecture, public spaces, developing leisure practices
Personal cultural trajectory	Me and daughter working out how to parent and deal with institutional structures since early adulthood Him ...	Me working out protocols for behaviour in cafés and restaurants (class, parents, language) since childhood Them ...
Underlying shared experience	Managing boundaries	Going to cafés, trying to work out how to get served

<p><i>Us'- 'them' grand and personal narratives</i></p>	<p>Me: 'Their collectivist culture doesn't allow personal choice in parenting and creates rigid hierarchies in universities'</p> <p>Him ...</p>	<p>... '... doesn't require personal choice in public behaviour and all cafés will be the same. They wouldn't understand my individualist decision-making'</p> <p>Them ...</p>
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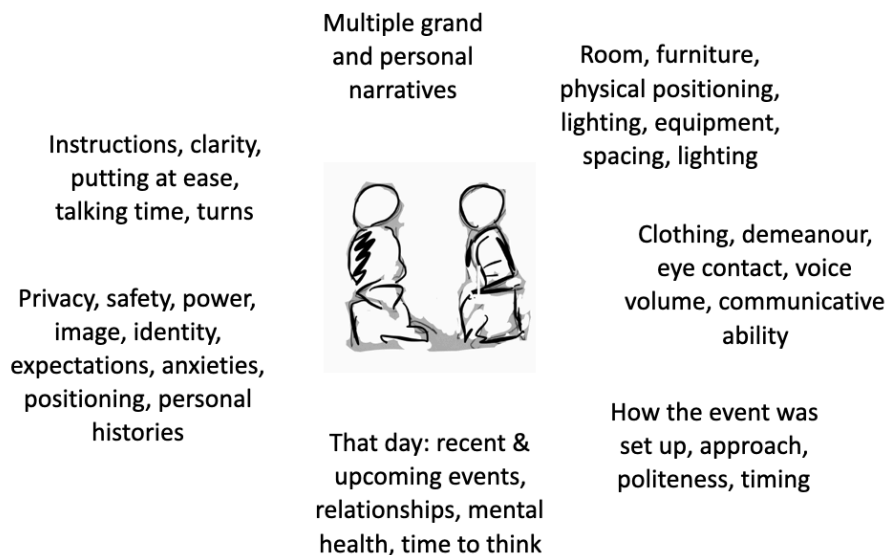
How therefore to deal with essentialist statements about culture?

- 'In my culture we don't think critically'
- 'My culture values family and is relational'
- 'Our loyalty is to our parents before our wives and husbands'
- 'We couldn't experience modernity and individualism until we came to the West'
- 'When we learn English we are in danger of losing our culture.'
- 'I can't understand you because you're a non-native speaker'
- 'We visited three new cultures while on holiday'
- 'We like to experience new languages because they represent new values'

Self-Othering? **Strategic essentialism** (Darius & Jonsson 1993, talking to Gayatri Spivek)

Why research 'participants' (and anyone) might tell us very different things even 30 minutes later

And what therefore might we need to write about them, and how?



How we researchers make sense

The participant is describing an argument with the owner of her accommodation about her breaking her contract.

.....

S: She was all the time saying that ... 'I've been refusing students all this time because of you; and now you are leaving simply because you don't like the house', and, she said, 'because you are leaving let me tell you that you've been so rude with us. And it was like a shock for me, because in my country, I mean all people who know me, they used to, to I don't know, to give me, to to, cite let's say my behaviour as an example of politeness and being kind and so on. It was like terrible to to think, to thing to hear. And I was like, I kept silent and she started saying a lot of things, and, she said the thing that I really wanted to [incomprehensible] she said, 'you will never be part of this culture'

R2: Ooh.

S: [laughing] I really wanted to tell her that that who told you that I'm that I want to be a part of this culture. I already have a culture. I don't need to belong. I already belong to a culture. I don't need to belong.

R2: Were you saying this because you were angry with what she was saying?

S: Aah.

R2: She she she is building a barrier.

R1: Mmm.

R2: So you're also responding to this barrier.

S's statement suggests a conflict between personal and grand narratives. On the one hand is what seems to be her host mother's grand narrative that foreigners should be 'assimilated' into the 'host' national culture. This can be associated with a dominant, essentialist, West as steward discourse of culture in which ... S has not learnt the 'this culture' lesson of being able to engage with and take responsibility for the rules of the accommodation contract because of 'her culture'.

We are not disclosing whether or not S is herself 'non-Western'. ... Neither do we know if S's interpretation of what happened is correct. This is not important. What is important is that S's account represents a personal narrative of independent resistance ... against being categorised as not belonging.

(Amadasi & Holliday 2018: 247)

.....

We also had some other data regarding S from my **research diary**, plus what she told us about her social life **later in the interview**

Why did we choose not to reveal her nationality?

Why do we think she is not just constructing an essentialist cultural block?

Is our intervention influencing what she says?

Where is the major thread?

What block could have invaded and dominated the whole of the research?

.....

S: Yeah exactly. But I didn't say that actually. I, I thought to say that. ... This is the thing that stopped me. I mean, I was saying to myself, people, whom I consider as examples, ... as seeing me like, like an educated person, who shouldn't act that way. So I kept silent, and she was saying blah blah blah blah a lot of things, and, when she stopped speaking I told her can I leave [laughing]. She said yes, and, I left the house, simply.

....

R2: So where did you go that time of night?

S: Fortunately I had credit on my mobile phone. I got [my friend...]; and, she was in the here in the town. She was in the in the restaurant with friends. She took a taxi, and she, she came to, yeah.

(248-9)

.....

What is the significance of this last part? (The 'friends' are from the same national background as S.)
What does it say about the nature of integration?

Why does this approach to intercultural communication not consider it important that newcomers are not mixing, making friends, or adopting the 'values' of 'members of the host culture'?

What further threads emerge?

The main emphasis on intercultural communication

Not solving a conflict between two separated cultures

Focusing on the threads that people bring with them

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