



## The (limited) effect of cultural globalization in India: implications for culture theory

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### Abstract

Since 1991, India has witnessed an explosion of new media. Between 1990 and 1999, access to television grew from 10% of the urban population to 75% of the urban population. Cable television and foreign movies became widely available for the first time. Despite being heavy users of this new media, nonelite urban middle-class men continue to be attached to previous family arrangements. The striking continuity of nonelite men's gender culture in the face of new meanings introduced by foreign media suggests that institutions are fundamentally important in rooting the fit between cultural orientations and institutional structures. Social theorists today often emphasize the mutually reinforcing nature of culture – meanings, norms, values – and structure – the way society is organized. But contemporary theorists too often sidestep consideration of the *relative* causal importance of cultural and structural factors. This paper confirms Swidler's argument that cultural "consistencies across individuals come less from common inculcation by cultural authorities than from the common dilemmas institutional life poses in a given society." Changes resulting from globalization are, then, more likely to follow from changed structural realities than the introduction of new cultural meanings.

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In 1991, the pace of globalization in India suddenly accelerated, as the Indian economy opened. Within a decade, satellite television and Hollywood movies became widely available. Many commentators expected that exposure to new cultural models would lead to changes in family and gender arrangements in India. This study compares noncosmopolitan Indian men's gender culture in two eras—one before Hollywood

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movies and cable television became widely available and one after their availability had transformed the media landscape. Despite a transformed media world which now celebrates cosmopolitan lifestyles, including more freedom for women and increased autonomy for young people in choosing a spouse, changes in the gender culture of nonelite, urban, Hindi-speaking men have been relatively modest.

Studying the effects of changes and continuities in the face of globalization offers an opportunity to consider the relative causal importance of cultural and structural factors in shaping social life. I argue that the effects of cultural changes in media on nonelite men have been limited because the institutional arrangements these men live with and the institutional constraints that they face have changed little in recent years. Because of the fit that tends to develop between social structures and the cultural understandings and psychological orientations that support them, *purely* cultural changes have had only a small influence. This supports Swidler's (2001, p. 176) argument that cultural "consistencies across individuals come less from common inculcation by cultural authorities than from the common dilemmas institutional life poses in a given society. Not shared indoctrination but shared life-structuring institutions create the basis for a common culture."

I further highlight the primary role of institutions in shaping cultural orientations by briefly considering how new cultural meanings have only been accepted when they are consistent with institutional realities. Nonelite men readily embrace new cultural meanings that bolster existing institutions of male dominance. But those who have accepted more wide-ranging cultural celebration of cosmopolitan lifestyles have tended to be the educated English-speaking Indians with skills to hitch their dreams to the global economy. The fact that the new cultural resources, which have had little effect on nonelites, have been embraced by elite Indians suggests that the changes associated with globalization are driven by institutional transformations rather than the introduction of new meanings—and that social institutions are the primary anchor of the fit between structure, culture, and psyche.

## 1. Studying the effects of cultural globalization in India

### 1.1. *Globalization in India*

India pursued autonomous economic development with limited global entanglements until the mid-1980s, when the Rajiv Gandhi administration began a process of economic liberalization. When the oil-price rise associated with the 1991 Gulf War led to a foreign-exchange crisis, the Indian government turned to the IMF for a bailout. In the summer of 1991, the Indian government accepted conditions for an IMF loan, reducing restrictions on investment, devaluing the rupee, and lifting foreign-exchange controls. Within five years, imports more than doubled, exports more than tripled and foreign capital investment more than quintupled (e.g., Shurmer-Smith, 2000, pp. 21–25).

Cultural globalization – the transnational movement of media – followed economic liberalization, as cable television offerings suddenly competed with state-run television and Hollywood films competed with local Hindi films. Until 1991, Indian television and film constituted one of the world's most protected media markets but deregulation

transformed the media landscape. Fueled by the desires of advertisers to reach the newly open Indian market, the number of television channels grew from one state-run channel in 1991 to more than 70 cable channels in 1999. Access to television increased from less than 10% of the urban population in 1990 to nearly 75% by 1999. In 1991, cable television reached 300,000 homes; in 1999, it reached 24 million homes. India remains the world's largest producer of feature films but with the easing of foreign-exchange restrictions Hollywood captured 10% of the market. In 1991, only a few foreign films showed in the most metropolitan cities, but by 2001 foreign films were dubbed into Hindi and screened widely (e.g., Thussu, 2000).

Many commentators anticipated that cultural globalization would transform life around the world. Appadurai (1996, p. 52) famously argued, for instance, that because of transnational cultural flows associated with migration, tourism and mass media, people now consider "a wider set of possible lives than they ever did before." Because of this, Appadurai (1996, p. 44) argues, culture has become "less what Pierre Bourdieu would have called a habitus (a tacit realm of reproducible practices and dispositions) and more an arena for conscious choice, justification, and representation." Many observers of the Indian scene suggested that new media would transform family arrangements and gender in India by encouraging dating (e.g., Jain, 1998) or helping men accept women as superiors in the work force (e.g., Chandran, 1996). Yet we have few systematic studies examining the extent to which such changes have in fact occurred.

### *1.2. Methodology*

During what enthusiasts of globalization call the "golden summer" of 1991 (Das, 2001, p. 213), I was in India, doing research with young male Indian filmgoers in the small city of Dehra Dun. Although I mostly interviewed educated men with good jobs or good job prospects, none had access to television beyond the one state-run channel and few had seen even one Hollywood film. Like the broader cross-section of Indian men whom I interviewed in the 1980s (Derné, 1995), the men whom I interviewed in 1991 focused on Indianness as the cornerstone of their identity and they often associated Indianness with what they saw as distinctive family systems that included arranged marriages and limitations on women's movements outside the home (Derné, 2000a). To understand how globalization had affected the lives and understandings of ordinary Indians like these young men, I returned in 2001 to replicate the study conducted a decade earlier.

In both 1991 and 2001, I conducted three months of participant observation with filmgoers in the small city of Dehra Dun, North India. Each day over the course of three months in each year, I hung around the eight movie houses in Dehra Dun, participating in filmgoing rituals and watching people watch films, noting when they laughed, when they sang along and what dialogues they knew. A comparison of filmgoing in the two eras provides insight into gender presentations that appeal to filmgoers.

In both 1991 and 2001, I conducted interviews with young male filmgoers. In both years, I approached men in and around movie halls. I asked men to tell me about their favorite films, their favorite heroes and their favorite heroines. In both years, I asked men about love marriages celebrated in particular Hindi films. While the interviews were not systematically random, I approached men who were purchasing expensive balcony tickets

and cheap floor tickets at all of the theatres in Dehra Dun and at showings of hit films and run-of-the-mill films, fighting-and-killing films and love stories, Hindi films and English-language films. The rate of refusals was low. The interviews were conducted in Hindi and took about 30 min. The taped interviews were conducted in public in and around cinema halls. In both years, I conducted the interviews with the help of a journalist for a regional Hindi newspaper.

### 1.3. Focusing on young, nonelite men

In 1991, 91% (20/22) of the men whom I interviewed were in their teens or 20s and 86% (19/22) were unmarried. In 2001, 94% (30/32) of the men I interviewed were in their teens or twenties and 84% (27/32) were unmarried. As LiPuma (2000, p. 63) rightly notes, an understanding of changes in thinking and ways of being should focus *especially* on “those who are coming of age” since they are often in the throes of “forging their identity.” By focusing on men in their teens and twenties in each era, I tried to examine whether new media had affected men’s cultural orientations toward family and gender as they entered adulthood.

I interviewed men with good standards-of-living but who didn’t speak any (or very much) English. They were professionals or successfully self-employed people (23% in 1991, 16% in 2001), undergraduate or postgraduate students (41% in 1991 and 50% in 2001), successful laborers or holders of lower-middle class jobs such as office clerk (36% in 1991, 34% in 2001). Their families owned scooters or televisions, but they could barely dream of owning automobiles or traveling abroad and they purchased few global products. Earning US\$ 1000–2150 annually, ordinary middle-class Indians like these constitute 16% of households India-wide, perhaps 40% of the urban population. They see themselves as India’s “middle class” – below the position of the rich jetsetters – the 3% of Indians (10% of urban ones) with high incomes (above \$2150 a year), college degrees, English-language skills, and global connections—but well above the position of the destitute 53% of Indians who earn less than US\$ 500 annually. For these nonelite middle-class Indians, economic globalization provided greater access to some goods, like televisions, which had previously been difficult to obtain due to foreign-exchange restrictions. But because they lacked English-language skills and global connections, new high-paying jobs linked to global markets were beyond the reach of these men, and their middle-class incomes kept them from fully entering the utopia of consumption trumpeted in new media.

While the main empirical data for this study focuses on young men in a small city in the Hindi-speaking region, I also cite evidence from elsewhere in India to suggest that the dynamics I describe may be common among nonelite middle-class Indian men.

### 1.4. Nonelite men face cultural globalization

While the effect of economic liberalization on nonelite Indians’ job prospects has been limited, the cultural globalization that took place in the ten years between the two studies dramatically changed the cultural landscape for ordinary Indians. In 1991, no Hollywood film screened in the three months that I worked in Dehra Dun, but in 2001 dubbed Hollywood films were the main fare at the city’s two most elite theatres. Audiences could

watch Hollywood films about adventurers traversing dangerous snowy peaks (*Vertical Limit*), B-grade films aiming at sexual titillation (like a dubbed version of the low-budget Hollywood film *Sexual Intent*) and action films with spectacular special effects like Arnold Schwarzenegger's *Arnold Ka Mukabla* (*The Confrontation of Arnolds*, a dubbed version of Hollywood's *Sixth Day*). While in 1991, none of the men whom I asked had seen Hollywood films, nearly 60% of the men whom I interviewed in 2001 had watched such films—and half watched dubbed films regularly. Nearly a quarter (7/32) of the men I interviewed were so charmed by foreign films that they claimed to see very few Hindi films.

Also significant is growing access to television and, especially, cable. In 1991, few of the men whom I interviewed had access to television and even those who had televisions were limited to state-run Doordarshan programming (as satellite TV was completely unavailable). In 1991, Doordarshan's hits were family serials, serialized Hindu mythologicals, and (biggest of all) a weekly Hindi film and a weekly program devoted to Hindi-film songs. By 2001, television had rapidly expanded so that nearly 88% (28/32) of the men whom I interviewed had access to television. The expansion of cable was dramatic. While none of the men whom I interviewed in 1991 had access to cable television, by 2001, about 69% (22/32) had at least some access to cable television. How has the new media transformed young men's thinking about gender and family—and what are the implications for understanding the role of culture in generating social change?

## 2. Attachment to existing family arrangements in a globalizing world

The advent of globalization has introduced new cultural celebrations of autonomy and individual choice. The idea that young people's love for each other should be the basis for marriage is reasserted by cable television's American serials (e.g., *Santa Barbara*) that show young people in pursuit of the "right one." Influenced by global media, Hindi-film hits now emphasize the search for the right partner (while in earlier eras they focused instead on overcoming parental opposition.) The big 1997 hit *Dil To Pagal Hain* [*The Heart's a Crazy Thing*] famously opens with the heroine voicing her certainty that "someone somewhere was made for me and that I'll meet him." The hero scoffs at the "nonsense" of a "soulmate," but the heroine remains firm: "When I meet my soulmate, I will recognize him. He will speak to me and give me a sign and my heart will realize...this is love." In the increasingly cosmopolitan media world, love as a basis for marriage is the celebrated goal.

### 2.1. Rejecting love marriages

Yet despite the transformed media landscape and the increased celebration of cosmopolitan lifestyles, the men whom I interviewed in 2001 remain as committed to arranged marriages as the men whom I interviewed before the global media deluge. Vinod, an unmarried 22-year-old high school graduate, enjoys cable television and Hindi film love-stories, but remains committed to arranged marriages:

Love marriages are only stories in films. In real life they are not possible. I haven't given a thought to marriage, but I know I'll marry according to my parents wishes.

This mantra was voiced by the range of ordinary middle-class men whom I interviewed. Virendra, 22, is a Jat Hindu in a postgraduate engineering program, living in a family headed by his Police Superintendent father and stay-at-home mother. Virendra likes to copy the “smart [*sunderta*] dress” of his favorite heroes and enjoys Hindi-film love stories, yet he too remains committed to arranged marriages: “In reality, [love marriages] are not successful. In actual life, a love marriage is not possible. I’ll marry with my parents wishes.” Another 19-year-old upper-caste Hindu student living in a joint-family headed by a father with a good service job similarly said that while the films he likes are “love stories, it wouldn’t be possible in real life.” Although his favorite film, *Mohabbatein* [*Loves*], features a school teacher who encourages his students to pursue love, this student remains certain that “any girl I could find for myself would not be as good as the girl my parents will find for me.” Despite a decade of cultural globalization celebrating the search for love, similar percentages of men voiced an on-balance disapproval of love marriages (68% [15/22] in 1991 and 66% [21/32] in 2001). The percentage of men voicing an unqualified support of love marriages also changed little in a decade (14% [3/22] in 1991, 19% [6/32] in 2001).

While in affluent circles (and in the media that cater to them), there is a widespread belief that globalization has encouraged dating and love marriages, my study’s systematic comparison showing little change in ordinary middle-class Indians’ attitudes toward marriage is confirmed by a number of other studies. Systematic, geographically-extensive evidence is lacking, but most sober commentators (e.g., Uberoi, 1998, p. 307) see little increase in love marriages and the few systematic local studies we do have show little change in attitudes about marriage and family. A 1998–1999 study found that 65% of 15–34-year-olds in Delhi, Mumbai, Kanpur, and Lucknow said that they would obey their elders “even if it hurts” (Page and Crawley, 2001, p. 176). A mid-1990s study of urban college students found that 68% said they wanted to have their parents arrange their marriage (Pathak, 1994). Abraham’s (2001, pp. 149–151) 1996–1998 study found that a “majority” of low-income, students in Mumbai thought that love marriages were unsuccessful. The students Abraham interviewed “preferred an arranged marriage for its stability and security.” Absent a change in structural realities of family life or economy, a decade of cosmopolitan celebration of love has apparently done little to change men’s views.

## 2.2. *Rejecting women’s autonomy*

While transnational media have intensified favorable images of independent women who often work in the paid economy (e.g., the popular *Ally McBeal*), ordinary middle-class men seem no less attached to gender arrangements which limit women’s public activities and freedom. As in 1991, men are the primary consumers of fighting-and-killing films and even at screenings of the more respected social films (where women might make up one third of the balcony audience) there are few women in the cheap floor seats. Men enjoy homosocial bonding in this all-male world. In 2001 (as in 1991), they shout out to greet friends both in the hall and while waiting outside. Men enjoy putting arms around each other or playfully batting each other. They joke, dance, and roughhouse together. Some men seem to enjoy their exclusive use of cinema-hall public spaces, while

emphasizing how this contrasts with women's home-based lives. Tahsin, a married 25-year-old, describes his compelling attraction (*chaska*) to Hindi film as so strong that he sees at last two movies a week, but he proudly relates that his wife is so "home loving [*gharelu*]" that she even objects to seeing movies with her own husband." For Tahsin, the cinema hall is a place that men enjoy, while women should remain at home. Tahsin doesn't watch television at home much. "It's for women and children," he says.

In both 1991 and 2001, men's discussion of their favorite heroines shows a focus on women's home responsibilities. Tahsin doesn't like many of today's heroines, saying that they expose too much of their bodies. Tahsin's favorite heroine is Kajol because of her innocence (*bholapan*). A 25-year-old who likes satellite television and American films like *Titanic* and *Godzilla* similarly told me that Aishwarya Ray was his favorite Hindi film heroine because of her generosity, referring to her widely-reported willingness to donate her eyes to science after her death. This man likes women who are willing to sacrifice for the broader society. Other local surveys show ordinary middle-class men's ongoing attachment to gender arrangements that make women primarily responsible for home duties. Abraham's (2001, p. 142) interviews showed that college-going men want women to be "simple," "home-loving," and in possession of a "compromising nature" that makes them "respect elders"—views which closely parallel men's views in previous decades.

### 2.3. Resistance to global media messages

Men's attachment to existing gender arrangements may be one reason so many ordinary middle-class men are uneasy with new media that appear to challenge these arrangements. Virendra, the postgraduate engineering student with cable television, is committed to arranged marriages and joint-family living. Although he likes the "smart dressing" of cosmopolitan heroes, he complains that "satellite TV is making younger people too mature." Umesh, a civil draftsman whose marriage has just been arranged, likes Hollywood movies cable and television, yet is disturbed by programming that "gives the message" that "a brother should allow his sister to go with her boyfriend to watch a movie. These are not good things," he says, "so they shouldn't be shown on television." This unease with global media sometimes generates protests against globalization's effect on local gender arrangements. For several years protesters have responded to Valentine's Day, by attacking couples in restaurants and burning Valentine's Day cards (Sengupta, 2001). Other protesters targeted discotheques for "spoiling the minds of youth" (*India Abroad*, 1999) and the 1996 staging of the Miss World pageant in Bangalore for threatening Indian womanhood (Oza, 2001; Fernandes, 2000, p. 625). Although often orchestrated by political elites, these protests resonate with ordinary middle-class men.

Transnational media have not led ordinary middle-class men to experiment with new gender arrangements. If it has made them aware of a "wider set of possible lives," cultural globalization has only increased their vigorous defense of local family lives and gender culture.

Nonelite Indian men's attachment to arranged marriages and to limiting women's public freedom reflects the economic and family structures ordinary Indians face. Without expanded economic opportunities, young men rely on parental support in the early years of marriage. Often living in joint households in the first years of marriage, men want a wife to

embrace an attitude of compromise given competing demands within a family. Because ordinary Indian women lack the connections and strong English-language skills that would allow them to compete in the global economy, most men want women to work in the home rather than at jobs that don't pay very well. Despite the media celebration of love, the institution of arranged marriages and limitations on interactions between unmarried men and women remain obdurate structural realities. These institutional realities – and men's interest in maintaining gender arrangements – press against ordinary Indian men's acceptance of love marriages and women's freedoms which are celebrated in the media they enjoy from Hollywood films to local productions which have been influenced by cosmopolitan media.

### 3. Intensifying cultural dimensions of male privilege

Because of obdurate social realities and men's interests in maintaining gender arrangements, ordinary men reject new imaginations of gender and family introduced by cultural globalization. But these same men embrace *other* meanings introduced by global flows because they can be used to bolster existing gender arrangements. This highlights the centrality of institutions in rooting cultural understandings.

#### 3.1. Intensifying the culture of male violence

The association of maleness with violent aggression has long been a basis of male dominance. Men in Indian cinema halls continue to clap and shout enthusiastically when the fighting-and-killing heroes of Hindi cinema beat up their opponents. Today, cable television and foreign movies *intensify* the attraction to violent masculinities. Nearly 60% (11/19) of the men I interviewed who watch foreign films regularly say that they do so because of the excellent action sequences in these films. (In 1991, foreign films were not available and none of the men whom I interviewed had seen a foreign film.) By 2001, men enjoy Jackie Chan or Arnold Schwarzenegger as favorite heroes because of their fighting ability. They say they like American films, like *Gladiator* or *Godzilla* because the action appears more realistic than in Hindi films. As I sat watching the previews before one screening of an Arnold Schwarzenegger film, one of the men I interviewed smiled broadly on seeing Jackie Chan. "Jackie's a good fighter," he said with a grin. Ramu, a twenty-year-old Brahman medical student, says that he likes watching Hollywood action movies because the Hollywood industry has the backbone to make the action more exciting and realistic.

Patwardhan's (1995) documentary film *Father, Son, Holy War* shows boys, teenagers, and young Mumbai men who are attracted to Arnold Schwarzenegger's body building. One 25-year-old says that he was "inspired" to become a body builder by watching videocassettes of "Arnold's movies." Patwardhan shows adolescent Mumbai boys' attraction to World Wrestling Federation characters. In a room decorated with posters of Hit Man, boys smile, roughhouse and imitate headlocks as they watch this World Wrestling Federation hero on cable television. "That's Hit Man, the World Wrestling Federation wrestler," one says. "He hits hard. He's good." One boy who had another boy in a headlock

says that “only boys” wrestle “because boys are heroes.” Pressed by the interviewer, the adolescent says he doesn’t play with girls “because girls wear *saris*, because girls are a calamity, because girls make too much fuss, because girls are girls and boys are boys.” In another scene, boys react enthusiastically to WWF wrestler Macho Man Randy Savage, who makes a local appearance to promote WWF on local cable. Boys chant “We want Macho; we want Macho” in anticipation of the hero’s arrival. One boy says that he would like to be like Macho Man because he’s “quite dangerous and well known all over the world and fights quite well.”

### 3.2. Intensifying the cultural objectification of women

Cultural globalization has brought more foreign pornography to India. In Dehra Dun in 2001 one of the most prestigious theatres routinely showed foreign films which were marketed with the A[adults only]-rating usually marketed as pornography. Low budget and dubbed into Hindi, these foreign films aimed at soft-core titillation as Indian censors bar nudity. The foreign pedigree and prestigious venue attracted good audiences that included middle-class viewers and male adolescents (as age restrictions were not enforced). In addition, boys now watch newly available foreign pornography in video halls. In Abraham’s (2001) study, more than half of male students had seen pornographic films, which were boys’ main source of information on sex.

The availability of foreign pornographic films *intensifies* the construction of women as existing for men’s pleasure. At screenings of A-films in Dehra Dun the wholly male audience whistled their enthusiasm at any scene suggesting sex. Mark Liechty (2001, p. 46) found that in Kathmandu, Nepal, foreign pornography intensifies demands men make on women. Women commented that when men watch pornography they begin to “think of others” in a “bad manner.” Liechty reports that pornography’s influence is magnified because of its association with prestigious consumer goods, like VCRs, and because women regard it not as fantasy but the reality in prestigious Western society.

Rather than embracing new cultural blueprints, then, most ordinary Indian men accept new meanings introduced by cultural globalization only when they can be layered on top of existing meanings to support the usual arrangements. Global media’s *intensified* celebration of male violence and construction of women as existing for men’s pleasure is accepted because it reinforces ways that local popular culture supports male dominance.

### 4. Implications for culture theory

The striking continuity in nonelite Indian men’s gender culture, despite a decade of exposure to transnational media celebrating women’s freedom and love as a basis of marriage, helps us understand the relative causal importance of culture in shaping social life.

My previous work emphasizes that a fit tends to develop between cultural meanings, social institutions, and aspects of psyche like emotions and self-conceptions. In India, there is a fit between a sociocentric cultural orientation (which emphasizes family obligations ahead of individual desires), families structured around arranged marriages and joint-family living (which limit individual autonomy), and an emotion culture that warns of

love as a potentially dangerous emotion that could disrupt family obligations, while valuing social fear that keeps people in line (Derné, 1994, 1995, 2000b). In the USA, there is a fit between an individualistic cultural orientation (which emphasizes individuals pursuing their own interest), a family structured around nuclear family-living and the individual's choice of marriage partner, and an emotion culture that emphasizes love as a lasting, sure feeling for a special individual (Swidler, 2001; Derné, 1994). A "fit" between cultural orientations, social structures, and psyche militates against easy social changes. Given the mutually reinforcing character of culture, structure, and psyche, it has been difficult to assign causal priority to any one of these elements. As Shweder (1991, p. 73) puts it, culture, structure and psyche reproduce each other, making each other up.

Indeed, the mutually reinforcing nature of culture – meanings, norms, values – and structure – the way society is organized – is so strong that much recent social theory sees cultural meanings as an indispensable part of social structure itself. Bourdieu (1992, pp. 7, 18) sees structures as having a double existence: Structures exist not just in the material world of institutions, but are internalized in the "conduct, thought, feelings, and judgments" of social agents. Sewell (1992, p. 27) similarly sees "structures as constituted by mutually sustaining cultural schemas and sets of resources." Rightly emphasizing that structures are always made up of the repetitive, meaningful actions of individuals, most definitions of social structure today emphasize the "rules," "shared meanings," or "norms" that support them (Giddens, 1984, p. 377; Sewell, 1992, p. 6; Fligstein, 2001, p. 108). This focus correctly emphasizes that it is through following certain cultural rules that social structures or institutions are produced and reproduced.

But too often the recognition that cultural meanings shape the behavior which structures institutions has led social theorists to skirt consideration of the causal role of culture in shaping social life. Despite the importance of focusing on the interrelations between cultural meanings and social structures, Spillman (2002, p. 5) is right to emphasize that it remains useful to distinguish social structures from the processes of meaning making that may play a role in creating and reproducing them. While both the material and the mental may be structured and interrelated, it is still useful to distinguish the two and the terms "structure" or "institution" and "culture" remain a good way of doing so. As Spillman (2002, p. 5) puts it, it is useful to study class consciousness separately from class structure, organizational culture separately from organizational forms. While social structure may ultimately be rooted in meaningful conduct of individuals that produce and reproduce social institutions, individual actors still face institutions as external structural realities. Thus, Weber explored the meanings that gave rise to capitalism, *while still recognizing that contemporary individuals contend with an economy structured according to capitalist principles*.<sup>1</sup> Even if the institution of arranged marriages is merely the aggregation of meaningful conduct of individuals, individual actors still face that structural reality, living

<sup>1</sup> Weber ([1904–1905] 1930, p. 69) sees the growth of capitalism as caused by a "new spirit" that had "set to work." But contemporary workers may not attribute "meaning" to "their restless activity" (ibid., p. 70). For contemporary workers "business with its continuous work has become a necessary part of their lives" (ibid., p. 70). The worker who "does not adapt his [or her] manner of life to the conditions of capitalist success must go under" (ibid., p. 72). Weber focused on the meaningful conduct that motivated capitalism, while recognizing that workers today face a capitalist economy as a structural reality.

in a world in which marriages tend to be arranged by the parents of the bride and groom. Even if the institution of joint-family living results from individuals' meaningful actions, that institution remains the structure which most people confront in the early years of married life.

For this study, the key aspect of social institutions or social structure is that they are experienced by individuals as external and constraining. Although made up of the patterned meaningful actions of individuals, institutions nonetheless appear to acting individuals as external realities. Certainly, much social theory today rightly emphasizes that institutions enable individuals as well as constrain them, but the external institution still structures possibilities. Living with the institution of love marriages, Americans are enabled to pursue a range of choices, but there is no institutionalized way for American parents to arrange children's marriages or young Americans to seek an arranged marriage. Living with the institution of arranged marriages, nonelite Indians may try to insist that they meet their spouse before marriage is finalized or even that their parents arrange a marriage with the person of their choosing (e.g., Derné, 1995), but most Indians lack the institutional structures that would facilitate marrying for love.

Men interpret new media messages in the contexts of the institutional realities they face. Facing family institutions in which most marriages are arranged and in which interactions between unmarried men and women are checked by family members, men distance themselves from new media celebrations of love matches, which they regard as mere fantasies. Economic institutions that limit financial autonomy also lead men to distance themselves from new media messages which urge following one's own desires when it comes to matters of marriage: While men may be thrilled by the celebration of love in films, most simply regard choice in matters of marriage as impossible given the economic constraints that they face. The institutional structures of male dominance in the home (which men like) lead men to reject media portrayals of women's independence that appear in foreign media. Men may be excited by independent Ally McBeals, but tend to regard such figures as products of a foreign lifestyle that seems alien to the patriarchal families in which they live. By contrast, men are attracted to new media celebrations of male dominance precisely because these are consistent with the institutional reality of patriarchy in the home. Rather than distancing themselves from foreign media's intensified celebration of male violence and the objectification of women, men are attracted to these new forms of male dominance that are consistent with the patriarchal families in which they live.

Continuities in men's gender culture despite new cultural ideas show the central importance of institutions in rooting cultural understandings and emotional orientations. My consideration of nonelite men's gender culture suggests that when cultural meanings are bolstered by social institutions and aspects of psyche, newly introduced cultural ideas don't transform people's imaginations. Nonelite Indian men have not embraced transnational media celebration of love marriages or women's freedoms because of institutional realities they face. Because their lack of global connections makes them unable to hitch their material dreams to the new global economy, nonelite Indian men need families to support their marriages. The family structures that limit interactions between unmarried men and women similarly make celebrations of love as a basis of marriage seem impossible. Yet ordinary middle-class men are attracted to new global celebrations of male dominance precisely because these new cultural meanings are consistent with their

attachment to existing structural arrangements of gender that they like. The fact that ordinary middle-class men have not been influenced by new meanings that are inconsistent with existing structural realities highlights that the shared culture of ordinary middle-class men comes more from shared institutional lives than from shared indoctrination by a common culture. The centrality of institutions in grounding the “fit” between culture, structure and psyche is the reason why cultural globalization has been resisted when it is inconsistent with underlying social structures and institutions which have not been simultaneously transformed.

### 5. Globalization's transformations and the centrality of institutions

This paper is part of a broader project that considers transformations and continuities in India since the intensification of globalization in 1991. While this paper focuses on continuities in nonelite men's gender culture, transformations in *elite* Indian culture demonstrates the role of institutional change in leading individuals to embrace new cultural meanings (see Derné, 2003, 2005).

First, the growth of consumerism in India today has been driven more by the new availability of goods than new cultural celebration of consumer lifestyles. The affluent Indians whom Fernandes (2000, p. 614) interviewed in 1998 saw “new choice of commodities as a central indicator of the benefits of economic liberalization.” They talked about how previously access to goods was limited to those who had the financial means to travel abroad to purchase goods. But today, as one person told her, “abroad is now in India,” a statement that shows that affluent Indians' “aspirations of consumption” can “now take place within India's borders.” Referring to the desire for cellphones and holiday homes, the editor of a print magazine told Fernandes (2000, p. 614) that previously “people would feel a sense of guilt—that in a nation like this a kind of vulgar exhibition of wealth is contradictory to Indian values. I think now consumerism has become an Indian value”. Hindi films have been participating for many years in this process of encouraging consumerist desires. In 1985s superhit *Ram Teri Ganga Maili*, the elite hero's uncle who has returned from a foreign trip presents the hero with an “alpine hat – from Switzerland! – a leather jacket – from France!”, and a polaroid camera, the novel operation of which he explains excitedly. But in the days of licensing and regulation, such items were novelties, the result of a foreign trip. Indians only really embraced the culture of consumerism when the economic structures changed to open markets, making global goods readily available to those with cash.

Second, affluent Indians have been more likely to embrace new cultural imaginations of gender and family trumpeted in transnational media precisely because globalization has transformed their structural realities. With economic liberalization, the 3% of Indians (10% of urban ones) with high incomes (above \$2150 a year), college degrees, English-language skills, and global connections have been able to draw on new high-paying jobs (from computer programmer to operating call centers) oriented to the international market and can now buy international products, which had previously been restricted by foreign-exchange controls. Affluent Indian women move about elite shopping arcades more because of new possibilities for consumption than new celebrations of women's independence. Those affluent Indians who embrace women's paid labor do so because of

high-paying opportunities that can help usher in the utopia of consumption more than because of global media's positive portrayals of women in the public sphere. It is because of new opportunities for economic independence rather than new cultural inculcation that affluent Indians increasingly embrace dating and love marriages as real possibilities. Nonelite Indians are exposed to the same global celebrations of consumerism, women's public freedoms, love marriages, and cosmopolitan identity as elite Indians, but nonelite Indian men reject these new cultural maps because globalization has failed to transform the structural realities nonelites face.

This description of the new consumerism in India and the transformed family and gender arrangements of affluent Indians show the double existence of structure pointed to by recent social theorists like Bourdieu and Sewell. A change in the material world has been accompanied by a change in the mental world of thoughts and feelings: For the affluent, increasing opportunities for global employment and consumption have led to a consumer orientation and wider acceptance of cosmopolitan gender arrangements. While recognizing the mutually reinforcing character of structure and culture, this study highlights the usefulness of continuing to distinguish the organization of social life from the meanings, rules and norms that guide people to reproduce any social structure. This study shows that the effects of *purely* cultural globalization are limited as long as economic and family possibilities are not simultaneously transformed. That the changes introduced by globalization come more from transformation of India's economic and family structure rather than the influx of new media suggests that shared cultural imaginations are rooted primarily in shared institutional possibilities, rather than socialization to a common culture.

As much contemporary theory identifies cultural meanings as a part of social structure, Swidler is the theorist who best highlights the independent role of social structures in rooting shared cultural understandings. Anthropologists like Strauss and Quinn (1997, pp. 190–191) still argue that it is primarily ideas of love that structure institutions of marriage. Swidler is right to argue the reverse: Structures of marriage shape ideas of love. It is because American marriage is organized around the choices of individuals that Americans see love as a certain, lasting feeling for a unique individual (Swidler, 2001, pp. 117–124; Derné, 1994). It is because Indian marriages are structured within larger joint families, that most Indians want love to follow from duty rather than the specialness of the beloved and expect that love should be extended to many in the family, while remaining subordinate to fear of elders (Derné, 1994, 1995, 2000b). By showing that changes driven by globalization have followed more from changing institutional realities than new cultural understandings introduced by new media, this study confirms the priority Swidler gives to institutions in rooting cultural meanings.

Sewell (1992, pp. 14–15) is right to recognize that the focus on the mutual reinforcing character of Bourdieu's "mental structures" and the "world of objects" implies a kind of stasis that makes "significant social transformations seem impossible." What is needed to theorize change, he says, is a more "multiple, contingent and fractured conception of society" (Sewell, 1992, p. 16). Sewell (1992, pp. 16–17) theorizes change by emphasizing that the "multiplicity of structures" and the "transposability of [cultural] schemas" allow versatile action of individuals. This study suggests that the multiplicity of cultural schemas and the transposability of social structures are at least as important. All societies include multiple cultural schemas. Bellah et al. (1985) argue, for instance, that while American

culture tends to focus on individualism, Americans also have a second language of commitments to others. Swidler (2001, pp. 125–128) shows that because of the structural reality of marriage, the dominant American cultural view of love emphasizes a lasting, certain feeling for a special person, but she also recognizes a second cultural language that emphasizes how often love is uncertain or transitory. Indian culture emphasizes commitment to a social group, but there is also a second language that focuses on individualism (in spiritual pursuits, relationships between siblings, and physical competitions, to note a few examples) (Derné, 1995, ch. 5). This multiplicity of cultural schemas is enhanced by cultural globalization, but all cultures recognize contradictory aspects of human experience, providing multiple cultural resources that individuals can draw on in times of change. Globalization shows how structures can be transposable. With economic liberalization, jobs based on global economies and cosmopolitan consumer marketplaces were transposed to India. Responding to these structural changes, many affluent Indians embraced alternative cultural ideas—which were enhanced by globalization, even if some already existed within Indian culture. It appears, then, that given cultural multiplicity, transposed structures are an engine of social change.

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