

VALUES SUBDUCTION: A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE
HYDERABAD INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SECTOR AS
“THIRD SPACE”

A Dissertation
Submitted to
the Temple University Graduate Board

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Human Resource Management

by
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August 2013

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ABSTRACT

Increasingly, there are organizations, industries, and cities worldwide where the “first” and “third” worlds meet in terms of culture, commerce, and politics. Although researchers agree there are significant socio-cultural implications associated with living and working in these dynamic spaces, there is considerable debate about the nature of these implications. Emerging as an example of an industry operating outside traditional parameters of space, time, and culture, the Indian Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry employs Indians to service the needs of clients and customers from around the world without ever having to leave India. Often heralded (or sometimes demonized) as vanguards of an idealized (i.e. Westernizing) Indian middle class, the identities of call center workers are often extrapolated from the goods they consume, and employment in the global workforce is equated with ascension into the global consumer class (Saraswati, 2008). In reality, the deeper socio-cultural implications of working in the Indian BPO industry are as unclear--both conceptually and empirically--as they are contested.

In this research, I contribute to our understanding of these issues by examining the ways in which call center work influenced the values and behaviors of my respondents from their unique points of view. Within the empirical domain, I present a critical ethnographic analysis of fieldwork I conducted in “DomesTech”—an Indian-owned, hybrid-focused BPO organization in Hyderabad, India. Calling upon postcolonial theory and the Bhabhaian perspective of “Third Space” as conceptual and analytical guides and focusing on the values of family, materialism, and ecological orientation, my research

shows that call center workers do not fit neatly into the aspirational mold often attributed to them. I also argue that the sociocultural implications of contemporary call center work are not sufficiently conceptualized by existing theoretical frameworks. Hoping to contribute to our theoretical understanding of these issues, I engage in a grounded theory approach to data analysis and call upon the geological process of subduction as interpretive metaphor to develop a refined conceptualization of contemporary culture change.

DEDICATION

For my family...especially Minor and Clare, for being the sweetest reminders of why I was working on this project; for Nancy, without whom this would not be; and for my son, Rumsey Klauder Dunsmore Hall.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Lynne Andersson, as well as my committee members, Dr. Lisa Calvano, Dr. John Deckop, and Terry Halbert, for their continuous help and support in the process of writing this dissertation.

I would also like to thank Temple University's Center for International Business Education and Research (CIBER) for their financial support and facilitation of this research.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	ii
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES	x
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
The Indian BPO Industry	2
Chapter Organization	7
2. THE INDIAN BPO INDUSTRY: HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT	8
Empire	10
Colonial Rule and the Rise of English Language in India	12
Post-colonial India: Attempts to Gain Economic Independence	15
Liberalization and Modernization	18
India's IT-ITES-BPO Sector	19
Hyderabad	23
DomesTech	26
3. THEORIES OF CULTURAL GLOBALIZATION	29
Cultural Divergence	30
Cultural Convergence	33

Hybridity	37
Glocalization	39
Creolization.....	41
Bhabhian Perspective	43
Theoretical Approach.....	51
4. METHODOLOGIES	53
Qualitative Research	54
The Critical Paradigm	56
Critical Ontology.....	59
Critical Epistemology	60
Collection of Empirical Materials.....	65
Critical Ethnography	65
Participant Observation	68
Interviews.....	71
Artifacts and Documents	78
Analysis of Empirical Materials	79
Content Analysis	80
Grounded Theory	82
5. INTERPRETIVE ANALYSIS: FAMILY VALUES	86
The Indian Family	88
Familial Obligation.....	94
Hybridizing Individualism	96
Hybridizing Individualism and Marriage	99

Family and the Choice to Remain in India	102
6. CONSUMER CULTURE AND MATERIAL VALUES	105
Consumer Culture and Material Values in the Indian Context	106
Consumer Culture, Material Values, and the Family	109
Materialism and Brand Value	110
Credit Cards and Savings.....	114
The Value of Customer Service	121
The Adoption of Customer Service as a Social Value	121
DomesTech’s Customer Service Requirements	123
7. ECOLOGICAL VALUES	130
Urbanization.....	131
Traffic and Air Pollution.....	137
8. DISCUSSION.....	146
DomesTech as “Third Space”	147
Grounded Theory Development of the Subduction Metaphor.....	148
The Density of Family Values	151
Colliding Values: Family and Individualism	153
Colliding Values: Family and Materialism.....	154
Shifting Values and New Cultural Formations: Customer Service Orientation	157
Shifting Values: Ecological Orientation.....	159
9. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS	164
Limitations of the Subduction Metaphor.....	167

Implications for Future Research	169
BIBLIOGRAPHY	171

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
4.1 Interview Respondent Demographics	74

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In little more than three decades, the technical, economic, political, and social phenomena that compose contemporary globalization have spread throughout the world at an unprecedented pace and with unprecedented influence (de Sousa Santos, 2006). Continuing advancements in Internet Technologies (IT) have penetrated the most remote corners of the globe (Naim, 2009). Capitalism has expanded from a largely developed nation phenomenon into the world's dominant economic system, facilitating a global free-flow of capital and commodities (Chossudovsky, 1997; Kasser, Cohn, Kanner & Ryan, 2007; Levy, 2008). Inseparable from this global spread of markets, the reach and power of multinational corporations (MNCs) have grown to historic levels.

As a result of these combined drivers of globalization, there are an increasing number of organizations, industries, and cities worldwide where the “first” and “third” worlds meet in terms of culture, commerce, and politics (Bauman, 2001; Gulson & Pedroni, 2011). Although researchers agree there are significant socio-cultural implications associated with living and working in these dynamic spaces, there is considerable debate about the nature of these implications (D’Mello, 2005). Of particular interest to me in this research is the contested study of cultural globalization or the nature and degrees to which cultures are converging, diverging, or hybridizing as a result of contemporary globalization. Although many researchers have contributed to what is now an expansive body of work related to the topic of cultural globalization, there is still considerable work to be done. Much of the existing literature is heavily weighted with

abstract theoretical speculations and conventional positivist approaches. There are surprisingly few ethnographic examinations documenting the experiences and perspectives of the individuals living in these “globalizing” spaces (Hannerz, 2010). Moreover, the dynamic, interactive, and interdependent relationships among culture and globalization require continual reevaluation and refinement of our approaches to examining these issues. Ongoing changes in our globalizing world demand the ongoing attention of researchers.

Given the bent towards conventional positivist research and the need to refine continually our understanding of contemporary cultural globalization, critical qualitative approaches have the potential to provide relevant and novel insights into the contested and fluid conditions of cultural globalization. In this research I contribute to the building of this scholarship by engaging in a critical ethnographic examination of cultural globalization as experienced and interpreted by individuals working in one of these dynamic spaces of globalization--the Indian Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry.

The Indian BPO Industry

Over the past two decades, the Indian BPO industry has emerged as an example of an industry operating outside traditional parameters of space, time, and culture. Facilitated by internet technologies and largely informed by Western business practices (Nadeem, 2011), this industry employs domestically-based Indians to service virtually the needs of clients and customers from around the world. As a result, BPO employees shift back and forth between their local Indian contexts and the globally informed

environments and requirements of their workplaces on a near daily basis. Given these unique characteristics and the rapid rise of this industry, the Indian BPO sector has attracted a considerable amount of interest from government, research, and media groups (Ravishankar, Pan, & Myers, 2006). Within the socio-cultural domain, researchers and the popular press have found fertile ground in speculating about the relationships between industry practices like assigning Indian call center workers with Western pseudonyms, exposing them to a pre-packaged version of Western culture, and the ways in which they spend their above average salaries (Beckett, 2011). Unfortunately, little of this research actually focuses on the experiences or meanings held by the individuals who work in this industry (D'Mello, 2005; Ravishankar, Cohen, & El-Sawad, 2010). Instead, their identities tend to be extrapolated from the goods they consume and employment in this global industry is often equated with ascension into the global consumer class (Beckett, 2011; Saraswati, 2008).

The widespread reach of these conventional examinations has given rise to an over-simplistic conceptualization of the Indian BPO workforce as a homogenous body of young, well-educated, English-speaking Indians working overnight shifts and spending their free time and significant surplus incomes shopping and partying (e.g., Nadeem, 2011; Pal & Buzzanell, 2008). In a more extreme manifestation, this narrative has contributed to a fear-based understanding in which many in the West see all Indian BPO workers as aspiring for the “American way of life” and “stealing” American jobs in the process (e.g., Vietor & Thompson, 2008, p. 10).

I do not wish to suggest that the existing literature related to the Indian BPO industry is invalid or to deny the significant contributions of many of these research endeavors. What I do argue is that our understanding of the Indian BPO industry is incomplete. There are far more references to quantitative data like salary, number of goods consumed, and sizes of consumer markets than there are ethnographic examinations of the experiences and meanings held by the individuals we seek to understand (Van Wessel, 2004). Although these quantitative data suggest compelling general relationships, the deeper socio-cultural implications of working in the Indian BPO industry are as unclear--both conceptually and empirically--as they are contested.

If we take a macro-view of the evolving Indian BPO industry, the gaps in our understanding become even more apparent. For understandable reasons, much of the world's attention has been focused on India's hives of global activity that have grown in both power and notoriety over the past two decades. As a result, most of what we know of this industry and its growing workforce comes from examinations of export-oriented organizations (i.e. international call centers) located within state-of-the-art technology parks like Electronics City in Bangalore and HITEC City in Hyderabad (Abbott, Zheng, Du, & Willcocks, 2012).

In contrast to the stereotypical view, Indian BPO is a diverse, multifaceted, and evolving industry that resists broad categorizations. Call centers differ in their target audiences and processes. As a result, the realities and implications of call center work vary considerably from center to center (Kauffman & Kumar, 2008). For example, some

organizations focus entirely on Western clients and customers¹, while others engage in a variety of functions for both domestic and international patrons. Although this industry was initially fueled by the demands of Western customers and clients, contemporary growth is driven increasingly by demand from non-Western markets, including India's own domestic market. India's National Association of Software and Services Company (NASSCOM) predicts that over the next decade, 80% of growth in India's IT enabled industries will come from new sectors and regions (Nandakumar, 2012). To meet the growing demands of non-Western clients, the BPO industry is increasingly hiring individuals with different skills and backgrounds than those typically employed by purely export-oriented organizations and is expanding into neighborhoods and towns that are largely removed from India's global grid. As a result, India's BPO workforce is becoming increasingly diverse in terms of demographics, socioeconomics, skills, and professional experiences--all of which inform the socio-cultural implications of call center work but have not yet been sufficiently considered (Murphy, 2011).

Against this background, my research attempts to deepen our understanding of the complicated socio-cultural implications of working within the dynamic Indian BPO industry. I do so by examining the lived-experiences and unique perspectives of individuals situated within it. My research is focused on a central question: How does working in the contemporary Indian BPO industry affect the values of the individuals working within it?

¹ Client refers to the organizational customer of the BPO industry. Customer refers to the individual patrons of the client organization.

The contributions of my research are both empirical and conceptual. Within the empirical domain, I present a critical ethnographic analysis of fieldwork I conducted in 2008 in “DomesTech²”--a domestically-owned, hybrid-focused BPO organization in Hyderabad, India. Located outside of the perimeter of HITEC city--Hyderabad’s world class global technology park and the epicenter of the city’s global activity--Domestech’s employees come from diverse backgrounds and skill levels and experience various realities and degrees of global integration depending upon the domestic or international focus of their position. These unique features allow me to provide a novel look into a fast-growing but largely unexamined sector of this industry and to engage in much needed comparative research into the socio-cultural implications of living and working in situations that “vary from high to low intercultural engagement” (Berry, 2008, p. 336).

Calling upon postcolonial theory and the Bhabhaian perspective of “Third Space” as conceptual and analytical guides, I examine the ways in which call center work influenced the values and behaviors of my respondent from their unique points of view. Focusing on the values of family, materialism, and ecological orientation, my research shows that the employees of DomesTech do not fit neatly into the aspirational mold commonly attributed to Indian call center workers, nor are their experiences fully explained by contemporary postcolonial approaches.

In the conceptual realm, I use my empirical data to argue that existing theoretical frameworks do not fully conceptualize the socio-cultural implications of working in the diverse and changing Indian call center industry. I hope to contribute to our theoretical

² In keeping with standard ethnographic practices, “DomesTech” is a fictitious name used to protect the privacy of the organization in which I conducted my research.

understanding of these issues by engaging in a grounded theory approach to data analysis and calling upon the geological process of subduction as interpretive metaphor to develop a refined conceptualization of contemporary culture change.

Chapter Organization

In Chapter Two, I present the Indian BPO industry, the city of Hyderabad, and DomesTech within the historic contexts of colonial, postcolonial, and post-liberal India. In Chapter three, I discuss the various interpretive frameworks informing my study. Within this chapter I pay particular attention to the theoretical positions of cultural convergence, divergence, and hybridity, and to the Bhabbian notion of “Third Space”. In Chapter Four, I present my research design and provide justification for my use of multiple methods of data collection and analysis by discussing qualitative research, critical theory, ethnography, and grounded theory. In Chapters Five, Six, and Seven I present my findings in an interpretive narrative of my fieldwork. In Chapter Eight, I discuss my findings and explain how the subduction metaphor extends contemporary postcolonial theory by presenting a novel framework of cultural negotiation and hybridization. Finally, in Chapter Nine, I conclude with the scholarly and practical implications of my research.

CHAPTER TWO

THE INDIAN BPO INDUSTRY: HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT

Although the rise of the contemporary Indian BPO industry is explained largely by policy changes enacted with India's late 20th century economic liberalization, the roots of this industry extend much further back historically. For example, recent changes in India's labor laws and increased foreign direct investment have facilitated the growth of Indian BPO, but India's large English speaking population, which is a direct result of centuries of British occupation, has been elemental to its rise. Given the importance of these colonial roots, most critical examinations of the Indian BPO industry call upon postcolonial frameworks to examine and explain its rise and success. To understand the contemporary Indian BPO industry and the socio-cultural implications of working within it, as well as to ground my dissertation within the context of other critical research into this topic, I begin this chapter with an examination of the historical factors that informed the development of the contemporary Indian BPO industry. In this chapter I provide this historical grounding by examining India and its rising BPO industry within three major eras of Indian history—"Empire", "Post-Colonial India", and "Liberalization and Modernization".

In the first section, I discuss India's history of colonization, paying attention particularly to India's time as a British Crown Colony and examining how the colonial strategy of domination through conceptual devaluation led to the rise and privileged nature of the English language in India. In section two, I discuss post-colonial India and

the social, political, and economic events that led up to economic liberalization in 1991. In section three, I examine India's contemporary era of liberalization and modernization. Finally, I relate the rise of the Indian BPO sector and the associated rise of the city of Hyderabad as dynamic zones of global and local realities. I also introduce DomesTech, the organization in which I conducted my fieldwork.

However, before I move forward with these examinations, I feel it necessary to clarify my approach and intentions in writing this chapter by stating that I do not intend for these pages to be read as essentializing or complete discussions of India or the Indian BPO industry—past, present, or future. The attempt to identify and historically locate the states and traits of any society is a complex undertaking that can never truly be completed in entirety—particularly in a single research endeavor such as this. It is a subjective process characterized by multiple, often conflicting, insights, interpretations, and conclusions (Ramanathan, 2005).

Inevitably, readers of historical narratives such as the one I present in this chapter are apt to bring their unique perspectives and to question the choices and conclusions of the author by citing various sins of omission and commission. These issues are particularly poignant in my attempt as a non-native to examine a society as complex as India's. Recognizing these concerns, I approach this chapter guided by the wisdom of Indian politician and activist Shashi Tharoor (2004) who says of this issue “any truism about India can be immediately contradicted by another truism about India. It is often jokingly said that anything you can say about India, the opposite is also true” (p.3). My hope is that through this chapter and the entirety of my research I will contribute my own

version of the truth that fairly and accurately represents the experiences of my respondents. Therefore, the following discussions are based on the topics I have identified as most important to my examination and are informed by the relevant literature as well as my own personal experiences and perceptions of India.

Empire (c. 200 B.C.-1947)

From roughly 200 B.C. until India's independence from British rule in 1947, various foreign regimes ruled over much of the region (Von Tunzelman, 2007). Although the British Empire was the last in a long line of powerful and influential colonizers, the contemporary manifestations of this relatively recent period of Indian history are particularly salient for understanding the rise of the BPO industry in India. In the following paragraphs, I discuss the history and implications of Britain's imperial tenure (c. 1600-1947) as they relate to my research into the Indian BPO industry.

The British occupation of India was seeded in the early 17th century through the trade activities of the British East India Company (EIC). Although the trade relationship between the EIC and India began relatively amicably, the consensual nature of this relationship dissolved as the EIC used its growing political and military might to capitalize on political instabilities in 17th century India (Rangila, Thirumalai & Mallikarjun, 2001). What began as a diplomatically agreed upon and mutually beneficial trade relationships quickly evolved into militarily enforced transactions that significantly advantaged the EIC, England, and its European allies, at the expense of Indian stability and sovereignty (Bayly, 1985).

Although economic gain was the primary driving force of Western European imperialism, colonizing nations attempted to disguise their exploitative intentions and validate their occupations through moral and philosophical justifications (Hohenthal, 2003). The resultant narratives transformed imposed rule and pillaging of autonomous societies into enlightened patronage gifted to hopelessly backwards civilizations. Prior to British colonization, the work of Indian craftsmen was prized and demanded throughout the world. Indian culture--although commonly seen by Europeans as exotic or curious—was nevertheless tolerated and often admired. India’s historic accomplishments in language, science, architecture, and art were acknowledged and respected (Washbrook, 2004). As the EIC’s control over India grew, this tolerant framework was replaced with a devaluing narrative in which Indians were conceptualized as ignorant and backward subjects incapable of governing themselves (Hohenthal, 2003). Eventually, the EIC’s rule of India was dissolved through the Government of India Act of 1858. All of the Company’s powers of administration in India were transferred to the British Crown and Parliament officially beginning the era of the British Raj. By the time the British government assumed control of the subcontinent, the reconceptualization of Indians from worthy trade partners and brilliant craftsmen to ignorant subjects in need of enlightened rule had become entrenched throughout most of the British psyche (Guha, 2011). This narrative provided self-legitimization and moral justification for the Crown’s continued occupation of India. It also informed the attempt to transform the Indian population into an educated and enlightened citizenry of English speakers whose loyalty was to the Crown.

Colonial Rule and the Rise of English Language in India

Beginning in the 17th century, the EIC offered relatively high paying jobs to Indians fluent in English (Joshi, 2002). These economic opportunities led to what quickly became an elite and self-perpetuating class of Indian English speakers who were closely aligned with the EIC (Hohenthal, 2003). The privileged economic and political power of this class continued to strengthen throughout the Raj as British administrators sought to cultivate a class of cultured Indians who could be trusted to serve as intermediaries between the Crown and the general populace of India (Viswanathan, 1998). One of the primary ways the crown went about cultivating this class was to provide intensive education in English language and literature to the sons of India's elite (Joshi, 2002). Upon completing their schooling and gaining a mastery of English, these advantaged young men were given preferential selection for high-paying and secure jobs in public service that allowed them to perpetuate a closed cycle of privilege by educating their children in English language and literature (Copland, 2007).

Although its reference is criticized by some as overused (e.g., Joshi, 2002) and its actual influence on British educational policy and eventual outcomes is debated (e.g., Graddol, 2009), Lord Thomas Macaulay's 1835 "Minute on Indian Education" has become an iconic illustration of the ideologies influencing British educational policy in colonial India. Presented to the Committee of Public Instruction in India, the contents of Macaulay's "Minute" provide insight into the Orientalist mindset of British administrators and shed light on the privileged nature of English language in colonial and contemporary India.

Macaulay was a law officer to the British Supreme Council, and like most of his British colleagues, he believed that the Indian people were incapable of self-rule. Although he argued that a representative government, such as Britain's Parliament, was the most noble and enlightened system of governance, he concluded that this political philosophy was far too evolved and thus impractical for the uncivilized masses of India. At the same time, Macaulay recognized that England's rule over India could not be sustained through military force alone. He argued that the Crown's long-term success depended upon gaining the loyalty of the Indian population. To these ends, Macaulay advocated for educational legislation designed to cultivate loyalty by colonizing the hearts and minds of Indians with the forces of British literature.

Macaulay's push to educate Indians in British literature was informed by his belief that the accomplishments of British authors' were far superior to the accomplishments of those belonging to any other civilization throughout history. Macaulay argued that exposure to this enlightened body of work would inevitably lead Indians to recognize the inferiority of their culture and that loyalty to the Crown would be assured as these enlightened Indians eagerly adopted the superior culture of their British rulers (Guha, 2011; Joshi, 2002).

The logistics of implementing Macaulay's plan to civilize the Indian subcontinent were complicated by the monumental administrative and budgetary challenges associated with educating such a large and diverse population. Recognizing these difficulties, Macaulay pushed for the creation of a "noble class" of cultured Indians who were "Indian

in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect.³” This noble class would then take up the work of civilizing the rest of the population in the image of the enlightened British rulers. The obvious candidates for the new Indian nobility were the elite member of the closed cycle of privilege dating back to the 17th century EIC.

By the early to mid-20th century, these colonial language policies successfully cultivated a sizeable population of elite English speakers and established English as the language of administration, commerce, education, and law in India (Dissanayak, 1986). However, the goal of an English-speaking, English-thinking India was never fully realized (Copland, 2007). In 1947, before the sub-continent could be completely “civilized”, India won its independence from Great Britain.

As a newly sovereign nation, India entered into a phase of drastic economic, social, and political reformation that resulted in decades of socialist-style economic policies. Although India was never transformed fully into an English speaking nation, the British Raj left a substantial legacy of English language in India, which was essential to the rise of the Indian BPO industry (Nadeem, 2011). Today English is India’s second official language, as well as the primary language of many of individuals, in particular those from the upper classes.

³ Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay’s “Minute of 2 February 1835 on Indian Education”.

Post-Colonial India:
Attempts to Gain Economic Independence
(1947-1991)

The first central government of independent India (1947-1977) was led by the Indian National Congress (INC)—a political party at the forefront of the fight for Independence. The head of the INC, Jawaharlal Nehru, was appointed the first Prime Minister of Independent India. In establishing the country's first post-colonial political economy, the INC sought to maintain independence, grow the Indian economy, eliminate class disparities, and alleviate poverty (Ciorciari, 2011). To these ends, the economic policies of the freely elected government were informed by the collectivist goals of Soviet-style socialism and inspired by the Gandhian philosophies of spirituality, austerity, and nationalism (Frankel, 1978).

Wary of the voids he attributed to Western capitalism, Nehru envisioned an enlightened political economy in which the ethical and spiritual pursuits of Indian citizens were as essential as the economic growth of the country. Although an internally-fueled expansion of the Indian economy was a primary objective (Tharoor, 2004), Nehru did not consider economic growth a sufficient goal in and of itself (Frankel, 1978). Economic expansion was seen as the means by which India could secure its independence, alleviate class disparities and poverty, and gain spiritual enlightenment. Accordingly, Nehru and the INC espoused secular and egalitarian ideologies in enacting economic and social policies intended to improve the lives of all Indians (Frankel, 1978). What ensued was four decades of semi-socialist autarkic economic policies in which

India sought self-sufficiency and economic autonomy (Mukherji, 2002; Panagariya, 2004).

Based on the Soviet system, India adopted five-year economic models that focused largely on import-substituting industrialization and economic self-sufficiency (Mukherji, 2002). State ownership replaced private ownership in many industries (Frankel, 1978). Industries remaining in the private sector were heavily regulated and subject to the inefficiencies and escalating corruption of the newly established licensing bureaucracies. Protectionist economic policies heavily subsidized public industry and severely limited investment and competition, while high import tariffs and trade barriers halted much of India's global trade (Panagariya, 2004).

During the decades in which it isolated itself from the global economy and closed itself off from foreign investment, India became one of the poorest nations in the world. The term "Hindu Rate of Growth" was coined to describe India's 3.5 percent average rate of economic growth between 1950-1980 (Meera, 2013). Per capita income grew less than 2 percent annually, which was less than half that of the rest of the developing world—including that of sub-Saharan Africa (Mukherji, 2002). Much of the population remained in poverty and depended upon subsistence agriculture (Frankel, 1978). The economic and social challenges of this period were compounded by explosive population growth and severe food shortages. By the end of the 1980's, India faced supporting the world's largest population with an economy that was only one-third the size of Italy's (Ciorciari, 2011).

As the Indian economy stagnated and the population expanded, the government bureaucracy grew to immense and complicated sizes making India the most regulated and bureaucratized of the non-communist countries (Mukherji, 2002). Inefficient domestic organizations and entire industries were protected from competition leaving consumers with limited choices and inferior goods. Rather than redistributing wealth throughout society, the License Raj imposed a corrupt and inefficient system of permissions. Eventually, most Indians had to pay *Baksheesh* or bribes to government official to complete even simple daily tasks like paying an electric bill (Khanna, 2007). Tharoor (2004) describes the post-colonial era as the age of the Indian bureaucrat who's most notable accomplishments were regulating stagnation and distributing poverty.

As its post-colonial economy faltered, the government was forced to borrow continually from domestic and international sources. Eventually, India resorted to borrowing from foreign countries to stimulate its economy, leaving it vulnerable to global externalities. In 1991, rising global oil prices associated with the Gulf War caused a balance-of-payment crisis and brought India to the brink of defaulting on its foreign debt obligations (Mukherji, 2002). Faced with the disastrous consequences of defaulting, India was forced to appeal the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for financial assistance. To qualify for IMF aid, India had to concede to drastic economic reforms, officially ending India's first post-colonial period and beginning the current era of liberalization, modernization, and globalization. With an established population of highly-educated, English-speaking Indians willing to work for low wages and drastic economic reforms, the foundation for the Indian ITES-BPO industry was laid.

Liberalization and Modernization (1991-Present)

Although India had been slowly dismantling aspects of its socialist-style economy since the 1970's, its engagement with the IMF marked the beginning of a major initiative to liberalize and open its economy to the rest of the world. In the two decades since liberalization, many sectors of the Indian economy have undergone a dramatic transformation from autarky to free-trade (Panagariya, 2004). Global trade activities and foreign direct investment (FDI) have increased significantly, and the License Raj largely disappeared as regulations diminished and public resources and industries privatized (Panagariya, 2002).

Since 2002, India's total economic growth has averaged 8.5 percent--second only to China's and putting the country on track to become the world's third largest economy by 2035 (Beckett, 2011). Compared to the sheltered environment of pre-liberal India, the "new" post-liberal India is replete with intense international competition and private development. In just two decades, many Indian locales have transformed from provincial centers of business and government to top-tier international cities characterized by intensive global and local activity. These developments have been associated with significant social changes. Aggregate statistics suggest that over the past 20 years per capita GDP, literacy rates, life expectancies, and consumer demands have all grown while poverty and population growth rates have declined (e.g., Das, 2006; Shaw & Satish, 2007). The rise of the "new" Indian economy has been led, in large part, by

India's Internet Technology and Internet Technology Enabled-Business Process Outsourcing (IT-ITES-BPO) sector (Ravishankar, Cohen, & El-Sawad, 2010).

India's IT-ITES-BPO Sector

Organizations within the Indian IT-ITES-BPO sector are involved with a vast array of activities ranging from state-of-the-art software research and development (IT) to the more familiar ITES-BPO services, in which an Indian organization is contracted to fulfill various processes or functions of another organization (e.g., data entry, customer service, emails, payroll processing). Since liberalization, the IT-ITES-BPO sector has evolved from a primarily low-cost provider of basic back-office services to large Western corporations into a global frontrunner in software research and development, as well as technology-enabled services, with a global clientele base worth hundreds of billions of dollars and more employees than any other industry within India's formal economy⁴ (Beckett, 2011).

The contemporary Indian IT-ITES-BPO sector is built upon a foundation of low-cost technology contracts between large Western corporations and smaller domestic Indian companies which began in the 1980's. These early relationships typically involved the "bodyshopping" of low-wage, "high-skill"⁵ Indian software engineers to U.S. organizations for an extended period of time (Kauffman & Kumar, 2008). By sponsoring Indian engineers for temporary work visas, U.S. companies were able to

⁴ Despite the significant impact of these new industries, they account for only about nine per cent of all Indian employment. The majority of Indians still work in low-wage, low-skill manufacturing jobs or earn their livings in India's vast informal economy (Panagariya, 2004).

⁵ College-educated, English-speaking.

contract qualified workers for a fraction of the costs required to hire full-time Western professionals with equivalent skills.

In the 1990's, advancements in Internet technologies revolutionized the Indian software industry by enabling highly qualified engineers to meet the needs of their Western clients without having to leave India and with considerably lower costs. These new Internet-enabled services (ITES) provided Western clients with even greater cost savings and increased the profitability of the Indian software industry. In addition to the savings gained through cost and labor arbitrage, the time differences between India and the West allowed Western organizations a cost-effective way to operate twenty-four-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week (Kapur & Ramamurti, 2001).

The ITES sector quickly expanded as organizations outside of the software industry sought to emulate these early successes by offering global clients an increasing array of cheap services from Indian locations. Within this period, the BPO⁶ industry experienced particularly rapid growth, initiating the global trend of offshore outsourcing service work to India. Throughout the 1990's and early 2000's Western corporations rushed to jump on the Indian outsourcing bandwagon, and many MNCs established captive locations in India to maximize the economic value they could capture from Indian employees.

In the initial years of the Indian BPO industry, Western organizations only transferred simple back-office processes (e.g., data entry, basic software coding) to

⁶ Because my research is focused on the Indian BPO industry, for the duration of this paper I will refer primarily to the "BPO" industry with the understanding that many of my conversations also apply to the entire Indian IT-ITES-BPO sector.

Indian locations (Kauffman & Kumar, 2008). Over the past two decades, the volume, value, and sophistication of international BPO contracts have grown as Indian companies availed themselves of continuing advancements in Internet technologies and their employees proved able to meet the increasing service needs of the international clientele base (Kapur & Ramamurti, 2001). Today, India is the top destination for offshore contracting, and most fortune 500 companies send critical components of their business operations to India (e.g., customer service) (Saeed, 2009). However, despite the historic growth in the relationships between Western organizations and the Indian BPO industry, the majority of expansion in the contemporary BPO industry now comes from India's growing domestic market (NASSCOM, 2009).

In addition to factors of technology and low-cost skilled labor, the rise of the Indian BPO industry was facilitated by significant government intervention (Ghemawat & Altman, 2011; Kennedy, 2007). Seeking to incubate the growing industry, attract more FDI, and encourage more MNCs to establish Indian locations, the government engaged in aggressive "business friendly" initiatives at the local, state, and federal levels (Ramamurti, 2001). Among the most significant of these efforts, the federal and state governments were directly involved with the building of several state-of-the-art technology parks in select Indian cities. In addition to gaining access to subsidized world-class infrastructure and amenities, private organizations were incentivized to locate within these parks with considerable perks (e.g., free water and electricity) (Kapur & Ramamurti, 2001; Kennedy, 2007). Moreover, because most of these parks are located within Special Economic Zones (SEZ) designated as foreign territories for trade

purposes, organizations locating within their boundaries were sheltered from most Indian taxation and regulatory laws (Alfaro & Iyer, 2009). For example, the “white collar” work in which most BPO employees engage is generally excluded from traditional Indian labor laws and historically strong union influences (Panagariya, 2007; Poster, 2007; Som, 2006).

Although many in the international community embrace these “business friendly” initiatives as exemplary examples of liberalization and modernization, the role of the government in the rise of the Indian BPO industry has also generated significant criticism and controversy. Winston (2002) argues that these efforts amount to the Indian government ceding its regulatory responsibilities to protect social and environmental systems and triggered a global “race to the bottom” in which powerful MNCs maximize profit by forcing governments to compete for business via low wages and reduced regulatory influence.

Many also argue that the preferential treatment given to the Indian BPO sector is unfairly disproportionate to its relevant contributions to Indian employment (e.g., NCUES, 2009) and that the massive government funds and public resources funneled into this wealthy and powerful industry come at the expense of economically or socially disadvantaged groups (Kennedy, 2007). Saraswati (2008) points out the inconsistencies in the government’s reform efforts which have been executed in the name of “liberalization” and “free markets” while simultaneously intervening and providing deep subsidies to this powerful industry. The development of economic zones of privilege has

also been met with resistance from many local communities who protest the taking of private land at non-market prices (Alfaro & Iyer, 2009).

Madon (1997) compared the growth and change of cities in which the new technology parks are located to the rest of India and concluded that the most significant aspect of this industry is the unevenness of its growth. Although India is now home to 47 technology parks (Chacko, 2007), the bulk of growth in India's tech sector has been concentrated in five major cities which have been transformed into hubs of intensive global and local activity. Hyderabad, the city in which I conducted my fieldwork, is home to one of the largest of the government sponsored technology parks and fastest growing BPO industries in the country (Ghemawat & Altman, 2011). As a result of the growth of the Hyderabad BPO industry, the city has undergone massive changes in a short period of time.

Hyderabad

Hyderabad, the capital city of the central Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, is home to the fourth largest center of Indian BPO activity. The explosive growth of Hyderabad's BPO industry has been facilitated by considerable assistance from a state government committed to transforming the city into a world class "business friendly" destination (Kennedy, 2007). Organizations are incentivized to locate in Hyderabad with considerable subsidies and regulatory exemptions. For example, the Hyderabad BPO industry is designated as an "essential services" industry allowing organizations to operate 24 hours a day/7 days a week/ 365 days a year (Kennedy, 2007, p.99). Local

wage rates and real estate costs are lower than in most other Indian metros and the city is home to an extensive base of educational institutions—ranging from small English language training institutes to world-class universities and research institutions (Chacko, 2007).

Prior to the development of its BPO sector, Hyderabad was a semi-urban city largely unknown to the world. Kamat (2011) writes that in the days before its IT-fueled buildup, Hyderabad was at best a “ramshackle” (p.187) domestic tourist destination. Today Hyderabad is India’s 6th largest city with a metropolitan population of about eight million people and is increasingly recognized as an international business destination. Most multinational IT organizations have an affiliation or subsidiary in Hyderabad (Kripalani, 2009)--the majority of which are concentrated in the city’s state-of-the-art technology park known as “HITEC City” (Hyderabad Information Technology Engineering Consultancy City).

Contemporary Hyderabad and HITEC City are often embraced as the poster children of Indian globalization and modernization. Any discussion of Hyderabad’s tech sector is incomplete without relating it to the city’s growing possession of the essential global accessories (e.g., upscale housing, expensive restaurants, high-end boutiques, international hotels). Hyderabad was listed as number nineteen in a recent *New York Times* list of the “41 Place to Go” (Williams, 2011). The article associates the outsourcing boom with the rise of Western luxuries and implies that these amenities now make it feasible for Westerners to visit and see the charms of “old” Hyderabad. The city is also attracting significant attention from the academic community as researchers from

around the world seek to understand the relationships between globalization and the changes taking place in Hyderabad (Kamat, 2011).

Unfortunately, the majority of these examinations take place within the context of HITEC city and its surrounding areas. While the stories of “new” Hyderabad and HITEC city are important to tell, a narrow focus on these aspects provides an incomplete depiction of the place and gives unwarranted support for the narrative of globalization as homogenization. In reality, contemporary Hyderabad is a city characterized by processes of contrast and change, old and new, Indian and international, and everything in-between. The large ultra-modern campus of HITEC City--which is modeled after foreign equivalents (e.g., Research Triangle Park in North Carolina) (Kennedy, 2007)--is located on the periphery of Hyderabad and stands in varying degree of contrast to much of the rest of the city and its surrounding communities. While HITEC city depends on a seamless connection to the world, other neighborhoods in Hyderabad are completely disconnected—both socially and technologically--and remain largely absent from the rhetoric of globalizing Hyderabad, while still others exist in various states between these two poles (Kamat, 2011).

Rapid economic development and urbanization have altered dramatically the landscape and character of Hyderabad. To accommodate the new demands of internationalization, the city is in a constant state of construction and development. Standing near HITEC City, on what are now the outer limits of the city, one can literally see the city expanding and changing. At night, the thousands of lights affixed to the working construction cranes are easily mistaken for mini-cities of occupied high-rise

building developments. Shiny new cars compete with the ox-drawn carts or herds of buffalo which use the roads with as much privilege as motor vehicles.

Deteriorating slums, often homes to transient construction workers and their families, are juxtaposed against the posh high-rise residential and commercial complexes they've been hired to build. In short, the build-up of Hyderabad's IT-ITES-BPO industry has transformed Hyderabad into a mix of global and local realities. However, much of what we understand about contemporary Hyderabad is informed from research that is primarily located within multinational corporations of HITEC city. As a result, global audiences are left with an incomplete understanding of Hyderabad as a city that has essentially stepped from its traditional past into a homogenized version of modernity. In reality, the forces of globalization have catalyzed a complex array of reactions in the city and its citizens. Given the relative dearth of research into the actualities of globalization in the various spaces that exist between the poles of "new" and "old" Hyderabad, the unique characteristics of DomesTech, as a domestically-owned, hybrid-focused call center located away from Hyderabad's global hives of activity, allowed me to gain novel insights into one of these spaces and the people who live and work within it.

DomesTech

Founded in 2004, DomesTech is a wholly-owned subsidiary of one of India's largest multinational conglomerates. At the time of my study, DomesTech had over 5,000 employees located in three Indian facilities and two in the United States. The Hyderabad headquarters of DomesTech occupy a state-of-the-art but modest four story

office building in Begumpet--a busy commercial and residential neighborhood in the center of Hyderabad. Although only about 10 miles away from Hyderabad's HITEC City, the material and psychic distance between the two neighborhoods is vast. HITEC City and its immediate neighborhoods have modern buildings, trendy restaurants and shops, professionally landscaped grounds, and wide roads. HITEC City also hosts an international population, Western business people intermingle with Indian business people. In contrast, Begumpet's infrastructure is much older and the streets are narrower and more crowded. There is less on-going construction in Begumpet and the population is primarily composed of Indians who live or work in the area.

Most of DomesTech's employees are customer care executive (CCEs) who handle inbound and outbound customer service and technical support calls. They also engage in non-voice and back-office services for a host of international and domestic clients. CCEs vary considerably in their backgrounds and skills and experience various work realities and degrees of global integration depending upon the domestic or international focus of their position. CCEs working in the domestic Indian operations tend to work day shifts and service Indian customers in 14 regional languages. In comparison, CCEs working in the international operation work overnight shifts, assume an assigned Western name, and cater to customers calling from the United States.

DomesTech's international CCEs are paid significantly more money than their domestically focused colleagues but less than most of their contemporaries who work for the larger multinational companies in HITEC City. For example, the average entry-level salary in the Indian BPO industry is about \$4,515 per year (Nadeem, 2011). In

comparison, the average entry-level salary in DomesTech is between \$1,000 and \$1,600 per year for domestic workers and about \$2,000 per year for international agents. In addition to gaining novel insights into this largely unresearched sector of the Indian BPO industry, the varying degrees of global integration experienced by the employees of DomesTech allowed me to engage in much needed comparative research into the various socio-cultural implications of working in the Indian BPO industry.

Having set the stage by presenting the historical and contemporary contextual background for my research, I next discuss the theoretical foundations informing and guiding my research. I will resume my discussion of DomesTech and the changes taking place in Hyderabad in chapters five, six, and seven where I present the interpretive analyses of my results.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORIES OF CULTURAL GLOBALIZATION

My research is concerned with cultural globalization and the actualities of culture change in the employees of DomesTech. Although there are many conceptualizations of cultural globalization, most of these frameworks fall into three dominant theories of culture change—convergence, divergence, and hybridization (Holton, 2000). In this chapter, I examine each of these schemes of cultural globalization and discuss their contributions as well as their shortcomings in providing useful frameworks with which to examine the relationships between contemporary globalization and culture change.

I begin the chapter by discussing the theories of cultural convergence and divergence. Although most critical theorists dismiss these dichotomous notions of culture change, they remain influential concepts in both conventional research and popular conceptualizations of cultural globalization (Thompson, 1991)—e.g., Jihad vs. McWorld (Barber, 1992), the Lexus and the Olive Tree (Friedman, 1999). Therefore, I begin by critically examining these frameworks before I move on to a detailed discussion of the theory of cultural hybridity—the domain in which my research is rooted. In my discussion of cultural hybridity, I pay particular attention to Homi Bhabha’s concept of “third space” and explain how Bhabha’s ideas have influenced my research. I then summarize the strengths and weaknesses of existing theories of hybridity and discuss some of the calls for alternative conceptualizations and frameworks of contemporary cultural globalization. Finally, I relate the calls for new conceptual tools for

understanding hybridity to my decision to engage in a grounded theory approach to understanding changing values in the “third space” of DomesTech.

Cultural Divergence

The theory of cultural divergence suggests that individual cultures are persistent and remain intact and largely unchanged in the face of contemporary globalization. Explaining the durability of culture, divergence thinkers argue that culture is a definable entity characterized by an internally homogenous set of values and behaviors that are learned at an early age (e.g., Hofstede, 1984; Huntington, 1997; Newman & Nollen, 1996; Schuler & Rogovsky, 1998). According to this view, cultures resist change and persist largely intact from generation to generation because the forces of shared history, local social identification, and assimilatory pressures are stronger than the forces of globalization (McCarthy, Puffer, & Darda, 2010). Some divergence theorists suggest that cultural persistence results from the deliberate rejection of a universal global culture by distinct local cultures and cite various contemporary movements like localism, nationalism, ethnic cleansing, and terrorism as evidence of widespread rejection of global culture by distinct local cultural groups (Holton, 2000; Huntington, 1997).

One notable contribution of the theory of cultural divergence is that it gave validity to the concept of culture within schools of business. Prior to the early research of scholars like Gert Hofstede (1984), culture was of little to no importance to most international business researchers and ignored by most global managers. Although many now recognize this early research as considerably flawed, it made the importance of

culture apparent to researchers and business practitioners by establishing a clear relationship between culture and organizational performance. This work also helped to focus the attention of researchers and practitioners on the importance of culturally specific modes of thinking and behaving as valid in their own right and as influential to the success of multinational organizations (e.g., Newman & Nollen, 1996). In so doing, divergence scholars helped to complicate our understanding of globalization and forced many to acknowledge the limits of Western influence (Holton, 2000).

Despite these contributions, the theory of cultural divergence has considerable shortcomings, as has much of the research claiming empirical support of the divergence framework. Among the most widely criticized aspects of the cultural divergence literature is researcher reliance on national-level cultural profiles like Hofstede's cultural dimensions (see Hofstede, 1984) to examine and explain the ways in which cultures differ from one another. A central notion of much divergence scholarship is that despite contemporary globalization, the world can be categorized into predictable cultural profiles bounded by the borders of nation-states. However, this understanding of culture is increasingly challenged as overly general and stereotyping.

For example, within critical management studies, scholars argue that the uneven and biased nature of globalization has variable effects within individual nation-states, rendering national-level profiles too blunt an instrument in the examination of contextually-specific cultural change on the local or individual levels (Chakravorty, 2007). Postcolonial scholars criticize the biases of the Western research paradigms informing national cultural profiles and challenge their claims of accurately representing

all individuals living within the socially constructed borders of contemporary nation-states (Banerjee, 2000; Said, 2003; Willis, 2010). In response to these concerns, the national-level examination of cultural globalization is increasingly giving way to regional, organizational, and individual level inquiries that continue to problematize claims of empirical evidence for the theory of cultural divergence (Frenkel, 2008).

Critics also challenge the normative assumptions implicit in much divergence scholarship. Minkes and Foster (2011) argue that the theory of cultural divergence is often appropriated by the executive suite of the academy to engage in performative examinations designed to maximize the profits of large corporations by showing them how to work around or control cultural remnants. For example, the theory of cultural divergence informs numerous marketing studies designed to allow marketing managers to maximize brand equity in the global marketplace by tailoring their products and advertising campaigns to local tastes (e.g., Alden, Steenkamp, & Batra, 1999; Banerjee, 2008; Khare, 2011). Within the human resources literature, scholars call upon the theory of divergence to instruct Western managers how to manage cultural influences in employee behavior (e.g., Ford & Ismail, 2006). Critics of this approach argue that these “inclusive” studies have culminated in the contemporary doctrine of multiculturalism in which local values are publicly embraced as accessories to the global armor of rational practices and ideologies but which, in reality, amounts to nothing more than a politically correct way to maintain Western dominance by normatively assessing local cultures as inferior to a Western-derived global culture (Rutherford, 1990; Kraidy, 2002).

Cultural Convergence

On the opposite end of the interpretive spectrum, the theory of cultural convergence argues that the relationship between globalization and culture is homogenizing (Bird & Stevens, 2003). Whereas divergence scholars argue for the enduring nature of culture, convergence scholars propose that cultures change in response to various internal and external forces (e.g., Alden, Steenkamp & Batra, 1999). According to this view, the processes and institutions of globalization interconnect and expose people from all regions of the world to common experiences, expectations, and commodities resulting in a new global culture with which most of the world will eventually identify (Bird & Stevens, 2003; Kellner, 2002).

Traditionally, convergence theorists hypothesized that global cultural trends began primarily in the U.S. and spread outward (Ohmae, 1987). Although a number of scholars now allow for the notion that the singular global culture into which all of the world is converging is truly global in nature and origins, most predictions of cultural convergence—particularly those depicted by the popular press (Kraidy, 2002)—continue to suggest that “traditional” cultures are being replaced by a globalizing Western, or more specifically, North American culture (Feigenbaum, 2002). For example, from a structural perspective, cultural convergence is explained as a function of the spread of Western-style capital markets which demand and produce distinct structures and institutions that eventually homogenize the behaviors and beliefs of the people operating within them (e.g., Budde-Sung et al., 2009). From a communications perspective, the global spread of Western mass media, mass marketing, and mass production is homogenizing global

consumer demands resulting in a global consumer culture (e.g., Alden, Steenkamp & Batra, 1999; Belk, 1996; Wang, 2008).

The theory of cultural convergence has considerable intuitive appeal--particularly for those in the West. This easily grasped theory has prompted a widespread discussion of cultural globalization that reaches far beyond the perimeters of the academy into the government, lay, media, and practitioner communities. However, an over-reliance on this theory informs an over-simplistic understanding of culture change. The notion that cultural globalization is an inevitable and predictable process in which culture only flows in a singular direction, the outcomes of which are always cultural homogenization, allows for little to no consideration of contextual details or degrees of interaction between the local and global (Holton, 2000). An uncritical subscription to this theory leads to conclusions which are often unfounded and overly general and which tend to deny the influences of place, history, and tradition and give almost no agency to the individuals they speak for and about (Kellner, 2002; Munasinghed, 2006).

For example, Suen (2007) criticizes the conclusions of cultural homogeneity as being based largely within the realm of theory and argues that supporters seem unwilling to engage empirically the actual people they explain as being dominated or homogenized into a global culture. In most accounts of cultural convergence, both the processes *and* implications (Berry, 2008) of globalization are lumped together and often celebrated or condemned as universal and unavoidable (de Sousa Santos, 2006). In other words, the structural and economic processes of globalization are equated with cultural implications. However, as Kraidy (2005) notes, "the consequences of globalization at the cultural level

are not always determined by economics alone” (pg. 9). The spread of the market structure does not reveal the internal cultural patterns of the people living within newly liberalized economies. Similarly, Holton (2000) writes that anecdotal observations of Western-style shopping malls throughout the world do not justify the conclusion that cultures are converging into a Western consumer culture. Increased consumption levels do not reveal the values informing these behaviors. To Hannerz (2010), this is an unfortunate preoccupation with bodies that neglects the souls of individuals. Finally, most of the examinations that do claim empirical evidence of cultural homogenization rely upon the suspect notion of culture as distinct and definable at the national level, the weaknesses of which I’ve elaborated above (Minkes & Foster, 2011).

Critics also contest the implicit and explicit assumptions inherent to most convergence theorists’ predictions that weaker local cultures are being displaced by a dominant global culture comprised mostly of North American cultural genetics (Berry, 2008). Thompson (1991) implicates the idea that the rest of the world is eagerly homogenizing into a Western idealized cultural profile as a colonial notion of misinformed Western superiority. Similarly, Feigenbaum (2002) rejects the prediction that weak and passive cultures are always replaced by strong dominant cultures as improbable and oversimplistic. Although cultural globalization might have trended toward Westernization in the earlier stages of contemporary globalization when the West had more presence in the global economy and Western brands had the advantage of novelty in newly opened markets, the world and the role of Western nations in the 21st century global arena have changed considerably over the past decade. Nations once

viewed as “peripheral” now have a powerful presence in the global community (Kraidy, 2001; Willis, 2010). These developments are critical to our understanding of contemporary cultural globalization but often overlooked in exaggerated predictions of the Americanization of the world (Thompson, 1991).

In conclusion, the theories of cultural convergence and divergence have furthered our understanding of cultural globalization. However, these frameworks do not have the conceptual power required to understand the complex and fluid relationships between culture and globalization. Both theories rely on the over-simplistic notion that individual cultures are internally homogenous entities contained within neat, identifiable, and describable boundaries. Moreover, both of these theories largely deny the agency, creativity, and power of individuals in choosing and creating culture and instead conceptualize people as either carriers or assimilators of culture (Munasinghed, 2006).

Finally, the dichotomous notions of convergence and divergence almost always pit the “local” against the “global” in oversimplified contests of moral and physical strength. The outcomes of these global versus local contests often depend more upon the values of the theorist than upon actual examinations of the individuals being represented. Interested parties adopt these bi-polar notions to explain the ways in which globalization is “good” or “bad”, or if people are “for” or “against” globalization, or the ways in which people have “globalized” or “remained traditional” (e.g., Friedman, 1999). Despite the intuitive appeal and cerebral ease of each of these conclusions, they are simply not nuanced enough to reflect accurately the realities of contemporary cultural globalization nor do they allow for the contextually dependent fluxuations and contradictions inherent

to the “novel configurations of culture and everyday life” (Ittersum & Wong, 2010, p. 290). Using either notion singularly does not allow us to examine the much more likely but less predictable scenarios in which both cultural convergence and divergence are happening at the same time. In other words, the notions of convergence and divergence do not allow for the possibility that globalization is localizing and globalizing, good and bad, desired and rejected.

Many scholars (e.g., Bhabha, 1997; Schirato & Webb, 2003) have recognized the shortcomings of these dichotomous positions and have placed considerable effort into developing more sophisticated and fluid conceptualizations of cultural globalization (Kraidy, 2002; Tomlinson, 2006). These scholars have argued that intercultural contact between different cultures results in novel configurations and that culture change is more aptly characterized as “emerging” or “hybridizing” (Husted, 2003; Sobel, 2003). This nuanced view of the emergent nature of culture change is increasingly supported in the academic literature and in a growing body of empirical work and suggests that culture change is variable in response to globalization. Assimilation or persistence may occur in some instances, but neither of these outcomes is destined (Berry, 2008).

Hybridity

Cultural hybridity explains cultural globalization as a mixing or fusion of cultures resulting in hybrid cultural formations that may have properties distinct from the original cultural entities (Hutnyk, 2005). Major contemporary frameworks of cultural hybridity include Glocalization, Creolization, and the Bhabhian notion of third space. These

frameworks suggest that intercultural contact causes cultures to resist, negotiate, and transform one another into unique systems (Belk, 1999). Instead of seeing culture change as strictly linear and unidirectional from the global to the local, the theory of hybridity allows us to conceptualize the processes and outcomes of intercultural contact as multi-directional flows transformative to the interacting cultures (Kraidy, 2005). Rather than essentializing pure and persistent cultural formations and individuals as passive assimilators or carriers of culture, hybridity suggests that cultural systems exist in indeterminate states of negotiation and reconstruction and, to varying degrees, grants agency to individuals in the process of culture change (Puri, 2004; Sween, 2007).

The concept of hybridity has roots in 18th century biological notions of racial intermixing, where the term “hybrid” was primarily used to describe the offspring of European colonizers and their non-white subjects as “miscegenations” whose existence threatened to contaminate the purity of the white race (Kraidy, 2002; 2005).

Contemporary notions of cultural hybridity have moved beyond colonial-era judgments of racial intermixing to become a multidisciplinary concept describing the various processes and outcomes of fusion or mixture between cultures (Sween, 2007). Despite its versatility and popularity, its colonial history and conceptual ambiguity make hybridity one of the most contested and unsettled concepts in the realm of cultural globalization (Hutnyk, 2005; Kraidy, 2002). Within the postcolonial paradigm, cultural hybridity is understood through the lens of unequal relationships of power. The formation of hybrid cultures is explained as the successful manifestation of colonized peoples’ resistance against hegemony or, conversely, as colonizers’ failures to impose their culture upon

their subjects (e.g., Bhabha, 2004). In other conceptual paradigms, cultural hybridity is explained as a neutral or even beneficial process of cultural mixing (Kraidy, 2005; Tomlinson, 2006).

Glocalization

The theory of “Glocalization” is one of the more popular models of cultural hybridity. Cultural glocalization calls attention to the simultaneous and mutually constitutive relationships between global and local cultures. According to Memmott (2011) cultural glocalization is “the sharing or blending of two cultures on more or less equal terms, whereby two sets of elements are fused together but both remain overtly recognizable” (p.44).

When not applicable or relevant to the local culture, aspects of the global are refitted according to the particulars of the local (Robertson, 1992). Glocalization first gained broad appeal in the 1990’s as a marketing concept explaining the process by which multinational organizations reengineer and/or repackage their products to make them relevant to local markets (Chew, 2010). One of the more familiar examples of glocalization is the classic case study showing the ways in which McDonald’s gained a powerful international presence by combining globally standardized practices with locally tailored menus (Connell, 2007) (e.g., Banerjee, 2008). Cultural theorists have adopted and reformulated the notion of glocalization to suggest that the effect of globalization on culture is both universalizing *and* particularizing (Giulianotti & Robertson, 2007).

Although glocalization allows for more complexity than the convergence and divergence models, it also suffers from similar conceptual flaws that limit its explanatory power. For example, the term “glocalization” confines researchers to conceptualizing intercultural contact as occurring between the global and the local, allowing for no consideration of more micro-level cultural exchanges within cultural entities. Glocalization also implies the existence of “pure” global and “pure” local cultures (Ritzer, 2003). Connell (2007) argues that glocalization’s reliance on “global” and “local” over-simplistically “asserts both terms of a static polarity at once” (374). In other words, the glocalization framework explains the meetings and modifications of a singular global culture and a singular local culture. While glocalization predicts that the influences between the local and the global are mutually-constitutive within the space of the local, it still implies a larger linear and unidirectional flow from the global to the local. Once the global has been customized to the specific local, it then moves on largely unchanged and ready to customize itself once again according to the needs of the next local cultural market. This implies that culture flows primarily from the global to the local and echoes the problematic convergence notion of culture change emanating from the center to the periphery (Holto, 2000). Little to no consideration is made for the ways in which the “local” affect the “global” in a continuing process of transformation or hybridization.

Moreover, glocalization theory suggests that the global and the local will always produce novel results due to cultural differences but does not go into depth or specificity about the nature of these differences and their relationships to the varying degrees and

forms of glocalization. There is no theoretical consideration of how various contextual factors influence the creation of new cultural formations (Chew, 2010). Finally, critical scholars take issue with glocalization theory's neutral stance and conclude that its failure to consider the inequities, power imbalances, and hegemonic intentions that "weave the hybrid fabric of transnational culture" (Kraidy, 2005, p. 47) render it an over-simplistic conceptualization (Ritzer, 2003).

Creolization

As a postcolonial framework of cultural hybridity, creolization also suggests that intercultural contact creates new cultural formations (Cohen & Toninato, 2010). However, whereas the glocalization framework is largely without normative assumptions (Connell, 2007) and suggests a peaceful coexistence of global and local, creolization explains cultural emergence through the historic lens of colonial force, occupation, and enslavement (Managan, 2008). Unlike many theories of culture change which conceptualize individuals as mere carriers of culture or as powerless vessels into which cultures are imposed, the creolization framework gives agency to individuals and groups as having an active role in the persistence, absorption, and creation of culture (Munasinghed, 2006).

Contemporary notions of cultural creolization arose from the historic examination of hierarchical interactions among various diasporatic populations—predominantly European slave owners and African slaves--forced to live and function together in the 18th century Carribean-slave complex. The original framework explained the building of

new culture from the fragmented remnants of various original cultures by the residents of Caribbean sugar plantations--few of whom were indigenous to the Caribbean. Situated in a new and unfamiliar world absent the influences and structures of local cultural norms, family, traditions, and institutions, select elements from various cultures were adopted and/or hybridized, eventually developing into a new creolized culture (Mintz, 1996).

Contemporary theorists have reinvigorated the creolization framework and increasingly use this historically situated conceptualization as a tool for understanding the unique cultural outcomes associated with globalization (Hall, 2010). Cohen and Toninato (2010) suggest that creolization is a “master metaphor” (p.5) that provides researchers with a powerful analytical tool for considering the complex, fluid, mutually constitutive, and often indeterminate outcomes of contemporary cultural globalization. Balutansky and Sourieau (1998) suggest that a distinct advantage of the contemporary use of creolization theory is that it provokes researchers from the West to engage in the uncomfortable contemplation of ambiguity and contradiction forcing us to move beyond our preference for neat and totalizing theories of “pure” culture.

On the other hand, there is also considerable controversy surrounding the increasing popularity of creolization as a general framework for contemporary culture change. While some scholars argue that the overall notions of creolization theory transcend time and place (e.g., Hannerz, 2006) or that the contemporary uses of creolization are more metaphorical than literal (e.g., Khan, 2006), critics of the global appropriation of creolization argue that its explanatory power is limited by the specific socio-cultural, political, and historic context within which it was developed.

For example, Munasinghed (2006) takes issue with what she suggests are “utopian” and “teleological” (p.551) assumptions inherent in the current incarnations of creolization as a framework for examining culture change on a global scale. She explains that the foundations of the theory are empirically rooted in the strict hierarchical relationships of slavery and that to assume general applicability of this framework in the context of contemporary circumstances is an unfounded leap of conceptual faith. Similarly, Mintz (1996) argues that creolization theory specifically explains “the creation and construction of culture out of fragmented, violent, and disjunct pasts” (p.302) resulting from centuries of slave trade and, as such, is not relevant to contemporary cultural mixing or fusion. He fears that the global appropriation of creolization theory has the potential to deny the critical historical and painful contexts of slavery, domination, and resistance inherent to its original conceptual development and criticizes its misinformed use as demonstrating little regard for its original historical context and meaning. Although the metaphor of creolization has the potential to provide powerful insights into contemporary culture change, the extensive and emotional criticisms of the global appropriation of this historically mired framework limit its contemporary application.

The Bhabhian Perspective

One of the most well-known and contested frameworks of cultural hybridity comes from postcolonial scholar Homi Bhabha (1997; 2004). Like creolization theory, Bhabha provides a framework of culture change that examines unequal power

relationships between first and third world countries (Frenkel, 2008). Through post-structural literary analysis of colonial-era texts, Bhabha created a psychoanalytic framework that explains culture change and hybridization as arising from acts of resistance, negotiation, and translation within the ambivalent relationships between colonizers and colonized (Huddart, 2005; Hutnyk, 2005).

Unlike most of the frameworks of culture change presented in this chapter, Bhabha rejects the notion of pure cultural entities (e.g., Hofstede's cultural dimensions). He argues that cultures are multidimensional systems in ongoing states of contention, imitation, negotiation, and production (Byrne, 2009). He further suggests that individuals do not belong to a single internally homogenous cultural system but instead are always in an iterative process of imperfectly recreating or translating cultural significations such that no claim to a pure original culture can ever truly be made (Bhabha, 2009). In essence, all cultural systems are unique and fluid hybridizations that cannot necessarily be traced back to an original formation. However, because Bhabha writes from a postcolonial perspective, his notion of hybridity is not one of a peaceful coexistence and fusion of various cultural factors in the creation of new multicultural formations. Instead, he argues that hybridity is catalyzed by power imbalances between the colonized and the colonizer which cause ambivalence on the part of the colonizer and acts of resistance on the part of the colonized.

This notion of the colonized resisting domination is central to Bhabha's understanding of cultural hybridity and demonstrates his belief that, contrary to outward appearances, power is not situated entirely within the domain of the colonizer (Huddart,

2005). Similar to creolization theory, the Bhabhian framework gives considerable agency to the colonized in the creation of hybrid cultures in what Kraidy (2005) describes as a celebration of the “contamination of imperial ideology, aesthetics, and identity by natives striking back at colonial domination” (p.58). In other words, Bhabha argues that dominant cultures are not simply imposed upon submissive populations. Instead, hybridity arises from the colonized peoples’ resistance against attempted cultural imposition. Although the colonizer attempts to assimilate those they have colonized, these efforts are undermined by their own conscious and subconscious insecurities and ambivalent motivations—weaknesses which are capitalized upon by the colonized to resist domination. The results of these complex interactions—what Bhabha refers to as “mimicry”—result in new hybridized outcomes that redefine both first and third world cultural representations (Frenkel, 2008).

In the Bhabhian sense, mimicry is not a mindless imitation of culture. It is a complex and iterative process of reinterpretation characterized by the ambivalence and insecurity of the colonizer and resistance and translation on the part of the colonized. Bhabha suggests that colonial ambivalence arises from the colonizer’s strategic articulation of cultural difference as moral justification for colonial occupation. In other words, the colonizer embraces notions of their own cultural superiority to essentialize their colonized subjects as self-justification for colonial occupation. Framed as the benevolent civilizing of backward populations of the third world, the colonizer attempts to impose its superior culture upon the populations they’ve colonized. However, Bhabha suggests that the colonizer never truly intends for the colonized to become fully

assimilated into the culture of the colonizer. Full assimilation would imply that the status of the colonized and the colonizer had been equalized thus eliminating the logic of domination through discourse and differentiation (Huddart, 2005). The imposition of culture is meant to be a civilizing process that comes close to, but never fully civilizes the uncivilized populations of the third world. Bhabha (1994) explains this as the colonial desire for “a reformed, recognizable Other” or the creation of subjects who are “almost the same, but not quite” (p. 86). However, in these lingering spaces of enforced difference between colonized and colonizer, the colonizers lose control and therefore the ability to dictate the outcomes of culture change (Mabardi, 2010). Instead, the colonized who, through acts of resistance and imitation, gain control over the process of culture change—often to the effect of contaminating the original imperial ideology (Kraidy, 2002).

Adding to the sense of colonial ambivalence, the colonizers’ confidence is weakened by insecurities about the veracity of their professed superiority and the realities of the innate differences distinguishing themselves from those they’ve colonized. The colonizers’ conceptualization of their own superiority is nothing more than a superficial veneer compromised by inward tensions and anxieties with regard to the tenability of their control and proclaimed superiority. These insecurities come from the conscious and subconscious knowledge that there are, in reality, no material differences between themselves and those they’ve colonized and give rise to psychological cracks through which colonized subjects further resist and subvert colonial domination.

What makes Bhabha's theory of hybridity powerful is that it provides a contextually-dependent framework that requires researchers to consider the uniqueness of time, place, and conceptual space in the formation of hybrid cultures. Bhabha focuses on the enforced spaces of cultural difference between the colonizer and the colonized and the psychological cracks through which the colonized resist domination as the locations from which to understand the process of hybridity. Metaphorically referring to these spaces or locations as "third spaces of in between", Bhabha suggests that it is here that hybrid cultures arise from the contextually specific outcomes of ambivalence and resistance (Frenkel, 2008). The third space is a unique liminal space that exists conceptually and/or physically between different worlds or cultural designations. It is a "translational space" in which hybrid cultures emerge through processes of dialogue, resistance, invention, and negotiation (Bhabha, 2009) and, to a large degree, negate the various histories that constituted their original formations (Rutherford, 1990).

In conclusion, although Bhabha's theory of hybridity is complex, if one can look past the nuances and ambiguities of Bhabha's writings, his framework can offer researchers interested in cultural globalization powerful insights into the contextually dependent nature of culture change. Unfortunately, despite the potential contributions of the Bhabhian perspective, many are dismayed by the complexity of Bhabha's work. Some of Bhabha's more vocal critics have even suggested that his writings are deliberately vague, dense, and ambiguous and that he succeeds more in convincing readers that his ideas are important than he is in actually explaining his ideas (Byrne, 2005). Others argue that Bhabha's psychoanalytic approach to hybridity is too esoteric

and has little practical use beyond the boundaries of academic theorizing (Kraidy, 2002). Opponents reject the idea that people throughout the world are engaged in acts of resistance against globalization or colonial domination. For example, Friedman (1997) argues that Bhabha's focused concern with resistance and rebellion against hegemonic intentions is the concern of middle class elite academics who have the time and ability to theorize hybridity. Likewise Kraidy (2005) suggests that the practical application of Bhabha's framework is limited and completely irrelevant to the millions of people "whose energies are devoted to securing the barest conditions of survival" (p. 67).

Similar to some of the criticisms leveled at creolization theory, many question the contemporary relevance of Bhabha's postcolonial approach in theorizing hybridity. Ahmad (1995) argues that Bhabha's framework is limited by its historical grounding in the hierarchical interactions between Europeans and non-Europeans and concludes that it is not appropriate for understanding the altered power structures and increasingly complex intercultural relationships inherent to contemporary globalization. Finally, although Bhabha gives agency to the colonized in the eventual creation of hybrid culture, his theory implies a bi-polar relationship of colonial dominance and third world subordination. By extension, this bi-polar relationship implies that intercultural change follows a directional pattern initiated by center and moving outward to the periphery (Sueen, 2007). In other words, the initial intercultural contact is envisioned as an imposition from the colonizer onto the colonized. Little consideration is given to cultural changes initiated from the periphery.

While Bhabha's theory of culture change can be dense, complex, and often ambiguous, his approach to understanding culture change as a process dependent upon and inseparable from the unique times, spaces, and places—the third spaces--provides the central framing of my research into the actualities of value change in the employees of DomesTech. Although I move forward with my research under the influence of the Bhabhian notion of third space, I have no hopes of implementing the entirety of the Bhabhian perspective in my empirical analysis, nor do I profess to implement Bhabha's notion of third space in exacting detail. Instead, I am inspired by Bhabha's own recognition that, like culture change, the meaning of his ideas are contextually dependent and that the very acts of reading and writing his texts leads readers to engage in unique processes of translation, the results of which are never exact carbon copies of the original (Bhabha, 2009). Validating my approach to adopting an interpretive notion of third space in my research, Huddart (2005) argues that Bhabha intends for his readers to take an active role in his work, suggesting that “what the reader brings to the process of reading makes it live, makes it catch fire” (p.33).

Therefore, in the interpretive analysis of my empirical materials, I borrow from the Bhabhian perspective to conceptualize DomesTech as a “third space” in which individuals are in the constant act of negotiating among various worlds. I sought to understand DomesTech as an emerging space that was neither global nor local but rather an indeterminate third space of in between (Bhabha, 1997, 2003). In examining this unique liminal space, I invoke the notion of third space as a way to examine and

understand this space as a unique site of dynamic cultural interactions resulting in variable outcomes of culture change.

In my research I was also inspired by Bhabha's notion of cultures as fluid and multidimensional systems, whose organization and meanings are continuously negotiated in the various interactions and experiences of individuals. As I suggested earlier in this chapter, traditional notions of culture as singular, internally homogenous entities bounded by nation states are overly-general, stereotyping, and empirically problematic. From the Bhabhaian perspective, the recombinant nature of values and the uniqueness of third spaces further problematize the use of national level value profiles. Bhabha's notion of culture as contingent systems suggests that the various components of culture are likely to react differentially to the contemporary pressures and influences of globalization (Khan, 2010). This approach to culture implies that to understand the emergence or hybridization of culture, it is necessary to examine the individual components of "culture" and the relationships among them (e.g., clothing, food, values, systems of relationships, religion, and behaviors). To understand the implications of intercultural contact, we must examine the meanings individuals associate, negotiate, and develop in response to these interactions (Willis, 2010). Conflating external significations (e.g., clothes, shopping malls, consumer purchases) with internal cultural values of large populations may lead to misleading or incomplete conclusions. The mere presence of global brands or increased or homogenized consumption of global consumer goods does not mean that individuals place the same meaning or value on the acts of consumption (Belk, 1996).

Accordingly, I did not attempt to understand the “culture” of DomesTech. Unlike most conventional examinations of culture change, I don’t rely on the national level examinations such as Hofstede to explain the ways in which my informants are or are not shifting from one monolithic cultural system to another. Instead, I attempt to understand the emerging values or structures of meanings held by the employees of DomesTech. However, as with my adoption of the notion third space, my use of Bhabha’s conceptualization of culture is also tempered. I do not believe, as Bhabha suggests, that hybrid cultures are entirely unique and largely devoid of historic, national, social, and familial influence. Instead, I adopt the view of Willis and Trondman (2000) who write that social groups “find and make their own roots, routes, and lived meanings” (p.8) and that these meanings can only be understood through the combined consideration of individual meaning-making, broader social factors, and historic moorings. Therefore, throughout my research, I supplemented my examination of the individual manifestations of values with various historic factors, social conditions, and values-related literature.

Theoretical Approach

In conclusion, my extensive review of various theories and frameworks of culture change has led me to believe that the general theory of cultural hybridity, and the Bhabhian notion of third space in particular, offer the most promising approaches to understanding the complex and fluid processes of contemporary cultural globalization. I agree with Sween (2007) that the concept of hybridity is particularly suited to examining culture in the midst of the constant flows of people and ideas. However, I also share in

Kraidy's (2005) belief that "the analytical potential of hybridity has not been fully exploited" (p.3) and is need of considerable conceptual work to "tackle its vexing ambiguity" (p.71). Or, as Hannerz (2010) writes "it is not that we have no past of attempting to understand large-scale cultural systems and their change. It is rather that much of this past does not now seem very usable" (p. 381). Typical examinations of culture change and hybridization seek to understand the ways in which the imposition of "dominant" Western values are adopted or adapted by the citizens of non-Western countries (Mirchandani, 2004; Murphy, 2011). From the standpoint of cultural globalization and hybridity, our understanding is limited by the assumptions that culture and power flow unidirectionally from the "West to the Rest" (e.g., Pal and Buzzanell, 2008). As such, the whole-scale adoption of any one of these interpretive frameworks in my research proved inappropriate. Therefore, in the interpretive analysis of my data, I use the general notion of cultural hybridity and the specific idea of the Bhabian notion of third space as my initial interpretive guides. However, instead of using these frameworks to produce a purely descriptive analysis of my research, I engage in the grounded theory approach to data analysis to develop a more relevant conceptualization of culture change based on the metaphor of subduction. In the following chapter, I explain my approach to data collection, interpretive analysis, and grounded theory development.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGIES

The choice of research methodologies is a complex process requiring the consideration of multiple interrelated factors (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000). The decision to favor certain methodologies over others is guided by both the nature of the research questions and by one's alignment with a particular research paradigm (Prasad, 2005). Alignment with a research paradigm, in turn, informs the use of specific empirical tools, as well as the particular writing conventions and methods employed for analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating the end results of an inquiry (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Just as a cross-cultural examination such as the focus of this study requires the consideration of multiple world views, the choice of research methodologies requires a similar consideration of various, often conflicting, research paradigms and their associated ontological and epistemological assumptions and methodologies (Prasad, 2005). I undertake this examination in the following sections by discussing the logic behind my decision to engage in a qualitative examination, my alignment with the critical paradigm, and my choice of critical ethnographic methods. I then follow with a discussion of the tools I used to gather the empirical materials for my analysis and conclude with a discussion of my interpretive approach to data analysis and use of grounded theory techniques.

Qualitative Research

I chose to engage in a qualitative examination of DomesTech because qualitative approaches are particularly suited to the detailed exploration of local settings and complex human interactions--especially those that are unique or in the process of rapid change as is the case for the city of Hyderabad and its BPO industry (Flick, 2002). Although there is no universally agreed upon standard for classifying and conducting qualitative research, most qualitative researchers engage in postpositivist non-statistical examinations of individuals and their lived experiences (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000; Prasad, 2005). However, because the positivist paradigm is dominant in contemporary social science research⁷, throughout this chapter I will compare the ontological and epistemological assumptions of my research with those of the positivist paradigm when it is helpful for clarification purposes. For example, the positivist ontology asserts that an objective and unified reality exists and that, through the use of objective and rational science, researchers can discover the universal laws that explain human behavior. Once discovered, these laws are used to predict human behavior--typically with the intention of contributing to performative outcomes of organizations (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000). By following the objective rules of science, the positivist paradigm aims to produce generalizations through standardized processes which are dependent upon reduction and simplification (Agger, 1991; Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The knowledge resulting from

⁷ It is important to note that qualitative research is increasingly recognized as an important approach to social science research and is subsequently growing in use within various disciplines (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000; Flick, 2002).

positivist research is assumed to be an objective and literal representation of reality, and therefore, universal and uncompromising (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

In comparison, most qualitative researchers do not subscribe to the view that a single objective reality exists “out there” but are instead guided by a constructivist ontology which argues for the existence of multiple simultaneous realities which are socially constructed from the subjectivities of individual experiences. This interpretive approach seeks to understand the subjective world views of a certain group of individuals. In this approach, researchers “focus on what events and objects mean to people, on how they perceive what happens to them and around them, and on how they adapt their behavior in light of these meanings and perspectives” (Locke, 2003, p.9).

These different ontological assumptions inform different goals for the outcomes of postpositivist qualitative research as opposed to those of conventional logical positivism. Whereas positivist research attempts to distill disparate realities into standardized forms for purposes of generalization, qualitative researchers seek to preserve the unique and often contradictory details they uncover in their attempts to understand the ways in which larger societal factors influence the behaviors, thoughts, and interactions of those they are studying (Prasad, 2005). In short, qualitative researchers tend to emphasize social relevance and contextual details over statistical significance and generalizations (Guba & Lincoln, 1981).

Prasad (2005) explains qualitative research as less an exact science as much as it is a learned craft in which researchers align with various interpretive “traditions” or research paradigms (e.g., critical theory, feminism, poststructuralism). Within these

various qualitative “traditions” are communities of researchers whose members generally share a similar world view, converge around specific theoretical frameworks, and follow particular research and writing practices. Therefore, before a researcher is able to choose specific data collection tools and engage in fieldwork, the conscious decision to align with a particular research paradigm must first be made (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000). In the end, choosing to align with a research paradigm is a personal decision based on the researcher’s interests, values, and belief in the guiding theories and conventions of a particular research community. Because my research into the Indian call center industry engages primarily with an established body of critical postcolonial scholarship with the intention of examining and proposing alternate understandings of the ways in which colonial structures of power persist in this evolving industry and the ways in which these powers influence the processes of culture change in my respondents, my research is aligned with the critical paradigm.

The Critical Paradigm

Arising out of the Frankfurt School in the 1920’s, contemporary critical theory was born from the critique of mid-20th century Western society by influential thinkers like Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, and Herbert Marcuse (Alvesson, 2008). The initial concerns of the Frankfurt School focused upon the increasing primacy of economic growth in Western civilization and the associated ways in which individuals and the natural world were being reconceptualized as consumers and consumables. In addition to critiquing social ills, members of the Frankfurt School were equally committed to

offering alternative possibilities to the status quo social structures they deemed as unjust (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000; Prasad, 2005).

The contemporary critical paradigm now has different meanings to various groups of researchers who identify with certain theories, traditions, and disciplines. Although the domain of the contemporary critical paradigm contains diverse approaches, most research utilizing a critical focus maintains a commitment to certain foundational pursuits and to a shared set of ontological and epistemological assumptions. Specifically, most critical theorists agree that the initial point of convergence within the critical paradigm is the use of social critique with the intentions of contributing to positive social change (Alvesson, 2008; Banerjee, 2000; Car, 2000; Prasad, 2005). For example, Agger (1991) writes that an identifying element of critical theory centers on challenging assumptions that are often taken for granted and uncovering hidden power relationships. Of particular concern to many critical researchers are the influences of late capitalism which are criticized for establishing many of the oppressive norms and behaviors responsible for the social and ecological “dysfunctional consequences of modernity” (e.g., mindless consumerism) (Prasad, 2005, p. 137).

While most critical researchers engage in the examination of unproven assumptions and seek to challenge dominant discourses, it is important to clarify that critical theorists are concerned with more than just critiquing what they view as unjust in society. In addition to identifying social ills and challenging the status quo, critical researchers are committed to parlaying their critiques into the establishment of a more economically and socially just society. The overarching goals of this research are to

assist in the emancipation of oppressed groups from the economic, political, social, and institutional structures and roles imposed by powerful and hegemonic forces (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000). Rather than searching only for performative outcomes, critical management researchers challenge the innocence of organizations and attempt to offer alternatives to conventional institutional and social structures (Fournier & Grey, 2000; Prasad, 2005).

Within the critical paradigm, researchers interested in critical management studies (CMS) use the lenses of conflict, power, and domination to examine organizationally related issues. CMS recognizes various stakeholders beyond the managerial class as important and sees their issues as often neglected within conventional research (Alvesson, 2008; Alvesson & Deetz, 2000; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Prasad, 2005). For example, Alvesson (2008) suggests that CMS researchers are concerned with the critical examination of dominant and unchallenged institutions and ideologies and argues that one of the fundamental goals of CMS researchers is to facilitate positive social change by emancipating individuals from repressive structures. However, Alvesson and Deetz (2000) caution critical researchers against the traps of hyper-critique and utopian theorizing which only contribute to the marginalization of critical research. In other words, it is essential that CMS scholars maintain a realistic consideration of the pursuits of business and consider the constraints of the contemporary corporate form. Working within these conventions, much contemporary critical research, including my examination of DomesTech, seeks to uncover new ways of understanding organizations

and to encourage dialogue among organizations, their various stakeholder groups, and the academic research community.

Beyond the common elements of exposing social injustices and providing alternative visions of society, the critical paradigm also identifies with specific ontological and epistemological assumptions (Agger, 1991; Guba & Lincoln, 1989). More specifically, the shared ontological assumptions of the critical paradigm directly inform the epistemological assumptions and, in turn, appropriate tools for gathering and interpreting empirical material. In the following paragraphs, I discuss the ontological and epistemological assumptions of the critical paradigm and explain the ways in which these ideas informed my choice to engage in a critical ethnographic examination of DomesTech.

Critical Ontology

In line with the majority of qualitative or interpretive traditions, most researchers aligned with the critical paradigm agree that while an objective reality may exist, the realities which are relevant to individuals and therefore of concern to critical researchers are subjective and socially constructed (Alvesson, 2008). Rather than being static and predictable, these various constructions of reality are thought to evolve through time and place as a result of social, economic, and political forces, which in turn, are mediated by power relations (Agger, 1991; Prasad, 2005). To inform the accuracy of their critiques and support the legitimacy of their recommendations, critical researchers are concerned with an ongoing understanding of the nuanced details of the subjective lifeworlds of various groups of individuals.

Most critical scholars are wary of the notion of “grand theory” and reject the search to find universal truths explaining human behavior. Accordingly, the results of critical research are not meant to produce absolute truths. Instead critical researchers recognize that they are contributing one of many possible interpretations and that their own interpretations can be deconstructed further and challenged with alternate interpretations. Finally, the contextually-focused nature of critical research means that the value of the research is most often found in its entirety. Its relevance is reduced as it removed from its context and broken into comparable parts in the pursuit of a cumulative accounting of the “real” world. Instead, individual stories and experiences are gathered and understood as pluralistic rather than cumulative sources of knowledge (Agger, 1991). This constructivist ontology directly informs the critical epistemology and data collection tools, as well as the ways in which critical researchers analyze and evaluate the results of their research efforts.

Critical Epistemology

The critical epistemology is directly informed by the emancipatory goals and the constructivist ontology of the critical paradigm. Because critical theorists see the world as characterized by the inequities of differential power relationships and engage in research with the intention of deconstructing and delegitimizing these norms, they inherently reject the notion of objective and value-neutral research in which researchers call upon the authority of the scientific method to define reality (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000). By definition, critical researchers recognize the subjective nature of their inquiries

and willingly assert their personal values into their research efforts (Prasad, 2005). Furthermore, the constructivist ontological assumptions of the critical paradigm suggest that knowledge is not objectively discovered. Instead it is in large part created through the interactions between subject and object. Therefore, the critical epistemology rejects the notion of the objective or presuppositionless representation of an objective reality (Agger, 1991).

The notion that scholars do not attempt to remove themselves from the research process through various controls and manipulations is of primary importance to the critical paradigm (Jack & Westwood, 2006). Whereas traditional positivist research attempts to emulate the objectivity and subject-object duality found in the natural sciences, critical research recognizes and embraces the mutually influential relationships between researchers and respondents in the reconstruction or interpretation of subjective realities (Flick, 2002). The values, affiliations, and unique characteristics of both researcher and participant are seen as inseparable and influential throughout the entire research process. The interactions between researchers and respondents are not denied or controlled for. Instead, through the process of reflexivity, they are embraced and integrated into the interpretive results of the examination (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Jack & Westwood, 2006). Accordingly, before I continue on with the discussion of my critical ethnographic approach and an explanation of the tools I used to gather my empirical materials, I discuss the personal reasons I pursued this research using a critical framework.

Personal Profile

Although my interests and world view cause me to challenge the profit maximizing motivations of much of the research undertaken in the business school, my interest in engaging in this research and alignment with the critical paradigm began, unbeknownst to me, the first time I traveled to India on business in 2005. During this trip, my initial understanding of Indian society was influenced significantly by the politically motivated “India Shinning”⁸ campaign in which Indian celebrities exalted the promises of a technologically sophisticated, globally integrated, and financially dominant “New India” of the 21st century. This utopian conceptualization of a “New India” challenged Indian citizens to make the choice to leave behind “Old India” with its implied backwardness. As a first time visitor from a developed country and seeing the challenges of “Old India” firsthand, I was convinced by this narrative and believed that a new, modernizing India was the right and inevitable outcome for this dynamic place.

My uncritical support of the notion of “New India” drastically changed when, on this same trip, I took a tour of Infosys, one of the largest IT firms in India. Infosys is located in the southern city of Bangalore in India’s world famous technology park—“Electronics City”. With only a few steps, I experienced the transformation of “old” India into “new” India as I stepped into the perimeter of the campus. The “new” India which was pristinely packaged in a gated zone looked eerily like the distant West from which I had travelled but nothing like the “old” India from which I had just stepped.

⁸ The following links to video example of the “India Shinning” campaign featuring Amitabh Bachchan, one of India’s most famous actors: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MNIF0uZDvhg&NR=1>.

The drive from the center of Bangalore to Electronics City, which is located in peri-urban Bangalore, takes passengers through the growing pains of massive regional development and exposes the inherent struggles and inequities of this globalizing city. Once the perimeter of the campus is reached, however, the environment is suddenly green and impeccably manicured with high-tech glass buildings and state-of-the-art recreation facilities located throughout the huge complex.

While most of my Western companions on the tour were delighted by the progress as exemplified by the state-of-the-art architecture and lush green landscaping of Electronics City and impressed by the familiar “rationality” of Infosys, I found myself troubled and uncomfortable yet intrigued by the entire experience. It seemed to me that the ways in which the Bangalore landscape and Indian citizens were being molded, or at least conceptualized as being molded, into an idealized Western image only to revert back to “traditional” India by crossing a property line had significant social and ecological implications that needed closer examination.

My discomfort with my experience was clarified later that same evening when I met with an old Indian friend who is a naturalist at a Bangalore based NGO. He was thoroughly unimpressed and visibly disappointed when he learned that I was among the throngs of Western business professionals who he believed came to Bangalore to express their approval at the ways in which Indians were adopting the “logical” and “rational” business models of the West. Thus began my curiosity to understand the implications of the push for a “New” India and which eventually led me to this study. Although I couldn’t articulate it at the time, this experience began my alignment with the critical

paradigm and with those researchers who challenge the narratives of a Westernizing globalization.

Not long after this trip, I joined Temple's graduate program and spent most of my time in the Fox School of Business researching contemporary globalization, Indian society, and the social and ecological changes taking place within it. My position as a research assistant in Temple's Center for International Business Education and Research (CIBER) allowed me to return to India two more times. In the first of these return trips, I split my month in India between independent travel and leading a group of undergraduate students on an educational tour of the country. The second time I returned was to conduct the fieldwork presented in this dissertation. It was also through my position at CIBER that I was able to establish my contact at DomesTech. Knowing my research interests, CIBER's Executive Director put me in contact with one of his professional acquaintances who was also DomesTech's Managing Director (MD). After numerous emails and a personal meeting in Philadelphia, DomesTech's MD gave me permission to conduct fieldwork in his organization for one month in November of 2008. Although situating my research in the city of Hyderabad and the organization of DomesTech allowed me to pursue my interests in studying the social and ecological implications of globalization within the Indian context, my decision to conduct my fieldwork specifically in DomesTech was primarily based upon the facts that I was welcomed into the organization and that this research was supported by my institution. The unique aspects of DomesTech did not become apparent to me until after I had begun my research. In the next section, I discuss the details of my data collection.

Collection of Empirical Materials

In deciding how to collect empirical materials, critical researchers have both the opportunity and the challenge to choose from a wide selection of data collection tools (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). Although there are no formal codes for collecting data, researchers seek methods that will facilitate the creation of contextually dependent and detail rich understandings of their subject (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Rather than seeking tools that will produce the most objective and generalizable results, critical researchers believe that the most useful, fair, and representative knowledge is that which is focused on the local and created through a dialogical process between researcher and respondents. Accordingly, when collecting data for my study, I joined the long history of critical researchers who use an ethnographic approach to data collection and analysis (Prasad, 2005).

Critical Ethnography

Born from the discipline of cultural anthropology, ethnography is now one of the most common research traditions used throughout various disciplines in the qualitative examination of culture, including CMS (Prasad, 2005). While critical ethnographers share the data collection tools and writing conventions of traditional ethnographers, they maintain allegiance to the pursuit of social critique and liberation and to the constant process of reflexivity regarding the influence of their personal values and positions in their research endeavors (Madison, 2005).

Ethnography is an approach to data collection in which the researcher attempts to develop an intimate understanding of respondents and local situations through intensive field work (Prasad, 2005). As with the larger philosophy of qualitative research, ethnographers are particularly concerned with examining and understanding the unique contexts in which people live their lives. Central to the ethnographic approach is the notion of understanding individual experiences and meanings and relating these insights to their wider social, economic, historical, and political contexts (Murchison, 2010; Willis & Trondman, 2000). Most ethnographic researchers do not enter the field committed to specific a priori theoretical classifications. Instead, they tend to engage in the daily lives of their participants and allow this information to inform and narrow the ongoing focus of their fieldwork. This process often leads researchers to the creation of situationally-derived conceptual elements or interpretive frameworks (Locke, 2003). To Willis & Trondman (2000) ethnography facilitates “the positive development of reflexive forms of social theorizing, allowing some kind of voice to those who live their conditions of existence” (p. 7).

Perhaps the best known description of the aims of ethnography comes from Geertz (1973) who calls for researchers to use multiple methods of data collection to build a “thick description” in which they embrace detail, complexity, and contradictions (Prasad, 2005). To accomplish this thick description most ethnographers engage in intensive local fieldwork and develop relationships with their informants. Although some ethnographers spend years in the field, there are no upper or lower immersion limits above or below which a study is classified as ethnography or not. Indeed, a few weeks of

concentrated observation and participation are often sufficient (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000). In the end, the merits of ethnography are not judged by time spent conducting fieldwork but by the researcher's ability to gain a contextually relevant understanding of their research subject and to produce an insightfully relevant, coherent, and convincing narrative of their experience (Prasad, 2005). In short, the telling of the story is as important to a successful ethnographic examination as is the use of appropriate methods of data collection and analysis (Murchison, 2010). Nevertheless, there are still useful conventions in ethnographic data collection which emphasize insight over prediction and upon which I relied when gathering my data.

There is no single tool that proves best or even consistently applicable in ethnographic research. Each method has its own set of strengths and weaknesses and the relevance of the tool depends upon the context in which it is employed and the degrees to which it allows researchers to gain insights into the "irreducibility of human experience" by engaging with a "family of methods involving direct and sustained social contact with agents" (Willis & Trondman, 2000, p.5). In the attempt to balance the weaknesses of one method with the strengths of another, most ethnographic researchers employ multiple methods of data collection (Madison, 2005; Murchison, 2010). Although the use of multiple tools presents the researcher with vast amounts of information, the appropriate use of various methods has the potential to expand the scope, depth, relevance, and validity of the research (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; 1989). Accordingly, while conducting my fieldwork I engaged in three primary methods of ethnographic data collection:

participant observation; individual and group interviews, and the collection and examination of various artifacts and documents.

Participant Observation

Participant observation is a central component of ethnographic research and a necessary complement to other data collection methods in the production of “thick descriptions” (Dewalt, et. al, 1998). Rather than quietly observing objects of interest from afar, participant observers gain tacit insights and an enhanced ability to understand complex realities through active and genuine participation in that which is being studied (Murchison, 2010). The simultaneous acts of participation and observation provide researchers with a deeper understanding of the participants’ point of view through first-hand experience. This is particularly important for cross cultural research endeavors, as participant observation facilitates the understanding of and ability of researchers to interact in cultures that are not their own (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). Participant observation not only builds understanding and sharpens insight, it increases the validity and relevance of the empirical materials and their interpretation as researchers are forced to triangulate their various findings and assumptions with their own personal experiences (Dewalt, et. al, 1998).

While in the field, I was in a constant state of participant observation both inside and outside of the organization. It is important to note here that the successful employment of this method requires that researchers maintain a mindful and delicate balance between the poles of pure participation and pure observation (Flick, 2002). With

this in mind, I balanced my time in the field between more active participation (e.g., participating in training sessions) or more reserved observations (e.g., listening in on CSR phone calls).

Throughout my month-long immersion in DomesTech, I was essentially treated as an internal member of the organization and allowed to build my understanding of the place through an almost complete freedom of exploration. I was given many of the privileges of a traditional employee--including a badge, my own workstation, and access to the computer and cell phone networks. And, just like a traditional employee, I had to navigate the organizational bureaucracy before gaining access to many of these amenities. While securing access to day to day essentials like the internet may have been time consuming and frustrating at the time, these first-hand experiences provided me with invaluable insights into DomesTech's organizational structure and culture.

Because I was treated as an internal member of the organization, I quickly developed personal relationships with individuals throughout DomesTech. Dewalt et al. (1998) discuss the importance of establishing rapport with informants in securing opportunities for gaining and enhancing the validity of participant observation. My time conducting fieldwork strongly supported this notion. It was from my personal relationships with many of my informants that most of my opportunities for participant observation and other methods of data collection--both inside and outside of the organization--arose. When I was not facilitating my own interviews, I was welcomed as a participant observer in multiple interview, hiring, and training sessions, and in various management meetings. I sat with customer service representatives (CSRs) as they went

about their daily (or nightly) activities and monitored calls with managers as they “batched in” on live conversations between CSRs and customers. I also took meals in the cafeteria and spent down time hanging out with employees in the various social spaces throughout the building.

As a participant observer of Hyderabadi life, I lived and took many of my meals in a modest Indian guest house run by migrant Nepali men. I spent my free time learning about the city by wandering its streets, observing and practicing its customs, and figuring out—through significant trial and error—how to function within the complexities of its various formal and informal commercial systems. I socialized with the friends I made at DomesTech, getting to know them intimately through visits to their homes, sharing meals, attending ceremonies, and spending time with their families and friends.

My interactions with these individuals led to genuine relationships and my life at the guesthouse was largely on par with those of the Indian “middle-class”. However, despite my personal assessment sanctioning the validity and reliability of the results of my time as a participant observer, there are still weaknesses with this method in general and with my approach in specific that need to be acknowledged. For example, although the critical paradigm recognizes and embraces the constructed nature of the empirical materials and the ways in which the personal characteristics of the researcher influence understanding, researchers must always be aware of their potential to exert unwanted influence that winds up clouding their experience and understanding. This concern once again illustrates the centrality of reflexivity in critical methodologies, as it is essential that

researchers always attempt to identify and surface their personal biases and interpretive tendencies (Dewalt et al., 1998; Flick, 2002).

Accordingly, I am committed to being honestly reflexive about these influences in the process of presenting my analysis. I will begin here with the acknowledgement that, although I experienced many of the physical and emotional challenges typical to the process of intensive participant observation, I always had the option to, and often did, take advantage of many amenities not available to most and point out that my “authentic” accommodations were still more luxurious than those of the average Indian household which has not yet reached the echelons of “middle-class”.

Despite these potential weaknesses, the time I spent as a participant observer in DomesTech and in the city of Hyderabad allowed me to get closer to understanding life as a BPO worker in Hyderabad and proved essential in the development of my research. True to Spradley’s (1980, p. 34 as cited in Flick, 2002, p. 140) prediction, my time engaged in participatory observation was evolutionary and enlightening. While being a participant observer initially helped orient me to my new environment, it quickly progressed into an invaluable tool for surfacing nuances that refined my research, informed my ongoing collection of empirical materials and, ultimately, guided the interpretive formation of my conclusions.

Interviews

I conducted 32 in-depth, semi-structured interviews. In total I met with 49 informants, 27 of whom I met in individual interview settings; 22 in group interviews.

For the individual interviews, I was typically given a small “cabin” (office) furnished with a small round table and a few chairs. For group interviews, I was given the use of larger conference or break rooms. Individual and group interviews averaged approximately one hour each and, with verbal consent from participants, were recorded with a small unobtrusive tape recorder. At times participants seemed a little nervous about being recorded as was evidenced by nervous laughs or suspicious glances at the small tape recorder on the table. However, most interviews quickly progressed into natural conversations in which the participants and I seemed to forget about the recording device. The verbatim transcriptions of these interviews make up the majority of my empirical materials.

Although the individuals I interviewed were at times determined by the time and resource constraints of a for-profit organization, my selection of informants primarily followed Flick’s (2002) recommendation that critical researchers engage in theoretical sampling. In this model, researchers are not concerned with building a representative sample. Instead they deliberately choose participants with the most potential to provide rich and relevant information and continued insight. According to Morse (1998, p. 73 cited in Flick page, 69), when using this method, participants should be chosen for their possession of the knowledge and experience being studied, or their responsibilities and capabilities of performing the processes to be observed.

Thanks to my unfettered access to DomesTech, I developed friendly relationships with key gatekeepers who allowed me to meet with employees from all ranks and all departments throughout the organization. Once I arrived in the department, I would

discuss the type of employee(s) I was interested in meeting. The manager would then identify and ask relevant individuals if they were willing to speak with me. To my knowledge, no employee declined to speak with me. As a result, my sample was purposively diverse in both employee process and demographic characteristics which proved to be central to the deepening of my insight and in the eventual outcomes of my inquiry. Specifically, I met with front-line workers (e.g., call center customer care executives ((CCEs)) and various levels of management. Within these groups I met with tenured employees, employees who had been freshly hired, and employees who had tendered their resignations. I also met with employees working in a purely domestic process engaging only with domestic Indian clientele, as well as with employees who worked only in the overnight shifts catering primarily to North American clients under the guise of an organizationally assigned Western pseudonym. The following table shows the details of my respondents:

Table 4:1 Interview Respondent Demographics

Participant	Gender	Age	Married	Focus*	Position	Tenure**
1	F	30	Y	D	Ops. Mgr.	42
2	M	29	N	D	Team Mgr.	42
3	F	40-45	Y	D	Dpt. Head	
4	M	34	N	D	Mgr.	108
5	M	32	Y	D	Team Mgr.	12
6	M	28	N	D	Asst. Mgr. Training	54
7	F	35	Y	D	Trainer	54
8	F	19	N	D	Trainer	7
9	F	28	N	D	Trainer	7
10	F	23	N	D	CCE	12
11	F	26	N	D	CCE	24
12	M	24	N	D	CCE	8
13	M	23	N	D	CCE	12
14	M	23	N	D	CCE	12
15	M	24	N	D	CCE	12
16	F	23	N	D	CCE	14
17	F	22	N	D	CCE	2
18	F	26	N	D	CCE	1
19	F	22	N	D	CCE	7
20	F	21	N	D	CCE	8
21	F	22	engaged	D	CCE	14
22	M	35	Y	I	Dpt. Head	
23	M	25-30	N	I	Team Leader	18
24	F	23	N	I	Trainer	31
25	M	24	N	I	CCE	18
26	F	26	Y	I	CCE	30
27	F	26	Y	I	CCE	30
28	M	40-45	Y	I	CCE	36
29	M	23	N	I	CCE	11
30	F	25	N	I	CCE	
31	F	22	N	I	CCE	8
32	F	22	N	I	CCE	12
33	F	25	Y	I	CCE	24
34	F	28	Y	I	CCE	3
35	M	28	Y	I	CCE	8
36	F	28	N	I	CCE	12
37	F	23	N	I	CCE	8
38	M	22	N	I	CCE	9
39	M	25	N	I	CCE	3
40	M	24	N	I	CCE	12
41	M	22	N	I	CCE	3
42	M	28	N	I	CCE	36
43	M	27	N	I	CCE	36
44	F	21	N	I	CCE	9
45	M	23	N	I	CCE	13
46	F	21	N	I	CCE	13
47	M	30	N	A	Recruiter	96
48	F	40-45	Y	A	VP HR	12
49	M	25-30	N	A	HR Rep.	

*A=Administrative, D=Domestic, I=International

**Months

Interview Structure

To facilitate comprehensive and relevant discussions, most critical researchers do not rely on rigid pre-structured interviews produced through *a priori* theorization. Relying on preconceived notions too heavily and following a preordained script too closely is likely to cause the researcher to miss the unanticipated insights that often arise in organic conversations. Moreover, when conducting group interviews, researchers must be prepared to adjust to the unique and contextually dependent nature of each group (Flick, 2002). Therefore, most critical researchers use an inductive approach and build their understanding by engaging in unstructured interviews, asking open-ended questions, and using the emerging information as a guide to ongoing and future conversations. In other words, throughout the interview process, indeed throughout the entire research process, data collection and analysis is a simultaneous, mutually constitutive, and ongoing activity. This fluidity in process and purpose—which is based on the ongoing conversations between researcher and respondent(s)—also illustrates the ways in which the researcher is responsible, at least partly, for the nature of the empirical materials produced—a central recognition of the critical epistemology.

Despite my initial theoretical understanding of the emergent approach to critical research, I nevertheless, as a novice researcher, traveled to Hyderabad armed with an interview script that was essentially a verbal questionnaire based upon my theoretical and experiential preconceptions. True to the predictions of my mentors, who did their best to convince me not to become too attached to my prewritten interview questions and much to my initial discomfort, this procedural document and many of my preconceived notions

were quickly invalidated by my ongoing conversations and deepening understanding of the place. My overall research question remained the same throughout my fieldwork, however many of the insights I gained throughout this period were unexpected, forcing me to move quickly from an inert to an emergent design. Each unstructured conversation informed the next so that I was able to deepen my insights by refining my future inquiries in light of my ongoing findings. Needless to say, the end results of my research turned out considerably different from the ones I anticipated when I entered the field.

Interview Protocol

After my initial interviews, a loose interview protocol quickly formed. Upon first meeting informants, I initiated informal conversation which led typically to a discussion about the nature of our interview. I was always honest, albeit brief, when explaining the nature of my study. I told participants that I wanted to understand what was important to them as individuals and to understand their perceptions of how working in DomesTech and living in the globalizing space of Hyderabad affected them personally. I also explained that I wanted to get a feeling for what was happening in the relatively new Indian BPO industry and immediately assured all informants of the anonymous nature of our conversations. My commitment to honesty and to protecting the identity of my participants proved instrumental in establishing honest and trusting relationships.

Just as I stressed my commitment to being open and honest (I invited participants to ask me any questions—personal or other--that they wished), I emphasized the importance of honesty on the part of the respondents and encouraged anyone who might

feel uncomfortable with the nature of my inquiry or who felt unable to engage in an open and truthful conversation to excuse themselves from participation with no consequence or hard feelings. No one declined to speak with me. From my perspective, most employees seemed excited to talk with me and grew increasingly comfortable as the conversations continued. Moreover, respondents I met later in my field study seemed more comfortable talking with me than those I met during my first few days of immersion. This is likely explained by my continuous presence in the various departments and social areas of DomesTech. While my initial presence, as a white North American woman wandering the organization and meeting with select employees, was an anomaly which provoked chatter, stares, shy smiles, and surely much conjecture, I eventually became an unsurprising presence in DomesTech. I came to know many employees personally and, through word of mouth, most employees understood and accepted my presence in the organization.

However, despite this increasing state of mutual comfort between the organizational community and myself, there are still unavoidable weaknesses in the interview process related to my personal influence and to the interview method in general. For example, although my individual interviews took place in the social context of my study (i.e. in the actual organization in which these individuals work, in the city of Hyderabad, in the country of India), there was still an element of artificiality and an undeniable source of potential influence arising from my personal presence and facilitation of the interviews. Specifically, because I was an American woman supported by upper management to engage in non-routine conversations with Indian employees, it

is likely that some employees felt a sense of pressure to engage in impression management and to say “the right” thing to me. Guba and Lincoln (1981) argue that most often respondents will tend to be open and honest in their interview conversations but warn that there are also likely to be a few individuals who attempt to mislead researchers for various reasons. Indeed, there were a few occasions in which I felt that participants were telling me what they thought I wanted to hear and doing their best to look good from a managerial perspective. Thankfully, these types of responses seemed few and far between and occurred primarily in the beginning of my time at DomesTech. I’ve taken care to note and to consider critically these potentially problematic interviews in the interpretation of my data. Contributing to my confidence in the validity of my data, many respondents spoke frankly about their discomforts with American culture. By freely discussing what they saw as unfortunate and undesirable manifestations of the culture to which I belonged, they demonstrated their comfort and trust in me and with my research pursuits.

Artifacts and Documents

Supplementing the information gained from interviews and participant observation, artifacts and documents add a convenient and data rich source of information to the research endeavor (Murchison, 2010). As with most qualitative research tools, there is no single definition that succinctly qualifies something as a valid artifact or document. Useful information is determined by the researcher before, during, and after fieldwork. Accordingly, the various artifacts and documents I’ve used to

inform my research are a compilation of official and unofficial reports, fieldnotes, photos, videos, brochures, maps, and articles.

Specifically, I took copious notes and kept an ongoing field journal during my time in Hyderabad. In addition to giving me complete access to the organization, my contacts at DomesTech provided me with documents reporting extensive organizational details including structure, employee information, and performance data. Throughout my research, I triangulated these internal documents with the local, national, and international newspaper and journal articles gathered throughout years of research on this subject. I also referenced various secondary databases from industry sources like India's National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM). Finally, I documented my fieldwork with numerous photos and videos.

Analysis of Empirical Materials

Ethnographic data analysis is interpretive and differs substantially from the statistically based analyses of most conventional research. Instead of pursuing statistical significance through methods of data reduction and standardization, ethnographic researchers engage in the interpretive analysis of their data in the production of a comprehensive narrative of their experiences in the field (Carr, 2000; Alvesson & Deetz, 2000). The eventual creation of a coherent, relevant, valid, and easy to read narrative is traditionally given the most consideration when assessing the quality of ethnographic research (Prasad, 2005).

In addition to being the most important product of the research endeavor, the creation of a comprehensive narrative is also the most challenging. Researchers face the very real danger of becoming overwhelmed by the extensive amount of detailed, often contradictory, data they've collected (Fontana & Frey, 2003). I can personally attest to these dangers and to the ways in which they make it easy for researchers to stall once they've reached the analytical stage of ethnographic research. Once I finished transcribing my interviews, the reality of the hundreds of pages of data I had collected proved overwhelming. As a result, I fell into one of the most common traps of the qualitative researcher and wound up putting off the analysis of my data for some time. However, although I was not always engaged in the written analysis of my data, I was actively reflecting upon my experiences and conceptualizing my interpretations and narrative approach. This time proved critical in clarifying the direction of my final narrative.

Content Analysis

Although the interpretive analysis of ethnographic data is as much art as it is science, researchers do not have the freedom to create simply a story (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). The method of interpretation must make sense in light of the goals of the study, be grounded in the empirical materials, and adhere to established standards of rigor. To meet these requirements, I used the process of content analysis and grounded theory techniques--two of the most widely-used and accepted methods of qualitative data analysis (Flick, 2002). When engaged in content analysis, researchers reduce and organize their data and search for repetitive themes by systematically coding and sorting

it into established categories (Craig, 2000; Murchison, 2010). In creating these categories, researchers call upon a combination of pre-existing theory and inferences gained in the field to create classifications that accurately reflect the purposes of the research (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). Although content analysis provides researchers with a useful guideline for coding and organizing vast amounts of data, Locke (2003) warns that a strict adherence to a priori categorizations and content analysis risks mimicking modernist assumptions in which the researcher is attempting to validate existing theory. As I discussed in my examination of contemporary theories of cultural globalization, existing frameworks offered particular insights into my data. However, as I show in more detail in the discussion of my interpretive analyses, none offered sufficient or complete explanatory power for my data. Given the shortcomings of these existing frameworks, I turned to grounded theory techniques for a more refined research approach. Engaging with these organizational and interpretive methods helped me understand and interpret the subjective views of my informants. I was then able to use these insights to develop a grounded conceptualization of culture change. In the end, I used content analysis in the initial organization of my data and in the development of my descriptive data (e.g., age, gender, position, tenure). I used grounded theory techniques in the interpretive analysis of my data and in the eventual development of the subduction metaphor as a novel conceptualization of cultural globalization.

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory is an inductive approach to building theory from systematically collected and analyzed data (Charmaz, 2003; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). According to Glaser and Strauss, grounded theory techniques guide researchers in developing novel conceptual categorizations from perceived patterns in the data and in explaining the relationships among these various categorizations. Whereas traditional positivist research engages in the deductive approach to testing pre-existing theories, grounded theory research begins with empirical research and seeks to develop theoretical conceptualizations directly from the data (Locke, 2003). Specific to the critical paradigm, researchers use their classification schemes to facilitate new ways of thinking and to challenge commonly held assumptions (Alvesson & Deetz, 2009). This, however, does not mean that existing theory is completely ignored and that grounded theorists enter the field with no understanding of preexisting theoretical frameworks or that they enter the field with no defined research agenda. Instead, grounded theorists should enter the field having identified the “issues they hope to illuminate” (Locke, 2003, p. 44) as well as having gained a general understanding of the relevant theoretical frameworks associated with their research endeavor. However, instead of attempting to fit their data to existing frameworks, grounded theorists maintain a contingent relationship with these existing theories as they attempt to develop conceptual classifications that are grounded in the empirical data, relevant to the social actors from whom the data was gathered, and applicable to the researcher’s discipline (Locke, 2003).

When engaging my data with grounded theory techniques, I followed Glaser's (1978; 1992) advice that researchers begin to organize their empirical materials by open-coding their data. In this initial phase, I went line-by-line through my transcriptions and broke apart or "fragmented" my data into individual components. In this stage, which is similar to content analysis, I assigned provisional categories to data incidents or fragments. I then grouped similar incidents together into these initial categories. Throughout this reorganizational process, I maintained all identifying information such that I was always able to attribute these individual fragments of data to the individual respondent and to associate it with the contextual details of the interview. According to Locke (2003), this process of breaking apart large blocks of transcribed data allows the researcher to see the data more clearly and to immerse herself in the details rather than becoming attached or overwhelmed by large blocks of interview data. Once I completed this initial reorganization, I was in a better position to immerse myself in the data and to develop more substantive categories (Locke, 2003). However, as I discussed above, I did not engage with this process with no prior theoretical leanings or research agenda. Indeed I was guided by my initial interests in understanding how working in DomesTech affected the material and environmental values of my respondents. I was also influenced by my tentative relationship with the Bhabhian theory of cultural hybridity. However, as I discuss in the interpretive analysis of my data, my grounded analysis led me to some unexpected insights and categories. I continued with this process of deeply reflecting upon, renaming, and reorganizing my data until I was satisfied with my final categories

and began to see relationships among these categories. I discuss these grounded categories in the interpretive analysis and final discussion of my data.

Conclusion

In conclusion, although I went into the field hoping to examine the relationships between call center work and potential changes in the material and ecological values in the employees of DomesTech, my expectations were quickly complicated by my experiences in the field. To remain true to my ethnographic intentions of understanding and interpreting my data from my respondents' perspectives, I had to let my data guide my ongoing analysis and data collection in ways that continued to move me further away from my original intentions, but which also provided me with unexpected insights into the realities of culture change in my respondents. In the following chapters, I present these findings through the interpretive analyses of my empirical materials. Specifically, in chapter five, I discuss the salient value of family centrality and the specific collective behaviors and values my respondents' family values informed. I also discuss the ways in which my respondents were adopting a hybridizing sense of individualism within the family collective. In chapter six, I discuss my respondents' material value orientations and consumer behaviors. In this chapter, I pay particular attention to their adoption of Western notions of customer service. In chapter seven, I discuss my respondents' ecological values and relate these values to the environmental challenges facing their city. Finally, in chapter eight, I discuss the relationships among these various values. I then present my grounded theory development of the subduction metaphor as an

alternative conceptualization of the changes taking place within my respondents' values and behaviors.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERPRETIVE ANALYSIS: FAMILY VALUES

As I moved back and forth between data collection and analysis, the primacy of family emerged as a dominant theme. Although I entered the field interested in examining the relationships between call center work and the material and environmental values and behaviors of my respondents, our conversations converged strongly around their views about the importance of family. Throughout most of my interviews, respondents spoke of the ways in which supporting and maintaining their families were their primary concerns. It quickly became apparent that the only way to understand the implications of call center work on the values and behaviors I originally hoped to examine was to understand the role of family in my respondents' lives.

In light of its documented prominence in Indian society (e.g., Banerjee, 2008; Shivani, Mukherjee & Sharan, 2006; Sooryamoorthy, 2012), the salience of my informants' family values is not an altogether surprising finding. The relevance of this finding is also somewhat obscured by the likelihood that most people throughout the world consider their families as a primary source of importance and influence in their lives. However, the centrality of family in my respondents' lives was distinct from traditional Western notions of family in terms of the collective values and behaviors it inspired and the tight structure it informed (Jain & Joy, 1997). It was also particularly relevant to my research by the pronounced ways it influenced the material values and consumer behaviors of my respondents. These findings gain further value when

contrasted with some of the dire predictions of the collapse of the traditional Indian family wrought by the modernization of Indian society and the spread of Western values (e.g., Carson & Chowdhury, 2000; Ghosh, 2011; Prasad, 2006). Contrary to my initial assumptions and to the narratives of the Westernization of India, my data suggest the value of family was more influential in my respondents' lives than were the potentially conflicting values they encountered in their professional positions. At the same time, my research suggests some interesting examples of hybridization within the larger value of family--particularly with regard to traditional hierarchical roles within the family unit.

In the following pages, I support these conclusions by relating my informants' discussions of the ways in which their family values informed collective values of familial obligation and influenced their living arrangements, financial management, and decision making. I also discuss the ways in which call center work influenced my respondents' family values resulting in a hybridizing sense of individualism within the traditional family collective. To demonstrate this hybridizing individualism, I discuss my respondents' changing views on the institution of marriage. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of the ways in which my informant's family values influenced their decision to remain in India for the duration of their lives. With these discussions, I also establish the foundation for my subsequent analysis of informants' material values and consumer behaviors which were influenced more by their family values than by the global influences they encountered in DomesTech. I begin by discussing the literature on the Indian family.

The Indian Family

Despite the diverse and pluralistic nature of Indian society⁹, family has long been recognized as one of the more salient of Indian values and institutions (Carson & Chowdhury, 2000; Kashyap, 2004; Khare, 2011). According to Sooryamoorthy (2012), the Indian family serves as the primary source of “nurture, growth, support, values, and development” (p.1) in Indian society. Given its centrality, the value of family informs a well documented set of collective values and behavioral expectations among Indian family members (Jain & Joy, 1997). Individual identities are aligned with the family identity while individual needs are subordinated to those of the family (Banerjee, 2008). Cooperation and sharing are fundamental and familial bonds are emphasized. The family also serves as the primary source of value formation and transmission from older to younger generations (Medora, 2007). As a traditional patriarchal society (Gupta, 2011; Radhakrishnan, 2002), these values and behaviors are often established and enforced by the strong hierarchical structure of the Indian family in which the eldest male assumes ultimate authority over all of the family’s social and economic affairs (Bhat & Dhruvaarajan, 2001; Misra, 1995; Sooryamoorthy, 2012).

The patriarchal, patrilineal, and patrilocal traditions of the Indian family also inform particular values and behaviors with respect to gender roles and expectations as well as relationships and responsibilities within the family unit (Radhakrishnan, 2002). Power and property are traditionally passed along male lines (Newbigin, 2010). It is assumed that children will live at home with their parents until marriage, which is traditionally

⁹ There are many variations of family structures and values in India. However, because the majority of the population—in both India and my sample--are Hindu, my discussion focuses primarily on traditional Hindu family structure and values.

arranged by the parents or extended family (Medora, 2007). After marriage, sons are expected to live with their wives and families in the same household as their parents and to assume their parents' care until death (Donner, 2002). Married daughters are expected to move into their husbands' households and to serve the needs of her in-laws for the duration of their lives (Kallivayalil, 2004). Male children are generally preferred over female children, as it is assumed they will remain with their parents and support them in their old age (Carson & Chowdhury, 2000; Khanna, 1997). Female children are often perceived as an economic burden, unable to contribute to the financial well being of the household and, moreover, as a liability because marriage is traditionally dependent upon a significant dowry from the bride's family (Khanna, 1997).

The different perceptions of male and female roles and their respective abilities to contribute to the family often contribute to different parenting and socialization styles (Shivani, Mukherjee & Sharan, 2006). Because male children are expected to eventually assume all of the family's financial responsibilities, they are traditionally more pampered, taught to be more assertive and independent, and afforded more education than are girls. Because Indian girls are traditionally expected to be good housewives, their upbringings have tended to be much stricter and more sheltered than those of their brothers (Medora, 2007).

Although most researchers agree that family centrality is one of the most important of Indian values, there is also a general consensus that that the Indian family has been impacted by the forces of globalization (e.g., Bhat & Dhruvaarajan, 2001; Sheth, 2009; Medora, 2007). For example, Indians are increasingly mobile within the subcontinent as

educated individuals leave their families for new professional opportunities in other regions of the country and less educated individuals are increasingly forced to migrate away from rural areas into urban areas in search of work. The role of women in Indian society has also changed drastically over the last decade. Fifteen years ago, women were almost non-existent in India's professional world. Today, women's participation in the professional world is growing and they currently occupy about 50 per cent of India's BPO workforce (Nadeem, 2007). Supporting these statistics, half of my respondents were women. Divorce rates are on the rise and families are getting smaller. While few debate the significance of these factors to the traditional Indian family, there are considerable differences of opinion with regard to the nature of these changes and the future role of family in India (Sooryamoorthy, 2012).

For example, there is ample evidence that suggests the Indian family is becoming smaller and more nuclear (Amato, 1994; Bhat & Dhruvaarajan, 2001; Medora, 2007). In other words, the traditional extended or joint Indian family¹⁰ is diminishing while the more typical Western model of the small nuclear family is becoming more prevalent. Many researchers have suggested that these structural changes are also associated with changes in traditional family values (i.e. family centrality, sharing, cooperation, familial obligation). According to Medora (2001), the structure of the Indian family is changing as a direct result of the impingement of Western influences on the "traditional ways of life, values, beliefs, and familial obligations" (p. 188). Similarly, Bhat and Dhruvaarajan

¹⁰ For the purposes of this paper, joint family refers to the structure in which distant relatives live together in the same household (e.g. aunts, uncles, cousins). Extended family refers to multiple generations of the same family living together (e.g. grandparents, parents, children).

(2001) write that these changes are eroding both the traditional structure of the family as well as the collective values and strong intergenerational bonds between family members.

While there is little doubt that the external structure of the Indian family is changing under the forces of globalization, much less is known about potential changes taking place in the internal values espoused by the individual members of the “new” Indian family. Ramu (1988) suggests that our preoccupation with examining changes in the structure of the family has given rise to a research paradigm that fails to consider the realities of the individuals who live within them. Although there has been much speculation about the connections among changes in the external structure of the Indian family, the increasing adoption of Western capitalist values like individual achievement and material accumulation (Chekki, 1996), and the collapse of the “traditional” Indian family (e.g., Carson, Jain, & Ramirez, 2009; Nelson, 2006), there is little empirical research to support these claims (D’Cruz & Bharat, 2001).

Given the unique integration of Western, global, and Indian influences present in DomesTech, I was in a unique position to examine the implications of these various forces on the traditional Indian family—from both a structural and values perspective. Through my conversations and participant observation, I found little evidence of direct relationships between working in DomesTech, changes in external family structures, and the decline of family as a central value in the lives of my respondents. Although some individuals discussed the smaller size of their extended families, the general notion of family as a central and fundamental value was unaffected by any changes in external

structure. Demonstrating this, one 23-year-old unmarried male international CCE lamented the shrinking size of his extended family saying:

My family...10 years ago, for any vacation, winter vacation, summer vacation, we used to gather in one place. 75 people, we used to spend around 30 to 35 days spending together. Sharing things, cooking together. Now the gathering happens and there are only around 8 to 10 people. My family and one other family. That's it.

Despite the smaller size of his family gatherings, he continually spoke of the ways in which his family remained of utmost importance and served as the primary influence in his life. From his choice of undergraduate studies to his future aspirations of owning a luxury car so that he could take his entire family comfortably together to a movie, the impacts his decisions made on his family were his most important considerations. In the following passage, he explains how his decision to pursue undergraduate studies in mechanical engineering was influenced by multiple generations of his family:

My father decided for me...because my father wanted to be a mechanical engineer. My grandfather wanted my father to be a mechanical engineer. By the time my father realized the importance of engineering, my grandfather had expired. It was his dream to be a mechanical engineer and so I wanted to fulfill the dream of my father and my grandfather.

Although my research provides limited support for the documented structural changes taking place in terms of the size of the traditional extended family, I found that some of the other structural facets of the traditional Indian family were more impervious to change within the context of my research. For example, most of my respondents still upheld and believed strongly in patrilocal traditions wherein male children remain with

their parents for life and females until marriage. Almost all respondents who lived in close proximity to their parents lived with them in the same household. When speaking about their intentions to remain at home with their or their husbands' families, my respondents spoke with clear conviction. Many elucidated the importance and distinctiveness of this tradition within their lives and within Indian society by comparing Indian patrilocality to traditional North American notions of independence and the expectations associated with granting U.S. children independence at the age of 18:

So, I stay with my mom and dad and that is the way it is going to be.
Interview Question: You live in the same house with your parents?
Respondent: Absolutely, everybody does. Interview Question: When you get married are you going to stay with your parents? Respondent: Yeah!
(his inflection and tone of voice imply that this is the most obvious answer in the world.) (30 year-old unmarried Recruiter)

And even the culture we follow because we take care of our children. Because, I believe in the US, after 18 years, the children will go out of the house and they need to take care about themselves and their careers. It is not in India like that. (25-year-old married female international CCE)

I never heard anyone (referring to her American customers) saying that after the child of 18 will stay with them. After that they will be gone. But coming to India, it is completely different. We stay here together and all. Here a son of age 40-50 years will stay with his parents. In America, once a person is 18 years, he has to go and earn to have his credit, he has to go and earn. (23-year-old unmarried female international CCE)

Those who did not live with their families were typically away from home for the purpose of furthering their careers and intended to rejoin the family structure once their fortunes allowed. Given the relatively young age and unmarried status of most of my respondents, the fact that they continued to live with their parents while they began their careers is much less of a finding than the ways in which their collective values and

behaviors within their family units (i.e. cooperation, sharing, familial obligation, and hierarchy) were upheld and/or undergoing interesting hybridizations. In the clearest example of the perseverance of collective family values and familial obligation, most of my respondents contributed all or most of their salaries to their families. At the same time, their ability to contribute to the financial well being of the family was serving to change traditional notions of hierarchy within the family unit. In the following section, I discuss my respondents' financial support of their families and the ways in which this simultaneously maintained traditional collective values and contributed to a hybridized sense of individualism within the traditional family hierarchy. In addition to providing interesting insight into the nature of some of the changes taking place in my respondents' family values, this focus of my analysis also provides interesting comparative insights into the different realities faced by the employees of various call centers.

Familial Obligation

A number of researchers have noted an increasing desire for independence among Indian youth (e.g., Kashyap, 2004; Nadeem, 2011; Sooryamoorthy, 2012). Some have specifically related call center work with increased social and economic independence (e.g., Ramesh, 2004; Prasad, 2006) and the loss of traditional identity markers like family (e.g., Sheth, 2009; Pal & Buzzanell, 2008). In their study of an international call center in Northern India, Pal and Buzzanell (2008) describe their respondents as euphoric about the economic freedom afforded to them through call center work. They write that that their respondents used their earnings primarily as “pocket money” or disposable income

to be spent on the “alluring trappings of modern India (e.g., discos, frequent eating out, buying expensive clothes)” (p. 49). In comparison, working at DomesTech provided most of my respondents—both domestic and international agents—with a way to contribute to the support and maintenance of their families. Their earnings were not simply pocket money to be spent in any way they wished. Most respondents actually had little control over their earnings. Instead, they contributed some or all of their monthly salaries to the running of the household. Depending upon the economic background and financial pressures facing the family, the parents then typically allocated this money among household needs, savings, and an allowance for the son or daughter. Those who did not give their checks over were typically the heads of their own households or were from families with relatively strong economic positions:

I give it, my salary, to my mom. If I need anything, she gives to me. Whenever I want money, she will give it to me. Whenever I need money she will give it to me. (21-year-old unmarried female international CCE)

The whole salary I will give with my mom and whatever I need I will take it but I don't expect monthly pocket money. (22 year-old unmarried female domestic CCE)

I take care of mom, dad, the house, the rent...everything. It is my turn now to pay all the bills. For any son, you end up being there. For a daughter it might be different if she ends up going to a different family.
Interview Question: Are you happy to have that responsibility?
Respondent: It is part of my life. It is not that I am happy or unhappy. You don't even think about it. You ask the question “do you think about your parents living with you?” It is not a question. (30 year-old unmarried Recruiter)

I know that Americans they will tell their child after 18 years you are on your own, so you have got to live your own life. That is a difference. But here in India, we are born to the family and will be for life. Interview Question: Do you have any interest in becoming financially independent from your family? Respondent: No. (22 year-old unmarried male international CCE)

Hybridizing Individualism

Although most of my respondents espoused collective values of sharing and familial obligation by living at home and contributing their earnings to their families, many related the maintenance of these values and behaviors with interesting changes in the traditional hierarchical/patriarchal structure and values within the family. They credited DomesTech and the growing BPO industry with providing them the opportunity to earn decent salaries earlier in their lives than their parents were able to. As a result, they had more individual influence on the important decisions of their lives (e.g., schooling, career, marriage) than their parents had at their age.

Speaking to this, Ghimire, Axinn, Yabiku, and Thornton (2006) write that interfamily relationships change as children engage in more organized activities (e.g., school, work) outside of the household. With increasing knowledge and skills gained from non-family activities, children are able to contribute new ideas and resources into the family structure. As a result, parents gain more respect for the child and value their input more than when the child was simply dependent upon the family. As parents value their children's input more, children then learn to value their individual ability to influence the household.

Discussing these changes within the Indian context, Nadeem (2009) writes that the frequency with which young Indians now out-earn their parents is contributing to changes in typical structures of authority in the family. Arguing about the nature of these changes, Bhat and Dhruvaarajan (2001) suggest that the traditional hierarchy of the Indian family wherein all decisions are made by the central patriarch for the good of the collective is being replaced by a more individualistic (i.e. Western) model in which personal decisions are made outside of the family hierarchy. My research provides interesting insight into the existence and nature of the potential changes taking place within the family values of my respondents. My respondents' ability to contribute to the financial well being of their families provided many of them with increasing individual influence within the family collective, indicating shifts in the typical family hierarchy. At the same time, my data suggest that the realities of these changes are much more complex and nuanced than is allowed for in the notion of a linear shift from Indian familial collectivism to Western individualism.

While working at DomesTech provided most of my respondents with more influence within the family structure, these changes did not suggest dissolution of the traditional hierarchy of the family. My respondents embraced and valued their increasing independence within the family structure; they also had no intention or desire to remove themselves completely from it. They were proud of their ability to contribute to their families and progress toward their career ambitions earlier than their parents had been able to. At the same time, they had no interest in establishing separate financial and/or personal lives distinct from their families. These changes suggest complex hybridizations

in which the dominance of the patriarch as the centralized decision maker of the family is giving way to a more inclusive model in which the individual has more input into their personal decisions. However, these shifts do not suggest a full swing of the pendulum in which the centralized model is transforming into that of the typical Western family. By providing my respondents with an unprecedented opportunity to earn and contribute to their families, call center work facilitated a unique and hybridizing sense of individualism that remained firmly entrenched within the family collective:

Our parents did this when they were in their 30's or 40's but now even the moment the person enters in this stream, we start earning, saving our money, buying our own cars, motorbikes, our possessions. There were days when our grandparents would buy clothes for our parents even after they are married but now we earn, we buy our own clothes. But, it was not in those days. I feel good that I bought this dress. I bought whatever I wear now, because this is what I earned. It is a kind of satisfaction that we feel. We have pride, in other words. But still whatever we earn, we give it to our parents first. We first put it into their hands and then we go out and have something. (23 year-old unmarried international CCE)

Offering further support that these changes are unique hybridizations taking place within the values of my respondents and that they do not suggest converging values of individualism between India and the West, many of my respondents clearly articulated that they had no interest in adopting what they saw as rather harsh Western family values:

The people [in the U.S.] are very dedicated to their works. They will go according to their timings. They will not even be with their families. Even for one minute, one minute is very precious for them. The first importance to us in India is our families. Apart from that, we will look after our jobs and all. Other countries first choice is given to careers. Careers and then they will think about their families. You people try to be like independent. Not dependent with your parents. Whatever you do, you depend by yourself. But, in India, we take decisions from our parents

first...whether we should do something or not. Interview Question: Which do you prefer? Do you want to be independent? Respondent: No, I would like to ask my parents whatever I do. (23 year-old unmarried domestic CCE)

I don't find you people to be too much attached to your family. I'm not too sure. I watch a lot of American movies. The one thing about them—we watch the movies so we can learn the language from them. There are not always good things. Negative I feel is that they are too much of independent at a younger age. You don't bother with your parents. You don't have that attachment. You just go out and do. You just make your money so you have your own decisions to take it. You don't involve parents. In India, even if you are 30 or 40 or 50 you have an attachment with your parents. You speak with them. Your day doesn't go if you don't speak to your mom and dad. It doesn't go. (28 year-old unmarried domestic Trainer)

Hybridizing Individualism and Marriage

Providing a clear example of this hybridizing individualism within the family collective, many of my respondents--both male and female/international and domestic--spoke of their increasing ability to factor into their own marriage decisions. Most marriages in India continue to be arranged by parents or extended families (Medora, 2007). In the typical arranged marriage, couples generally do not get to know each other before the wedding. The primary goal of the union is to strengthen both sides of the extended families. The individual happiness of the bride and groom is secondary to the collective needs of the families. Over the past decade, however, Indians' attitudes about marriage appear to be changing. Whereas in the past, individuals had little to no input into the choice of their spouse, they are now more frequently consulted by their parents about potential mates (Allendorf, 2013). Moreover, an increasing number of Indians

prefer to choose their spouse on their own and enter into a “love marriage” (Donner, 2002; Ghosh, 2011).

Here again, researchers have speculated about the nature of these changes, often suggesting that they represent the Westernization of a traditional Indian institution. Sooryamoorthy (2012) argues that these trends represent a significant shift away from traditional patterns of centralized familial decision making into a more Westernized form of individualized decision making. In an interesting adaptation of modernization theory, Thornton (2005) describes these changes as “ideational development” arguing that economic development leads to predictable changes in family life because individuals buy into the ideals espoused by the narrative of modernization. As development increases, individuals deliberately abandon traditional values and behaviors as they seek to modernize according to their globally informed ideals. Included among these ideals is that of the “modern” (i.e. Western) (Allendorf, 2013) family in which individuals freely choose their partners and engage willingly in a marriage of affection.

My research validates, to a degree, the changing values taking place with respect to marriage. The insights my informants shared with me about their changing views on marriage also served to validate the hybridizing individualism taking place within the family collective. For example, most of my respondents explained that, unlike their own parents, they were able to participate in their own marriage decisions. Moreover, if they felt strongly about a particular person, most suggested that their parents would support their choice of a love marriage. At the same time, my data does not support the notion that these changes are indicative of a full scale change in which Indians are taking

marriage decisions into their own hands and removing it completely from the family hierarchy. Although my respondents valued their increasing ability to influence their parents and to partake in the marital decision-making process, none wanted to make an important decision like marriage independent of their parents. Almost all of my respondents were completely comfortable with having their parents involved in arranging their marriages. In contrast to Thornton's argument that individuals around the world idealize the "modern" family, my respondents explained that removing their parents from such an important life decision would be foolish, as their parents knew them better than they knew themselves and had only their best interests at heart. My data suggest that Thornton oversimplifies the changes taking place in the Indian institution of marriage by suggesting that arranged marriages are evolving into "modern" love marriages. Instead, these changes are better explained as the hybridization of arranged marriage into an arranged-love partnership among two willing individuals and their respective families:

If we meet someone and we like them, we will just go to our parents and tell them this is the thing. They will support. If I want to marry someone, she has to see me, she has to know me. Earlier it was not like that. This is the person, you have to marry that person. (24 year-old unmarried male domestic CCE)

Taking a marriage will be a very strong position and so I will take the advice of my mom...because sometimes I might make a mistake but my mom and my parents knows more what I need exactly. (21 year-old unmarried female international CCE)

Interview Question: Is your marriage arranged? Respondent: Yes, it is an arranged marriage. Actually it is my cousin and I've met him for the first time at my cousin's marriage. They asked about me and my mother fixed the marriage. My mother knows very well about me and about marriage she knows very well but my mother knows better about me so when she said that I marry him, I agreed. (22 year-old engaged female domestic CCE)

We enjoy mom and dad picking someone for us. The thing I feel like is changing is I feel you should have a rapport with that person. Understand that person...understand the person rather than getting blindly married to a person. Indian tradition is too much of accepting what your mom and dad says. (35 year-old married female domestic Trainer)

Family and the Choice to Remain in India

Further illustrating the delicate balance between an increased sense of independence and loyalty to traditional family values, most respondents expressed an unequivocal interest and intention to remain in India for the rest of their lives. They were proud of their increasing ability to earn and to contribute to their families and valued their growing independence. They were also grateful for the ways in which their careers in the BPO industry gave them the ability to stay in India and make a decent living so that they could remain with their families. When I asked one recruitment manager if he would like to follow his sister who had emigrated to the U.S., he responded:

Never...now we have more opportunities here, if we can create that type of opportunity here, why should I leave and go to the US and leave my parents? Because I am born in a culture where I am supposed to take care of my parents. That is a big thing. That runs the family. You have to stick to your social structure. (30 year-old unmarried male Recruiter)

We are getting very good opportunities here where we can earn for ourselves. Without going out and being far away from the place and the parents. We can be here and look after our parents and earn for ourselves. We feel like this place is our mother and we cannot leave our mother. It feels like it is a mother India. We are all in this family, so why would we leave this place? Let's create something here. (22 year-old unmarried male international CCE)

Relations are important...family. These are the things we want. If we move from this place, we won't have it. If you look at Indian people, they love enjoying their life with their families and close by friends. That really matters because of the love that you get from your family. (22 year old unmarried female international CCE)

Their strong views about remaining in India also provide interesting insights into the diminishing allure of the West amidst shifting global power relations and the rise of what some suggest will be the "Asian Century" (Khadria, 2009). In addition to allowing many young professionals to stay in India for the entirety of their careers, the growing Indian economy and lure of home and family is also attracting many of the professionals who left in earlier decades back to India (Gupta & Tyagi, 2011; Mandal, 2011). Reflecting upon these changes, one upper level manager, who himself worked for a time in the U.S., described the new opportunities provided by the growing Indian BPO industry and explains that Indians no longer want to go abroad like they used to:

In the last five years, a lot of people who have gone abroad come back and work in BPO. People want to stay in India. People want to do something here. By staying here, they are sure they can do something to contribute to their families, to their society. We can grow here. A lot of people are staying after even graduate degrees because they can make increasing amounts of money in India. (35-40 year-old married male International Process Department Head)

The mindsets of people are changing, they are looking to doing a little bit more. Earlier the mindset used to be if you want to look at growing big thing have to look at moving to the US. Now, that mindset is slowly changing. (34 year-old unmarried male Domestic Manager)

What we need to financially succeed, to succeed in society, we are getting everything here, so we don't have to do it [go abroad]. The trend was here that people had to go outside to work until I would say about five years ago. But, it is rapidly changing here. We are not going outside. We are working here and we are getting much more job opportunities. (23 year old unmarried female international CCE)

In the new India I do not have to cross my country for future or better prospects. I can stay with my parents and I can earn financially. This IT industry, it was around the world but not in India at one point in time. So, 80% of my family members, they are in the United States. They are all professionals—all doctors, all engineers. But now, my generation and nobody is trying to go to United states. We want to be in India, we have a place in India. I can work here. (23 year-old unmarried male international CCE)

In conclusion, the strong convergence in my data around my respondents' family values and interesting insights into hybridizations taking place within the collective values and behaviors of the traditional family suggest that family remains a critical lens through which to view other values and experiences of my respondents. Throughout my conversations and data analysis, my attempts to understand the ways in which call center work influenced their material values and consumer behaviors were most often related through the value of family. In the following chapter, I discuss the ways in which their material values and consumer behaviors were influenced by their family values.

CHAPTER SIX

CONSUMER CULTURE AND MATERIAL VALUES

Researchers have long been interested in understanding the relationships between globalization, economic development, and consumer culture (e.g., Belk, 1982; McCracken, 1986; Inglehart & Baker, 2001; Ritzer, 1993). Of particular interest is the degree to which various societies around the globe are becoming more materialistic as a result of global integration and economic development (e.g., Inglehart & Baker, 2001). Identified by many as an entrenched value within the United States (e.g., Gill, 1995; Kilbourne & Pickett, 2008), materialism is characterized by a host of value and behavioral factors—many of which are associated with negative personal and social outcomes (Podoshen & Andrzejewski, 2012). Kilbourne & Pickett (2008) write that individuals with high levels of materialism define their well-being in terms of consumption and Belk (1984) suggests that these individuals have high degrees of possessiveness, non-generosity, and envy.

As with the larger examination of cultural globalization, various interpretations of the relationships between globalization and materialism have been theorized (Alden, Steenkamp, & Batra, 2006). One school of thought, informed by the general theory of cultural convergence, suggests that globalization is associated with the predictable rise in homogenized material values and consumer behaviors (e.g., Alden, Steenkamp, & Batra, 1999; Hannerz, 1990; Levit, 1983; Ritzer, 1993). Most researchers have moved beyond these over-simplistic assumptions to forward more complex interpretations of the relationships between globalization and materialism that are more in line with the thesis

of cultural hybridization. According to this view, the relationships between globalization and materialism are not predictably linear but are instead complex and contextually dependent (Turner, 2003).

For example, Inglehart and Baker (2001) suggest that economic development is associated with predictable shifts in general cultural values but that these overall changes are subject to the unique influences and histories of individual societies. They argue that increased economic development in poorer countries generally increases the material values of individuals but, at the same time, caution against interpreting converging patterns in consumption with the underlying values informing consumption choices. Similarly, McCracken (1986) argues that although globalization and economic development are associated with a convergence in consumer goods, the values informing the consumption of these goods are contextually dependent. In other words, the meanings people associate with their consumption activities cannot simply be extrapolated from the goods they consume. To understand changing consumption patterns, we have to look to the values and experiences of the individuals driving these changes.

Consumer Culture and Material Values in the Indian Context

Given the significant economic and social changes in Indian society over the past two decades, there has been considerable speculation about the ways in which India's development has encouraged the growth of a materialistic consumer society (Gupta, 2011; Lukose, 2009; Nadeem, 2011). As the Indian economy continues to expand and

consumption levels increase, India is seen by some as evolving away from its traditional past and into a more modern and materialistic society (e.g., Ghosh, 2011; Van Wessel, 2004). Normative assessments of the rise of the Indian consumer society range from neoliberalist praise of Indian citizens' new found consumptive powers to detractors who pejoratively frame increasing consumption as Western materialism and link it with the demise of traditional Indian values like family (Khare, 2011; McMillin, 2006).

As vanguards of the "new" India, call center workers are often portrayed as aspiring young materialists who, heady with money and independence, are recreating an American-style mall culture in India (Lin, 2008; Noronha & DeCruz, 2009). Popular images of Indian call centers depict young Indians driven by a growing sense of Western individualism and materialism (e.g., Chakravarty, 2004; Nelson, 2006; Kalita, 2005; Prasad, 2006). Nadeem (2009) suggests that call center workers balance the demands and stresses of working in the night shift by engaging their "hefty salaries" in "consumption binges at local malls" (p.29). In a case study of international call center workers in Kolkata, Pal and Buzzanell (2008) write that a career in a call center served as a "springboard" (p. 49) for lifetime access to previously unattainable luxuries and argue that these factors herald considerable changes in the social and cultural fabric of Indian society. However, many of these conclusions are based on what Indians buy (e.g., Ghosh, 2011), not on the meanings they attach to their purchases (Van Wessel, 2004). Just as the external structure of the Indian family cannot fully explain the internal dynamics of the family, quantitative consumption data do not give us a complete

understanding of the meanings attached to increased consumer spending in the Indian context (Inglehart & Baker, 2001).

My research into DomesTech provided me with a unique vantage from which to examine these issues. My respondents shared insights that add critical nuance to our understanding of the relationships between call center work and changing values of materialism and consumer behavior. Contrary to popular depictions of young call center workers as aspiring materialists, my respondents did not frame their identities from the things call center work allowed them to acquire. Instead, they spoke of themselves as grounded within their family units. Moreover, while most employees of export-oriented BPO organizations come from “the privileged castes and classes” (Nadeem, 2011, p. 3), most of my respondents were new entrants to the lower echelons of the middle class and thus exhibited little of the materialistic concerns or conspicuous consumption often attributed to those who’ve experienced upward mobility within the middle class. While working at DomesTech allowed them to buy more things, the values and meanings they attached to their purchases were more complex than the typical status-seeking purchases associated with materialist values (Berthal, Crockett & Rose, 2005; Burroughs and Rindfleisch, 2002; Richins and Dawson, 1993). Instead, my respondents’ consumer behaviors were most informed by their strong family values. They valued their increasing ability to consume for the contributions this consumption allowed them to make to their families, not for the ways in which the acquisition of things increased their own prestige or status. In the following sections, I discuss the meanings respondents

attached to their consumer purchases and the ways in which these meanings influenced their use of credit cards and savings behaviors.

Consumer Culture, Material Values, and the Family

The narrative associating the decline of the Indian family with the Westernization of Indian society is often inseparable from the narrative detailing the rise of the Indian consumer society (e.g. Mohan, 2011). According to this view, India's increasing consumption rates are explained primarily by a growth in Western materialist values that encourage the individual pursuit of status, self-gratification, and the subsequent decline of community and family (Van Wessel, 2004). Although this is a compelling narrative and no doubt has relevance and validity in certain situations, even perhaps within certain segments of the population, it is too broad to explain accurately the increasing consumer behaviors of all Indians. While consumption rates are increasing throughout most segments of the Indian population, my data suggest that material values are not always responsible for these changing consumer behaviors. My respondents explained that their changing consumer behaviors were influenced much more by their family values than they were by materialist pursuits.

Whereas Mathur (2010) broadly suggests that young Indians receive pleasure from consumption by way of elevated social status among their peers, I found that the pleasure of consumption in my respondents was strongly informed by contributing to or elevating the family. This does not mean that they did not enjoy, were not proud, or did not draw at least some of their identities from their consumer goods. Indeed, the

“alluring trappings” they could now purchase were certainly mentioned as benefits of call center work. However, for many, these trappings were valued less for their material properties than for the ways in which they could contribute to the happiness of the family. In other words, they sought utility through consumption, not in consumption. Even if my respondents had been driven by the materialist values often associated with young call center workers, the fact that most of them handed their entire monthly salaries over to their families left them with no opportunities to indulge in the shopping binges so often attributed to Indian call center workers:

First, I have given my offering to God. The second month I’ve purchased something for my mom and dad. The third month I purchased a mobile for my sister and I have given some of my salary to my sister, she wanted to buy a bike. (25-year-old unmarried female)

I was almost in tears, when my mom actually wanted to buy a television and she had to sacrifice it because of my college fees. So, the first thing I did was buy a television for my mom. I wanted to fulfill their dreams because they have sacrificed their dreams for the growth of my career and so it is the time for me to do things for them. And so, earning for me is important. (23-year-old unmarried male international CCE)

Recently I have taken some gifts for my sister because this week is her birthday. Two gifts I got because I've been saving my money since June actually. One I have got a sari for her, and a salwar kameez. (23 year-old unmarried female domestic CCE)

Materialism and Brand Value

Much has been made about the Indian middle class’ growing materialism and conspicuous consumption of global, or more specifically, Western brands in post-liberal India (e.g., Gupta, 2011; Mukherjee, 2012). Prior to 1991, consumption was generally seen as necessities-based (Mathur, 2010)--especially when compared to the notable rise

of conspicuous consumerism in the West. With liberalization, foreign consumer goods began to flood the Indian market and domestic products were suddenly challenged by an influx of global brands (Mann & Byun, 2010). Indian consumers went from having almost no choices in the products they purchased to store shelves packed with a variety of items from household goods to luxury items from around the world (Ghosh, 2011). During this period, the national discourse of consumption shifted away from Ghandian austerity and Nehurvian collectivism to a more market-oriented focus on individual accumulation and consumerism (Deshpande, 2004; D’Mello & Sahay, 2007). New forms of global media intensified the discourse of modernization by encouraging Indians to abandon their failed past and to join in the global consumer economy (Mazzarella, 2003). In this period, global brands were both advertised and perceived by many as more prestigious than domestic goods (Khare, 2011). As a result, the consumption of brand named goods has increased considerably in the decades since liberalization.

Many have taken the increased consumption of branded goods as evidence of the rising material values of the Indian population (e.g., Gupta, 2011; Souiden, M’Saad, & Pons, 2011). Some researchers explain materialistic Indian youth—particularly young international call centers—as obsessed with seeking status through the consumption of Western brands (e.g., Gupta, 2011). Once again, however, the direct connection between the consumption of branded items and material values is often spurious and cannot be generalized across an entire population. Brands mean different things to different people. It is not sufficient to extrapolate the adoption of materialistic values from the consumption of brand named items alone. While materialists tend to seek prestige and

status through expensive branded items (Richins & Dawson, 1992), others look to brands for functional information about the quality of the product. It is essential to understand the meanings Indians attach to their brand preferences—particularly in light of the limited choices and notoriously poor quality of many Indian products prior to liberalization. My findings call into question the regularity with which increased consumption of branded goods is equated with the values of Western materialism.

When asked to discuss their feelings about brands, most of my respondents explained that they preferred branded items. However, when asked to explain why they preferred brand names, most used functional terms like “quality”. They felt that branded items were of higher quality than the large volumes of unbranded consumer goods common in informal market places. Providing an interesting practical example, a number of respondents explained that only a decade ago brand named manufactured clothing was not readily available to them. They used to wear hand-made clothes of inferior cloth and construction. With their call center salaries, however, they could afford branded clothes made of better quality cloth and more convenient manufacturing:

People used to take cloth and get clothes stitched. Right now, we are working for a BPO, we are earning Rs. 10,000 (app. \$170/month) other people are earning less and wearing ordinary cloth. If you buy the branded you get better quality. Previously we used to stitch our clothes because we didn't have the access to these branded, manufactured things but now we are getting easy access to those clothes. So, why not go with that? (22-year-old unmarried male international CCE)

Although most of my respondents preferred to purchase brand named goods, they were not mindless consumers of Western brands. Given their low levels of materialism, the consumption of brands was informed by the utility of their consumption, not the

prestige of the purchase (Alden, Steenkamp, & Batra, 2006). While they consumed more and were more concerned with brands than their contemporaries in pre-liberal India, they were informed and concerned with getting the most for their money. As such, Western brands held little inherent or symbolic value. As long as the item was of high quality and value, it did not matter if it came from India, the U.S., or anywhere else. While Western brands may have been privileged with novelty and prestige in the first 10-15 years of liberalization, increased competition, familiarity, and a growing consumer savvy have diminished their power:

It [post-liberalized India] is different from old India. Old India was...I considered it was in a closed loop. It did not have any exposure and talking about the normal and average Indian he used to talk about government, he used to talk about farming and agriculture or about industry, and that's it. That was almost only five years ago. And if you completed your degree, you should be an engineer or a doctor—that's it. If you want to buy a product, there is only one. There was only one brand for that. If you want to buy a car, there was only one car. But now you see the average Indian citizen talking about the international politics, globalization, economic crises, competition, and related to education and into things like IT management. It has opened the eyes of an average Indian, it has widened the thought to the point when an average Indian can think the markets have become open and customers can be choosy now. Which offers me the best deal? Which offers me the best quality? Where can I go, what can I buy? (23-year-old unmarried male international CCE)

In today's world, if you go for shopping, one thing everybody can find is the fact of brand. Everything has to be branded, from shoes to ties. Anything, everything you buy you look for brands. Interview Question: Do you prefer a Western brand over an Indian brand? Respondent: It is nothing like that in today's world. Five years ago, yes. People wanted Western brands. In today's world, there is not much of a difference. It is becoming more of an international market, the West is not as important as it used to be. Five years ago, if you had asked me the same question, I would have said yes, people prefer international brands. In current scenario, Indian brands have come up in standard which would meet the international standards. Whatever suits for people, they will go for that. (26-year-old unmarried male international Team Leader)

Everyone likes brands...if you can afford it. It's a choice. If we like one kind of thing, if it is an Indian brand, we go for it. It depends upon the choice. We choose the best for us. We do what is the best for us. (24-year-old married international female)

We go for a brand once we see the color and the cloth. We don't see the companies. We don't see that it is US or Indian. (40-45 year-old married male international CCE)

Everything Western you can afford it to buy. Initially it was only a particular range of people working for a big company. He might be a big manager of a company, only then he and his family can afford wearing that. Nowadays it is like common. Any type of person can just go ahead and shop. (28 year old unmarried female domestic Trainer)

Credit Cards and Savings

While discussing the changing consumer culture in India, I was curious to understand my respondents' views about credit cards. Here again, there was a strong convergence in my data with regard to the ways in which my respondents' assumed a negative view of credit cards. Their strong unease with the purchase of goods on credit provides further evidence of their low values of materialism. Whereas typical Western materialism is often blamed for the overuse of credit as individuals seek instant gratification in purchases that are beyond their economic means (Penaloza & Bernhart,

2011), my respondents had little desire to risk their increasing economic security for immediate material pursuits. Instead, they expressed a strong preference for maintaining what they described as the Indian value of saving, contradicting typical economic predications suggesting that increased income causes increased consumption and decreased savings (Jain & Joy, 1997).

To the extent that it is possible to indentify overarching Indian values, the literature suggests that saving is a salient cultural value throughout Indian society. For example, Jain and Joy (1997) explain the value of saving as a function of Hindu values of familial obligation. Because individuals are responsible for contributing to the welfare of the family, saving is of paramount importance and is internalized as a personal duty by most Indians. Supporting this idea, Al-Awad and Elhiraika (2003) found that among various immigrant communities in the United Arab Emirates, Indians saved more than most other populations even though they tended to have larger households and lower incomes. In comparison to U.S. households, whose savings rates have decreased in the midst of stagnating wages and a contracting economy (DeGraff, Wann, & Naylor, 2005), the savings rate of Indian households has increased steadily over the past five decades. Indian citizens also save more than citizens from most other developing nations with similar per capita incomes (Loayza & Shankar, 2000). Between 1960 and 2008, the average total savings rate in India increased from about 12% to 28% (Agrawal, Sahoo & Dash, 2010; Budhedeo, 2010). When compared to corporate or government savings, private household savings make up the majority (70%) of India's gross domestic savings (Budhedeo, 2010).

In pre-liberal India, the majority of household savings was in physical assets (e.g., gold jewelry). However, since liberalization, India's financial sector has deepened, providing individuals with more opportunities to invest their savings in financial assets (e.g., bank accounts, stock market), causing a shift in historic savings behaviors. Although total household savings remains high, investments in physical assets are declining while the investment of savings into financial assets is increasing (Budhedeo, 2010). One implication of the deepening of India's financial market and the increased formalization of India's household savings rate via regulated financial assets is the increased availability of credit cards throughout Indian society (Kulkarni, 2012).

Given the historic importance of savings as both a value and a behavior in Indian society and the fact that the success of the credit card industry relies largely on the collection of interest from unpaid balances, the proliferation of credit in India is both affected by the values of Indian citizens and has the potential to affect considerable cultural changes. Despite these implications, the literature documenting these relationships within the Indian context is limited. While there is considerable research about credit card usage in China (e.g., Worthington, 2005), credit card research in India is limited. There is even less research about individuals' values and predispositions toward using credit cards in India (Khare, Khare, & Singh, 2011). Moreover, general theoretical models predicting the spread of credit throughout a society do not seem entirely applicable to the Indian context.

For example, from a macro-economic theoretical perspective, credit card use is positively related to age, income, and education (Abdul-Muhmin & Umar, 2007). Rising

incomes in particular are thought to cause predictable changes in lifestyles and to accelerate the deepening of a country's financial infrastructure, all of which facilitate the increased use of credit cards and decrease private savings (Khare, Khare, & Singh, 2011; Loayza & Shankar, 2000). Although this pattern has been observed in many different societies, it does not hold the same explanatory power in the context of India's economic expansion. While the use of credit cards has increased significantly over the past decades of unprecedented economic expansion and income growth, credit card usage in India is limited when compared to other developing countries with similar per capita income levels (Khare, Khare, & Singh, 2011). India still remains a cash-centric society. Total credit card expenditures as a portion of total expenditures in India is one of the lowest in the world. Even among India's most affluent, only about 28% use credit cards and most merchants still do not accept credit cards (Mishra, 2007).

From a socio-cultural perspective, some argue that the increased availability and use of credit in a society causes predictable changes in the values of individual members. For example, Worthington (2005) suggests that the maturation of a society's financial system has the power to affect culture change such that individuals see credit cards and debt more favorably. Similarly, Bernthal, Crockett and Rose (2005) suggest that economic growth, like that of post-liberal India's, is associated with a general feeling of economic optimism in citizens. This economic optimism is, in turn, associated with increased confidence of future income which encourages the use of short term credit to finance purchases in the near term. Within the Indian context, Khairullah and Khairullah

(2013) argue that the increased availability of credit cards has induced Indians to spend more and save less.

A few researchers have called upon the framework of materialism and consumerism to understand the role of credit in Indian society. However, given the unique patterns of credit growth in India, the literature is unsurprisingly ambiguous. For example, Gupta (2011) argues that increasing material values in Indian society is causing Indians to engage in more impulse purchases and that these material values are positively associated with rising credit card usage throughout India. Mathur (2011) writes that the simple act of possessing a credit card provides Indians with an elevated social status. He explains that having a credit card is a powerful signifier of potential purchasing power and is, in and of itself, a mark of status for members of India's growing consumer culture. Adding more nuance to Mathur's argument, Khare, Khare, and Singh, (2011) found that young people were more likely to use credit cards than were older people and argue that, for Indian youth, credit card usage represents a desired lifestyle and allows them to improve their sense of self-fulfillment. At the same time, they argue that Indians do not see credit cards themselves as a symbol of status and when the entire population of India is considered, most Indians remain unfamiliar and uncomfortable with credit card usage.

In some ways my data support the arguments of Khare et al. My respondents were extremely wary of credit cards. However, because of their professional positions, most were very familiar with credit cards and were acutely aware of the economic and psychological dangers of credit card use. With the understanding that credit card use had the potential to threaten the stability of their families, my informants were unwilling to

take the risk. They would not trade off the long-term stability of their families for short-term material gains. They were committed to maintaining self-control in their consumer behaviors and this typically meant avoiding credit cards. They valued saving and delayed gratification over indulgence and instant gratification:

We don't want to go for credit cards. Once you take out the money, you are not able to repay that money. So when the next month comes and you have to pay for some other thing, by the time it comes, you will not have the money to pay for the credit card. Indians are like if we have 10 rupees and see something for 11, we will not go for it. We will instead go and look for something that is only 5 rupees. (23-year-old unmarried female international CCE)

It is risky. It is scary, I would say that...you take a credit card, hidden charges, interest is more. If we have a credit card we will think about buying something. When payment comes... We are quite happy so why should we go for a card that will create problems? (40-45 year-old married male international CCE)

Some have suggested that after working with American customers, young call center workers become more comfortable with using credit to finance their Westernizing lifestyles (Kalita, 2005). My research suggests the opposite. The exposure many of my respondents had with American customers gave them critical insights into U.S. credit card use and savings rates. Most expressed disapproval of the centrality of credit in North American society. Contradicting the narrative that credit cards are coveted by call center workers as a symbol of confidence and modernity, many expressed pity for their stressed and indebted U.S. customers. They also detailed the continued importance of savings in their lives. Instead of seeking out short-term credit to finance lifestyle goals, most of my respondents and their families systematically saved part of their income:

In this society, you have been taught to save your money. That is the culture. It is the gene pool. Nobody can dare to spend all their money on shopping. Very few do that. That is where this Western culture is or whatever you call it is, but they get back to it because somewhere they realize that I am treated well in this society if I can save some type of amount there. (30 year old unmarried male Recruiter)

I feel, in US, 80% of the people they use the credit cards. I feel that when you have a credit card you really don't know if you want a product, you just go in for it because you have a credit card. You basically don't concentrate whether you would be able to make the payments or not. People say four payments or three payments, they go in for it. They don't wait until they get their salary to go in for the product. They just go in and say alright we'll purchase it from you. Interview Question: Will you use a credit card? Respondent: I don't want it, no. See, in India, what we do is...our basic practice is to save money. What we do is, basically, we save money a lot. What I see in our [U.S.] customers is that they live their daily life. They use more credit cards than what we use. They have got their bill payments, they have to plan everything accordingly and so any mistake, any extra payment or incorrect payment that goes to their account...their credit card...that affects their other checks as well. (27-year-old unmarried male international CCE)

They're [U.S. customers] spending money. They're spending a lot of money. They are not sure of what they are purchasing. I mean, they don't know. If I know what I am going to purchase and what exactly I am going to do with it. If you don't mind, I think that most of them are women. It's like they don't know what they are purchasing. They end up purchasing three to four products for three to four hundred dollars and they realize it after two months when the money back guarantee that we provide is over. And then they dispute and from the way they dispute, from their tone, I can clearly make out that "Ohh my god...she has spent a lot. She has spent on something that she has never intended to." We can make this out, yes. I don't know about others, but, I am quite sure that they [U.S. customers] are spending a lot. (23-year-old unmarried female international CCE)

And they [U.S. customers] may think about saving at that moment but not for a lifetime thing wherein they can save for their parents or for themselves. Wherein India, everyone saves for every one of them. After that I save a life insurance for my parents, even my sister, she does the same. (22-year-old unmarried female international CCE)

The Value of Customer Service

One of the most interesting and unanticipated findings of my research suggests that although my informants were not becoming increasingly materialistic as a function of call center work, they were becoming increasingly consumer-oriented as a result of their professional positions in customer service. In other words, after working in the call center industry, respondents internalized the value of customer service in their personal lives. In their narratives, they explained how their knowledge and expectations of receiving excellent customer service themselves had changed after working with demanding domestic and international customers. As a direct result of their professional experiences, they were now informed and demanding consumers who place a high value on excellent customer service. In the following paragraphs I discuss these changes as a function of the organizationally mandated labor process controls and notions of call center “professionalism” established to maximize agents’ customer service delivery and as a function of the individual agency of my respondents. I preface these discussions with an examination of the general literature on the adoption of customer service as a social value.

The Adoption of Customer Service as a Social Value

Economic growth and liberalization are associated with the spread of the market and increased competition, and in turn, increased consumer freedom and choice

(Worthington, 2005). Research shows that as competition increases, organizations are forced to become more consumer-focused to maintain a competitive edge (Worthington & Stewart, 2007). Moreover, as societies become more open and transparent and individuals have more access to information, consumer expectations increase. While rising incomes are associated with rising consumer expectations, Vadaketh (2010) argues that increased consumer awareness is the primary driver of increased consumer expectations and the adoption of customer service as a social value. Discussing these changes within the Indian context, Lukose (2009) argues that with economic liberalization and the changing consumer landscape of India, the conceptualization of Indian consumerism transformed from one of Nehruvian consumerism as duty to the state to one in which the consumer is now conceptualized as an individual with rights to consume and to be protected by the state.

From the perspective of the individual consumer, the disconfirmation theory of customer satisfaction suggests that customers compare their perceptions of the services or products received with their pre-existing expectations of these services. If their perceptions of service meet their expectations, expectations are confirmed. Expectations are negatively disconfirmed when evaluations of performance fail to meet expectations and positively disconfirmed when perceptions exceed expectations (Bloemer & Dekker, 2007). Combining these macro-and micro- theoretical perspectives, the increased competition in post-liberal India has given consumers more choices and forced companies to differentiate themselves with the products and services they offer as well as on the quality of experience they offer to their customers. At the same time, the service

expectations of individual consumers have increased, causing them to engage in more critical evaluative processes and to become more savvy and demanding consumers¹¹.

While these theoretical perspectives help explain the changes I found in my research, my data also suggest that call center work facilitated a particularly pronounced adoption of Western notions of customer service. Although DomesTech catered to both international and domestic clients, the organizational standards dictating the levels of customer service employees were required to provide to all customers were informed by DomesTech's Western clients. Speaking to this, Child (2002) writes that as a result of their economic, political, and technological power, Western corporations have significant influence on the business practices of organizations in developing nations (See also Vadaketh, 2010). Similarly, Yeung, Warner, and Rowley (2008) argue that organizations in emerging economies westernize their human resource policies with the intention of establishing a "global mindset" in their employees. Foremost among these Western standards within the Indian call center industry is the notion of efficient customer service (Nadeem, 2011; Noronha & DeCruz, 2009).

DomesTech's Customer Service Requirements

From their daily schedules to their monthly paychecks and opportunities for promotion, every aspect of my respondents' work was informed by the pursuit of quality

¹¹ Using the lens of increased customer service expectations also provides interesting insight into my respondents' clear understanding of what they sought in their brand named purchases. Instead of seeking utility in the brand, their increasing consumer savvy drove them to seek utility through the purchase of branded items.

customer service. Although agents were not required to follow a specific script, they had to follow organizationally established protocols of customer service. Not only were agents expected to meet the demands of the clients in a professional and efficient manner, they were expected to be happy and enthusiastic while solving even the most irate of customers. As has been noted by other researchers, agents were consistently reminded to let their customers “hear” their smiles through the phone (e.g., Brannan, 2005; Noronha & DeCruz, 2009). Agents were expected to display respect and appreciation for the customer and to demonstrate their sincere commitment to solving their customers’ problems while keeping an eye on the ticking clock that recorded their individual call times and overall number of calls they handled in a day.

In addition to the labor process controls established to assure excellent customer service, DomesTech attempted to have agents internalize the value of customer service through normative discourses of call center professionalism. Through various reward programs and titles like “customer service champ”, DomesTech distinguished between “workers” and “professionals”. While “workers” possessed the basic linguistic and functional skills needed to do the job, “professionals” truly embraced the value of customer service and possessed highly refined “soft skills” that allowed them to interact with customers in ways that ensured continuous delivery of superior customer service (Fleming & Sturdy, 2010; Noronha & D’Cruz, 2009).

These standard industry practices are well documented and debated in the call center literature (Callahan & Thompson, 2001). Using metaphors like “cyber coolie” (Ramesh, 2004) and “electric panopticon” (Ferne & Metcalf, 2000), critics argue that

these attempts to control the behavior and identities of their employees are oppressive and unfairly coercive. Others explain these processes with the more forgiving frameworks of labor rationalization and efficiency (e.g., Frenkel, Korczynski, Shire, & Tam, 1999). Researchers have also forwarded considerable empirical work linking these control processes with various organizational outcomes (e.g., commitment, satisfaction, turnover) (e.g., D’Cruz, 2007; Kinnie, Hutchinson, & Purcell, 2000; Ramesh, 2004; Fleming & Sturdy, 2010).

What is missing from much of this literature, however, is an understanding of the outcomes of these processes with relation to the internal values of these employees and the relationships these values have on their behaviors. While some have alluded to the relationship between these labor process controls and the formation of non-work identities (e.g. Ramesh, 2004), there is little empirical research to support these claims. My research provides interesting empirical evidence that suggests the implications of these standard call center practices can reach beyond the organization and affect the identity of call center workers. In addition to enacting organizationally mandated values of customer service and call center professionalism while at work, my respondents internalized these values such that their self-concepts were altered. However, contrary to Ramesh’s (2004) claim that call center labor process controls have produced a “productively docile workforce” (p. 492), my research suggests that the value of customer service was not simply imposed upon my respondents from above. Instead, they demonstrated considerable agency in internalizing this value. And, differing from Noronha and DeCruz’s (2009) suggestion that call center workers internalize the notions

of call center “professionalism” for esteem and status purposes, my respondents explained their adoption of this value in terms of pragmatic benefits:

When I go outside, I am a customer myself so there is a different approach from when I am in the office to when I am out of office. When I am in the office, customers are first. Interview Question: Have your expectations as a customer changed? Respondent: Absolutely. When I am delivering the kind of service to satisfy my customers, when I go out, I want that same service to be given to me. When I don't get it, I get upset. So many people will just be taking it, but I will not take that right now. I feel very comfortable giving a piece of my mind. Interview Question: Is that different than 5 years ago? Respondent: Well yes, I was a little more mellow then. (32 year-old married male domestic Team Manager)

We love to and know how to use the power that we have. If I will be a customer, which kind of power I should have... before I never realized that. Because [before] we go to the market and we purchase a product with no questions but when we joined the organization, we know each and everything. Like the customer has a lot of questions about the product—money, discounts, promotion offers. BBB-Better Business Bureau. In India we have a lot of offices for the government organization. We never used these kinds of services. People don't even know where are these offices. If you get a bad product, where should we go? But now we got to know each and everything. If we got a bad product, we should go to complain then. I search for it in a website. We are more knowledgeable you can say because we are adopting the American culture here.

Interview Question: What things are you adopting? Respondent: The knowledge they have. They have more knowledge than us. They are more advanced. They know how to use the services. They have the power. The customer has the power. He is not a simple man. If he purchases any product from Sony it means that he has the power to do anything if SONY gives a bad product to him. (28 year-old married male international CCE)

My respondents' internalization of the value of customer service was not only the most distinct example of value change I found in my research, it was also the only example I found in which my respondents seemed to internalize a Western value.

Although the specifics of customer service delivery were dictated by the particular client

organization (e.g., language, number of agents answering calls, length of calls), all of DomesTech's agents were required to adhere to organizationally mandated service delivery requirements and notions of call center "professionalism" (e.g., smile through the phone, listening patiently to irate customers, enthusiasm) such that there were no significant differences in their exposure to the value of customer service. However, there were significant differences between the expectations and demands of domestic customers vs. those of American customers. These differences were manifested in the different ways international and domestic agents articulated their adoption of this value and in the degrees to which agents internalized this value. International agents distinctly connected their internalization of the value of customer service to seeing the benefits of this value through the actions of their American clients and customers. They spoke of the distinct ways they had adopted the specific customer service expectations and behaviors of their American clients. On the other hand, domestic agents referred more to the abstract notion of call center professionalism to explain these changes and did not articulate the associated changes in their behaviors as specifically as their international counterparts. I've included some quotes from domestic and international agents below for comparative purposes:

Domestic Agents:

My mom is very well-educated. But since she has not worked, she is not as dynamic as me and she does not prefer going out and buying things on her own. For everything she prefers I go and get for her. She does not like shopping in things as much. I feel more understanding and more mature than her. (30 year-old married female domestic Operations Manager)

We learn responsibility and to be mature. (21 year-old unmarried female domestic CCE)

International agents:

I've seen the best thing about my clients, they come here often, every six months or eight months, last year they were training us. You could easily make out the difference. They are basically straight forward. They come to the point. That's what I like and that is what I implement in my own life as well. Interview Question: You are a more demanding consumer yourself now that you've been working with American clients?

Respondent: That's right. (27 year-old unmarried male international CCE)

American people are lovely people. I am not saying that because you are here and you are an American citizen. The reason being is the way they put themselves, they are very open. Even though I know I don't have a personal attachment with that person or I never meet that customer anytime, they are quite open. They show their emotions and that is nice. Interview Question: Is that different than Indians? Respondent: Yes. To some extent I do agree that but the trend is changing now. I would say that 10 years ago, it was not like that but our generation, we are rapidly changing, we are telling what exactly we need, so it is quite changed. (22 year-old unmarried male international CCE)

After working here, we now know exactly what is the value of money. For example, for no reason there are charges. For example, if the call doesn't go, we'll be charged. We'll be explained that there is nothing to be done, but now, I'll file a complaint. After talking to American customers, I've made my mind that when I've paid to them, when I don't get the service, why should I be penalized? That made me understand more should be done to get our money. (26 year-old married female international CCE)

The major difference between the Western clients and the Indian client, they know their rights in the West. They know where to go when things are not working properly. They know if there is something wrong in the demand for compensation. This is actually very less here, in the domestic section. Compensation is actually a concept mentioned quite often when we talked to international customers. Because people tend to know, if something goes wrong, they should be paid for that. They talk about the Better Business Bureau, they talk about many things like that. Here in India people do not talk to you about consumer forums. When you go to

the West, people will talk about the Better Business Bureau. I have hardly seen people here talking about any consumer forums when things are not resolved. In the US, people do speak about it. So the basic education regarding any product, regarding complaints, where to launch a complaint or where to go to get a result, people in the West are better educated regarding this compared to their Indian counterparts. (26 year-old unmarried male international Team Leader)

Conclusion

In conclusion, my research suggests that my respondents' consumer behaviors were driven more by their family values than they were by Western material values. Belying the popular narrative explaining the changes in Indian consumer culture as a convergence in material values between India and the U.S., my respondents were savvy consumers who sought utility through their purchases rather than in the goods they purchased. Offering further insight into their low material value orientations, my informants were wary of credit cards and instead valued saving, seeing it as essential to the stability of their families. Although the narratives depicting the rise of a Westernizing consumer culture in India are over-simplistic in the example of my research, my data does suggest that my respondents were adopting Western notions of customer service expectations. In the next chapter, I relate these findings to my informant's ecological values and present their discussions of the ecological health of their city.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ECOLOGICAL VALUES

The materialist values discussed in the previous chapter generally prioritize economic growth over environmental concern (e.g., Kasser, 2002). For example, research has consistently demonstrated that increased trade-related GNP is associated with decreased ecological stability across the globe (Kilbourne & Pickett, 2008). Thus, India's rapid economic growth has come with considerable costs to its natural environment. While the ecological orientation of the materialist mindset prevalent in Western capitalism is generally understood, much less is known about the environmental attitudes, perceptions, and tolerances of the citizens of developing countries who are directly affected by the environmental consequences of growth. In order to understand fully the environmental threats in rapidly growing economies, we also need to understand the personal views and experiences of those who are intimately connected with these settings.

During my fieldwork I spent a considerable amount of time discussing Hyderabad's natural environment with my respondents. Although I initially entered the field hoping to understand the ways in which the growing material values of my respondents were related to the dire ecological condition of Hyderabad, my expectations were quickly complicated by my experiences in the field. Because most of my respondents did not display the materialistic orientation often associated with the domination of nature in the West and lived relatively low impact lifestyles, understanding

their environmental attitudes and perceptions proved much more complex and difficult than I originally anticipated.

My research suggests that the environmental values of my respondents were much less salient than some of the other values they discussed and in somewhat of a formative state with regard to the ongoing development of their city. While all of my respondents expressed reverence and, to varying degrees, concern about the natural environment of Hyderabad, many of their perceptions and understandings of the ecological challenges facing their city focused primarily on short-term inconveniences to the general neglect of serious long-term implications. In the following pages, I present my respondents' views on the ecological state of their city by way of urbanization, traffic, and air pollution. Although I argue that my respondents' ecological values need more definition so that they are more likely to engage in more sustainable behaviors, my data and experience suggest that these needed behavioral changes are not primarily related to lessening the impacts of their already low impact lives. Instead, I argue that these behavioral changes should be manifested in the demands they place on their local governments to enact changes that favor sustainable development.

Urbanization

Two decades ago Hyderabad was a relatively obscure semi-urban city. Today, it is an international destination with a metropolitan population of about 7.6 million people (Chacko, 2007). Attracted by the city's growth and comparatively low costs, a steady stream of new migrants and businesses from around the world continue to move into

Hyderabad every year. Over the next decade, the population of Hyderabad is expected to grow to 13.6 million (EPTRI, 2005). To accommodate its rapid growth, the city is in a constant state of construction and development. In the past decade the size of the city has nearly doubled through the annexation of surrounding areas and the landscape and character of the city have been altered dramatically:

Well, Hyderabad has changed drastically. From the time there's been a boom in the IT industry, people have been coming to Hyderabad. That is the hot-spot, in fact, it is the limelight of the country. Because from the time there's been a boom in the IT industry you know there have been several openings, infrastructure, developments, everything. Hyderabad is the most hot and happening city. (25 year-old unmarried male international CCE)

The look has changed a lot. The MNCs, initially, it was not there. Hyderabad was too much of traditional. No MNCs were there. Now if you go to the HITEC City around 7 in the evening, you just find yourself to stay in the US. The way it looks completely, you will feel yourself to be in a different place all together. Not in Hyderabad. (28 year-old unmarried female domestic Trainer)

Twenty years ago, the northwest perimeter of the city was undeveloped wilderness. Today, this area is home to the hundreds of multinational corporations with locations in and around HITEC City--one of the world's busiest and most sophisticated technology hubs. In discussing these changes with my respondents, those who were born and raised in Hyderabad provided insight into the evolution of their city. In many ways, the city they grew up in is unrecognizable in the one in which they now live. Most agricultural lands and the ancient rock formations for which Hyderabad was once known have been subsumed by residential or commercial complexes:

15 or 16 years ago I would not want to ever go there [referring to land where HITEC City sits], because there was absolutely nothing. It was a jungle. There was nothing out there. We had a lot of rocks in the landscape around here. These had been around for centuries. You know, you had a huge boulder sitting on top of a very small rock. They would be there for centuries, and that was how we always identified Hyderabad. If we would go out of Hyderabad and then come back into the city, as we're approaching the first thing we would notice would be these rock formations. Now they are gone, people are blasting them. IT companies have to have huge campuses. (40-45 year-old married female HR Administrator)

There was a place that was a complete forest 12-13 years back. When I went there years later, the forest has been completely cut down, buildings have gone up, it has become a commercial complex. They are not supposed to cut down the forest and all these things, the government. Because of the increase of the population, they did not have a choice. (24 year-old unmarried male domestic CCE)

The landscape of Hyderabad is so different now. It will take you almost an hour and a half to get to the other side of the city. You don't know where it ends actually. (34 year-old unmarried male domestic Manager)

Around MNCs, you will see ten story apartment buildings in all different companies from the software companies to the call centers. You have TCS, Wipro, Infosys, Satyam. So many of them. This radius of HITEC city, initially it was nothing. Today it is the most popular place in Hyderabad. (28 year-old unmarried male domestic Assistant Manager Training)

There was no such big buildings. I remember 7-8 years back there was no concept of apartments. We used to have independent house. When I was in my 7th or 8th standard, then we got one apartment in our area. So, I myself had never seen what an apartment looked like and now everywhere we find apartments. Hardly even a house. (22 year-old unmarried female international CCE)

The ecological consequences of Hyderabad's intense urbanization are considerable. As the city expands, productive farmlands are lost, natural habitat is destroyed, and waste and pollution are growing to exceedingly dangerous levels (Calvert, 2001; Main, 2001). The generation of household and industrial waste is far exceeding the

capacities of the civic agencies responsible for their handling and disposal. At the time of my fieldwork, there were no regulated landfills or storage areas for this waste and many agencies disposed of waste in open spaces on the outskirts of the city. Many of the city's waterways are critically polluted with arsenic, mercury, lead, and phosphorus, causing outbreaks of Cholera, Hepatitis B, Dysentery, Diarrhea, and Typhoid (Andhra Pradesh State Pollution Control Board, 2009). Only blocks from DomesTech's headquarters, there was a severely polluted waterway cutting through a residential neighborhood. The waters flowed with visible sewage and massive piles of garbage that collected in the bends of the river, the smells of which often carried over to DomesTech.

Given the immediate and critical levels of pollution in the city, I was very interested in understanding how my respondents perceived the ecological health of their city and the connections they made between development and the state of their local natural environments. However, getting to the heart of these matters was not as easy as I anticipated. For example, when I asked people to discuss the implications of the changes they've witnessed, many framed their initial answers in economic terms and recognized the associated rise in land prices as the most immediate implication of development. Some informants expressed concern that rising land prices were forcing people to move continuously farther from the city and that individual homes had given way to huge apartment complexes:

The land rates have gone up for property which could buy for six lakh or seven lakh (~\$10,500-\$12,300) now costs you 60 lakhs (~\$105,000). It is very difficult for you to buy a house in and around the city. So if you have to buy a house now, a middle-class guy has to go outside the city and buy something. So the city keeps expanding. There was a time that this area

[referring to DomesTech's center-city neighborhood] was called the city. Now, even if you go 20 km from this place, you will still see people, you will still see apartments. Things have changed, flyovers (overpasses) have come, the airport has come... all this has come with lots of international exposure. Lots of international people. (28 year-old unmarried male domestic Assistant Manager Training)

Now we see that there is a growth in industry. Not just in BPO. Besides this, there is a real estate boom as well. So, BPO is more in South India, I would say that, Bangalore and Hyderabad. So, many people are coming from North India and that is how there is a boom in the properties. It is not very expensive, but for an ordinary person to own a house it is impossible. You can't buy a piece of land now. (40-45 year-old married male international CCE)

While some lamented the rising cost of land, others viewed these increasing prices much more positively. For example, one 24-year-old male international CCE was very enthusiastic about the ongoing development and rising land prices. He believed that the loss of productive family farms and open space was more than fairly compensated for by the government programs paying those who were displaced. When I asked him where all of these people went after they were displaced from their homes, he did not seem to have much knowledge or concern but stood firmly by his belief that Hyderabad's development was overwhelmingly positive:

Frankly speaking, I have seen more positives than negatives because positives have definitely taken a toll on the people of Hyderabad. Nobody accepted that Hyderabad would become such an important city. One of the things with the MNCs and BPO coming to the city is that the rates of the land have grown over night. Nobody expected that the land costing just Rs. 30,000 or 40,000 (~\$530-\$700) might actually fetch some Rs. 30 or 40 lakhs (~\$53,000-\$70,000). People were requested to vacate their lands but were given good offers. They were offered a very high price for the land. Usually, poor people used to stay in those areas. Once they were given the good offers, and packages, like good rates to their land, so ultimately they had no other route, because it is like a dream come true for

them. Because they were tribals, they were very poor, and becoming a rich person overnight. Interview Question: Where did all of these people go when they sold their land? Respondent: Well, I don't have any information regarding those people, but those people definitely they have become rich and they will find somewhere. It has been very positive. There has been a very positive impact of these MNCs and BPOs on Hyderabad.

Few people readily mentioned the ecological challenges that have come with the city's rapid development. I often had to encourage respondents to think about some of the negative ecological implications of development by prompting them to consider pollution and the natural environment. Even so, some still suggested that there were few to no problems with the city's development. When I asked one 23-year-old international trainer to discuss the downsides of development, she did not feel that there were any. Even after I asked her specifically about the pollution in the city, she could not see any negative implications of Hyderabad's growth:

I, I don't think that anything really as bad. I don't believe it's bad.
Interview Question: What about pollution? Respondent: Pollution is controlled. We don't have pollution.

Similarly, when I asked one 28-year-old male international CCE to discuss the ecological state of his city, he described a place with few environmental challenges. In his opinion, the ongoing development of the city was actually very beneficial to Hyderabad's natural resources:

Environment and everything is perfect. Interview Question: What about the pollution from the traffic? Respondent: That is a major drawback you could say. Interview Question: How is the water quality? Respondent: Water quality? Very nice. In some places, you do have some water crisis.

You have to call in the water supplier. Interview Question: Is the water clean? Respondent: Yes. In this place, in HITEC city, you've got these MNCs and so the water, the electricity, everything has been improved. Even the roads, everything around you, they are clean. Everything is taken care of now. Because of the MNCs coming to India. Our government sees to it that everything is, I mean when the client comes, they should see that everything is according to their standards so that's really improved us a lot.

As I continued to dig deeper into these issues, the responses and topics of conversation related to their perceptions of Hyderabad's ecological health varied. There was, however, considerable convergence in respondents' perceptions of Hyderabad's traffic problems. While some respondents articulated the complexities of these issues, most exhibited a rather cursory understanding of the connections between Hyderabad's traffic problems and its air pollution. Instead, they focused primarily on the short-term inconveniences of Hyderabad traffic.

Traffic and Air Pollution

For good reason, Hyderabad's growing traffic problems emerged as the most significant developmentally-related concern for most of my respondents. As the city grows in population, size, and wealth, its roadways are increasingly congested with traffic (Sharma, Kharol, & Badarinath, 2010). Between 1981 and 2005 the number of motorized vehicles in Hyderabad grew at an average annual rate of 12% (Reddy & Balachandra, 2012). Today there about 3 million motorized vehicles in Hyderabad and an additional 500-600 new vehicles are registered in the city every day (IANS, 2010).

About 75% of Hyderabad's motor vehicles are two-wheelers but the number of four-wheelers is on the rise (Reddy & Balachandra, 2012). Before the buildup of the city,

owning a four-wheel vehicle was a luxury enjoyed primarily by the upper classes. Individuals from less privileged backgrounds generally relied on two-wheelers, auto rickshaws, bicycles, buses, and walking. Today, people are increasingly able to purchase vehicles that were once out of their reaches and use of the city's public transportation is decreasing (IES, 2011). Reflecting upon these changes and the city's growing car culture, many of my respondents described how they and their families could now own two-wheelers, four-wheelers and, sometimes, both:

Before in Hyderabad, people used to go by buses or autos to go great distances, but now, to go to my friend's place, which is just behind the lane of my house, I take a car. Why should I walk when I have a car? That's it. That is the present attitude. My dad dreamt of owning a car, but 10-15 years ago he should be a business manager to own a car. But now, the rate of owning a car is getting much higher than the rate of using two wheelers. (23 year-old unmarried male international CCE)

You see, 10 years back, to purchase a car you had to be a big shot. Right now all the middle class families are buying cars. Because of the use of 4-wheelers, pollution is high. (22 year-old unmarried male international CCE)

It was tempting to explain the growing rates of motor vehicle ownership among many of my respondents and their families simply as an outcome of their rising incomes. However, my research indicates that the relationship is more complex. Although there is a distinct connection between respondents' rising income levels and their increasing rates of vehicle ownership, purchasing a vehicle is informed by more than income alone. Individuals consider multiple factors like the availability of public transportation and the quality of local roadways. Owning a vehicle has also become a necessity for the many residents who are forced to move to the outer edges of this sprawling city (Reddy &

Balachandra, 2012). The meanings people attach to their vehicles also vary considerably. For many Indians, vehicle ownership is a sign of status. However, my respondents did not display the material value orientation typically associated with status purchases. Moreover, they did not earn huge salaries and most did not have the advantage of making a luxury car purchase for the sake of brand status. When discussing the meanings they attached to their vehicles, respondents tended to discuss the pragmatic benefits they derived from their vehicles. Two-wheelers allowed them to get to work faster than the bus but were much less comfortable and safe than four-wheelers. Reinforcing the importance of family, one 23-year-old male international CCE provided simple but powerful insight into the benefits of owning a four-wheeler in Hyderabad. A car not only allowed him to take his entire family out together, it gave him shelter from the unrelenting externalities of Hyderabad traffic:

I can go with my family. I can go with my family. If I got my motorbike, I can go with my dad or with my mom mostly that's it. Only two can go. But when I own a car, all of us can go. And all of these present traffic jams, I can sit happily in my car, I can listen to music, I can wait for the traffic to come to clear, that's it. But, in motorbike it will be different. The standard of living has increased drastically; we can afford to buy a car. People who used to go by bicycle can afford to buy motorbike. People who used to afford to go buy motorbike can afford to go by car. Due to this, pollution has increased. (23 year-old unmarried male international CCE)

At the same time as my informants praised the benefits of vehicle ownership, they also realized that increasing traffic was a negative implication of growth. Many of the problems they attributed to the traffic were immediate and impacted the quality of their life. For example, many respondents' primary traffic-related complaints focused on the

inconveniences and frustrations they faced in their daily commutes. In some instances the congestion problems of traffic were completely separated from the pollution problems caused by the city's growing traffic problems:

Interview Question: How is the environment in Hyderabad? Respondent: Okay. Interview Question: How about pollution? Respondent: Pollution. It is there. But it's okay. Interview Question: How is traffic? Respondent: Traffic is very high. There are times when we have to come to the office earlier because we can't reach it. We can't tell what time we will have in the traffic. Interview Question: How long does it take you to get here? Respondent: It takes 45 minutes. I live 20 km from this place. (22 year-old unmarried female domestic CCE)

My home is 10 kilometers from here. It takes 20-25 minutes. If traffic is too much, it can take one hour. Bus, I cannot take, because I have to take two buses. Traffic is very bad. Traffic is all the time because of the traffic it takes me two hours to get here sometimes three hours. It is too time-consuming. (23 year-old unmarried female international Trainer)

Traffic is really bad. Now with the airports, traffic is really bad. Traffic is really bad even though it's only 8 kilometers sometimes it takes me an hour to reach home, so I have to come on a bike. (28 year-old unmarried male domestic Assistant Manager Training)

Previously when we had to come to any office or to work, it was quiet, we never had so much of traffic on the roads. There was one time when I used to come from my place in Secunderabad in just 20 minutes. Now from where I live it should hardly take 15 minutes. It takes almost one hour. Interview Question: You've seen this change in just 10 years? Respondent: Yes. Just 10 years. (23 year-old unmarried female international CCE)

Another inconvenience my informants noted was the impact of air pollution on their skin, hair, and mood. For example, when one 24-year-old male domestic CCE discussed the problems with traffic, he focused on the damaging effects of air pollution to his clothes and his mood:

The pollution is too much. It is really too much... The pollution, it really affects me. It is really bad. Too much smoke comes and my very good dress, my new shirt, very good dress and it gets dirty in the traffic. I feel very hot. By the time I reach the place, I am very tired, very frustrated. When we move in the pollution the first thing that happens, in our hair we get dandruff, and second thing, our appetite goes down and the third one... by the time I come here, I'll be very frustrated and I can't speak to you for too much time. I don't know why people don't control the traffic. Everyone wants to go first. The cops never come.

Similarly, a 28-year-old male international CCE who moved to Hyderabad from Delhi suggested that in comparison to Delhi, Hyderabad had little pollution. As evidence, he explained how he could wear white shirts for a few days in Hyderabad, whereas in Delhi he had to wash his white shirts every night:

Pollution is really fine. Compared to Delhi it is much better. If I wear a white shirt in Delhi, nightly I should wash, but not here. We can go for 2-3 days.

One 25-year-old international CCE who moved to Hyderabad from a more rural city talked about some of health problems associated with the city's air pollution, however, most of the concerns she noted were related to dry skin and hair problems. She also noted that these were no longer significant issues now that she has become acclimated to the city:

Pollution is very high... health problems are more. Actually I have some, related to my nasal. Problems used to be there but after coming to Hyderabad it is quite normal now. When I first came, my skin dried up very soon but later on it will be fine. Only because of pollution it is dried up. Hair problems are very huge in Hyderabad. That's all. Hair falls out because of the pollution. So problems are related to hair and to skin.

Although my informants identified the impact of Hyderabad's traffic and associated air pollution primarily in terms of personal inconvenience, few identified the societal consequences for health and well-being as problematic. In addition to the personal inconveniences caused by Hyderabad traffic, motor vehicle exhaust is the largest factor in the city's chronically polluted air (Sharma, Kharol, & Badarinath, 2010). The average levels of total and respirable suspended particulate matter (TSPM/RSPM) in some of Hyderabad's more congested areas far exceed acceptable levels set by both the government of India and The World Health Organization (WHO) and are among the highest in the world (Pucher, Korattyswaropam, Mittal, & Ittyerah, 2005). Because most of the particulate matter in the city's air comes from combustible sources, they are highly carcinogenic and dangerously small, which allows them to settle deep into the lungs, causing a range of adverse health effects from chronic respiratory problems and pulmonary disease to premature death (EPTRI, 2005).

As a participant observer, I experienced first-hand some of the unfortunate health effects of breathing in these particulates. About two weeks into my fieldwork I developed a tight and scratchy throat that persisted and worsened to the point where I had difficulty speaking and sleeping. After multiple assessments and medical tests, I was diagnosed with Reactive Airways Syndrome (RAS)--a diffuse term for chronic respiratory hypersensitivity caused by the particulates in my lungs. Despite the considerable short- and long-term health concerns associated with Hyderabad's air pollution, only a small number of my respondents expressed strong concern about the air they have no choice but to breathe:

In Hyderabad only we are having more pollution and traffic jams are also more. Here are the bridges when the construction is going on, we're having a lot of traffic jams. Due to this, we're facing many problems like throat infections. At the same time the traffic condition also is very high. It will be due to the petrol. It is not a pure petrol and any mixing we'll be getting more pollution. (26 year-old unmarried female domestic CCE)

Plus the number of automobiles is growing on a day-to-day basis, so the pollution is going up. More and more people calling sick. People who travel less distance on a day-to-day basis are more healthy, they don't give you sick leaves most of the time. (34 year-old unmarried male domestic Manager)

It is too much when you compare it to other places. Because people can take the bikes, the two wheelers, the four wheelers, everybody is comfortable coming in a four wheeler so there is too much of traffic and too much of pollution noise. Definitely it will increase. It may not directly affect us, but yes, during the course of time we will be affected by this pollution. Health will get spoiled. We will get diseases. First thing is health. If health is not good, you will not go to office, you will be losing your money. It is the pollution's fault. It may sound stupid that because of this pollution, it will spoil my health but yes, the fact still remains the same. (28 year-old unmarried female domestic Trainer)

If these environmental issues are not taken care of, I think you should come with a mask in Hyderabad. You'll have to come with an oxygen tank. (23 year-old unmarried male international CCE)

As I moved forward in my discussions, I asked respondents about potential solutions to Hyderabad's chronic traffic and air pollution problems. Once again, responses ranged in complexity and potential viability. Most, however, suggested rather cursory solutions that implied a general lack of understanding with regard to the complexities of these issues. For example, the same woman who suggested that the primary problems of pollution are dry skin and damaged hair explained that people could

protect themselves by simply covering their skin and hair when venturing out in the pollution:

If you go outside you can see people covering everything...gloves and clothes covering everything up, hair and all. Most of the people do like that, so that when they come to work they can remove everything. So that will be ok. When they travel, they try to cover because skin will actually get dirty, it will get affected. So, like, face they try to cover and hands. So, that will actually work.

Many suggested that the most viable solution was more development of the city's motor vehicle transport infrastructure. There was considerable convergence in their positive assessments of the city government's efforts to reduce traffic by building more roads, widening existing roads, and constructing flyovers throughout the city:

The government is implementing some things to overcome these problems. We have flyovers and bridges.

They are cutting the trees on the roads for more construction. But now that the road widening is going on hopefully there should be better traffic.

This is a clean city. The vehicle pollution is bad and they are cutting trees from the roads. Construction is more. But now, the road widening is going on and so the city should be better. (35 year-old married female domestic Trainer)

Conclusion

Although most of my respondents believed that the economic growth of their city needed to be balanced with its ecological health, their understanding of the complex relationships between these two factors was often cursory. Most of my respondents related the ecological concerns of their city in terms of the personal inconveniences rather

than societal or ecological harm. As such, many of these individuals were passively tolerant of the environmental degradation that has come with the economic growth and development of their city. In many ways, this view is a liability to their own health and well-being, as well as to the natural environment of Hyderabad.

This is also concerning given that an individual's perception of the natural environment and the degree to which they understand the issues facing these systems is significantly associated with their environmentally related behaviors and intentions (Cordano, Frieze, & Ellis, 2004). Individuals with greater concern for and/or understanding of their local natural environments are more likely to modify positively their behaviors than are individuals with less concern and/or knowledge (Kilbourne & Pickett, 2008). However, my research suggests that with more awareness and, in some instances, more concern, the ecological values of my respondents and the changes they demand can become much more defined and influential--particularly if they are framed with more salient values like family.

In conclusion, perhaps one 23 year-old male international CCE offered the best solution to combating the ecological crises caused by economic expansion. When sharing his opinion about the potential solutions, he stated simply and emphatically:

Exposure. Six years back, nobody knows about rainwater harvesting, but you can now see it in about every home. People harvest rainwater. They make use of it. But six or seven years ago, nothing. It all happened because of exposure. That exposure is more important than anything. People are now planting trees. Why? Exposure. Exposure to these things at school. Newsstands, ordinary television channels which show visualizations of globalization. They show ads showing how ozone is getting depleted. If you have exposure anything can happen. The basic thing is through exposure.

CHAPTER EIGHT

DISCUSSION

My research demonstrates that working in DomesTech is seemingly associated with varying degrees of value and behavior changes in my respondents. While some values, such as family centrality, appeared to be relatively stable, others, like individualism within the family and changing notions of customer service orientation, were seemingly affected more significantly by professional position. Most striking are the ways in which these changes appear to be interrelated and contextually dependent. For example, the value of family seemed to mediate the changes in potentially conflicting values like individualism, materialism, and consumerism resulting in unique value and behavior hybridizations.

Contrary to other researchers' (e.g., McMillin, 2006; Ramesh, 2004) claims that the Indian BPO industry is imposing a set of "Western norms and values" (Cohen & El-Sawad, 2007: p.1956) on Indian call center workers, my respondents seemed to have a clear sense of their identities and employed considerable agency in assigning power and importance to the values they internalized, hybridized, or rejected. In the following pages, I attempt to make sense of my findings by explaining these changes as functions of a contextually dependent and fluid process of value change.

Given my somewhat critical approach and interest in understanding the relationships between power, call center work, and value change, I was drawn primarily to the postcolonial literature of cultural globalization. Although I gained many insights into the call center industry from a seeming fit between my research and the postcolonial

paradigm, my most important insights came from an unfolding recognition that the conceptual and explanatory power of postcolonial theory began to diminish as I focused in on my individual-level data. The postcolonial emphasis on the ways in which the West perpetuates power inequities through political, economic, and social dominance (Ravishankar, Pan, & Myers, 2006) helped me make general sense of the Indian call center industry, particularly from an historical perspective. This approach also provided useful insight into potential views Western customers and clients hold of this industry and how these views influenced the state of the industry today. However, as I continued to engage with my individual level data, it became increasingly apparent that the postcolonial paradigm could benefit from novel approaches to conceptualizing contemporary cultural negotiation and resistance. Although the acts of cultural negotiation and resistance are discussed, there is little conceptual guidance into the processes of cultural resistance and negotiation. Accordingly, I sought to develop a refined conceptualization of culture change that extends the postcolonial approach to examining this industry from the vantage of the unequal power structures that characterize it, but which also allowed for a more relevant approach to understanding the individual-level acts of cultural negotiation that compose culture change.

DomesTech as “Third Space”

Consistent with the Bhabhian perspective, I conceptualized DomesTech as a third space in which Indian employees work in a dynamic “global” environment and engage in varying degrees of international contact without leaving India. Although domestic

employees do not work directly with Western clients, they are immersed in an organization whose professional atmosphere is informed by Western management practices and which differs considerably from more traditional Indian industries and from the immediate world outside the doors of the organization. From its off-the-grid location in the “globalizing” city of Hyderabad to its domestic ownership and hybrid focus, the contextual details of DomesTech are elemental in understanding my findings. By framing DomesTech as a unique third space, I was able to focus on the specific factors that appeared to inform the realities of call center work from the individual perspectives of my respondents (Cohen & El-Sawad, 2007).

For example, the salience with which family was related as both a personal and Indian value and the ways it influenced the formation of other values suggests that DomesTech is not simply a neutral ground of intercultural contact and cultural negotiation where the unique hybrid outcomes are more important than the original cultural artifacts. Instead, the socio-cultural implications of working in the third space of DomesTech were potentially strongly mediated by historic and contemporary variables that provide essential grounding in understanding this space and the processes of culture change taking place within it.

Grounded Theory Development of the Subduction Metaphor

Seeking to develop a more relevant framework for understanding my data and to contribute to the refinement of the ways we think about contemporary cultural globalization, I returned to my empirical materials for insights into the processes and

outcomes of intercultural contact from my respondents' perspectives. Given that "our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature . . . the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor" (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, p.1), I was concerned with grounding my conceptual process in more relevant metaphors of culture change that would still allow for the essential consideration of power without the strong historic and normative mirroring of most existing critical approaches.

As I moved back and forth between my empirical materials and my interpretive analyses in the attempt to develop a more relevant understanding of the processes of culture change, three primary themes emerged and served as guidelines to my conceptual development: 1) culture change is an ongoing process, not a distinct event or outcome; 2) the processes and outcomes of culture change are interactive, variable, and contextually dependent; 3) power is not inherent nor is it associated with monolithic cultural systems (i.e. nation states).

Guided by these ideas, I sought to develop a flexible conceptualization of culture change that would simultaneously allow the consideration of power, continuity, change, and variability. As I continued to think about my data and my interpretive analyses in terms of these grounded insights, it became increasingly clear to me that my respondents' lived experiences of cultural globalization were metaphorically similar to the process of plate tectonics in which the earth's geological plates are in continual but variable degrees of motion. From this vantage, I also began to see how the various outcomes of intercultural contact I found in my research were metaphorically similar to the

contextually dependent outcomes that occur when moving geologic plates come into contact with one another.

The areas where plates converge, often referred to as “subduction zones,” are extremely dynamic regions of the earth's surface where various tectonic metamorphic processes occur depending upon the density of the plates and the context of collision. In some instances, plates of equal density converge and intermingle leaving the surface of the earth relatively unchanged. In more powerful collisions between similar plates, the force of impact causes both to crumble and fold upward, affecting changes to each plate and creating new mountain formations.

When plates of varying densities meet--for example when a dense oceanic plate collides with a less dense continental plate--the less dense plate tends to “subduct” or ride over the surface of the denser plate. The denser plate will then bend and plunge downwards but is not replaced by the less dense plate. On the surface, the overriding plate may appear as the dominant geological presence; however, a more in-depth examination often reveals the continued presence and/or influence of the denser subducting plate. From an external vantage, the implications of subduction can range from barely noticeable to transformative (e.g., mountain building). When plates of different densities collide under extreme force, the denser plate is violently subducted deep into the earth's core causing extremely disruptive (e.g., volcanoes, earthquakes) and/or destructive outcomes (e.g., plates heat and melt).

Much like geological subduction zones, the third space of DomesTech is a dynamic zone of “values subduction” where different, often conflicting values come

together and catalyze various degrees of change, stability, and hybridization in the values and behaviors of the individuals working there. Similar to geologic plates, my data suggest that individual values have relative degrees of importance or “densities” that are informed by various internal and external factors and which influence the ways they interact with one another. And, just as the outcomes of subduction depend upon the contextual details and the force of collision between plates of varying densities, the contextual details of my research in the third space of DomesTech are essential to understanding my findings.

The Density of Family Values

My data suggest that family was the most important or “dense” of my respondents’ values and is central to the identities of my respondents. Although their professional positions engaged them with potentially conflicting market-oriented values like individualism and materialism, these values were much less dense, by way of salience and influence in their lives, than was the value of family. Moreover, the “collisions” of intercultural contact among these values were seemingly strongly mediated by DomesTech’s hybrid focus and Indian lineage, which lessened the force of impact among these potentially conflicting values, especially when compared to some of the non-Indian export-oriented call centers operating out of HITEC City. For example, when speaking about the culture of DomesTech, my respondents often noted that their organization was more “traditional” and less stressful than the cultures of the export-oriented MNCs operating out of HITEC City. Although DomesTech’s international agents had to assume a Western pseudonym, they had no obligation to hide their Indian

identity or location. In other words, they were not forced to pretend that they were American customer service representatives working out of an American-based call center, as is often the case in larger MNC operations. Whereas Nadeem (2011) writes that call center personalities involve a “carefully choreographed mimicry of Westerners” (p. 42), DomesTech’s international agents were trained in Western culture and accent neutralization not to disguise their Indian identities but rather to relate, as Indian professionals, to their Western customers. In speaking about this requirement, respondents suggested that the well-documented processes requiring Indian call center workers working with Western customers to hide their identities was no longer as relevant as it once was. They suggested that this practice was particularly important in the early years of the outsourcing industry when Western customers were unfamiliar with outsourcing practices and, particularly, in the midst of the strong anti-outsourcing sentiments in the U.S. However, with the maturation of the service outsourcing industry and a lessening of the U.S. backlash against outsourcing call center work to India, the need to hide the Indianness of call center workers has diminished. Demonstrating this, many of my international respondents spoke of the ways in which their American customers engaged them in conversations about themselves and about India. There were still some instances in which American customers refused to speak to Indian call center workers. In these situations, the CCE’s were not required to lie or to pretend to be an American; instead, they simply complied with the customer’s demands and transferred them to the U.S. corporate number. As a result, the less dense market values they encountered in their professional positions did not have the strength nor were the

collisions among these conflicting values powerful enough to affect truly disruptive or transformative changes to the family-centered identities of my respondents—at least in the near term. Instead, the significant density of my respondents’ family values tended to influence the processes of change that took place in some of their other values.

Colliding Values: Family and Individualism

Just as relatively minor collisions between plates of different densities have the potential to affect varying degrees of change to both plates and to the surrounding area, my research shows that employment in the third space of DomesTech facilitated subtle collisions between the less dense value of individualism and the most dense value of family, resulting in the hybridizing value of individualism within the family collective. For example, from the higher than average salary to the varying degrees of exposure to Western clients and customers, call center work exposed my respondents to a market oriented version of individualism that appeared to conflict in many ways with the value of family. Although the collisions between these two values did not provoke radical changes, and their strong family values were in no way replaced by the less dense value of individualism, most of my respondents credited their work at DomesTech with the development and internalization of a hybridized sense of individualism and explained some interesting changes in their behaviors as functions of this emerging value.

In describing this hybridizing individualism, respondents explained that call center work allowed them to enter the labor market earlier and to earn more than their parents ever could have at the same age. Unlike the complete control their grandparents

had over their dependent parents, my respondents explained that their unprecedented ability to contribute to their families at such a young age provided them with an equally unprecedented right to participate in the process of making some of their own most significant life decisions like marriage, career, and school. However, unlike their Western contemporaries, who are arguably vanguards of market individualism, the value of family remained central to their identities and influenced many of their behaviors. For example, most of my respondents still lived at home, continued to support their families financially, and looked to them for social support and moral guidance. Although they recognized and valued their growing independence, they expressed no interest—many even explained a clear disinterest--in removing themselves from the family structure or in making significant life decisions completely on their own. As such, the density of family was the seemingly most important factor in the outcomes of the collisions between the values of family and individualism.

Colliding Values: Family and Materialism

Using similar logic, the subduction metaphor helps make sense of the relatively low values of materialism and changing consumer behaviors I found in my research. Although the collisions between the less dense value of Western materialism and the more dense value of family did not appear to be powerful enough to affect radical changes to the identities of my respondents, they did seem to catalyze interesting hybridizations and unique manifestations of consumer behavior. Similar to the process of subduction wherein a less dense plate overrides a more dense plate giving the illusion that

the less dense plate has completely replaced the more dense plate, my respondents' changing consumer behaviors could be easily mistaken for their adoption of Western material values. However, the value of family remained firmly entrenched and provided the foundation through which my respondents made sense of their changing consumer behaviors. For example, while my respondents related their professional positions with an increasing ability to purchase material goods, their consumption seemed to be informed more by their family values than by traditional notions of market oriented materialism. In addition to explaining the utility of their increasing ability to consume in terms of the ways in which their purchases benefitted their families, they also spoke about their future aspirations in terms of family. Whereas an individual with high material value orientation might be expected to discuss their future aspirations in terms of the things they will own (Kasser, 2002), my respondents spoke of their future hopes in terms of increasing happiness and security for their families. And, although they described having more material goods than their parents had at their age, the importance with which they valued savings over consumption and shunned the use of credit cards as essential to the long-term stability of their families belied superficial suggestions that they were fully adopting Western notions of materialism.

Here the subduction metaphor also helps to make sense of the differences between my findings and those suggesting a direct causative connection between the Indian call center industry and a growing population of young Westernizing materialists. By conceptualizing the unique variables of DomesTech as informing the force of collision between the values of materialism and family, the subduction metaphor allows me to

make an essential differentiation between working in the call center industry and working in DomesTech. When compared to the rather forceful collisions between the values of family and materialism suggested by many examinations of the (Western) export-oriented aspect of the Indian call center industry, the comparatively low salary, hybrid focus, and traditional culture of DomesTech may catalyze less forceful collisions between the values of materialism and family. Moreover, because the density of any particular value is relative and informed by a variety of internal and external factors, it is possible that the relative densities of the values of family and materialism are very different in DomesTech than they are in the typical export oriented MNC in HITEC City.

For example, most of my respondents were relatively new to the call center profession--for many it was their first job—and, depending upon process, not all agents were required to have strong English language skills. In comparison, the larger export oriented MNCs look to hire experienced agents with excellent command of English language and/or international experience (e.g., Western education). Given the historically informed relationships between English language skills, education, and class in India, agents in export oriented call centers generally come from a higher class than the typical agent working DomesTech (Nadeem, 2011). Given the different economic and social backgrounds between the “average” DomesTech agent and the “average” MNC/HITEC City agent, it is possible that these two groups assess the values of family and materialism differently. From this interpretive perspective, my findings do not necessarily conflict with those who have found more direct connections between call center work and increasing material value orientation. Instead, by facilitating the

contextual examination of my data, the subduction metaphor suggests that the relationships between call center work and changing material values is dependent upon the unique details of the organization and the individuals with whom, we as researchers, engage in our examinations.

Shifting Values and New Cultural Formations: Customer Service Orientation

My respondents' strong internalization of the value of customer service was one of the most distinct and unanticipated findings of my research. It was also the only evidence I found to support a direct connection between the professional positions of my respondents and the internalization of an intact Western value. Although some suggest that customer service delivery in the U.S. is declining due to massive cost-cutting efforts in many industries (Swickard, 2006; Whitaker, Krishnan, & Fornell, 2012) and is inferior to customer service outcomes in other countries (Silver, 2011), my research suggests that U.S. customers have distinct notions of customer service expectations that informed the adoption of this value on both the industrial and organization levels and that these expectations were internalized by the employees of DomesTech. Specifically, the strong notions of call center professionalism evident throughout the organization were tailored to meet Western expectations of customer service. In addition to seemingly influencing the customer service expectations of both domestic and international agents, the direct contact between U.S. customers and international agents seemed to affect a deeper and more pronounced internalization of this value in international agents. In comparison to the more subtle changes or complex hybridizations in family, individual, and material

value orientations, my respondents adopted these Western notions of customer service with no obvious alterations. However, there were interesting differences in the ways domestic and international agents discussed their internalization of this value.

Thinking about these changes in terms of plate tectonics and subduction suggests that, unlike the collisions between the values of family and individualism and family and materialism, the value of customer service did not seem to conflict or collide with their family values. This is not to suggest that my respondents placed the same degree of importance on the value of customer service as they placed on family. Instead, because this value did not collide with any existing values, its relative value compared to other values is not an important consideration here. Just as geologic plates can shift and settle into a new area affecting changes without major collisions or disruptions, the Western value of customer service was seemingly adopted with no collisions or immediate alterations to other existing values. At the same time, the difference in the ways international and domestic agents articulated and internalized this value to seemingly different degrees suggests that they associated the value of customer service with significant but variable inherent densities. Because international agents related their adoption of Western notions of customer service more clearly and emphatically than did domestic agents, it is likely that the value of customer service in international agents was denser than it was in domestic agents. As a result, I would expect the consumer behaviors of international agents to be more significantly affected by call center work than are the consumer behaviors of domestic agents.

Here the flexibility of subduction metaphor appears to be particularly suited to examining and interpreting the realities of culture change from my respondents' point of view—a vantage commonly overlooked by other frameworks of culture change. While other critical researchers might interpret these changes as the forced internalization of dominant values by hegemonic powers, my research suggests that respondents exercised considerable agency in internalizing this value. They described this process not as a forced imposition or unintended consequence but as a deliberate choice that they made based upon the benefits being more informed and demanding consumers brought to themselves and their families. I do not wish to imply that hegemonic intentions are irrelevant in this examination or that DomesTech did not benefit from my respondents' internalization of this value. What I do argue is that my respondents' experiences and perceptions of this change cannot be fully or fairly extrapolated from these potential hegemonic ideologies and intentions. By conceptualizing power as relative and subjective (as opposed to absolute and forced), the subduction metaphor allows me to consider hegemonic intentions without extrapolating them onto the perceptions of my respondents. As such, they seemingly deliberately internalized Western notions of customer service.

Shifting Values: Ecological Orientation

My research suggests that the ecological values of most of my respondents are in formative states. Though they were aware of notions of ecological sustainability and demonstrated concern for the environment, their knowledge of the ecological crises

facing their city was, for the most part, cursory. As such, their ecological value orientation was expressed primarily as a reverence for the general natural environment as opposed to being more urgently focused on making specific changes to the ecological health of the place in which they live and work.

Furthermore, the value or importance of the natural environment was not an issue that they came in contact with at work. Although DomesTech had a clear pledge of sustainability, almost none of my respondents were familiar with the code or had any knowledge of it when I asked them about it. Rather than representing a salient organizational value, DomesTech's sustainability pledge was more of a formality that held little relevance to employees. As such, call center work had little to no influence on the individual ecological values of my respondents.

By framing the importance of ecological orientation as essential to the health and stability of their families, it is likely that my respondents would internalize a stronger ecological orientation. If on the other hand, ecological values were to be framed as conflicting between economic growth and ecological stability, my respondents would likely suffer from a conflict of interest as they depend upon economic growth to facilitate the well being of their family. From my research, it is reasonable to expect that if my respondents believed that improving the health of Hyderabad's natural environment would come at the potential expense of their families' financial stability, their formative ecological values would be pitted against the densest value of family diminishing the chance for their ecological values to grow and develop. If, on the other hand, my

respondents were to view the importance of sustainability through the lens of family, the conflict between family values and ecological values could be avoided.

Because family is seemingly the densest or most important value in my respondents, it is an important filter through which most decisions and opinions are formed. Admonishing individuals to be more responsible for the environment for the sake of the environment or for individual reasons may be less effective than encouraging individuals to develop more salient environmental values and behaviors for the sake of their families. Attempts to enhance my respondents' environmental knowledge and concern should use information that is consistent and relevant to their dense family values. By framing or tying ecological concern into familial duties, Indians may be more likely to demand more significant change in the development of their cities. My respondents felt responsible for both the short- and long-term safety and well being of their families. They spent most of their time working for their families, saving for their children, parents, and other family members to assure their secure and happy futures. Framing a clean environment as essential to the achievement of these goals may help to increase the salience of their ecological values. Therefore, groups working to forward sustainable development in Hyderabad should consider framing the importance of sustainability through the lens of family and not as a choice between economy and ecology.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the subduction metaphor provides a novel conceptualization of cultural globalization as a fluid process and can serve as a useful conceptual guide for examining the complexities of contemporary culture change. Rather than approaching the implications of intercultural contact as stagnant or the flows of culture as unidirectional, the subduction metaphor allows for considerable flexibility and variability in the ways we examine and explain cultural globalization. Most existing frameworks of culture change tend to implicitly (e.g., Hofstede) or explicitly (e.g., creolization) associate power with geography or economy and to primarily explain culture change as a function of the global reframing the local. In comparison, the inherent flexibility of the subduction metaphor allows us to conceptualize power as relative and subjective and allows us to interpret culture change as multi-directional and contextually dependent. The true power of this metaphor is that it encourages researchers to consider the multiple, often conflicting, levels of contextual details that can lead to novel insights and stimulate interesting and new research directions.

For example, by using the metaphor of subduction as an interpretive guide, my research suggests that the value of family was the densest of my respondents' values. As such, this value remained firmly entrenched in my respondents' identities despite collisions between it and the potentially conflicting values of individualism and materialism. Although collisions between these various values seemed to affect variable degrees of change my respondents' values, the significant density of family seemed to be the primary mediator of these changes. While call center work seemingly facilitated a

process by which these less dense values overrode or “subducted” the value of family, allowing them to gain a distinct presence in my respondents’ lives, they were not dense enough nor were the collisions powerful enough to affect considerable changes to their underlying family values. When compared to the value of family, the values of individualism and materialism seemingly held a shallow presence in their lives. At the same time, these collisions were associated with interesting hybridizations such as the hybridizing sense of individualism within the family collective.

Whereas most frameworks of cultural globalization explain changes such as those suggested by my research as the result of the global reframing the local, the metaphor of subduction allows us to think about the contextually dependent nature of value change and the ways in which the local and the global affect each other. As such, my research suggests that the “local” value of family mediated changes in the “global” values of individualism and materialism. Moreover, the subduction metaphor allows us to think about culture change as an ongoing process and not an event. For example, by conceptualizing the values of customer service and ecological orientation as shifting tectonic plates, the subduction metaphor suggests that these values may undergo further changes with time and with changing contexts, serving to remind us that we have to continually reexamine our assumptions and accept that our findings are based in the “moment” of our research.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In this research, I have shown that working in the third space of DomesTech is associated with variable implications to the values and behaviors of my respondents. While some values were unaffected by call center work, others seemed to be in differential degrees and processes of change. For example, although the general value of family centrality and many of the values and behaviors it informed seemed to be relatively stable, my respondents appeared to be internalizing a hybridizing sense of individualism within the family collective. And, although call center work affected changes to their consumer behaviors, my respondents were not adopting Western values of materialism. Instead, their consumer behaviors were influenced most significantly by their salient family values. Call center work appeared to be, however, related to the full scale adoption of Western expectations of customer service in most of my respondents. Finally, my research suggests that my respondent's ecological values were in a formative state. They expressed concern for the ecological health of their city, but most did not have a full understanding of the serious ecological problems facing Hyderabad and every person living within the city.

These findings have important empirical and theoretical implications for the call center literature as well as for the literature on cultural globalization. To start with, my research adds important empirical insight into a largely un-researched sector of the Indian call center industry. While most examinations of this industry focus on the export-oriented processes--specifically, call centers catering to Western clients and customers—

my examination of DomesTech provides insight into a domestically-owned, hybrid-focused call center. In addition to adding to our understanding of the Indian call center industry, my research allows for future comparative research between purely international and non-international call centers. I elaborate more on potential future comparative research between various call centers later in this chapter.

My research also contributes needed empirical insight into the personal values and meanings held by the individuals working within this diverse industry. Rather than focusing on external structural changes or quantitative consumption data, my research contributes to the understanding of the realities of cultural globalization from the point of view of the individuals living and working within the spaces most affected by globalization. From this vantage, my research suggests that individuals living and working in these dynamic spaces use considerable agency in internalizing, rejecting, or hybridizing potentially conflicting values with which they come into contact through their professional work. In addition to shedding important light on the processes of culture change, my research also suggests subtle but important shifts taking place in global power relations. Taken together, these findings point to the need to reevaluate and refine our contemporary theoretical frameworks of culture change—particularly within the postcolonial paradigm. Although existing postcolonial frameworks offered insight into these issues from a macro-perspective, they were less relevant in explaining the individual experiences and perceptions of my respondents who spoke with considerable agency and confidence about their experiences.

Against this empirical background, my research contributes to our theoretical understanding of cultural globalization by forwarding a grounded theory conceptualization of culture change based on the metaphor of subduction. According to Locke (2003) “a potential [theoretical] contribution can be made by developing a theoretical product that expresses a different underlying metaphor for a phenomenon.” (p.38). Developed from my empirical materials, the subduction metaphor makes a theoretical contribution by providing a new lens that attempts to more accurately represent the experiences of cultural globalization from the point of view of the individuals living and working within these dynamic third spaces of globalization. In comparison to the static bi-polar frameworks of culture change, particularly those that employ national-level cultural dimensions (e.g. Hofstede), the subduction metaphor allows for the consideration of the dynamic processes and outcomes of intercultural contact on multiple levels, between and within countries.

When compared to the popular but somewhat abstract framework of glocalization, the subduction metaphor provides conceptual guidance into the nature and degrees of culture change. In addition to moving beyond the largely descriptive nature of most theories of hybridity (Kraidy, 2002), the subduction metaphor allows for the consideration of power relationships and “historically and structurally determined inequalities” (Nadeem, 2011, p. 46) but, unlike most postcolonial frameworks, it allows us to take into consideration the subjective notions of power as held by the individuals we seek to understand. By conceptualizing cultural globalization as an ongoing process whose results are contextually dependent and by understanding values as similar to

geological plates with unique densities, we can move beyond historically mired frameworks of culture change that associate the West with dominance and the Rest with subordination. Finally, given the variable outcomes of geological subduction, many of which require examinations that dig below the surface of the earth, the subduction metaphor provokes us to think more complexly about culture change. It guides the examination of contemporary social and cultural changes which, as suggested by Ghosh (2011) are “not unidirectional” and consist of “several contrary trajectories generating processes like homogenization, pluralization, traditionalization, and hybridization at the same time.” (p. 172). While, on the surface, converging behaviors appear to support the notion of globalization as homogenization, a deeper examination has the potential to reveal foundational values that add much needed complexity and nuance to our understanding of cultural globalization.

Limitations of the Subduction Metaphor

In forwarding the subduction metaphor as a novel conceptualization of contemporary culture change, I am aware of its potential conceptual weaknesses. For example, there is the danger that thinking about intercultural contact in terms of colliding plates implies that all instances of intercultural contact are violent and that different values always collide. However, in reality, the subduction process is highly variable. While some plates collide with extreme force, others move much more slowly and come into contact in a much slower process, the implications of which are perceptible only over long periods of time. There is also a danger that the subduction metaphor implies the

meeting of values as between distinct nationally informed value systems. In reality, however, this metaphor does not assign value origination, it does not make any assumptions about the place from which a particular value arose, it only encourages us to examine what happens when different values meet by calling upon the subjective realities of the individuals we are representing to assign relative densities to specific values. Moreover, value densities are not fixed, instead, they are dependent upon situation, context, time, and other values.

There are also a number of limitations associated with the use of metaphor as a theoretical tool. Although the use of metaphor is an extremely useful tool in the organization and interpretation of ethnographic data (Smith, 1981), the metaphors we use also have the potential to limit the ways we think about or conceptualize the phenomena we study. In employing metaphor, we gain an understanding of one thing by borrowing the language and imagery of something else (Semino, 2008). At the same time, our examinations are limited by the language and imagery of the metaphors we choose. Although the metaphors we use to guide us in our theoretical conceptualizations have the potential to shed light on unexamined issues and to lead to valuable insights in our research, they can also prevent us from seeing things that are important but not relevant to the metaphor of choice. The use of metaphor also provides a coherent picture which serves as a guide in helping to prevent researchers from getting lost in their data (Alvesson and Deetz, 2009). However, when using metaphor as a tool for conceptual development, it is essential to maintain an understanding of the fact that metaphors are not literal representations of the things we seek to understand; instead they are conceptual

tools that have the real power to shape the way we think and reason about a particular issue (Thibodeau & Boroditsky, 2011). As such, the choice of an irrelevant or inaccurate metaphor as conceptual device can significantly jeopardize the validity and relevance of the analysis. In the end, although it is not a perfect conceptualization and there are limitations associated with the use of metaphor as a conceptual tool, the subduction metaphor has the potential to help reframe the ways in which we consider culture change and power dynamics in our evolving global society.

Implications for Future Research

In addition to the above empirical and theoretical contributions, my research also points to a number of interesting opportunities for future research. Most particularly, my ethnographic examination of DomesTech sets the stage for future comparative work within the Indian call center industry. Future research should simultaneously examine domestic or hybrid-focused call centers and those that are geared specifically toward Western audiences. Comparative research within the Indian call center industry will not only deepen our understanding of the sociocultural implications of working within this industry, it also has the potential to allow for the isolation and examination of Western influences in this evolving industry and in the processes of cultural globalization.

For example, although I did not find significant differences between the value densities of family, materialism, and ecological orientation among the various groups of international and domestic agents working within DomesTech, given the differences my respondents described as existing between DomesTech and Western-focused call centers

operating out of HITEC City, future research should consider potential differences in the importance of these, and other, values to employees between differentially focused organizations in the Indian call center industry.

Future research should also consider the longitudinal implications of living or working in the third spaces created by contemporary globalization. For example, although at the time of my fieldwork my informants had negative views about the use of credit cards, Penaloza and Bernhart (2011) argue that credit card usage and debt are generally looked at skeptically at first but as debt and credit become more acceptable in the general society, users become more comfortable with adopting them and carrying debt. Given these considerations, it will be interesting to see how or if the views of my respondents about credit card usage and debt change—particularly with the ongoing growth of the internet access and online shopping in India. Similarly, although my research suggests that my respondents had low material value orientations, their relatively modest economic positions did not allow for the development of a consumerist lifestyle. Longitudinal research might consider changes in the material values of these individuals associated with changes in their economic and social positions.

I conclude that this study is a valuable contribution to our understanding of the Indian call center industry and to the overall literature of cultural globalization. By examining the experiences and meanings held by the individuals living and working in the third spaces of globalization, my research suggests that culture change is a contextually dependent process that needs ongoing empirical attention and theoretical refinement.

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