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Political and social inequality: a review

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Foreword

Some two years ago the Department for International Development (DfID) commissioned a bibliography on inequality. It was subsequently noted that this had concentrated on “economic” inequality and it was thought it might be helpful if this were balanced by a complementary review looking at “social” and “political” inequality. Like the initial bibliography the principal target readership is DfID staff, particularly, in the present case, social development advisers with an academic background in the social sciences. This exercise differs, however, from its predecessor by publishing it through the IDS Development Bibliography series so that it can reach a wider audience. By putting the material into the public domain it is hoped to stimulate a wider interest and debate beyond DfID, among practitioners as well as in the academy, concerning the conceptual understandings of inequality and the implications of these for development policy and practice.

This volume contains two sections. The first section, written by Rosalind Eyben, is a review essay with its own references. The second section, written by Jarrod Lovett, consists of abstracts of selected texts from the relevant development studies and social science literature. The subject is both complex and contested and thus the texts were deliberately chosen to represent a range of voices and perspectives, ranging from classic social theorists to unpublished papers by development practitioners.

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Contents

Foreword	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
List of boxes	v
Summary	vii
1 The sociological imagination in the pursuit of social justice	1
1.1 Premises and aims of this review	1
1.2 Does inequality matter?	4
1.3 Explanation, structure and agency	6
2 Current understandings in development practice	11
2.1 Locating the theory	11
2.2 Inequality as disparity	12
2.3 Capability deprivation	15
2.4 Social inequality: class and status	16
2.5 Social exclusion	21
2.6 Rights based approaches	22
3 Inequality expressed through identity	24
3.1 Categorising difference: how fluid is identity?	24
3.2 What about race?	26
3.3 The power of categorisation	28
3.4 Race, culture and development practice	31
4 Inequality as process and experience	32
4.1 An actor-oriented approach	32
4.2 Othering and objectification	33
4.3 Bordering and boundary maintenance	35
4.4 Emotions and emotion management	36
4.5 Adaptation	38
4.6 Supporting transformational processes	39
5 Conclusion: from theory to practice	40
References	43
Selected works on political and social inequality	50

Boxes

Box 1.1	Habitus and hegemony	7
Box 1.2	The perils of historicism	8
Box 1.3	Some useful constructivist ideas for development practitioners	9
Box 1.4	Post-colonial studies	10
Box 1.5	What is critical theory?	11
Box 2.1	A critique of rationalism	13
Box 2.2	When is equality really inequality among African pastoralists?	14
Box 2.3	Rawls's theory of social justice	15

Box 2.4	Marx and Weber on inequality	16
Box 2.5	Elites	18
Box 2.6	Social structure and inequality	19
Box 2.7	Low status can cause poor health	20
Box 2.8	Researching inequality in China	20
Box 2.9	Perceptions of social exclusion in Bolivia	21
Box 2.10	Social movements	23
Box 3.1	The invention of race in Rwanda?	28
Box 3.2	The power of categorisation	29
Box 3.3	The construction of an Afro-Brazilian identity	29
Box 3.4	The growth of <i>dalit</i> consciousness	30
Box 3.5	Behaviour of a privileged group	31
Box 4.1	How language can be used to obscure processes of power	33
Box 4.2	Othering and the building of the nation state in Brazil and South Africa	34
Box 4.3	The black response to apartheid	35
Box 4.4	Adverse incorporation and the indigenous challenge in Bolivia	38
Box 4.5	Thinking about empowerment	39

Summary

This essay understands inequality as the condition, process and experience of unequal power relations that constrain individuals, communities and even wider groups, such as nation states, from the same freedoms that are enjoyed by those with whom they are in a position of subordinate relationship. This understanding is only one of a number current in development studies, policy and practice. Statements are often made about inequality without clarifying the meaning given to it. Nor do they recognise the conceptual and theoretical implications of the way the word is used. Furthermore, because the various understandings of inequality are highly contested, bureaucratic practice can result in a compromise or fudge whereby ideas and action can be equally muddled and thus likely to be ineffective in reducing inequality, however understood.

The essay makes a case for familiarity with the social theory that underpins different understandings of inequality. It identifies how theory has in various ways influenced mainstream and more alternative thinking concerning inequality and development. I explore both the way in which inequality is currently understood in development studies and practice and introduce the reader to the wider literature on inequality as expressed through identity and process. I conclude by proposing a critical theory approach as a means for development practice to pursue its normative agenda.

1 The sociological imagination in the pursuit of social justice

1.1 Premises and aims of this review

The premises of this review essay are that:

- 1) Global social justice is the aim of development practice.
- 2) Steps towards this aim require a reduction in political and social inequality.
- 3) Effective support to reducing inequality requires that development practitioners have a conceptual understanding of inequality, be transparent concerning the normative position involved in that understanding and recognise the implications of both the concepts and values selected for the way evidence is used and policy recommended.

I have always been interested in inequality but it can be very difficult to acknowledge one's own role in reproducing it.¹ In 1967 I arrived in Burundi to undertake anthropological fieldwork with a Leverhulme research studentship. I wanted to study the unequal power relations between the dominant Tutsi minority and the Hutu majority. It was fortunate that it was the Leverhulme Foundation that was funding me because it was the power of Unilever, the principal multinational corporation in Burundi and represented locally by a Belgian that secured me a residence permit. I was also helped by my being a very young woman and therefore essentially non-threatening to the authorities. On my second day I was invited to lunch by the honorary British consul to meet the three other members of the British community in Bujumbura (as the consul defined it – there were I afterwards discovered a number of Asian shopkeepers with British passports). The first question asked me at lunch was which university I went to and the second concerned the occupation of my father. When my hosts learnt of my working class origins and my non-Oxbridge education, they lost all interest and I never met them again. The following day the (Belgian) Unilever representative invited me to a picnic on a beach of Lake Tanganyika. While little barefooted boys guarded our cars and black nannies looked after the white babies, the Belgian “colon” community chatted about the constant friction between Flemings and Walloons within their community while, at our back, lorry loads of Mobutu's black army rumbled past along the lakeside driving from Bujumbura airport to neighbouring Zaire to besiege Bukavu, held at that time by rebel white mercenaries. And I had not even started to think about my research topic . . .

Can we observe the practice of inequality without being part of it? And if we are part of it, how can we “objectively” observe? There are many aspects of inequality which we do not easily observe either because they have become “natural” (the way the world is) or because observation might lead to uncomfortable reflection. It is just those unobserved aspects of inequality that are the ones we are most likely to play a part in their maintenance and reproduction.

¹ See also Sarah White's story (2002) and her challenge to the ‘colour blind stance of development’ that I discuss later in this essay.

Inequality, in some of the ways I encountered and performed it then (but did not, at that time, reflect upon nor study), was for a long time not recognised in the practice of development agencies. Only recently has the mainstream noted it as a “neglected dimension” of development (Stewart 2002). Development practice has tended to favour structural-functionalist social theory as a way of looking at society. Such theory has not been that interested in inequality because it was not very concerned with the conflict and change that we associate with inequality. This lack of interest is typified by a 1966 introduction to sociology still on my bookshelves from my student days. The book does not include “inequality” in its index, nor is there any discussion of gender or race (Mitchell 1966). It is worth reflecting that many of those now in positions of senior management in development practice may still remain heavily influenced by this kind of undergraduate reading, struggling to accommodate other kinds of thinking.

Neither has academic social anthropology been very interested in the subject. According to Tilly a count of 337 titles in the Annual Review of Anthropology from 1984 to 2000 yielded a mere 19 articles – less than 6 per cent – whose titles includes variants on the words caste, chiefs, class, ethnicity, gender, hierarchy, inequality, minority, power, race, slavery and/or status with gender by far the leading mention (2001: 299). We had similar results when, for this review, we searched the index of the journals kept by the Royal Anthropological Institute.

During this review I was disappointed to discover that there are no great “ah ha” texts from development studies that demand the reader’s attention and are guaranteed to change the way they go about their work. Yet, at the same time, both development studies and the broader social science literature do offer many illuminating insights on inequality that can inform our practice. The quantity is almost boundless. Time and resources allowed only a brief paddle in the shallows of a great ocean of social theory and ethnography. This review is most definitely *not* definitive. Nevertheless the selection of the material abstracted in the second part of this bibliography is far from arbitrary. First, it has been guided by a principle of choosing readings that I consider being *practically* relevant to those working in international development agencies who have been educated in one of the non-economic social sciences, such as sociology, social anthropology or human geography, as is the case with social development advisers from the UK’s Department for International Development (DfID). Secondly, I have favoured readings that remind us of how the wealth and diversity of social theory can help practitioners achieve a more nuanced and responsible understanding of their craft. The citations in this essay include many of those which Jarrod Lovett has abstracted but the essay also refers to a wider body of theoretical literature that may be of use for development practitioners when following guided reading programmes or undertaking mini-sabbaticals.

The reader will see that I have already constructed an exclusionary barrier, leaving on the outside all those who cannot claim a formal education in a particular set of academic disciplines. I have done this because in the discussion that follows, and in my choice of readings, I have assumed a certain level of prior knowledge of the subject. Thus this publication does not seek to justify to other “development” disciplines, such as economics or tropical agriculture, the importance or relevance of understanding

inequality for economic growth or agrarian reform. Nor do I attempt to construct a universal explanatory framework that can accommodate different disciplinary epistemologies. There must always be a tension between the bureaucratic interest for simplification and single explanations and the academic interest to problematise and appreciate complexity and ambiguity. Both have their role to play and it is the task of specialists working inside development agencies to construct the pragmatic bridges between the two worlds. Thus this essay seeks to equip readers with an enhanced appreciation of how to draw on and use their own social science *academic* competence so as to work more effectively in building these bridges in pursuit of the common goal of poverty reduction.²

The first aim of this essay is to encourage readers to become excited about and appreciate the importance of theory and to be aware of and explicit about the conceptual lens they are wearing, as social actors in and observers of the performance on inequality. Good practice requires explicit knowledge of theory. This is undisputed in the world of engineering, otherwise bridges would fall down. However, social scientists in development practice often find the literature apparently impenetrable and perhaps unfriendly to their concerns. Once they are engaged in the day-to-day endless task of tackling poverty, they may lose an erstwhile interest in conceptual thinking. They do this at their peril. Regular refreshment with and reflection on theory is fundamental if social scientists want to influence how the world practises development.

There are no rights and wrongs in social theory. No direct cause and effect between getting the theory wrong and the bridge falling down. Bourdieu wrote:

When you want to escape from the world as it is, you can be a musician, or a philosopher, or a mathematician. But how can you escape as a sociologist? Some people manage to. You just have to write some mathematical formulae or go through a few game theory exercises, a bit of computer simulation. To be able to see and describe the world as it is, you have to be ready to be always dealing with things that are complicated, confused, impure, and uncertain, all of which runs counter to the usual idea of intellectual rigour.

(quoted in Jenkins 1992: 180)

Nevertheless and just *because* it is a mess, intellectual rigour is necessary. One of the great founding fathers of modern sociology, Durkheim, emphasised the need to be clear about concepts:

Precisely because it treats everyday things such as the family, property, crime etc, the sociologist most often thinks it unnecessary to define them rigorously at the outset. We are so accustomed to use these terms and they recur so constantly in our conversation, that it seems unnecessary to render

² This assumes that the practice of different disciplines is not affected by unequal power relations. See Ben Fine's article on the imperialism of economics as it 'rampages across other disciplines' (Fine 2002).

their meaning precise. We simply refer to the common notion, but this common notion is very often ambiguous. As a result of this ambiguity, things that are very different in reality are given the same name and the same explanation, and this leads to boundless confusion.

(1938: 37)

Development practice has been extraordinarily sloppy and ambiguous in the way it speaks of “inequality” without defining the way in which the term is used. This essay identifies the various often implicit understandings given to the term and traces the roots of these understandings to classic social theory.

My second aim is to take a view of inequality as “relational” and “meaningful” considering how it is experienced, explained, symbolised and reproduced as a characteristic and outcome of a social (including political) relationship. Wood suggests that people are poor because of others (2003: 4). I would add that poverty is a state that is quintessentially defined (by those experiencing it), either in relation to others who are not in that same state or to themselves in an earlier or hoped for future state. As part of this the essay takes a particular interest in race and ethnicity, not as essentialised categories but as concepts that relate to aspects of unequal power relations that have been relatively little explored in development studies and practice.

The third aim is to introduce in the last part of the essay one possible framework for understanding the processes that can maintain or transform inequality. I have selected this particular framework because of what I believe would be its practical utility in identifying how and when development aid could support such processes in favour of transformation, rather than in reproducing the status quo or in making inequality worse.

Lastly, I hope to encourage my readers to become more reflexive. By this I mean that they situate themselves historically in their own place, space and time and as a member of a development agency, considering the day-to-day performance of inequality in their own daily practice and encounters with others in and outside the workplace. Every day we experience and practise inequalities constructed in terms of age, gender, race, class and religion. Just because story telling is often banished to the periphery of ‘real knowledge’ (Nnaemeka 1997: 7) we risk forgetting how our own life story strongly influences our understanding.

The rest of Part 1 considers the debate about inequality that takes place in and outside development agencies and proposes that the argument often gets confused because of unexplained conceptual differences. This provides the backdrop to introducing social theory as a *relational* understanding of inequality where concepts of structure, agency and consciousness have played a predominant part in explanations of societal differentiation.

1.2 Does inequality matter?

In December 2002, the *Financial Times* published a debate between two of its own columnists entitled ‘Is inequality good for you?’ (Prowse and Shales 2002: 1,11). The debate was about relative poverty and the unequal distribution of wealth. Prowse argued that high inequality was bad for your health citing the

studies of Wilkinson (1996) and others. In market societies people on low incomes are made to feel like losers because of the correlation between income level, social status and capacity to have control over one's life. Shales responded that high levels of inequality, such as in the United States, provide an enabling environment for entrepreneurship with free markets that create growth and jobs. Furthermore, she argued that global inequality would be reduced once all parts of the world had equally embraced the free market. She did not comment on Prowse's point about unequal societies being unhappy societies.

In an important sense, Prowse and Shales were talking past each other as is often the case in debates concerning inequality, poverty and growth. People are giving different, implicit meanings to the word. For example, "inequality" is used in development practice with reference to the following issues: gender inequalities, growth and equity, inequality in opportunities, capability deprivation, chronic poverty, structural blockages to poverty reduction, inequality in middle income countries.

As in the *Financial Times* debate the "default" meaning of inequality is about unequal distribution of wealth (as defined in relation to income, consumption or assets) but because it is the default it is quite rarely explicit in policy analysis and debate. Thus "inequality" is often made to carry a considerable theoretical load that remains unexamined. For example in a statement such as 'globalisation is causing greater inequality' the term is subject to multiple interpretations and therefore different sets of observations which in turn lead to alternative policy choices.

Over the past half century development has been understood as general progress towards increased welfare. Dudley Seers, back in 1969, recognised that "development" was a value laden concept with three main elements: poverty reduction, in the sense of basic needs, employment (that today we would call livelihoods) and a decline in inequality. Seers meant by the latter inequality of income but noted that such inequality was often connected with inequalities in education and power. He even commented that race was a significant factor and wrote that 'the social barriers and inhibitions of an unequal society distort the personalities of those with high incomes no less than those who are poor' (Seers 1979: 11).

For those whose understanding is "distributional" the question about growth becomes significant. Like Shales, many development economists view more equitable distribution as a trade-off with growth. Redistribution through transfers of wealth via the fiscal system could lead to budgetary deficit or if the transfers were paid for by high taxation, it could reduce incentives for entrepreneurship. Other economists have argued on the contrary that there is a positive relationship between reducing inequality and promoting growth.³ Social development advisers, without necessarily being very clear about the economics involved, favour the arguments of this second group of economists because high levels of disparity in incomes, consumption or assets would appear to be *sui generis* bad for achieving objectives such as empowerment and social inclusion. When engaged in these arguments, they should not forget the conceptual origin of a debate that is rooted in a liberal position that separates politics from economics (Gerth and Mills 1948: 66).

³ Lynn Bennett provides a succinct summary of the debate for non-economic social scientists (2003: chapter 5).

People debating about whether and why inequality matters are often deploying shifting economic and social understandings of inequality. Disparity as measured on a graph becomes *meaningful* when people perceive the disparity as unfair. It becomes *relational* when protesters use the evidence to justify and express their dissatisfaction with the existing structure of relations of domination and subordination. It is not surprising that international development agencies find it difficult to get to conceptual grips with the complexity and ambiguity of the subject of inequality. Inequality has to be “unpacked” to gain explanatory power (Hulme and Shepherd 2003).

Whether inequality matters and what to do about it appears particularly problematic for development agencies when they consider the situation of middle income countries. Arguably in such countries there is sufficient wealth for all individuals and their children to escape from absolute poverty. Inequality is seen as cause, explanation and outcome of the continued existence of poverty. Severe or growing inequality is also seen to contribute to political unrest and social instability, which in turn affect people’s livelihoods and their capacity to contribute to sustained economic growth.⁴

A less common but equally important and possibly contentious question is to whom does inequality matter? If inequality is about relative positions, one’s views are likely to be influenced by where one sees oneself placed. It is no accident that it was women who initially put gender inequality onto the development policy agenda. In contrast concerns about racial inequalities have until very recently received much less emphasis and the body of associated academic literature in development studies is much less developed. While development theory and practice are increasingly using contested and complex concepts such as “culture” and “ethnicity” they are largely doing so in fairly reified and simplistic ways, without much reference to the rich hinterland of classic and contemporary social theory that relates to these concepts. This is dangerous. Simplified atheoretical understandings of the social world in which people are placed in bounded categorical boxes can lead to erroneous policy solutions that put people’s lives and wellbeing at risk. We need social theories for good development practice and when we use any theory we need to be aware of its explanatory power and its limitations.

1.3 Explanation, structure and agency

The sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society.

(C. Wright Mills 1970: 12)

To what extent is history shaped by social forces beyond our control? Can we, individually, or through collective organised action, make the future different? In sociology these questions relate to one of its long-standing but ever green areas of inquiry and debate. I briefly consider some of the key theoretical

⁴ Goodhand (2003) notes that while there is no agreement in the literature as to whether chronic poverty is a cause of conflict there is a growing body of empirical research which points to the importance of extreme inequalities as a source of grievance which is used by leaders to mobilise followers and to legitimate violent actions.

issues to introduce what follows in the rest of the essay where I attempt to clarify the conceptual origins of our policy approaches. While lack of clarity provides the opportunity for pragmatic “mixing and matching” it also risks confusion and misunderstanding. Irritable discussions, for example concerning the fundamentals of a poverty reduction strategy, are based on implicit but different conceptual approaches.

An optician’s shop is stocked with different spectacle frames. Having chosen a frame, we select the lens that gives us the sharpest vision for the purpose we have in mind: one for reading, another for driving and another for when we are in bright light . . . I like to think of the frame as a certain theoretical approach and the lens as the different concepts that we can employ to view the social world. Lenses can be switched (with some amendment) from one frame to another, so we will find that ‘class’ as a concept will appear in different theoretical frameworks. We can get lazy and wear the same frames for so long a time that we forget we have them on. We risk assuming that the way we see the world through these glasses is the only way to see the world and that everyone else must be seeing the world this way as well.

Box 1.1 Habitus and hegemony

Habitus and hegemony are two concepts that seek to explain the strength of structure over agency. *Habitus*, a term coined by the French sociologist Bourdieu, is understood as the deeply established and accepted social and cultural practices which people see as natural and do not question. Building on this idea Bourdieu proposed the concept of “cultural capital”, meaning the knowledge, tastes, skills, values and habits that are acquired in the course of growing up and can be used to maintain and demonstrate a difference in status which is seen as “natural”. Those in subordinate classes who struggle to acquire the cultural capital of the dominant class are, through this struggle, simply reaffirming and reinforcing the “natural” difference between the classes (Jenkins 1992).

Hegemony is best known in association with the thinking of the Italian political philosopher, Gramsci. Hegemony describes a domination which includes as one of its key features a particular way of seeing the world and human nature and relationships. It is a world view reinforced by power. It is different from ideology in that it is seen to depend for its hold not only on its expression of the interests of a ruling class but also on its acceptance as “normal reality” or “commonsense” by those in practice subordinated to it (Williams 1983: 145). ‘Hegemony at its most effective is mute; ideology invites argument’ (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992: 29).

How far is my selection of an explanatory framework a matter of voluntary choice or to what extent is my choice shaped by my “positionality”? How much scope any of us have to change the way we see the world is itself a matter for debate.

Whereas economists for a long time continued to pursue theories of individual agency, most social theorists were interested in the social institutions and structures that shaped such agency. In the 1950s and 1960s radical sociologists and social anthropologists, such as Max Gluckman, struggled to identify a non-equilibrium theory that could accommodate constant social change (R. Smith 1984: 476). One possibility was to re-examine the relationship between social structure and human agency and the extent to which individuals and collectives can make their own history rather than be shaped by it (Giddens 1987: 204).

Box 1.2 The perils of historicism

Causes which were lost in England might, in Asia or Africa yet be won.

(E.P.Thompson 1963: 13)

The social historian, E.P. Thompson was influential in arguing that the English working class made itself rather than be a product of structural forces. He wrote passionately about 'rescuing the poor stockinger, the Luddite cropper, the obsolete hand loom weaver' and saw his history as being relevant for other parts of the world still undergoing "analogous" processes of industrialisation and democratisation.

To what extent are British development practitioners influenced by a belief that experience of struggles in their own country can be relevant for other times and spaces and then find themselves subject to criticism from "developing" countries? Is the idea of "analogy" yet another attempt to "universalise" a particular spatial and temporal type of inequality? Arguably it can be understood as an example of the way in which development "universalises" a particular (European) historical process that itself was contingent on Europe's economic and political expansion into the rest of the world. More recently "universalist" understandings of democracy and governance are challenged by many of those studying political change in the South (for example, Chabal and Daloz 1999).

How can we support other social actors – those living in poverty and deprivation – to change society? If the hegemonic structure is so powerful and its ideology internalised by those subordinate to it, how can they even conceive of change if they perceive such structures as "natural"? When a dominant ideology has been naturalised and has contrived a tangible world in its own image, it does not appear to be ideological at all. Conversely, the ideologies of the subordinates, for example women in patriarchal systems, may seem shrill, fragile and contradictory, just because they are visibly social constructed. Nevertheless, argues social action theory, hegemony is a process that constantly has to be made and re-made if it is to survive. Therefore it can be unmade. This is the power of agency.

Non-Marxist feminist theory has generally strongly emphasised agency over structure because it has been concerned to change existing patterns of social relations through *re-framing the way we understand the world* and through subsequent collective action to persuade others to also change their understanding. The growing influence of concepts of agency was particularly prevalent in feminist anthropology in which the study of female domains, knowledge and spheres of activity was given equal or more attention than the study of men as actors. More recently some feminists have suggested that agency is exaggerated, that it is more myth than social theory, a myth that empowers people to struggle against the structures. The same point has been made about subaltern studies, stories of the resistance movements of peasants under the British Raj (O'Hanlon 1988: 213).

The lens of power

Earlier I used an optician's shop as a metaphor to explain how different theories provide alternative ways of viewing the world. This is a rather mechanical metaphor and development practice has been part of a

wider paradigm of thinking about the world in linear, mechanistic and functional terms. This mode of thought shaped understandings of inequality as either being functionally necessary (the Shales argument in the *Financial Times* debate) or as being the means, through class conflict, in enabling society to progress to a state of ultimate happiness (the Marxist argument).

Long (1990), one of the leading proponents of an actor-oriented approach to development sociology, suggests that the two principal paradigms of social theory that influence development studies are the structuralist and the social actor approaches. However, perhaps a more fundamental difference is between the positivist who sees the social scientist as an objective, rational observer, investigating the facts of structural inequality, and the critical constructivist. The latter understands the social scientist as a socially embedded actor who considers that theory is always for some person and for some purpose and that no particular social theory is required to fit every situation in which we find ourselves (Bauman 1998).

Thus from the *constructivist* perspective, knowledge is constructed by the individuals through their interactions with the world they inhabit. Language as central to the construction process and constructivists argue against large-scale explanatory systems of thought. These take on a natural life of their own so that we find it difficult to construct the world in other ways.

Box 1.3 Some useful constructivist ideas for development practitioners

- Models and theories on which any one of us bases our understanding are partial representations of reality, not to be confused with reality itself.
- The validity of an idea in an organisation is connected to the relative power of the idea's proponent and ideas cannot be detached from the person holding those ideas.
- Reflexivity and self-consciousness can help individuals and organisations adapt and respond to external changes and to communicate more easily with others.

For Foucault the most important aspect of power lies in the system of social relations that produces and uses knowledge. Making visible the invisible is an exercise of deconstruction. Deconstruction means the examination of the accumulation of concepts, practices, statements and beliefs that were produced by a particular mindset of a historical period. This is sometimes referred to as a discourse perspective, one that examines how people use language and imagery to represent the world and how these world views are created and reproduced by relations of power. If we consider knowledge as the power to dominate then a dominant discourse tends to make invisible what has the potential to challenge that power (Foucault 1980). This is why a discursive perspective proposes that those seeking political change must deconstruct the discourse and reveal it for what it is.

Foucault's interest in what and how we know is also important for development practice because of his discussion of historical *amnesia* (what is forgotten by those with the power to construct knowledge). This has been significant for historical studies of invisible subordinates, for example the role of women in

class struggles (Wallach Scott 1988). In India, already mentioned, there has developed a school of “subaltern studies” that can be defined as the history of those at the receiving end of colonisation, particularly the peasant majority of the population (Guha and Spivak 1988). The term has expanded in critical international relations to the concept of “subaltern states” within the society of the international system (Ayoob 2002: 41).

Box 1.4 Post-colonial studies

Post-colonial studies are concerned with positionality. Can someone from the dominant West write the history or sociology of the powerless and the inferior? How can a writer from the North write an essay on inequality experienced in the South? Can someone who has not experienced oppression write about it? Can concepts developed as part of the history of the West help the subjects of colonialism express and reflect upon their understanding of the situation in which they find themselves (Nigam 2000; Mudimbe 1988)?

Post-colonial studies have developed earlier feminist critique of the hierarchical categories of western philosophical thought of binary worlds of male/female, black/white, dominant/subordinate (Charles 1996: 7). Exploring the ambiguities of contemporary social, community and global relations they ask why this tradition of thought uses dichotomised representations of the world as a means of maintaining power. They note that the West as a generator of hierarchical dichotomies has been destabilised from inside and outside. Whereas it had been a case of the ‘West and the rest’, we now find the ‘rest in the West’ (Mudimbe-Boyi) or what has also been described as ‘the Empire bites back’.

Intrinsic to almost all post-colonial approaches is the search for the symbolic and representational connections between the world views of the colonisers and the colonised, as typified by Edward Said’s “Orientalism” (Essed and Goldberg 2002). Post-colonial concerns are about the politics of knowledge and how the powerful construct the “other”. Post-colonial studies have become well known in western academia but have marginally penetrated into the knowledge domains of development practice (Darby 2003).

Some constructivists use these ideas of knowledge, discourse and identity as building blocks for critical development theory. They do not take a problem-solving approach but engage in reflective appraisal of the framework that a problem-solving approach takes as given. If the children from *dalit* families in India are dropping out of school, these critical theorists do not instantly seek pragmatic solutions to this problem, for example by a special scholarship programme, but search for an explanation as to why this should be. Only then do they work with others in supporting processes that may change the power relations that had produced this inequality. This is often referred to as a *critical theory* approach.

The term “critical theory” was coined by the Frankfurt school of sociology as a new basis for Marxist theory in the early 1930s and as a critique of “traditional” theory. It rejected the empiricism or positivism of the established social theories which were seen as extending an appropriate natural science model to the social world. This model led to a focus of attention on the superficial and more controllable phenomena of social life and an overemphasis on technical responses to observable problems. It failed to relate these surface features to their underlying and essential structures. Critical theory, on the other hand, was shaped by concerns for emancipation (John Scott 1995: 228ff).

Box 1.5 What is critical theory?

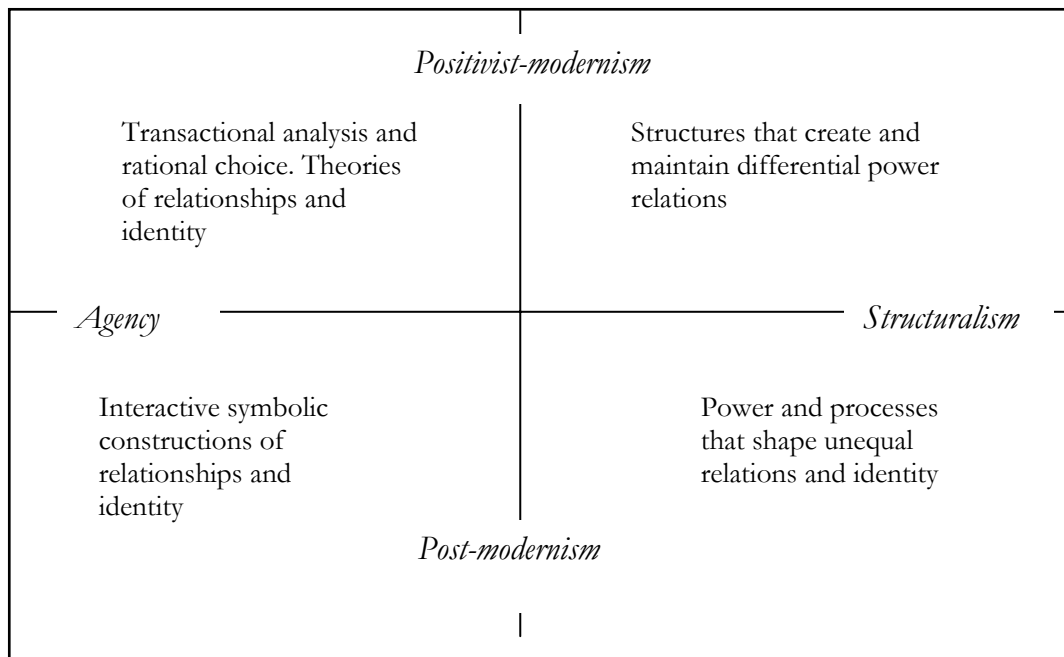
'Critical theory, in the very broad sense . . . understands it to be irreducibly situated within that which is under investigation – society, the polity, the world – and is consequently self-reflexive and unequivocally non-objective. It proceeds from an awareness of the theorist's partiality and serves as critique, based on the possibility of transcendence – of the here and now, of actually existing social relations, of current configurations of thought . . . Critical theory considers the political and economic structures of the modern world to be profoundly alienating, unjust and exploitative . . . and employing whatever theoretical strategy appears suitable . . . seeks to confront and perhaps reform the institutions and ideas that constitute this world' (Bell 2002: 340–1).

In the last section of this essay, I make an argument as to the importance of critical theory for changing development practice for reducing inequality and promoting social justice. I do this because current understandings of inequality in development practice tend to ignore the problem of deep structural inequalities. Critical theory would suggest that failure to consider these would make much of our practice ineffectual in terms of achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

2 Current understandings in development practice**2.1 Locating the theory**

Development as an idea and as practice is generally understood to have started in the 1940s with a conscious choice by the then colonial powers to encourage economic growth in the colonies and to invest in the welfare of the colonial subjects as a means to securing sustained growth (McMichael 1996; Rist 2002). Today that optimism is waning with the positivist evidence that in many parts of the world structural poverty is not responding to 50 years' of technical intervention. It is leading development bureaucracies down new paths of critical reflection that would seem fundamentally alien to the original modernist project. Part of such reflection is an examination of the tools we use for thinking with. How does development practice think about inequality? This part of the essay reviews the main ways that inequality is understood conceptually by current practice.

As noted earlier, inequality in current development practice tends to be used loosely as a concept, drawing variously and often uncritically on different social theory, both positivist and constructivist, with greater or lesser emphasis on the power of agency over structure. The matrix below summarises these as a rough guide to locating the differences in approach in the literature on inequality and development.



I suggest there are five principal ways in which development practice understands inequality. These can all be found in development policy statements and in the design of programmes and strategies. They are:

- inequality as disparity in distribution, consumption and more recently, assets;
- capability deprivation;
- inequality as difference in opportunity;
- rights based approaches;
- social exclusion.

This list is not exactly a time line although the last three are more recent newcomers. However the first two are still much in use and still evolving, as well as continuing to dominate the thinking of conventional development practice.

2.2 Inequality as disparity

The most common way in which inequality is understood in development practice is that used in mainstream development economics informed by rational choice theory. This is based on the concept of the rational individual and a certain understanding of society as the unintended consequence of the myriad actions of individuals each pursuing their rational self-interest. Utilitarianism that developed from this thinking conceived of each man exercising this choice to maximise his “utility” and minimise his suffering.

Public sector bureaucracy shares the same roots in ideas about the rational individual (Hare 1981). It is an organisation constructed on rational principles with staff recruited on the grounds of technical competency and who make objective decisions concerning the greatest good for the greatest number. Weber argues that bureaucracy develops a mode of organisation when there has been at least an

assumption of the levelling of social and economic differences with a presumed equality before the law, and all individuals are treated the same (Gerth and Mills 1948: 196–244). Thus bureaucracy was an improvement on previous patrimonial forms of government in which caste and status differences explicitly provided and required that individuals should be treated differently, rather than equally.

Box 2.1 A critique of rationalism

Liberalism sees agents of the state as pursuing their own self-interest who must be controlled by being held accountable to the electorate. Marxist critical analysis shares with liberalism a suspicion of the objective bureaucrat. Public servants are seen as historically situated social actors, representing their class interest. The bureaucrat's rationalist claims to objectivity are considered spurious because he is part of the society about which he makes judgements. When an official claims to be objective he is using such claims as a means to stay in power. From this critical perspective such rationalism can be seen as *hegemonic* practice. It has a political agenda that is so dominant that it appears the natural way of understanding the world, and its own interests appear to be the interests of all. Rationalism can thus be seen as highly exclusive and (contrary to its claims) inegalitarian.

Rationalism has been critiqued by scholars from the countries formerly colonised by the West. Reason travelled to the rest of the world as an essential part of the baggage of European trader, soldier and missionary. The society that invented Reason was the same that took over the rest of the world in the name of Reason. The European preached Enlightenment humanism at the colonised and at the same time denied it in practice (Chakrabarty 2001; Mudimbe 1988). Goldberg, writing about the slave trade from Africa to America, goes so far as to argue that racism is the shadow side of rationalism (Goldberg 1993: 35).

Bureaucracy has a rational character: 'rules, means, ends and matter-of-factness dominate its bearing' (ibid: 244). In utilitarianism everyone's utility gets the same weight in the maximising exercise of the greatest happiness for the greatest number. For example, in the 1980s it was possible for economists in aid bureaucracies to make a case for large dams even though those people with the least power, often indigenous minorities with only customary title to land, were the losers in the process. Critics argue that while in the interests of efficiency utilitarianism postulates that there must always be winners and losers, somehow the losers appear to be those who had least to start with. Giving equal weight to the equal interest of all parties assumes that all the parties are equal. Utilitarianism is ultimately concerned with an efficiency-oriented approach, concentrating on promoting the maximum sum total of utilities, no matter how unequally that sum total may be distributed (Sen 1995). A paradox with bureaucracy is that although it seeks to treat everyone equally the internal organisation is very hierarchical. Rights based development

practitioners feel uncomfortable employed by such bureaucracies because they wonder how such organisations can promote social change that reduces hierarchy and levels of power.⁵

The World Bank website on the subject asks ‘What exactly is inequality?’. It notes that inequality means different things to different people and that whether inequality should encapsulate ethical concepts such as the desirability of a particular system of rewards or simply mean differences in income is the subject of much debate. It opts for the latter meaning and defines inequality as ‘the dispersion of a distribution, whether that be income, consumption or some other welfare indicator or attribute of a population’ (World Bank 2003). This is a definition that is concerned with objective measurement rather than normative statement. It is a positivist approach that assumes objectivity is possible.

Box 2.2 When is inequality really inequality among African pastoralists?

When is inequality really inequality was the subject of a lengthy debate about pastoralism in an issue of *Current Anthropology* in 1999. In this issue Galaty argues the need to distinguish between observable disparities – ‘If you measure wealth or resources, an always differentiated sample lends itself to division into thirds: the rich, the middle and the poor’ – and their structural effects. He proposes that differentiation may be ephemeral and that the measured disparities may not be associated with deep, durable structures that reproduce the disparity from one generation to the next (Galaty 1999: 46–8). That pastoralist societies tend to have cyclical disparities in wealth without structural inequality is not the view taken in historical study of the East African Turkana from 1890 to 1990. Here it is argued that the specific economic history of the Turkana has been shaped in fundamental ways through the interaction of global and local processes and that these have perpetuated the continued structural impoverishment of certain Turkana (Broch-Due and Sanders 1999).

Inequality as disparity in wealth is still the most dominant in development practice. “Inequality” as studied by economists for development agencies, has tended to mean disparity between individuals, as measured by the observer, rather than as experienced by the actor. It favours the apolitical and the technical approach to development policy and practice. Conceiving inequality as categories of econometric difference between individuals suits the conventional bureaucratic development planning approach to poverty reduction. It also handles the issue in terms of theory and abstraction rather than through an engagement with the experience of discrimination and subordination.

The Ginni coefficient is a common measure used to determine the level of inequality understood in this way. The growth and equity debate is centred around the relationship between the extent of disparity and its positive or negative effect on efficiency. Monetary differential can be compared with other ways of

⁵ Liberal economists employed in development organisations are equally uncomfortable with the public sector bureaucracy that employs them. This is because their theory postulates that each individual in the organisation will pursue his own personal interest rather than that of the public good. This is what underpins the arguments for ‘rolling back the state’ and privatising the public sector. It assumes that the most efficient way to achieve human happiness is for each individual to have the power to choose rather than for a bureaucracy to make that choice for him. Since those who govern will also individually pursue their self-interest, government has to be accountable to an electorate in order to ensure this happens (Held 1996: 74–5, 94–5).

classifying humanity, for example on the basis of sex, age, geographical location, and thus lead to policy choices for enhancing efficiency. The case for tackling gender disparities (understood as measured differences between the two sexes) is based on this premise. A reduction in disparity will enhance efficiency that will in turn lead to growth and thus to poverty reduction.

2.3 Capability deprivation

Utilitarianism does not easily recognise that some individuals have more autonomy than others and that the world is therefore an unequal place and thus by default it risks privileging those with greater autonomy.

Based on the Rawlsian theory of justice, Amartya Sen and others introduced ethics into economic understandings of inequality. Whereas Rawls understood individual advantage in terms of amount of primary goods, Sen proposes that the advantage should be understood in terms of the “means” or capability to make free choices (1992).

Box 2.3 Rawls’s theory of social justice

Rawls’s theory of social justice critiques utilitarianism from a rational, liberal perspective. Because some individuals are deprived of “primary goods” (rights, liberties, opportunities, income, assets and the social basis of self-respect) they cannot achieve the same utility gains as those who possess these goods. Thus unweighted utilitarianism in any maximising exercise will result in unequal outcomes. The just state therefore has a duty to intervene so as to ensure that the worst off benefit as much from public action as do the better off. Ethically permissible inequality is over and above that which provides the most deprived member of society with these primary goods (Rawls 1971).

Sen has considered “capability” with respect to gender inequality and concludes that utilitarian preference theory cannot be the basis for justice because very deprived people, such as women, limit their preferences and are therefore constrained by their own perceptions from the freedom to maximise their utility. He looks at relations between men and women in terms of “cooperative conflicts” where there is not a level playing field because men have a capability advantage. He notes that the current arrangements are often argued to be optimum for efficiency and argues the need to identify alternative co-operative conflicts which can be no less efficient but more equitable (Sen 1995).

Building on Sen’s work Nussbaum specifies certain basic functional capabilities at which societies should aim for their citizens. The onus thus lies with the state to ensure this is achieved, rather than on the citizens to make the demand.

Sen has been enormously influential in permitting economists to recognise that equity matters. Sen has made it permissible in the most orthodox circles to refer to “freedom” and “justice” and has provided the foundations for sharing a common ethical vision. Nevertheless, his approach is still based on the theory of individual choice and his concern is not therefore relational. He asks ‘equality of what’ (1992: ix)

not equality between whom. This is the principal approach that has been used in the Human Development Reports of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) that were established as a direct challenge to the World Bank's World Development Reports that did not consider justice as central to development concerns. The Human Development Report on human rights (UNDP 2000) sought to bring Sen's approach to capabilities and freedoms into a human rights framework. It proposes that a marriage of the two results in a recognition of the duties of others to enhance the human development of a third party.

2.4 Social inequality: class and status

While still remaining firmly positivist, this approach to inequality is sociological in origin as distinct from the economic approach of the disparity and capability understandings of inequality.

Nineteenth-century social theory was constructed on this understanding of societies being different. The society of the people doing the theory, sociologists such as Durkheim, was seen by them as more advanced and complex than the more primitive societies of their own historical past or of the rest of the world in their own time. Mauss and others distinguished between societies where gift exchange is the expression and reproduction of solidarity compared with market societies where autonomous individuals exchanged commodities without the requirement for any other kind of relationship. Underlying all these explanations was the idea that in primitive or traditional society there was 'a shared community of beliefs and sentiments' (Durkheim 1933: 379) and that differences in status or wealth did not affect the capacity of the society to function as an integral whole. Even Marx's theory of class struggle was still based on the idea of one functioning social system being replaced by another in discrete stages.

Box 2.4 Marx and Weber on inequality

The ancestors of much of modern social thought, Marx and Weber still loom large in the conceptualisation of inequality. As such they present a daunting challenge to anyone attempting a literature review. Both were interested in the relationship between inequality and the progress of history but whereas Marx saw the conflict over control over the means of production as the moving force of history, Weber's view was more nuanced.

For Marx, inequality was about class formation and the ownership and control of the means of production. For Weber, prestige or status was at least as enduring a basis of group formation as a common situation in the market (class). Marx had interpreted all social and political associations as part of a superstructure determined by the inequalities within the organisation of production. Weber denied that political action must follow from class formation (Bendix 1974) but elaborated the concept of hierarchal power relations in the constitution of the social order.

For Marx, as with Durkheim, inequality became a problem when the old solidarity links broke down as society evolved from traditional to modern. These ideas still resonate in current alternative thinking about development. Gilbert Rist, for example, defines development as 'the destruction of the natural

environment and of social relations. Its aim is to increase the production of commodities (goods and services) geared by way of exchange to effective demand' (2002: 13). He argues that in non-developmental societies goods are subordinate to social ties in contrast to the forces of development when the 'axiomatics of self-interest explicitly exclude any reliance on the kindness of others' (ibid: 17). Similar arguments are very current among Aymara intellectuals in Bolivia who perceive capitalism as a means of oppression and an instrument that destroys traditional gift-exchange systems.

Marx's "alienation" occurred when as a result of capitalism workers were separated from the means of production. A carpenter no longer chops down the tree and makes a chair but is hired as a hand by the capitalist who provides the wood, pays the man a wage and then sells the chair at a profit. The carpenter has become a member of the proletariat. However, he could not act to challenge and change the class system until he had become conscious of his situation and joined with others to take collective action. Until then the poor need someone else to represent them.

In so far as there is merely a local interconnection among these . . . and the identity of their interests begets no community, no national bond and no political organisation among them, they do not form a class. They are consequently incapable of enforcing their class interests in their own name . . . They cannot represent themselves, they must be represented.

(Marx 1962: 334)

Many development practitioners who may never have read the '18th Brumaire' are heavily influenced by this analysis and it shapes views on the role of development aid in representing the poor who cannot represent themselves.⁶ This is also where the current interest lies in the role of elites as agents of social change. Elites have become a recent topic of interest in development practice around the question as to how to encourage them to adopt a social conscience and support poverty reduction (Hossain and Moore 2002).

Marx's theory of social change, that moves from one stage to the next through a process of class conflict, did not essentially contradict a mode of thought that conceived society as a structure of patterns of relationships that exist independently of people and as being in a state of functional equilibrium. Structural functionalism was the predominant mode of thinking about society in the 1950s and 1960s. Stratification was seen to have a social function rather than as an expression of the power of some people over others. This was epitomised in such concepts as the 'chief as the tribal banker' (Malinowski 1921). Maquet's study of inequality in Rwanda was premised on an assumption of the functioning of the patronage system for the mutual benefit of all parties, whereby Hutu received cows and land in exchange for rendering services to the Tutsi (1961).

⁶ See for example the following extract from a recent note by a DfID director concerning a possible switch in aid practice: 'To put it glibly, we would spend less of our time trying to represent the interests of the poor in the policy-making process, and more time trying to ensure that the poor have their own say'.

Box 2.5 Elites

Pareto, famous in economics for the general equilibrium theory, conceived societies as holistic systems in equilibrium. Every element in it had a part to play in the maintenance of the system. According to Pareto in any society there are two strata, the mass of people who are ruled and the upper stratum of the elite. At any one time some of the elite are in power, governing the masses and the others are not but together they form a political class that competes for influence over the economy and society. The inherent inequality is "managed" to allow society to stay in equilibrium by a process of social mobility in which individuals from the lower stratum join the elite (Bottomore 1964).

De Swaan *et al.* (2000) understand elites as controlling a much larger share of material, symbolic and physical resources than the other strata of society. Elites are not homogeneous. Some individuals and families may be powerful in one sphere, such as business, without necessarily having similar power in another, such as politics. However, some elites are able to exercise power in all spheres.

In the years after the Second World War there developed an understanding of social change in relation to concepts of the welfare state and that has since influenced current development thinking about inequality in relation to rights and citizenship. The sociologist, T.H. Marshall, perceived society as a social system of interrelated activities that maintained social behaviour and identity while allowing individual free choice. Writing with reference to the reduction of inequality in western Europe, Marshall argued that representative democracy, political citizenship, resulted inevitably in successful claims for equal rights in social and economic citizenship. Social citizenship, implemented through policies of redistribution, led to a de-commodification of labour by decoupling the living standards of citizens from their market value (Marshall 1996). A theoretical account of this historical process is offered by Przeworski's analysis of the way in which political parties representing the working class in universal franchise democracies produced a series of strategic bargains that ensured rising living standards for all without threatening the survival of the market economy (Przeworski 1986).

Theories of progress towards social citizenship underpin current development (wishful?) thinking about poverty reduction and good governance. In his comparative study of democracy and inequality in Africa and Latin America, Steven Friedman argues that while democracy is more evident across the world than ever, elites do not appear to be under the same pressure, as they had been in Europe, to implement redistributive policies. 'As political democracy and free markets became theoretically and practically intertwined, the egalitarian basis of historical democratisation pressures has been lost . . . Whether by consent, imposition or default (the last named a possible result of strong social forces pressing for greater equality) the price of extending democracy across the globe appears to be a narrowing of the issues considered appropriate for its attention' (2001: 6).

Box 2.6 Social structure and inequality

Social structure has been defined as 'all the forms of consequential social arrangements that constrain us' (Parker *et al.* 2003: 140). Interest in social structure has not been necessarily functionalist. A more radical "structuralist" tradition has criticised functionalism for limiting its attention to the observable features of social life, ignoring the deep structures that are responsible for them. Positivist social theory in the Marxist tradition has looked at how social institutions such as families, political parties, business enterprises, are shaped by deeper structures of production, domination and ideology (John Scott 1995: 162).

Anthropologists working in a neo-Marxist tradition, particularly from the French tradition of Meillasoux and others, have continued to explore these questions, for example in Africa in relation to the commoditisation of economic relations with respect to land and labour. However, as a recent study of class formation in Malawi makes clear, it is much more difficult to discern this process as it takes place than to look back into history and analyse what has already happened (Peters 2002).

In thinking about inequality, social structure defines a person's position in relation to others. Tilly suggests that anthropologists have four main questions to ask: (1) what asymmetrical relations prevail among persons, groups, categories and social locations? (2) how do person, groups, categories and social locations end up in the positions they occupy? (3) what effects do 1 and 2 have on individual and collective social experience? (4) how do 1, 2 and 3 change? (2001: 230).

Considering structure in this way at the global level is referred to as a "world system perspective". For example, it has been argued that universal standards and principles are an ideology that maintains the deep structures of unequal power relations established as the means by which the West maintains dominance while providing sufficient satisfaction to the less powerful to prevent them challenging the system (Cox 1987).

Inequality of opportunity

The development literature on inequality of access and opportunity commonly draws on Weberian sociological concepts of status and rank in social systems in relation to observations of social structures, objectively collectivising people in terms of their access to resources and opportunities for action (Parker *et al.* 2003: 142). Ascription of social class positions are seen as fundamental factors in, for example, access to education or health care.

An example of this approach is from Hungary where the authors look at the persistence of inequalities of opportunity in access to education during the communist period (Hanley and McKeever 1997). It is an approach also widely used in India in relation to constraints on opportunity as a result of caste barriers. Policy implications from this approach to inequality are to make special provision for those of lower status so as to give them the same opportunity as those of higher status, for example through educational scholarships.

Box 2.7 Low status can cause poor health

Drawing on research from eastern Europe as well as from Britain and the United States, Wilkinson argues that it is not the richest societies that have the best health but those with small income disparities and low levels of social stratification (Wilkinson 1996). People in positions of subordination and relative inferiority have poorer health not because they may have less money than people in positions of relative superiority but because their feelings of inferiority and powerlessness affect their sense of well-being.

Equality of opportunity has been the most common way in which development practice has tackled gender disparities, aiming to give women the same chances as men without considering the underlying power relations that inform gender inequalities. It has been heavily influenced by a western, primarily North American sociology that possibly has not been interested in pursuing a radical agenda, reducing “gender”, “class” and “race” into quantitative variables (C. Anderson 1996: 730). The concept of ‘equity’ strengthens this rather mechanistic approach to inequality when understood as a statement that certain differences in access to social benefits are morally and politically unacceptable (Bloom 2001: 208).

Box 2.8 Researching inequality in China

Playing around with Marx and Weber can still be politically dangerous for modern social researchers. In China a research team challenged the Communist Party orthodoxy on class formation by publishing a study on social change in the previous 20 years (Li Peilin 2002). They described a working class that enjoyed little power and was of low economic and social status compared with Weberian bureaucrats and the new economic elite. Workers on strike in China’s north east “rust belt” waved copies of the book to claim social justice from management and the book was banned (personal communication from Li Peilin and Zhang Wanli).

Equality of opportunity approaches can be understood in development practice as a means towards social mobility and more open societies. As with capability deprivation the focus is on state intervention to remove barriers to opportunity. The usual underlying assumption is that the state is acting in a rational technocratic and impartial fashion with the aim of achieving welfare outcomes with the greatest attainable efficiency. An alternative, political science assumption, based on theories of elites, results in similar policy choices. This is because there is an interest in the ruling elite to recruit a sufficient number from the subordinate classes to maintain its own vigour and, by offering hope of escaping from deprivation, keep the subordinated majority quiescent.

2.5 Social exclusion

Social exclusion derives its conceptual origins from the (Durkheimian) emphasis on social solidarity. Thus social exclusion is defined as ‘the process through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society within which they live’ (De Haan 1999).

Box 2.9 Perceptions of social exclusion in Bolivia

In Bolivia DfID and UNDP supported a series of workshops involving representatives of grassroots organisations and movements. For some, exclusion was understood as inequality of access to opportunities, a definition that the workshop organiser commented was perhaps the most comfortable one for government policy-makers. Others saw exclusion as more political, as an involuntary absence from decision-making fora, while querying whether they, the excluded, were complicit in this process. Yet again others considered exclusion as a monopolisation of power and wealth by the few to the detriment of the many. Issues of land rights and territory, of exploitation and police oppression, of lack of voice and discrimination were hot recurrent topics (Arauco and Eyben 2002).

Although not always thought of in spatial terms, social exclusion is often so considered, for example in the way it is used in Britain and France with reference to deprived urban areas. In this sense social exclusion can be seen as a new way of thinking about “marginalisation”. In the development studies literature “marginalisation”, particularly in urban areas, was understood as the situation of poor people in squatter and slum communities that were not integrated into the city’s economy and society. It was an approach that informed urban planning in development countries for some decades. It was the premise underlying the design of large slum improvement projects that the British aid programme funded in India during the 1980s. These had the goal of “integrating” slum dwellers into the wider urban community. In a 1969 study of Rio de Janeiro, Perlman argued that slum dwellers were ‘not economically and politically marginal but are excluded and repressed; that they are not socially and culturally marginal but stigmatised and excluded’ (Perlman 2003: 16). She notes that in Latin America in the 1980s the concept of “marginalisation” was replaced by exclusion, inequality, injustice and spatial segregation (ibid: 20).

Kabeer explores exclusion from the perspective of institutional “rules of the game” and emphasises that it is agency that constructs and maintains these rules. An analysis of the mechanisms of exclusion can both inform social policy and make it self-aware as to how policy practice can itself reproduce the exclusion it is seeking to address (Kabeer 2000).

De Haan argues that the greatest value of the concept is the potential to explore the processes that cause exclusion and thereby deprivation of those excluded. Nevertheless, the concept risks supporting the status quo by implying there is the possibility of bringing marginal people into the existing social structure without any need to radically change that structure or indeed, by ignoring the existing and complex social relations that give rise to and perpetuate inequities (Sayed and Soudien 2003: 10). This conservative

interpretation of social exclusion is, for example, favoured by Christian Democrat parties in various European and Latin American countries.

In terms of access to public provision, such as health and education, the onus is on the state to tackle the exclusion that deprives some citizens of their rights. Nevertheless, as Sayed and Soudien make clear, there is a need for greater self-conscious awareness of who is doing the including and the excluding, recognising that the barriers are socially constructed and that the “inclusive state” may itself be reproducing processes of further exclusion.

That social inclusion is the responsibility of the state is explicitly recognised in a paper prepared by Lynn Bennett for the social development group in the World Bank. Social inclusion is seen as complementary to empowerment. While the latter requires the enhancement of people’s assets and capabilities in order to engage, influence and hold more accountable the institutions that affect them, social inclusion is defined as ‘the removal of institutional barriers and the enhancement of incentives to increase access of diverse individuals and groups to development’ (Bennett 2003: 18). Concerned to influence development organisation decision-makers Bennett is interested in making a bridge between economic and social theories. She draws both on anthropological literature and on that of new institutional economics to make a case for why social inclusion and empowerment are good for growth, in other words, to provide an efficiency argument for caring about inequality.

2.6 Rights based approaches

Rights based approaches have evolved and joined together from several streams of thought and practice (Eyben 2003b). One of these is based on the international legal human rights framework, a set of United Nations conventions and covenants (Steiner and Alston 2000). These have been critiqued from the South because although their advocates claim them as universal, they did in fact originate in the European Age of Enlightenment and were part and parcel of the package that was used in the expansion of the West.

The fallacy of historicism is also found in another approach to human rights from political science that emphasises rights as part of an assumed universal historical evolution from clientship to citizenship in the way that it occurred in European history (Unsworth 2003). The DfID policy paper on human rights notes it is often particular groups of people who cannot claim their rights in different areas of their lives because of discriminatory policies that result in inequitable outcomes (DfID 2000). This leads development policy to take an interest in political inequality, citizenship and good governance (Jones and Gaventa 2002) and the relation between achieving political rights and changing the ascription of status by the social structure. Referring to India, Beteille argues that although the entitlements of citizenship have made a difference to the texture of social life, ‘no one can seriously say that the legal rights of citizenship have obliterated all the social distinctions of caste . . . The Indian case . . . shows dramatically how a certain commitment to the equal rights of citizenship can go hand in hand with a fine sense of the differential coefficient of social worth’ (Beteille 1996: 522).

An interesting distinction has been made by Bairros between “rights” and “privileges”. She notes that in Brazil the cross-cutting variable of race is often associated with advantages for whites and disadvantages

for blacks. Hence through achieving inequitable access to public goods, the dominant group has transformed a citizen's right into a privilege (Bairros 2001: 4).

Social action

A third stream, drawing on theory of social action, has grown primarily out of a myriad of social, cultural and political struggles and debates both in North and South. Rights based approaches are inspired by autonomous movements such as of those of women, the landless and indigenous peoples which often include demands for participation in decisions which affect their lives (Nyamu-Musembi 2002a). Kabeer (2003) uses this kind of rights framework in looking at Nijera Kori and in her study of land rights in Kenya, Nyamu explores the interplay of ideas about how the world should be with day-to-day practice of social relationships in a fast-changing wider social context. Søren Hvalkof's account of how the highly excluded Ashénika people in the montane area of Peru between the Andes and the Amazon succeeded against enormous odds in establishing legal rights to their territory suggests that their success is partly a result of their preparedness to operate in the international human rights arena as well as the local arena to secure their own goals (Hvalkof 2002).

Box 2.10 Social movements

From the 1968 radical experience in France, Alain Touraine developed the idea of the "historical subject" as the transformative agency in social change and explored the significance of the *social movement*. Scott proposes that a social movement is a network of groups and organisations that are unified by a shared conception that they form part of a single "movement" to change existing patterns of power relations, possessing shared values and specific goals and making deliberate attempts to ally themselves with each other through joint action and coalitions. Social, gender and ethnic categories are not groups nor collective actors *per se* although it is plausible to explore the "emergent properties" of these categories and to analyse the groups, organisations and social movements with which they are associated (A. Scott 1991: 132–6). Development studies have taken this idea further and coined the phrase "new social movement" to describe movements of collective action and resistance to western hegemony, such as the Chipko movement in India (Watts 1995; Escobar 1995).

The growing interest in thinking about inequality from an actor-oriented and social constructionist form of social analysis is exemplified in development studies by Long (2001). Long's emphasis on agency assumes that, although some people have more power than others, there are no deep structures that constrain the action of the less powerful. Rather, power is fluid and shifting, giving actors the opportunity to contest, challenge, negotiate and capture. The social theory of agency thus privileges peoples' capacity to change their lives rather than be held prisoner by the deep structures of power and oppression that hold them down.

From these kinds of arguments has developed a school of studies concerned with the 'the weapons of the weak' (James Scott 1985) where it is argued that even powerless people have agency for resistance

and that the relationship between dominant elites and subordinates is a struggle in which both sides are continually probing for weakness and exploiting small advantages. Gledhill notes the importance of analysing the content of such popular practices of resistance in order to see what kind of impact they have on power relations (2000: 81). We should not see such resistance as an either/or situation of, on the one hand, letting off steam to re-establish stability and equilibrium or, on the other hand, an expression of real revolution.

Ortner critiques some of the resistance literature for its “cultural and political thinning”, for example in the casual way in which James Scott treats religion. She suggests that individual acts of resistance as well as large-scale resistance movements are often themselves internally contradictory and affectively ambivalent, in large part due to these internal political complexities. An understanding of the subordinates’ own or internal forms of inequality and asymmetry, she argues, is indispensable to an understanding of the nature of resistance (Ortner 1995).

Conclusion

The purpose of unpacking the different ways in which inequality is used in current development practice has been to help the reader recognise the theoretical origins of the explanations we provide to identify, illuminate and justify our practice. In such practice we often tend to mix and match two or more theoretical approaches into any actual statement about inequality. In some instances this is a result of muddled thinking but most times it is an attempt to achieve consensus between different points of view or to include into a theory held by a more powerful group some elements of another understanding of inequality. Other times and in some situations the theoretical origins of some of our explanations are best left obscure.

Inequality is a contested and therefore sensitive issue for development organisations and people may well find it more comfortable not to define their terms. This allows them to elide from a more radical to a conservative perspective when they sense they are challenged. While it may be a valid political tactic, it is one more likely to be effective if we are ourselves aware of the possibilities of definitions that are available to us. An even better tactic may be not to retreat to a defensive position but to offer and suggest other ways of thinking about inequality in such a way that our interlocutors find themselves seeing a problem in a fresh light. In the rest of this essay I explore how conceptual work on identity, process and experience can help us further in clarifying and improving our practice.

3 Inequality expressed through identity

3.1 Categorising difference: how fluid is identity?

People categorise themselves and are classified by others in various ways. The place they come from, which place of worship they attend, what they eat and do not eat, with whom they may have a sexual relationship, the language they speak, the colour of their skin . . . All these are socially constructed means

by which some person or group of people distinguish themselves from another person or group. They are relational expressions and fundamental to the generation and maintenance of inequality.

In Part 2 we considered the various ways in which current development practice considers and approaches inequality. All of these different approaches include concepts of identity, for example with reference to the categories of gender and ethnicity.

The manner in which social theory explains identity relates to where the explanation sits on the agency – structure continuum. Someone tending towards a structural approach to relational inequality will be more interested in the structures that are created and maintained (categories, networks, groups) as a result of the relationships, whereas someone with a stronger actor-oriented approach will be more interested in identifying the processes taking place during the social encounter. Explanation is also influenced by the extent to which we are positivist or constructivist. Is our identity objectively real – set in concrete – or is it fluid, shifting and fragmented? Bearing in mind the two theoretical continua provided in the matrix on page 12, from where does development practice draw its ideas on identity?

Contemporary understanding of ethnicity has been heavily influenced by Barth's social agency approach (1969). Ethnic identification is understood as being generated, confirmed or transformed in the course of transactions largely bereft of culture. Banton (1998) has developed a "bottom up" model of race and ethnic relations where individuals make rational choices about their identity from a limited number of alternatives.

Towards the other end of the continuum are more structural social anthropologists such as Jenkins, influenced by Bourdieu's notion of habitus. Jenkins proposes a model of ethnicity in which the socially constructed signifiers of difference are cultural, rather than transactional (1997). Because they are cultural they have greater persistence and durability and shape the relationship between two individuals.

Explaining social difference is also informed by the other continuum. At the modernist or positivist end, neo-Marxists, such as Tilly (1998) understand the structures that make difference as objective reality. Tilly notes the "mechanisms" that make this happen ("exploitation" and "opportunity hoarding") but his main interest is in the binary categorical inequality that results: black/white; male/female. He appears to understand these as essential categories.

Towards the post-modernist end of the continuum, there is greater interest in the operation of power and process in the reproduction of structure and culture.

From this perspective these binary categories can equally be understood as cultural constructs. Wright refers to culture as a contested process of meaning-making in situations of unequal power relations:

The contest is over the meaning of key terms and concepts. How are these concepts used and contested by differently positioned actors who draw on local, national and global links in unequal relations of power? How is the contest framed by implicit practices and rules – or do actors challenge, stretch or reinterpret them as part of the contest too? In a flow of events, who has the power to define? How do they prevent other ways of thinking about these concepts from being

heard? How do they manage to make their meanings stick, and use institutions to make their meanings authoritative? With what material outcomes?

(Wright 1998: 4)

Many development practitioners, and social activists more generally, tend to be unhappy with explanations of inequality that imply the existence of structural differences that constrain individual freedom to be oneself. But, it is just because they are practitioners, that they encounter the brutal reality of the lived experience of those who suffer from the power of social structures from which they do not benefit.

Susan Jolly, for example, argues that the notions of female and male are not biological realities but social conventions. Nevertheless, while the biology may be largely imagined, inequalities between the two genders remain very real. Given this, she proposes that we continue to work within these categories but with an awareness that they are only temporary and taken on as a strategy, rather than as essential “who we are”. Referring more widely to the structures that impose classifications on people, she notes ‘We need to work both for the interests of particular identity groups oppressed by this system (of categorisation) and at the same time for the abolition of these identities themselves’ (Jolly 2002: 12).

3.2 What about race?

Anthias and Yuval-Davis explore the connections between class, gender and race in modern Britain. All three divisions, they argue, involve differential access to resources and processes of exclusion and inclusion, and at times, oppression and domination. However, although class status can be hereditary they do not perceive the genealogy of class functioning in the same way for the working class as it does for racialised groups. Race is deterministic whereas notions of inherent capacities in class are fluid (1993: 19). Whereas this seems a valid argument for the practice of class and race in modern-day Britain, it may well have been that class was more racialised in the past with concepts such as aristocratic ‘blue blood’ (B. Anderson 1983: 149). Jones quotes Mayhew’s study of poverty in nineteenth-century London and the belief at that time in the differences in skull shape between the upper and lower classes that demonstrated ‘distinctive moral and intellectual features’ (Jones 1996: 173).

The social construction and selection of biological differences as a means of signifying exclusion or inclusion has clearly been a particularly significant means of establishing and maintaining hegemony in the last two to three centuries of European cultural practices. Nevertheless, we may ask whether “race”, as understood in this way, has had a wider historical and geographical span. In any case, the fluidity of racialisation processes can convert class or ethnic categories into and out of racial distinctions, as we have

seen in the way that the British press treats asylum seekers. The term “neo-racism” or “cultural racism” has been coined to describe such a treatment. It refers to a belief in and practice of the insurmountability of cultural differences (Doty 1999; Wright 1998; Modood 1997).⁷

What is race is a highly contested and political issue, as demonstrated at the Durban World Conference Against Racism in 2001 where “caste” and “Zionism” were proposed and rejected as examples of racist practice by different global and national political interests. Current theories of race understand it as a socially constructed phenomenon that draws on perceived physical difference as the basis for the construction. Wade emphasises, however, that to see races in this way is to assert that we can recognise racial categorisation independently of history. In fact, he argues, only certain phenotypical variations make racial categories and these are historically contingent. Thus Wade understands race as a social construct that was part of the process of European colonisation of the rest of the world. He argues that the physical differences that are socially significant are those that correspond to the geographical encounters of the colonisers (Wade 1997: 14–15). Thus, in Bolivia, for a woman to possess hair on her legs is a signifier of “whiteness” as distinct from being “indigenous”.⁸

If we understand race in this way, is it only in the European encounter with the rest of the world that there has been a social construction of historically contingent perceived physical difference? Can race serve as a means of mutually distinguishing strangers from neighbours without a necessary implication of it being a means to symbolise domination? The valued hairiness of the ruling class in Bolivia was also a signifier of difference between Chinese and Europeans but one constructed by the former in a historical encounter where neither party accepted the domination of the other. This would contradict Frederickson’s statement that race is ‘ethnicity made hierarchical’. He argues that the application of power makes difference invidious and disadvantageous and with a stress on the presence and articulation of a belief that the defining traits are innate or unchangeable (Frederickson 2002: 140).

Frederickson’s distinction between race and ethnicity implies that the first exists in a context of unequal power relations and the second when relations are more equal. Such a distinction might imply that whereas ethnicity is constructed by those who claim membership of the group, race is constructed by more powerful others who use that power to categorise the less powerful. Thus people would be able to change their ethnic identity more easily (because it is arguably self-ascribed) than they could their racial one (which is ascribed to them by more powerful others).

⁷ Another recently coined term is “environmental racism” which has been variously used to indicate excessive dumping of municipal waste and/or lack of attention to the public health and environmental concerns in residential areas inhabited by racially defined subordinate groups (Ruiters 2001; Cole and Foster 2001) to racial oppression in nature conservation (Lohmann 1999).

⁸ Personal communication from Alison Spedding. This is an interesting example of how the term “white” is used to describe physical characteristics which do not relate to skin colour.

Box 3.1 The invention of race in Rwanda?

The extent and reasons for political and social inequality in Rwanda has been contested and dynamic both within the country itself and among academic analysts. At the time of independence Tutsi nationalists argued that the divisions between Tutsi and Hutu had not been that significant prior to the arrival of the Belgians who had deliberately emphasised and exploited the division in order to split the population, making it easier for them to rule. Rather than who was to blame Hutu nationalists were concerned with the present reality in which Tutsis were clearly privileged.

That "race" was a concept invented by the colonial powers is the argument made by Mamdani and others in tracing the categorisation of difference in Rwanda. Mamdani (2001) emphasises how the colonial regime in Rwanda used the positivist instruments of measurement and categorisation in a way that changed the meaning and expression of hierarchical power relations, solidifying what had been more fluid structures and then privileging the ruling class. They suggest that the Belgians, and the Germans before them, were in fact applying their own racial lens to the situation and converting Tutsi into the lowest rank of a hierarchy of whites.

In a review of the early colonial literature in my own postgraduate studies I quote a German explorer who wrote of the Hutu as 'ungainly figures . . . who patiently bow themselves in abject bondage to the Tutsi . . . unmistakable evidence of a foreign strain are betrayed in their [the Tutsi] high foreheads, the curve of their nostrils and the fine, oval shape of their faces'. A report by the Belgian authorities to the League of Nations in 1938 notes the intention to maintain and consolidate the traditional Tutsi ruling class because of the great qualities found in them – 'their undeniable intellectual superiority and their potential for leadership'.

For Jenkins ethnicity becomes race when the cultural signifiers are shaped by historically contingent structural power relations that result in stigma and disadvantage. 'Racism and categories of "racial" classification and differentiation are most usefully conceptualised as historically specific allotropes of the general, ubiquitous, social phenomenon of ethnicity' (Jenkins 1997: 83). Like Wade he sees the most significant of those moments has been the European expansion into the rest of the world.

3.3 The power of categorisation

When inequality is understood as disparity, identity tends to be used statistically for comparing one part of the population with another, for example in relation to school attendance or kind of employment. Recently census takers have started to ask people to categorise themselves rather than submit to the classification scheme of the statistician. In the last census in Bolivia, a Spanish born bishop described himself as "Aymara" because he said that was the identity he had now acquired. In Brazil only a much smaller proportion of the population describe themselves as "black" than would so be described by others. In Britain the numbers defining themselves as working class dropped during the time of the Thatcher government.

Box 3.2 The power of categorisation

Varese (1989) notes the obvious that the Indian was invented by European colonialism, constructed as an epistemological category that has served since then the dual purpose of occluding the complexity and diversity of civilisation found in this hemisphere and leaving them with a diminished, uncertain social identity (p. 58). The power of reductionist categorisation was made apparent to me in Bolivia when the then Minister wanted the country strategy paper to provide statistics as to the proportion of the population that was indigenous and disliked the idea that notions of identity in Bolivia were more complex than this.

It would be an interesting exercise to see in which DfID country strategy papers or country action plans include these kind of figures and review the decision making process that led to this. The Rwanda draft country action plan (June 2003) for example does not include figures about proportions of Tutsi and Hutu.

Identity can be constructed as much by the powerful observer, such as anthropologist or development practitioner, as by the subject and the political implications of assigning an identity to a less powerful other need to be recognised (Toyota 2000; Wade 1997). Each time a DfID country strategy paper refers to categories of people we need to be aware of the policy implications of such practice: 'For those researching and writing on such sensitive matters, the decision to employ a strategic essentialism of this sort is something that must be considered on a case by case, if not a word by word basis' (Oliver *et al.* 2000: 7).

Box 3.3 The construction of an Afro-Brazilian identity

Black movements in Brazil are refuting the official national myth that black poverty and social exclusion are unrelated to racial discrimination. They have also started to construct an Afro-Brazilian cultural identity and actively connected politically with international networks to bring global pressure on Brazilian elites to make real the myth of racial democracy (Reichmann 1999).

In that context Bairros was invited to speak to a meeting in Sao Paolo of DfID staff based in Latin America. She spoke of the impact of the preparations for the Durban conference and that not only was the Brazilian government issuing policy statements in response to pressure but that for the first time international cooperation organisations were paying the issue attention (Bairros 2001: 3). She asked whether international cooperation should play an advocacy role or introduce new ways of thinking about and intervening in social issues, establishing alternative paradigms on the basis of the international human rights framework.

Bureaucratic organisations tend to require neat categories and dislike the messy and shifting complexity of lived experience. Thus fluidity of identity has led Frances Stewart to note a problem for development practice. 'If group differences are to provide a useful basis for policy, group boundaries must be relatively clearly defined and have some continuity over time' (Stewart 2002: 6).

It is not my intention to summarise the current rich debate on the topic of race and ethnicity (for example, apart from those already cited, Bonilla-Silva 1997; Delgado 2000; Goldberg 1993; Winant 1994) but I believe it is important to stress the need to avoid definitive and simple statements of the kind that bureaucracy tends to prefer. Mainstream development studies must enter the field of race and ethnicity with caution and humility. Stewart's well received (among development practitioners) work on 'horizontal inequalities' is an interesting example of the play of power within development practice when an economist is prepared to admit that there are other ways of considering inequality from 'the normal [my emphasis] definition of inequality which lines individuals or households up vertically and measures inequality over the range of individuals' (Stewart 2002: 3).

Stewart has absorbed from social theory an understanding of ethnic identity based on internal definition, that is the people in a group see themselves as a group and on that basis make collective or individual claims for more jobs, voice or whatever. Jenkins, on the other hand, emphasises how external actors may categorise into a group people who do not so perceive themselves, in other words have no sense of collective identity. However, an externally defined category may evolve into a self-conscious group, and vice versa. Social identity is the outcome of a dialectical process of external and internal definition (Stewart 2002: 52–73).

Box 3.4 The growth of *dalit* consciousness

To what extent did the British Raj reinforce and solidify what had been a more fluid caste structure in India (Bahugura and De Haan 2002: 3)? Or was there even before the Raj a casteism that has been ignored by many Indian scholars and rendered invisible by the Brahminical hegemony (Iliah 1999). Nigam argues that it was the availability of the language of rights and the secularisation of public space, thanks to western education and the modern processes unleashed by the British rule, that provided the main ingredients of the *dalit* struggle (Nigam 2000: 7). He particularly focuses on the irony that most Indian leading Marxists were Brahmins who emphasised the predominance of class as the subject for identity struggle, leading to a non-recognition of *dalit* efforts for self-expression. While many Marxists made a real attempt to purge themselves of casteism, yet they remained caught within the mesh of caste (as of gender) privilege and therefore of discriminatory practices (ibid: 15).

What happens when categorisation is undertaken by powerful external agencies that control knowledge and resources? Development practice is a pertinent example of such an enterprise, employing categories such as "women", "the poor", "indigenous peoples" and finding these categories useful because, as Stewart points out, they need stable groups in order to make and monitor policy. An outcome of this process is that an externally defined category may evolve into a self-conscious group. At the same time self-defined collectivities may consciously redefine themselves so as to fit more neatly into the classification system of the external actors. For development practice it may be useful to explain social

identity as the outcome of a dialectical process of external and internal definition (Jenkins 1997: 52–73). This is because it makes explicit the impact of external definition on the change process.

3.4 Race, culture and development practice

It has been argued that the discipline of international relations was and is predicated on a systematic politics of forgetting, a wilful amnesia on the question of race (Krishna 2001). The same point could be made for development studies.

Why is this so? If development itself is understood as the linear heir of colonialism which in turn is understood as a racial project (McMichael 1996: 18), then a post-modernist response would be that development would not interrogate its own construct.

There is a very small but growing literature that attempts to explore the issue of race and development from the reflexivist perspective of the practitioner (Noxolo 1999; White 2002; Goudge 2003). Noxolo, as a British black practitioner in an aid project in Ghana, finds herself in an ambiguous position of sometimes being ascribed whiteness and sometimes blackness. From that perspective she observes that white development practitioners are accorded privileges which they don't even notice as such (Noxolo 1999: 42). She refers to their racialised assumption that their knowledge is the universal knowledge, what she calls 'whiteness as passepartout knowledge'. Referring to interviews with DfID staff in the Caribbean she comments on their attempts 'not to be racist' but being forced within the bounds of the discourses to draw on racialised structures (ibid: 27).

Box 3.5 Behaviour of a privileged group

'Because whiteness is the norm, it is easy to forget that it is not the only perspective. Thus members of dominant groups assume that their perceptions are the pertinent ones, that their problems are the ones that need to be addressed, and that in discourse they should be the speaker rather than the listener. Part of being a member of a privileged group is being the centre and the subject of all inquiry in which people of colour or other non privileged groups are the objects. So strong is this expectation of holding centre stage that even when a time and place are specifically designated for members of a non privileged group to be central, members of the dominant group will often attempt to take back the pivotal focus. They are stealing the centre – often with a complete lack of self-consciousness' (Grillo and Wildman 1997: 46–7).

Sarah White (2002) compares the “colour blind” nature of development to its previous gender blindness and following Omi and Winant’s notion of the “racial project” (Omi and Winant 1986) suggests that development policy and practice can be considered racist if it creates structures or reproduces structures of domination based on essentialist categories of race. Just as development before 1970 spoke little about gender yet had gendered outcomes, so, she suggests, the challenge is to trace the implicit racial character of formally “colour blind” development discourse and practice.

At the personal and institutional level, development practice that reinforces or reproduces wider patterns of unequal power relations defined in relation to race or ethnicity became a concern of this writer when working for DfID in Bolivia (Eyben 2003a). In conclusion to this brief discussion, the reader is encouraged to reflect on the possibility of racist and other exclusionary practice in the privileging of certain forms of knowledge and relationships over others. For example, recent discussions in some DfID country offices have revealed national staff concerns that their knowledge and understanding is not given sufficient recognition by the UK-based managers.

Building on our enhanced understanding of issues of identity, structure and agency the next and final part of this essay looks at the processes which maintain and reproduce unequal power relations. Such an approach may be particularly helpful to development practitioners concerned with how their organisations can best support rather than hinder transformational change in favour of poor people. At the same time, in identifying these processes, it is useful to keep always in mind ourselves as individual actors whose own behaviour may strengthen or undermine the capacity of our organisation to promote the reduction of inequality.

4 Inequality as process and experience

4.1 An actor-oriented approach

It is worth noting that other than in the field of gender, inequality in development theory has focused mainly on condition or status. This has been both with regard to what kind of inequalities exist – political, income/consumption, levels of human capital (less on status and prestige) and to the degree of inequality. Less has been published in the development literature on the processes related to the reproduction of inequality nor on how it is experienced by all parties to the relationship.

When official development practice does refer to inequality or structural poverty it tends to assume “barriers” or “constraints” that have to be tackled or eliminated on the road to development. The metaphor is both static and concrete without reference to the actors who are continuously building and transforming these barriers. I propose that a more actor-oriented approach is therefore useful because it points to who is doing what and in relationship with whom. It thus provides the information required for a development agency to identify those dynamic processes already extant and that it could seek to either strengthen or minimise. A focus on agency also encourages the development actor to see him or her self as one of those involved in the nexus of political relationships concerned with struggles to maintain or reduce inequality.

In adopting such an actor-oriented stance, I am not suggesting that we discount the explanatory strength of structuralism, nor am I proposing an approach that ignores the presence of hegemony and habitus. My emphasis on processes is pragmatic rather than theoretical. How can we support change? And in answering that question we must not ignore the irony that much major social change appears to come as a result of unintended consequences rather than intentional action (Dirks *et al.* 1994: 401). This means

being prepared to live with the uncertainty that where our actions will lead we do not know. ‘There are no answers, only choices.’⁹ Theory guides us in the choices we make.

Box 4.1 How language can be used to obscure processes of power

Those who control resources, information and decision-making have power over those without such control. At its extreme, power over an individual or community results in physical violence or the latent threat of violence that affects the behaviour of the oppressed. Euphemisms may be used for “power over”. For example, the World Bank’s Country Assistance Strategy for India refers to the *constraints* that inhibit and exclude people from participating in and sharing the benefits of development. What would be the implications if this sentence were to be reworded to read ‘the exercise of power that inhibits and excludes people from participating in and sharing the benefits of development’? Highly unequal power relations permeate Indian society and polity. Another common euphemism for this unpleasant situation is “entrenched hierarchy”. We may wish to reflect on why in India it is so difficult to discuss easily the issue of some people having structural, political, economic and social power over others.

Thus this final part of the essay presents a framework based on an understanding of the processes of relational inequality that was very largely developed in the United States and particularly on the basis of studies of racism and gender. The framework responds to the argument of Cynthia Anderson that our understanding of inequality, and hence our capacity for seeking changes in social inequality, is hampered if we fragment “inequality” into separate areas of investigation along the axes or variables of “gender”, “race”, “class”, etc. Consideration of only one dimension at any one time provides an incomplete picture. We risk failing to explain the generic processes that contribute to the reproduction and transformation of the many and connected aspects of relations of domination and subordination (C. Anderson 1996).

In a literature review of the treatment of inequality in the USA Schwalbe and colleagues propose four generic processes central to the reproduction of inequality. These are othering, boundary maintenance, emotion management and subordinate adaptation. In any specific context it is likely that we would identify two or more of these processes at work but for analytical purposes it is worth separating them out. This I shall do, illustrating with some examples from literature in countries where DfID is engaged, including briefly identifying the possible transformative processes related to these experiences of inequality.

4.2 Othering and objectification

The term “othering” has come to refer to the process whereby a dominant group defines into existence a subordinate group. This process entails the invention of categories and of ideas about what marks people as belonging to these categories. The literature sometimes refers to “othering” when describing what happens when a person or a group or category of persons are treated as “objects” by another group. This

⁹ From the film *Solaris*.

“objectification” is the means by which those doing it can break the moral rules of social relationships or can regard them as without the power to decide their own fate.

In the context of ethnically defined conflict, such as between Serbs and Croats, “othering” may be a process of mutual objectification and thus not necessarily be limited to the maintenance of more embedded or structural relations of inequality. “Othering” can be seen as a process of nation forming (C. Anderson 1996). At the time of Partition in India, millions of refugees were designated as the “Other”, denied their human rights and forced to abandon their homes (Chaturvedi 2001: 152).

Box 4.2 Othering and the building of the nation state in Brazil and South Africa

Anthony Marx undertakes an analysis of why racism is different in Brazil from South Africa. In both cases race-making was tied to the importance of the nation state building and the challenges to it. He argues that, because Brazil had a dominant ideology of being a non-racist society in which all enjoyed equal citizenship rights, it was much harder for excluded blacks to mobilise themselves to make claims to a citizenship which in theory they already enjoyed. He asks why slave-owning Brazil did not develop state-constructed racism in the way that happened in South Africa. He suggests that in Brazil there was only one elite group that could maintain white subordination without having to run the risk of creating a collective identity among the subordinate blacks by legally excluding them. In South Africa, however, there were two conflicting white elites and the means of unifying these elites was to create a “white nation” which was to officially exclude the blacks (1998: 254).

The characteristics of the “objectified” person may change in response to efforts to tackle existing inequalities. Thus, dalit students in India have imposed on them at their place of study new stigmatising identities related to their entitlement to scholarships and in place of the old “impure” identity. They are labelled with a new set of derogatory qualities: undeserving, stupid, indolent, spoilt, dirty, cunning, and so on. The dual consequence of this process is the reinforcement of feelings of superiority among the non-dalits and feelings of inferiority among the dalits. One possible but contested policy response is to offer dalit students education in separate institutions where they are protected from these daily social encounters with “othering” and can learn more easily in a less threatening environment (Velaskar 1998: 227). Another is for a reform of education policy that recognises and challenges the processes of “othering” that take place in schools and by so doing use education as an engine for broader social transformation. International donors, such as the World Bank, could encourage such reforms if they were themselves to appreciate how formal education systems that do not address this challenge can contribute to the perpetuation of othering (Vasavi 2003).

How can “othering” be transformed into recognising people’s rights to be human and to define themselves? What are the implications of understanding the process of “othering” in terms of rights based approaches, including the management of conflict on the basis of mutual respect and dignity?

4.3 Bordering and boundary maintenance

Othering is often accompanied by bordering, as expressed for example in apartheid.

Box 4.3 The black response to apartheid

Friedman and Chipkin propose that the diverse interests among the whites in South Africa were reconciled by positing a black "other" but emphasise that these diverse interests based on class and ethnic distinctions for a long time made "whiteness" a fragile construction. Being "black" was equally contested and unstable and also with particular potential to rupture along lines of class or ethnicity. Nevertheless the African National Congress (ANC) was able to maintain a broad church on the basis of the racialised common identity given to them by the apartheid regime. The common struggle reconciled different political interests. For the trade unions and the Communist Party the racial oppression was seen as capitalist in nature and the blacks would not be free until liberated from economic slavery. For others it was not the economic system that was the problem but that it was controlled by a racial minority. Another cleavage was between a growing middle class of black women who challenged the patriarchy of the traditional ANC leadership. The authors note the heroic assumption that this heterogeneous coalition against apartheid would be sustained once majority rule was achieved (Friedman and Chipkin 2001).

Preserving inequality requires maintaining spatial and symbolic borders or boundaries between dominant and subordinate groups. One way this is done is through the accumulation and transmission of cultural and social capital.¹⁰ Going to the "right" school, for example, is a means for accumulating both the symbolic culture and the social networks that preserve a dominant position. Another way is through management of space. When I lived in Zambia I observed that the housing (and related shopping, educational and recreational facilities) of the workforce for the great open-cast copper mine of Kitwe was designed in concentric circles around the mine and each employee was allocated a house in the circle that related to his place in the hierarchy. In many cities in developing countries, the spatial divisions are very clearly demarcated.¹¹

Spatial bordering for the reproduction of inequality was at its most extreme in apartheid South Africa but recent work on international migration policies provides an example of how bordering, joined with othering, could be interpreted as the maintenance of global inequalities (Van Houtum and Van Naerssen 2001).

Social exclusion can be conceived as boundary maintenance and thus the challenge for development practice is how to support those alternative processes that diminish the exclusive power of cultural capital, social networks and spatial management. Research associated with a DfID–Sida funded programme of

¹⁰ Bourdieu's notion of cultural and social capital seeks to answer the question how does a social system survive when a substantial section of the population is obviously exploited and without its rulers having to depend on physical coercion for the maintenance of the system (Jenkins 1992: 119).

¹¹ The presence of the donor community in the most elite housing areas of the city is no different from the situation of diplomats living in each other's capital cities but can also be interpreted as a symbolic statement of the boundary established between aid agencies and the poor they are seeking to help.

action for a more inclusive national election process, identified the characteristics of those people who were not able to acquire the legal documentation they needed to realise their citizenship rights. They lacked both cultural capital (not speaking Spanish) and the social networks that would allow them to connect themselves sufficiently with the boundary maintaining state institutions to acquire the identity card to which they were legally entitled (León *et al.* 2003). The policy debate among the civil society consortium and the donors was whether to act as powerful intermediaries for these people and through our cultural capital and social networks help them obtain the necessary documentation. It could be argued that by recognising the existence of the boundaries and helping individuals cross them would actually contribute to the maintenance of inequality. The alternative would be to support action that demolished the boundaries, for example by simplifying the complex and contradictory bureaucratic process of acquiring an identity card.

Gender studies have emphasised how violence, or the threat of it, is an important means of keeping the subordinate person “in her place”. Levels of actual organised violence against dalits in part of northern India are reported to be on the increase,¹² as might be anticipated with the growing dalit resistance to their imposed subordinate status. The development practitioner needs to be aware that supporting a boundary challenge can give the subordinate people sufficient confidence (they are backed by powerful people) to go further in their challenge than they might otherwise do. In Vanuatu women micro-entrepreneurs participating in a donor-funded training programme were subjected to physical violence by the men of their village.¹³

How can “bordering” be transformed into an understanding of inclusion? An understanding which recognises interdependence between self-defined categories embraces cultural diversity without hierarchy and provides autonomous (self-owned) spaces for decision-making.

4.4 Emotions and emotion management

The extent to which our feelings about our social relationships are a product of “habitus” and the potential for feeling about that relationship in a new way has only become a subject of study relatively recently and possibly as a result of feminist studies (Lutz and White 1986). Nevertheless, in our daily life as a social observer and development practitioner we are constantly analysing and reflecting on the emotional context of any social encounter.

From my own observation in Bolivia I noted how when Aymara are “invited in” to spaces controlled by the elite they do not show any feelings. Their lack of emotional expression is thus in striking contrast to how the dominant group perceives them and may well be in response to that. In a certain sense they are “absent” from the space, thus retaining their sense of dignity and identity in a situation not of their creating. In other words they do not perform subservience. It can be argued that the strong preserved sense of cultural identity and pre-Conquest history present in Aymara communities permits feelings of pride and autonomy despite discrimination and poverty. In contrast, it can be argued that the dalits of

¹² Personal communication from Dr Prakash Louis, Executive Director, Indian Social Institute, Delhi.

¹³ Personal communication when visiting Vanuatu.

India were until the early twentieth century less able to exert agency through overt acts of resistance because of their full adverse cultural and political incorporation into Hindu caste society. The dalits were not only made to feel inferior. They themselves had internalised those feelings of inferiority and worthlessness.

Schwalbe *et al.* (2000) suggest that the emotions of subordinates are managed by those with an interest in preserving the status quo in three ways: (1) regulating discourse, (2) conditioning emotional subjectivity and (3) scripting mass events.

In post-Descartian Europe women, the working classes at home and the conquered and the colonised in the rest of the world were considered by the powerful to share common characteristics of childishness, irrationality and emotionality. During the Cochabamba water protests the leading Spanish language newspaper in Bolivia, carried a long readers' correspondence on the essential difference between indigenous and European modes of thinking and the inability of the former to consider rationally how best to manage water resources. It appeared that from the perspective of the ruling class the uprising in Cochabamba and the associated protests in other parts of the country could be seen as yet another incident in the long perceived history of violent and savage behaviour of the Andean peasant contrasted with the self-control of the heirs to the Enlightenment. At the same time, as part of the management of emotions that Schwalbe *et al.* describe as 'scripting mass events', the ruling elite quite self-consciously seeks to manage the emotions of all Bolivians as an 'imaginary community' through the annual ritual of the Oruro Carnival where descendants of the conquerors disguise themselves as pre-Conquest gods and devils. All peasant protests and violent demonstrations are halted when Carnival comes and a Bolivian sociologist has observed that it is only the Carnival that kept the nation together.¹⁴

Perhaps the most common subject of study concerning emotions is in connection to inequalities in wealth. In sub-Saharan Africa witchcraft accusations have been often understood by external observers as a means by which emotions are invoked to encourage redistribution rather than hoarding. In this genre a recent study of Pentecostalism in Nigeria considers how it both exacerbates and addresses tensions between individual desires for accumulation and the obligations of reciprocity to the wider collective (Jordan Smith 2001). An alternative is proposed by Caroline Humphrey for post-Soviet Russia where it is all right to get rich provided one is emotionally accepted as a member of the community. Humphrey discusses the strong emotional attachment to collectivism and how the political leadership can take advantage of this. While monetary inequality is created through disadvantaging those who are emotionally excluded from the community, for those who manage to stay in the community there are opportunities to achieve a dominant position in politics and the market (Humphrey 2001).

How can emotion management be transformed into an open and honest expression of these emotions with an explicit recognition of the importance of emotions in shaping our identity while appreciating the cultural difference in their expression?

¹⁴ Carlos Carafa – personal communication.

4.5 Adaptation

The most widely studied aspect of the processes of reproducing or transforming relations of inequality has been that of subordinate adaptation. Schwalbe *et al.* suggest that most of the qualitative studies they have looked at show that most strategies of adaptation have dual consequences, challenging some inequalities while reproducing others. They propose three types of adaptation: (1) trading power for patronage, (2) forming alternative sub-cultures and (3) hustling or dropping out (2000: 426).

Trading power for patronage is the subject of a paper by Wood on the “Faustian bargain” of staying secure and poor in developing countries and the characteristics of peasant/clientelist societies that shape patrimonial relations of power and decision making. He points out that we cannot assume that these relations will change to commodification of labour with resulting “modernisation” of governance and possibilities for broad-based democracy. In poor countries the uncertainty facing the household or community which leads to the trading of autonomy for protection is enhanced by the wider insecurity of the country in the global economy. Thus individuals, communities and whole countries can be “adversely incorporated” into a world in which they have no power (Wood 2003).

In his study of labourers in commercial agriculture in South Africa, du Toit paints a picture of high levels of insecurity where labour has become commodified and following the end of apartheid and the restructuring of the industry, former patronage relations with the employers have largely disappeared. In a production system geared at the export market, the casual farm labourers are adversely incorporated into a global economy and dependent on the patronage of state institutions for any chances at greater security (du Toit 2003). Although he does not consider it in this way, the situation of the farm labourers could, according to Wood’s argument, eventually be a means to transformation to a more socially equitable society just because they are not prisoners to the Faustian bargain. Du Toit’s policy recommendations are to the state and they include steps that would give people a greater voice in local government decision making and thus demand resources and services to respond to their interests. Both Wood and du Toit are implicitly taking a neo-Marxist position in which transformation of unequal power relations depends on changes in the relations of production.

Box 4.4 Adverse incorporation and the indigenous challenge in Bolivia

The indigenous challenge that has continued since the 1980s has included an attempt to convert the highland *campesinos* back into *indios* (Strobele-Gregor 1994). Hahn (1996) argues that the problem facing the leaders of the *campesino* movement was that while they tried to organise around a common ethnic identity that could make economic demands on the state, the structure of the organisation was western and therefore could not adequately represent the non-capitalist indigenous population to itself or to the state. It was the indigenous coca producers, already adversely incorporated into part of a global capitalist system of production, who thus became the most powerful element of the *campesino* union while still claiming an indigenous identity. Hahn’s argument appears to have been validated with the leader of the coca producers coming second in the presidential elections of 2002 on a platform of anti-US imperialism.

When can adaptation be understood as resistance? For O’Hanlon it is the ‘moments in which the prizes and incentives of the dominant are refused, held inadequate or simply uncomprehended’. These moments are much more than collective heroic efforts, such as peasant uprisings or mass social movements. She sees these as masculinist interpretations of resistance and points out more “feminist” versions that may include withdrawal or “exit”, passivity and indifference (O’Hanlon 1988: 221ff). Schwalb *et al.* imply something similar when they refer to one form of adaptation as “dropping out”. They note that this may not simply be a passive indifference but an active rejection of the beliefs and practices of the dominant culture and trying to form non-oppressive alternatives. The new social movements in Latin America are illustrative of these (Esteva and Prakash 1998). On the other hand, successful challenges may incorporate strong elements of the dominant culture and use them to their own ends.

How can adaptation be transformed into empowerment?

Box 4.5 Thinking about empowerment

Power with has to do with common ground among different interests and building collective strength through organisation and the development of shared values and strategies. DfID’s interest in moving beyond its traditional support to service delivery non-governmental organisations (NGOs) may lead to an engagement with social movements and community and interest-based organisations that have developed a voice and a capacity to influence change through the strength of *power with*.

Power to relates to agency – the capacity to act. The World Bank, for example, understands empowerment as *the expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives*. While Narayan (2002) notes that empowering poor people requires the removal of formal and informal institutional barriers that prevent them from taking action to improve their well-being, she skirts around the possible response of those who have *power over* poor people and the issue of conflict and possible violence when poor people seek more *power to*.

Power within has to do with a person’s self-worth and sense of dignity and there has been a long-standing tradition of civil society activity, such as ActionAid’s *REFLECT* based on Freirian principles that seeks to enhance the *power within*.

(Based on VeneKlasen with Miller 2002).

4.6 Supporting transformational processes

For each of the processes that sustain and reproduce inequality I have suggested a transformational possibility. What role can development bureaucracies play in supporting such transformation, particularly those which are government agencies whose main relationship is with counterpart state institutions, institutions that themselves may be instrumental in the reproduction of inequality through bordering, othering and emotion management? Self-evidently any answer must depend on specific context. Many people working for the state are committed to changing the way they work and development practitioners are skilled at ‘working on both sides of the equation’ (Goetz and Gaventa 2001).

There is another problem. Ortner's demand for "thicker" understandings of the processes of adaptation and resistance to domination (1995) poses a particular challenge for the practitioner working for a development bureaucracy that still largely perceives change as planned, predictable and linear. In her study of Nijera Kori, a social mobilisation organisation in Bangladesh, currently funded by DfID, Kabeer points out that there is no such certainty about the relationship between the activities undertaken by the organisation and the outcomes it is able to achieve. Its focus is to transform the potential for action by its members by transforming how they see themselves and their relationships with each other (Kabeer 2003). However, when the outcome is unpredictable (already a challenge to bureaucracy . . .) there is a greater likelihood that the funder will at least want to be confident there will be no unwanted outcomes, such as greater exploitation, corruption or co-option. On the other hand, to acquire Ortner's "thick" knowledge that might reassure us on this point would require a highly professional anthropologist to study the people for a year and to report back on the processes of othering, bordering, emotion management, adaptation and resistance that I have presented in this framework.

I suggest there is a more feasible alternative with two elements. The first is to be aware of the thickness, by not assuming that the bureaucratic need for simplicity of explanation means the processes themselves are not complex or unpredictable. Ways of staying aware include regular immersion-style visits, going out of the way to listen to many different voices and organising talks and seminars from academics and others who have the opportunity to study the processes of the reproduction or transformation of inequality. The second element is a strategy for risk management based on investing in non-instrumental relationships of trust with the leaders of the organisations you are intending to support. This requires self-awareness, a capacity for reflection and a willingness to work with others beyond the short-term (Eyben forthcoming).

5 Conclusion: from theory to practice

The point of social science is not to get it right but to challenge guiding assumptions, fixed meanings and relations, and to reopen the formative capacity of human beings in relation to others and the world.

(Alvesson and Deetz 1989: 205)

Today ideas in the social sciences are following a major shift in the physical sciences. Although this shift has as yet hardly penetrated modernist development practice that is still focused on linear progress, future thinking about inequality is very likely to be shaped by a new post-Newtonian theory that conceives the social world as a complex adaptive system where there is no ideal end state. In such a system the primary shapers are processes and relationships. Thus development could be understood as a myriad of organisational, collective and individual actions and struggles for greater equity in human relations at global and local levels. Social actors are no longer performing functionally defined "roles" but are constantly negotiating questions of power, authority and the control of the definitions of reality (Dirks

et al. 1994: 4–5). If we understand the world thus how does development practice take advantage of theory to inform and improve itself?

As a conclusion therefore I briefly invite the reader to consider the kind of theoretical approach that would suit an agenda for social change, bearing in mind the normative nature of development practice. I suggest that the pursuit of such an agenda would benefit from consciously choosing a “critical theory” approach to development, even when situated inside an aid bureaucracy.

In the spirit of this approach I therefore do not provide any answers but pose some critical questions for the development practitioner concerned with reducing social and political inequalities. In constantly reminding ourselves of these questions, we may find ourselves making a more significant contribution to an unending but positive process of human struggle for social justice:

- How can someone working from inside a highly hierarchical organisation promote social change that aims to level power?
- Are British development practitioners influenced by a belief that experience of struggles in their own country can be relevant for other times and spaces? Could such a belief be implicitly claiming that a particular historical moment is universal and therefore more important than other people’s histories?
- If the hegemonic structure is so powerful and its ideology internalised by those subordinate to it, how can they even conceive of change? Are development practitioners themselves caught up in this process so they only find answers to problems rather than step back and ask does the world have to be like this?
- Is agency more myth than theory? Do we like the myth because it validates our work without unsettling our comfortable position?
- Is the way we describe things the first step to changing unequal power relations? And if so, what are the risks we run in describing things and presenting ideas that challenge existing orthodoxy?
- How does our own personal history and location influence the way we interpret and support efforts to reduce inequality?

Where is the tool box?

At the end of this essay I hope I have left the reader wondering how to apply theory to day-to-day development practice. I suggest that the kinds of questions just posed can help make a bridge to do this. Such questions allow us to construct operational frameworks, approaches and toolkits that are conceptually grounded and therefore more robust. Good development practice is analogous to good cooking. A successful recipe needs kitchen utensils but these will produce food not worth eating if the cook has no knowledge of the nature and behaviour of the ingredients. Too often in development practice we jump straight to the search for new tools without consideration of the concepts we are using to define the problem we are seeking to tackle. By asking questions of the kind I have just listed (and there are many

more that can be added to this list) it may be that we find the problem is not what we had first thought it to be and that therefore our response – and the tools we decide to use – may also be rather different.

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Selected works on political and social inequality

Bahuguna, S. and de Haan, A., 'Caste in South Asia: social and economic exclusion'	52
Bendix, R., 'Inequality and social structure: a comparison of Marx and Weber'	53
Bennett, L., 'Empowerment and social inclusion: a social development perspective on the cultural and institutional foundations of poverty reduction'	54
Biswas, S., "'Nuclear apartheid" as political position: race as a postcolonial resource?'	55
Booth, D., Leach, M. and Tierney, A., 'Experiencing poverty in Africa: perspectives from anthropology'	56
Broch-Due, V. and Sanders, T., 'Rich man, poor man, administrator, beast: the politics of impoverishment in Turkana, Kenya, 1890–1990'	57
Charles, N., 'Feminist Practices: Identity, Difference, Power'	58
De Haan, A., <i>Social Exclusion: Towards An Holistic Understanding of Deprivation</i>	59
Du Toit, A., 'Hunger in the valley of fruitfulness: globalisation, "social exclusion" and chronic poverty in Ceres, South Africa'	59
Fernandes, L., 'Contesting class: gender, community, and the politics of labour in a Calcutta jute mill'	60
Friedman, S., 'Free but unequal'	61
Gledhill, J., <i>Power and Its Disguises: Anthropological Perspectives on Politics</i>	62
Goldberg, D.T., <i>Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning</i>	63
Green, M., 'Representing poverty: attacking representation – anthropological perspectives on poverty in development'	64
Hossain, N. and Moore, M., 'Arguing for the poor: elites and poverty in developing countries'	66
Hulme, D. and Shepard, A., 'Conceptualising chronic poverty'	67
Humphrey, C., 'Inequality and exclusion: a Russian case study of emotion in politics'	68
Jolly, S., <i>Gender and Cultural Change: Overview Report</i>	69
Jordan Smith, D., "'The arrow of God", "Pentecostalism", inequality, and the supernatural in south-eastern Nigeria'	70
Kabeer, N., 'Making rights work for the poor: Nijera Kori and the construction of "collective capabilities" in rural Bangladesh'	71
Krishna, S., 'Race, amnesia, and the education of international relations'	72
Li Peilin, 'Introduction: changes in social stratification in China since the reform' and Wanli, Z., 'Twenty years of research on stratified social structure in contemporary China'	73
Mamdani, M., 'The Racialisation of Hutu/Tutsi Difference under Colonialism'	75
Mikhalev, V., 'Inequality and transformation of social structures in transitional economies'	76
Muzaffar, C., 'Equality and the Spiritual Traditions: An Overview'	77
Nussbaum, M., 'Human Capabilities, Female Human Beings'	78
Nyamu-Musembi, C., 'Are Local Norms and Practices Fences or Pathways? The Case of Women's Property Rights'	79
Ortner, S., 'Resistance and the problem of ethnographic refusal'	80

Perlman, J., 'Marginality: from myth to reality in the <i>favelas</i> of Rio de Janeiro, 1969–2002'	81
Peters. P., 'Bewitching land: the role of land disputes in converting kin to strangers and in class formation in Malawi'	82
Reichman, R. (ed.), <i>Race in Contemporary Brazil: From Indifference To Inequality</i>	82
Sayed, Y. and Soudien, C., '(Re)framing education exclusion and inclusion discourses: limits and possibilities'	83
Schwalbe, M. Godwin, S., Holden, D., Schrock, D., Thompson, S. and Wolkomir, M., 'Generic processes in the reproduction of inequality: an interactionist analysis'	85
Scott, J., 'The Infrapolitics of Subordinate Groups'	86
Sen, A., <i>Inequality Reexamined</i>	87
Smouts, M., 'International organisations and inequality among states'	88
Stewart, F., 'Horizontal inequalities: a neglected dimension of development'	89
Sweetman, C., 'North–South cooperation'	90
Tilly, C., <i>Durable Inequality</i>	91
Velaskar, P., 'Ideology, Education and the Political Struggle for Liberation: Change and Challenge among the Dalits of Maharashtra'	92
Wade, P., <i>Race and Ethnicity in Latin America</i>	93
White, S., 'Thinking race, thinking development'	93
Wood, G., 'Staying secure, staying poor: the "Faustian bargain"'	95

Bahuguna, S. and de Haan, A., 2002, 'Caste in South Asia: social and economic exclusion', unpublished paper prepared for DfID Office in India (query@dfid.gov.uk)

The aim of this paper is to provide an overview of the issue of caste, the social system that defines a wide range of social and economic forms of interaction in the South Asian region, and in light of this discussion offer suggestions for addressing caste issues in DfID projects.

The paper has five main sections:

- 1) Social and cultural aspects and definitions of caste, with particular attention paid to the marginalised position of 'scheduled castes' (SCs). Caste dynamics are institutionalised and transformed through weakened traditional roles as a result of economic development, an emerging *dalit*-middle class and a *dalit* identity/consciousness; but these do not abolish caste.
- 2) Economic aspects of caste. In most respects, SCs suffer from multiple forms of deprivation, and social aspects of caste stratification are closely interlinked with economics. Many of India's development goals cannot be achieved without addressing such inequalities, and it is proposed that caste differentiation hampers human development and economic growth.
- 3) Politics of caste. Caste hierarchies have been transformed in the political sphere, for instance through the language of caste adopted in electoral politics, but this does not necessarily extend to other spheres, nor lead to more pro-poor environments.
- 4) The ways caste discrimination has been addressed in Indian policies. This has been approached through a wide range of affirmative action programmes in education and employment in the public sector.
- 5) Conclusion and recommendations for DfID.

The research finds that caste is an important element for understanding social integration and exclusion in the region. Education and livelihoods programmes are seen as key to changing caste relations, with a strong emphasis on targeting and providing support for local communities. These also require looking at issues of quality of service delivery, issues of status, attitudes of teachers and health workers, and content of teaching.

Some practical suggestions for DfID-India are made:

- Need to understand the vast government machinery dedicated to the "welfare" of scheduled castes.
- Reinforce the approach to targeting by understanding the social processes that lead to (informal) exclusion.
- More proactive engagement with civil society to strengthen the advocacy role of *dalit* groups.
- Strengthening local governance to ensure that the voices of the most deprived are heard, leading to more inclusive policies.

Bendix, R., 1974, 'Inequality and social structure: a comparison of Marx and Weber', *American Sociological Review*, Vol 39 No 2

This paper contrasts the Marxist argument for the foundation of class in the organisation of production with Weber's emphasis upon status-differences and organised collective action. It also compares, as Marx and Weber did, the differences between "modern" and "pre-modern" types of inequality and society.

Marx held that ideas and institutions are determined by the material conditions under which people work. To understand the organisation of production therefore helps to track the development of society. So Marx took an economic analysis of capitalism, dealing primarily with the organisation of production as the basis of social classes in capitalist society. While Marx's approach to the study of class is seen as too reductionist to be successful, the problem he outlines is important, namely, property ownership and the division of labour as bases for the formation of classes.

Weber modifies Marx's analysis in three respects. First, he denies that a common class situation will give rise to association, pointing out that such situations tend to result in unco-ordinated mass reactions. Second, Weber broadens Marx's concept of the economic determination of class situations, arguing that these situations vary with the common experience of individuals in response to shifting economic scenarios. Third, Marx maintained that "bourgeois ideologists" would contribute to the political radicalisation of the labour movement, whereas Weber saw the responses and goals of these groups as divergent. In sum, Weber agrees that the economic and political solidarity of workers might overcome their initial fragmentation of interests, but solidarity of this kind is weakened by religious and/or ethnic differences.

Marx interpreted all social and political associations as parts of a super-structure determined by the inequalities within the organisation of production. Weber challenged such reductionism. He agreed that classes tend to form under the conditions Marx specified, but he denied that association and organised action must result from this tendency, even in the long run. In each case, concerted action depends on a staff of persons administering the rules of the organised group and on the changing relations between group members and the administrative staff.

The conclusions reached through examination of inequality in pre-modern society are, first, although economic and social differences exist in all societies, the distinction between classes and status groups, and between experience in the workplace and in the family, is peculiar to modern history.

Second, the social structure of the earlier period was characterised not only by uncertain frontiers, but also by a firm subordination of intellectual life to Church and State. Then frontiers became more clearly defined, national consciousness increased, and the earlier world view was challenged by ideas which attained a social force.

Bennett, L., 2003, 'Empowerment and social inclusion: a social development perspective on the cultural and institutional foundations of poverty reduction', *Background Paper for World Bank Social Development Sector Strategy Paper* (l.bennett@worldbank.org)

The aim of this paper is to provide a conceptual framework for thinking about issues of empowerment and inclusion of poor and socially excluded groups in developing societies and outlines some of the ways that the Social Development group in the World Bank can help support these processes. Empowerment and social exclusion are identified as two key processes essential to focusing on the relation between people and the institutions and organisations that affect them. Building on these definitions a framework for poverty reduction is presented through institutional and social change at multiple levels. Great emphasis is placed on power relations which define social identity and economic status and are mediated by institutions and organisations, as well as the use of empowerment and social inclusion as a means of shifting these relations towards greater equity. Given these conditions, social change is seen as the core of poverty reduction.

The background to this conceptual shift in the Bank's strategising can be seen in the *World Development Report (WDR)* (2000/01), which highlights the empowerment of marginalised individuals and groups as a critical component of social change. The WDR 2000/01 emphasises that through the process of empowerment, these groups gain an awareness of their own agency and mobilise collective action to influence the institutions that affect their lives. Other outcomes explored are the intersecting influence of economic policies that most effectively build a favourable investment climate, and public policies that strengthen empowerment and social inclusion, since good governance and the rule of law appear to be equally critical to social equity and to broad-based prosperity.

The paper covers a number of issues: perspectives on institutions and culture, the concept of pro-poor growth, a theory of social change based on the interaction between marginal groups and historically dominant groups, and current thinking on the relationship between inequality and growth, particularly in the context of Africa. From this discussion the core competencies involved in the work of social development are laid out: participatory practice and social analysis. These are seen to be deeply interlinked and suggest a broad scope to allow them to be combined in different ways to produce contextualised outputs for each country. It is argued that such outputs can help by:

- Improving implementation by providing an understanding of poor people's realities, of the actual functioning of the public sector, and by supporting participation and civic engagement to ensure services are actually being delivered.
- Enhancing analysis by combining a bottom-up view with a top-down analysis of institutional bottlenecks and opportunities to implementation, and by supporting the concept of pluralism in ways of knowing or establishing the truth.

- Improving public action choice and helping to minimise negative impacts and maximise the long-term poverty reduction impacts of policy and institutional reform.
- Deepening the World Bank’s strategic response capability in terms of its own internal strategies, and its engagement with its clients and with the wider development community.

Biswas, S., 2001, “Nuclear apartheid” as political position: race as a postcolonial resource?, *Alternatives*, Vol 26

This article seeks to highlight the failure of international studies, and in security studies in particular, to bring attention to the category of race. The issue is explored with reference to India’s decision to nuclearise in May 1998. Despite strong reactions from the international community, governments, NGOs and others, little attention was paid to the use by the Indian government of a significant racial signifier – “nuclear apartheid” – to justify and defend its actions. The nuclear apartheid position points to the material inequalities in the distribution of global nuclear resources, into an elite club of “haves” and “have-nots”. It is argued that the nuclear apartheid position of the Indian government performed a dual role: it points to a series of racial exclusions in the contemporary global order, and also masks and constitutes an “Indian nation” through another series of racialised exclusions.

The main purpose of this article is to interrogate, critically, the category of nuclear apartheid as deployed by the Indian government in order to think through how the silence on race within the field of international relations enables and constrains its deployment as a post-colonial resource. It begins by discussing the security environment and the domestic political context within which the decision to test the bomb was made by India. It then considers the rise of Hindu nationalism in contemporary Indian politics, finding the immediate conditions leading to the tests in the domestic political environment. The next section of the article presents and analyses the nuclear apartheid position as articulated by the two prominent arms-control treaties – the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty – and points to the global structure and racial hierarchies that make possible the effective deployment of the Indian government’s position. Finally, the article turns to a deconstruction of the nuclear apartheid position to demonstrate both its analytical shortcomings and the political functions it serves in the contemporary Indian context in effecting ‘new kinds of racialisations’.

The main findings are that a commitment to the maintenance of stable and balanced orders naturalises a particular set of relations of power and interest, privileging those who are influential and rendering invisible the political basis of their claims. Hence, if one takes “rationality” as fundamental to what makes us fully human, fears of proliferation that rely on presumptions of the irrationality of “others” draw on racist discourses that deny a degree of humanity to others in the very constitution of the “self” as

human. Given these points, two reflections are made on conceptualising race within global politics and the implications of taking race seriously for issues of peace and justice:

- Any serious attempt to halt proliferation requires a demonstrated commitment to nuclear disarmament on the part of the nuclear armed.
- Security issues are not peripheral to questions of political economy, given that even at the global level race and class are not disconnected issues, and that larger structural transformations in the global political economy are a prerequisite for global peace.

Booth, D., Leach, M. and Tierney, A., 1999, 'Experiencing poverty in Africa: perspectives from anthropology', *Background Paper No 1(b) for the World Bank Poverty Status Report 1999*

While the value of a multidisciplinary approach to the understanding of poverty and the design of poverty-reduction strategies is widely accepted, this paper argues that current explanations about the potential contribution to poverty analysis from disciplines other than economics remain rather too slanted towards what are presumed to be the special strengths of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)-based Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs): capturing poor people's perceptions, identifying their priorities and describing their coping strategies. Properly understood as centring on the observation and interpretation of behaviour, however, anthropological enquiry has relevant things to say concerning poverty status and makes it possible to use the results of participatory assessments and other grass-roots case study materials to check, qualify and enrich the findings from the more established analytical approaches.

The sections of the paper develop three sets of messages, corresponding broadly to three core status report questions: (1) who are the poor? (2) why are they poor? (3) what can be done to reduce poverty? Section 2 examines the implications of anthropological evidence for the treatment of poverty concepts and the construction of poverty profiles, including the use of data from "wealth ranking" exercises at community level. While anthropological work can help to enrich statistical poverty profiles, a more important contribution may be in documenting the variable, fluid, complex and contested categorisations and relationships that constitute the reality that poverty-reduction efforts must contend with on the ground.

Section 3 addresses the "why" question, drawing particularly on work by anthropologists and social historians on people's responses to sources of long-term change. Documented responses to structural change are sufficiently diverse and affected by the particularities of local structures, including, notably, gender relations, that multiple paths of impoverishment or dis-impoverishment remain more likely than homogenous national or regional trends.

Section 4 turns to the implications of these findings and other anthropological evidence for the design of anti-poverty interventions. Anthropological studies help to remind us that the primary stakeholders in anti-poverty operations are, of necessity, active participants in constructing their own future, while the activities of states and development agencies are not always empowering of poor people.

The main implications for the policy and practice of poverty reduction are:

- The complexities which remain uncaptured by statistical and sociological categorisations of the poor are a source of uncertainty. Since it is known that they are numerous and important, planning for poverty reduction will generally benefit from a strong learning-process orientation.
- Diversity of social responses does not mean that no generalisations are possible, or that those that remain robust (e.g. the gains from decontrolling rural markets, or legislating on women's rights) are unimportant. But it does strengthen the view that anti-poverty action needs to be built at least from the bottom up.
- Development interventions, including anti-poverty strategies, are likely to benefit from an approach that is more institutionally self-aware. This implies placing poor people's own efforts at the centre, and reflecting more self-critically on possible side-effects of the exercise of governmental and agency power.

Broch-Due, V. and Sanders, T., 1999, 'Rich man, poor man, administrator, beast: the politics of impoverishment in Turkana, Kenya, 1890–1990', *Nomadic Peoples*, Vol 3 No 2

Three different scenarios spread over five decades demonstrate that the policies of colonial and post-colonial interventions led to similar results. Whether to extract resources, as the Kenyan colonial administration did, or to provide resources, as with the post-colonial aid donors, outside interventions made little difference. Both, paradoxically, led to a permanently poor sector of the population. The aim of this paper is to map out the ways that macro fiscal and political policies have historically shaped Turkana's world, and how Turkana understandings of their world have shaped those policies and vested them with new meanings.

The main contention is that decidedly different policies implemented over the course of a century have ensured that a certain sector of the Turkana population has remained unable to engage meaningfully in survival strategies other than those of dependence on outsiders. Globalising forces have unwittingly conspired to produce the structural conditions of poverty and dependence from which escape, for many, is not an option. The overall result of the encounters of global and local worlds has been to perpetuate the structural conditions for the continued impoverishment of certain Turkana. The theoretical implications arising from this are that the results between colonial and post-colonial policies have been strikingly

similar, as both have reinforced poverty amongst a certain section of the local population. This suggests that any sharp socio-historical break between colonial and post-colonial eras is ultimately untenable. Thus it would appear that these eras are more similar than is sometimes imagined. The ultimate irony is that both interventions reproduced the conditions of poverty they sought to alleviate.

Charles, N., 1996, 'Feminist Practices: Identity, Difference, Power', in N. Charles and F. Hughes-Freeland (eds), *Feminist Practices: Identity, Difference, Power*, London: Routledge

This introductory chapter to a collection of essays on feminist practices charts the changing ways in which gender has been theorised and practiced over the past 20 years, in the “second-wave” of feminism, and according to different disciplines. A central concern is the relationship between theory and practice and a conviction that feminist political practice and academic feminism should be related.

The idea of a shared oppression that unites women in their struggle for liberation has been central to second-wave feminism. The uncomfortable acknowledgement of differences between women was precipitated by debates around sexuality and race/ethnicity and associated with the emergence of identity politics and the fragmentation of western women’s liberation movements at the end of the 1970s. The recognition of different identities and a privileging of experience led to the question: if all women are different and do not share the same experience of subordination, and if some women oppress other women because of race, class, sexuality, etc., how can there be a politics of women’s liberation?

An approach to this dilemma was to dive into theory. Feminist critiques of the categories of western philosophical thought have revealed the gendered nature of the dichotomies that structure it. Two main elements in the feminist critique of objectivity/rationality are discernible: one of these claims that all knowledge is subjective and therefore partial, the other claims that knowledge is relative because reality is never experienced directly but is always already socially constructed. Hence, dissatisfaction with universal explanations and a recognition of the different ways of being female encouraged feminists to study gender relations as they existed rather than as they were theorised to exist. This has led to a much greater understanding of the forms taken by gender divisions and their relation to other systems of social relations. As a result there has been a renewed emphasis on the historical and cultural variability of gender in all its forms: gender symbolism, socio-sexual divisions of labour and constructions of gendered identities. This research has challenged essentialist views of the nature of women’s subordination and exposed the cultural specificity of ways of conceptualising gender divisions.

What occurred in the 1980s was a changed and diversified feminist politics, with many different spheres of activity for feminists, leading to women-only forms of political activity and feminist involvement in organisations. Instead of one feminist identity the number of identities available to feminists multiplied, making the forms of practising feminism vary considerably.

De Haan, A., 1999, *Social Exclusion: Towards An Holistic Understanding of Deprivation*, London: DfID

This paper makes a strong plea for the use of the concept of social exclusion. This is not because the concept describes a new reality, or because it is the only appropriate or a radically innovative concept to describe deprivation. The concept's advantage is that it focuses attention on central aspects of deprivation, equally relevant to analysis and policies: deprivation is a multidimensional phenomenon, and deprivation is part and parcel of social relations. The concept of social exclusion can help to ground the understanding of deprivation firmly in traditions of social science analyses.

The concept has made a rapid ascent on to the stages of debates on deprivation and policies that combat deprivation.

The aims of this paper are to:

- briefly review this ascent, and discuss some of the uses of the concept;
- clear up some of the confusions around the concept, and discuss its central elements;
- compare the concept with the notion of poverty, and its various definitions, emphasising the overlaps as much as the differences;
- argue that social exclusion can be measured but that the type of research is likely to be different from measurement of income poverty;
- discuss the policies in which social exclusion has been central, particularly in France and more recently in Britain. Also point at policies in developing countries that operate with similar understandings of poverty;
- point to some ways in which work on social exclusion can be taken forward.

Du Toit, A., 2003, 'Hunger in the valley of fruitfulness: globalisation, "social exclusion" and chronic poverty in Ceres, South Africa', paper presented at the 'Staying Poor: Chronic Poverty and Development Policy' conference, 7–9 April 2003

This paper explores the findings of a household livelihood survey among poor households in the Western Cape district of Ceres, one of the centres of the South African deciduous fruit export industry. It considers the usefulness of the concept of "social exclusion" for understanding chronic poverty in the context of relative surrounding wealth, and argues that households' livelihood options can only be understood in the context of the broader dynamics of globalised agro-food restructuring and the modernisation of paternalist farming styles in the context of political transition.

Key components of chronic poverty in Ceres are asset depletion, the stresses of seasonality and the often disregarded and invisible “dark sides” of social and human capital: criminality, violence, and the exploitative relationships of the “underground economy”. It is also argued that social exclusion, through focusing on the disabling effects of poverty, fails for the most part as a way of making policy sense out of the dynamics that keep poor people poor. It agrees with proposals that these are better captured by the notion of adverse incorporation. The paper argues that there is a need to go beyond modernising and trickle-down approaches in southern Africa, and makes recommendations for some of the key requirements that need to be met if policy is to be able to deal with the problems of chronic poverty. These include:

- Welfare reform: one of the most obvious and important elements of a pro-chronically-poor policy framework;
- Food gardens and urban land reform: an important set of measures to broaden the scope of agrarian and land reform;
- Subsidies for basic social services: this has already been undertaken in the realm of energy and water, with positive effects on household cash flow;
- Community organisation and social capital: these allow individuals and communities to “empower” themselves and broaden the depth and scope of their social agency;
- Local and provincial government reform: to reduce the political marginality of long-time impoverished neighbourhoods and communities.

Fernandes, L., 1994, 'Contesting class: gender, community, and the politics of labour in a Calcutta jute mill', *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, Vol 26 No 4

In this article, Fernandes seeks to reconceptualise class by building on the ideas of class as a culturally constructed category. The concern is to address the issue of difference within the working class, with particular attention given to gender and community, as it unfolds at the factory level in India. The study is based on research into contemporary working class politics in the Indian jute industry.

Initially a departure is made from Marx's description of the creation of classes through the process of homogenisation inherent in modern capitalism. This approach employs an economic determinism by assuming that class identity and interests of workers can be reduced to monetary returns. Two areas are then considered concerning the definition of the interests of workers through political processes. First, the structuring of class in terms of the organisation of the labour market and workplace practices. The class formation of the jute workers has been shaped by the creation of an internal labour market whose boundaries and rules are constituted by distinctions of gender and community in the mill. This is achieved through job differentiation, recruitment, and the allocation of particular occupations to workers. One of

the primary sources of differentiation between workers that produces conflict and competition in the factory lies in the determination of job status and security. Recruitment of workers is done through a web of authority in the mill. Trade unions exert a considerable degree of control over recruitment procedures in the mill, and supervisory and disciplinary staff are also able to use their own positions of authority to accumulate personal power and influence recruitment. A further condition for differentiation is noted given that the factory has increasingly been transformed into a male sphere through the dual processes of displacement of female workers and curtailment of any new recruitment of women.

The second aspect explored of the definition of workers' interests is the cultural and ideological aspects of class politics in the mill through the strategies of authority and resistance in the factory. This can range from isolated, hidden tactics to planned organisation of interests through trade unions. In the case of the latter, workers must depend on the authority of union leaders since they are unable to approach management directly. This dependence is intensified by the system of discipline and regulation that operates in the mill. Unions themselves have built on relationships, identities and hierarchies that exist within workers' communities, and workers are aware of the complex networks of interests and patronage that link management and trade unions. Such social hierarchies that exist in working-class communities are then transformed into inequalities and forms of dependency within the system of power in the factory.

In conclusion, understanding class in terms of both structure and the praxis of class politics must integrate issues of gender and community. The article points to the way in which the "working class" is constructed and contested by the politics of gender and community, suggesting that it is critical to pay attention to issues of difference within the working classes. Such difference is seen not merely to manifest as class identities, but as political processes in which class interests are articulated through conflict, hierarchy and exclusion.

Friedman, S., 2001, 'Free but unequal', *Synthesis Report: Democracy, Inequality and the State in Latin America and Africa*, Johannesburg: Centre for Policy Studies

This paper makes a comparative study of Argentina, Brazil, South Africa and Uganda, to examine three questions: can democracy – or moves towards it – be sustained in the South if current inequalities persist or grow? What political constraints and options face democratising societies which attempt to address poverty and inequality in the next decade and beyond? And taking into account the political realities which face these societies, what social policy options are feasible given current international and domestic constraints on developing states and economies? The approach is based on four hypotheses:

- States have not lost their capacity to shape political, social and economic outcomes, in spite of the processes of globalisation.
- The degree of inequality which is compatible with democracy and stability depends on dominant norms and social understandings expressed through parties and interest groups: the political context therefore shapes the effect of inequality. Also, the viability of measures to deal with inequality depends greatly on politics.
- Attempts to address inequality are likely to succeed only if a coalition in their support exists or can be built which ensures that projects have support and legitimacy, and that they generate social stability.
- Within these political realities, viable social policy options must take into account the capabilities of the states and economies in which they are formulated and the international realities within which countries operate.

The study confirmed the specificity of country experiences. The history of inequality in the countries differs substantially. However, common themes can be discerned. In none of the countries does a substantial imminent revival of the sort of politics which may lead to meaningful reductions in equality seem likely. Furthermore, the relationship between democracy and inequality was found to be unstable, making it too early to conclude that the two were in some form of sustainable equilibrium.

Suggestions for further research are made. First, it was argued that no sustainable egalitarian outcome is possible unless sources of capital can be included in its service. One suggestion is to see an activism which is able to use moral embarrassment and advances in communication technology to hold companies to account. Second, the study points to the need for more investigations into the dynamics within social groups who have actual or potential access to organisation and a motive to support egalitarianism. Third, the point is made that far more needs to be known about the patterns of associational life and collective organisation among the poor, who would in principle have the most interest in a new egalitarian coalition. Lastly, the Brazilian study's observation that the institutional design of its democracy has impeded egalitarian politics and the South African case's proposition that representative democracy is too shallow to allow the preferences of the poor to enter the policy debate, suggest that further study of the design of democratic systems and the way in which these may encourage or impede egalitarian politics is needed.

Gledhill, J., 2000, *Power and Its Disguises: Anthropological Perspectives on Politics*, London: Pluto Press

This book adopts an anthropological approach to politics to show how the study of the micro-dynamics of power in everyday life, coupled with sensitivity to interactions between local and global processes, offers critical insights into issues such as state terror and ethnic violence, the emancipatory potential of social movements and the politics of rights, gender and culture.

Anthropological writing about the political life has much to offer but there is still a need to maximise the potential of anthropology to illuminate this facet of human experience. A fundamental way to do this is to relate the local to the global, but in a more radical way than has been attempted in the past. This leads to an examination of some of the premises of “political anthropology” as it was defined in the classic writings of the British school. The problem with the traditional approach in political anthropology is identified as starting with the political organisation of “modern” societies as its baseline and setting up typologies of “other cultures” according to the categories. This reduced stateless societies to a negative category, but it also produced a categorisation of societies which did have states as “primitive” versions of western-derived archetypes. As a result of this neglect of historical events preceding the emergence of modern societies, the western tradition of political analysis places excessive emphasis on the state and on formal political institutions and government.

With regards to understanding power relations in society, it involves more than an understanding of the formal institutions of the state, as some theorists outside the anthropological tradition, such as Gramsci, have argued. It is also necessary to recognise that power remains incompletely centralised in northern and southern societies, and that the anthropological study of local-level politics can play an important role in helping to understand societies of the South and North. Hence, the multilayered complexity of political reality needs to be appreciated, as power is seen to rest on the everyday social practices which are the concrete form taken by relations between the governing and the governed. Such resistance is seen as central to modern life as societies now contain large numbers of people who do not feel incorporated into the political life of the nation. Action which contests existing power relations takes many forms. Anthropology has an important role to play in bringing these dimensions of modern political life back into view and recognising them brings a political and ethical dimension to the discipline.

With regards to the rise of the western form of state and society it is seen as important not to replace the Weberian ideal-type model of the state with another constraining model. Anthropological perspectives need to recognise that contemporary political processes and power relations reflect the impact of western global expansion in both its direct, colonial forms, and in other, more indirect ways. Even struggles for cultural autonomy and against western domination take place under conditions which have been shaped by that domination. Hence, only concrete, contextualised analysis of particular situations enables an understanding of what is happening and why.

Goldberg, D.T., 1993, *Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning*, Oxford: Blackwell

This book is concerned with marking out the contours of a culture of racialised exclusion and the possibility for resisting and responding to this. It poses a challenge to the view of racist expressions in western culture as a socially anomalous phenomenon, as individual aberrations, or as institutional

hangovers. In doing this, it focuses on both social expressions of race and on the prevailing understanding of these expressions in contemporary social analysis, arguing that social subjects have come to be seen primarily in racial terms.

Racial definition and forms of racist articulation are seen by the author to have emerged only with the rise of modernity. Liberalism, as the defining doctrine for modernity, is interpreted as playing a foundational part in the process of normalising and naturalising racial dynamics and racist exclusions. The role of the philosophical discipline of liberalism is therefore acknowledged in establishing discourse and the culture of racisms. However, the central paradox of modernity is outlined that the more explicitly universal modernity's commitments, the more open it is to and the more determined it is by racial specificity and racist exclusivity. Thus, race is seen as irrelevant in a situation where "all is race".

Following on from this, a general conception of racialised discourse is elaborated in terms of the variety of its historical expressions, and a framework is offered for revealing the historical transformations occurring between discourses. From this a general conception of race is set out in line with the main historical usages and meanings, leading to a definition of forms of racisms as racial exclusions. The presumption that race and racisms are inherently irrational is shown to be mistaken as they are so deeply embedded in historical discourse. Even contemporary social sciences in the prevailing liberal tradition are considered to extend the concept of racialised social orders which encourage racist exclusions. Therefore the general rationalistic grounds of the liberal and moral political condemnation needs to be rethought. Reconceived models of racism are developed to illuminate the racialised and racially exclusionary definition of spatial location throughout South Africa and the West – just as racial location of the socially marginalised throughout the West reflects the intersection of conceptual and social histories.

Green, M., 2003, 'Representing poverty: attacking representation – anthropological perspectives on poverty in development', paper presented at the 'Staying Poor: Chronic Poverty and Development Policy' conference, 7–9 April 2003

This essay argues that an anthropological perspective can throw considerable light on the constitution of poverty as both a category of development thinking and as a label applied to particular social categories. The application of such categories is explored through an analysis of social development perspectives on poverty and a discussion of the new institutional mechanisms for monitoring poverty.

Poverty as a research focus is perceived as predetermined by the current policy content of international development, and what constitutes poverty changes depending on the perspective of those charged with its assessment. Recent development representations of poverty claim to make use of a range of methodologies and analytical perspectives to access the multi-faceted dimensions of poverty. Quantitative methodologies and poverty lines help to create poverty as a tangible entity, the scale of which

can be captured through measurement. Yet this attributes poverty agency to impact on the lives of people who “fall into it”, and it is not seen as a consequence of social relations but represented as an evolving entity that must be attacked. By asserting the social construction of poverty as a category within international development Green wants to emphasise that the current context of the category of poverty is not self-evident.

The scale of the poverty problem as represented in the development literature has not captured the attention of other social sciences to the same extent. This is true of anthropology, although the discipline is changing. For anthropology, poverty is a social relation, not an absolute condition, since the anthropologist cannot be concerned with their own idea of poverty as with what concepts of poverty exist in a particular place. An analysis of historically informed perspectives on poverty reveals not only the social construction of the category within a historical and institutional setting, and the key role of powerful institutions in globalising the poverty agenda, but the fact that the constitution of the kind of poverty that development aspires to reduce is itself the product of the socio-economic relations of modernity.

The social critique of the society of the poor, rather than the society that produces poverty, is equally present in development thinking as a moral imperative. The moral judgement tends to imply that poor societies are dysfunctional and social failure is looming. This kind of thinking explicitly informed the strategies of colonial Christian mission, and colonial policies, and current claims to authoritative knowledge are dispersed through development agencies. For instance, the World Bank’s strategy to become a knowledge bank presents a unitary and evolving vision from different knowledge on development.

The main findings of the paper are:

- The content of poverty is not specific. It conveys a range of associations, including consumption measures and access to basic services, aggregated at rather crude levels with an emphasis on magnitude and scale.
- The quantification of poverty permits the homogenisation of poverty across time and space.
- The tendency to generalise equally informs qualitative approaches through the lack of historical and social analysis.

Further issues outlined are:

- The emphasis on poverty as the problem diverts attention from social relations which produce poverty.
- The reification of poverty deflects from the issue of agency.
- Focusing on people highlights the centrality of the action and strategies of rich and poor alike in determining poverty outcomes, and the quality of the embodied experience of poverty.

Hossain, N. and Moore, M., 2002, 'Arguing for the poor: elites and poverty in developing countries', *IDS Working Paper 148*, Brighton: Institute of Development Studies

This paper argues that aid donors and other external agents could usefully engage more actively with developing country elites in defining national anti-poverty strategies. This does not necessarily depend on those elites being altruistic or especially “pro-poor”, as elites have some self-interest in reducing poverty.

Historically, the elites that have governed the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries for the past century have been markedly pro-poor, in the sense that they have promoted broad-based national economic development, and other public programmes to redistribute income and assets towards the poor. Comparatively, developing countries do not share the history of social, political and economic interactions that have led most OECD countries to be pro-poor. The major reason for this is the absence or fragility of industrialism. Many factors explain the absence of industrialism, and the reduced salience of the national political arena and the chances that national level political bargains over issues of social and economic policy can be forged in developing countries the way they were in OECD countries. These include: urban, industrial working classes, as well as white-collar middle classes, are demographically and politically weak; public service is often highly politicised; significant wealth derives from “niches” that are created or need to be protected through the direct exercise of political power, rather than from skill in capital and enterprise activities; high levels of ethnic diversity; the prevalence of foreign capital; the influence of donors; and the broader cultural dimensions of globalisation.

However, the history of the OECD countries was neither simple nor uniform. A major factor was that class conflict and repression threatened or occurred much of the time. The political and ideological conditions in contemporary developing countries therefore provide real opportunities and stimuli for the adoption of attitudes and policies by national elites that are pro-poor in outcome. These arise mainly from the continuing priority accorded “development” and the current prevalence of “human resources” in development.

The conclusions reached are:

- Developing countries’ elites could play a greater role in framing and supporting pro-poor policies if they were engaged in a more constructive and sympathetic way by aid donors.
- There is considerable scope to present poverty in different ways, and to advocate for public interventions as contributors to broader national economic goals.
- Leaders of state tend to pursue six main objectives: autonomy, hegemony, revenue, legitimacy, external recognition and accumulation.
- Developing countries’ elites tend to compare themselves and their countries with others, and can feel a strong sense of shame or pride at their perceived relative performance.

- Conditions under which there is likely to be a positive response to poverty are: the poor as a threat to the elite; this threat being presented to the elite as linked to a subset of the population; persuasive stories that link “solution” to poverty with “solutions” to other perceived problems; proposed actions against poverty being administratively and fiscally viable, benefiting significant sections of the population, and being consistent with what relevant comparator countries are understood to have done.
- Whilst awareness of elite bias is essential, it is mandatory to include elites in the framing of national agendas so as not to provoke the pursuit of unrealistic, short-term, “salvation is at hand” strategies.

Hulme, D. and Shepherd, A., 2003, ‘Conceptualising chronic poverty’, *World Development*, Vol 31 No 3

The authors aim to set out a framework for analysing chronic poverty by addressing the following questions: what is chronic poverty? Who is chronically poor? Why are people chronically poor? What are the implications for poverty-reduction policy? The purpose behind this is to make policy and social action more effective in a context of increasing commitment to reducing global poverty by national and international bodies, and to ensure that those who are chronically poor do not miss out on the benefits of global development. Given that these bodies conceived of the poor as a single homogenous group whose prime problem is low income, there is a danger of weak analysis and distorted policy.

Chronic poverty is defined as occurring when an individual experiences significant capability deprivations for a period of five or more years. Distinguishing features of the concept are its extended duration, and that it is individuals who are ultimately seen to suffer from chronic poverty and whose life experiences should be analysed. Given this, relying on the usual income and consumption measures may not be enough to measure persistent poverty, which advances the case for more multidimensional understandings of poverty to draw out complex factors in its make-up.

While there is no single body of theory that allows a simple answer to who the chronically poor are, a number of categories are outlined:

- those experiencing deprivation because of their stage in the life cycle;
- those discriminated against because of their social position;
- household members who experience discrimination within the household;
- those living in remote rural areas, urban ghettos and regions where prolonged violent conflict and insecurity have occurred.

A vast array of theories seek to explain why poor people stay poor. At the global level these range from radical interpretations against the nature of capitalist development, to the neo-liberal view of obstacles to

capitalism preventing development, to arguments of “urban bias”. At the national level, “bad governance” is highlighted and a lack of economic growth. Inequality at the societal level is seen to be underlined by structures of power inherent in income and wealth distribution.

In light of this analysis, it is advocated that sustained financial support from wealthier countries and people is employed for the pursuit of chronic poverty reduction and the millennium development targets. The persistent nature of poverty calls into question some of the orthodoxies of recent decades, and points to the need for a more comprehensive strategy. The World Development Report 2000/2001 is highlighted as such a strategy. It pursues the following goals: empowerment, which highlights issues of governance and social equity; increasing opportunity to allow for economic growth; and improving the security of livelihoods of poor people and reducing the vulnerability of the chronically poor to shocks and adverse risks.

Humphrey, C., 2001, 'Inequality and exclusion: a Russian case study of emotion in politics', *Anthropological Theory*, Vol 1 No 3

The question addressed in this article concerns the generation of a particular kind of inequality through practices of exclusion and inclusion. It argues for the need to examine political and economic motivations to explain inequality and shows, using the case of Russian history, how political anxieties about the integrity of social groups and their governability has created inequality by disadvantaging those excluded.

The concept of inequality is seen as something that can be produced by political emotions and discursive practices, rather than as a fixed situation to be explained in terms of income disparities, unequal rights, or structures of exploitation. These practices are investigated to expose the political impulse for the preservation of society, which constantly reviews the criteria for conformist unity and thus resets the boundaries for defining insiders against the outsiders. The process can be identified among ordinary people, through their fear of being excluded and ambivalent sentiments to those who have been expelled, which give rise to judgements about the legitimacy of inequality, especially when certain of the previously dispossessed suddenly take their chance to grasp wealth.

It is examined why people mind more about one kind of inequality than another, with a view to ascertaining attitudes to the different political-economic systems that generate variations. For instance, why were Soviet inequalities of power and material benefits regarded with relative equanimity and accepted as just? Why are present-day income differences greeted with fatalistic cynicism, anger or distress, to the extent that many people feel them as a personal insult? It is argued that in the Soviet and post-Soviet periods a political-social anxiety about unity and integrity has created a fundamental emotional nexus, which operates in state and local institutions. The practices of producing unity have at the same time generated practices of exclusion, which in turn has led to inequality. The profound paranoia that

characterised Leninist-Stalinist politics is identified as a central aspect of this process, and its relevance in present-day Russia persists in a situation where the masses experience few benefits from capitalism.

The main findings of the paper are that over the long term the basic building blocks of the polity have not been individuals but territorially rooted and internally hierarchical groups. People who are excluded, or exclude themselves, arouse more passionate and ambiguous emotions. The patchy advent of capitalism has not yet eroded this situation for ordinary people who experience socialism, because for them real privatisation still means self-exclusion by the proprietors, and a surrender of protection. For them belonging constitutes the society, and in economic terms people cling to the collective not only for immediate provisions, but also because it remains the only site for organising the local economy as a whole. Hence, some kinds of inequality are produced by a political impulse for the preservation of society, which constantly reviews the criteria for conformist unity and thus continually resets the boundaries for defining itself against the outside.

Jolly, S., 2002, *Gender and Cultural Change: Overview Report*, Brighton: Institute of Development Studies

Is gender and development (GAD) an imposition of western ideas on other cultures? This is an important question as it stands, and also because such accusations have often been made to thwart efforts for gender progress. This overview report seeks to deal with the issue.

It begins by asking, what is meant by culture? Culture is understood to be dynamic and diverse, informed by internal and external influences, and structured by representations and power. The position is taken that there is no homogenous, fixed northern or southern culture, yet the North and South are interacting and influencing each other within an imbalanced structure of power.

How culture is formed on an individual level is considered through the lens of international dynamics which interact with family, community and nation to provide the context for individual lives. In this way, development interventions will form and change cultures, including thinking and practices of development which are laden with cultural values. Cultures of colonialism still influence development today, for instance, through the assumption that the “South” should learn from and try to emulate the “North”. However, many individuals and organisations are challenging such representations and forging new cultures in GAD.

The following observations and recommendations are made based on the experiences described in this report:

- Charges of western imposition are often made in response to gender interventions. These accusations may be accurate, or simply politically motivated to obstruct transformation of gender relations, or both.

- Development will always impact on cultures and development interventions always impact on gender. They either change things, or sanction and reinforce the status quo. Ignoring gender in development is seen to be just as much a cultural assumption as putting it on the agenda.
- Culture and tradition can enable or obstruct, can be oppressive or liberating for different people at different times. Value judgements need to be made about which aspects of culture to hold on to, and which to let go of.
- However, who makes such judgements is an important issue. “Outsiders” need to be cautious about how they judge other people’s cultures. Developers need to make space for discussion of cultures by “insiders” and enable people to identify and take action against practices they find oppressive.
- Development thinking and practice, including GAD, are themselves laden with cultural assumptions. Individuals and organisations need to challenge their own assumptions and power dynamics.
- Enabling participation and leadership of previously excluded groups can contribute to changing the culture of development organisations and reorienting their priorities.

Jordan Smith, D., 2001, “The arrow of God”, “Pentecostalism”, inequality, and the supernatural in south-eastern Nigeria’, *Africa*, Vol 71 No 4

In 1996 in the city of Owerri in south-eastern Nigeria riots broke out over popular suspicions that the town’s nouveaux riches were responsible for a spate of child kidnappings and alleged ritual murders. This article seeks to understand the Owerri riots and the symbolic power of ritual murder and “satanic wealth” in the context of growing social and economic inequalities.

Another dimension to the disturbances concerns unhappiness about inequality and the popular discourses it produced in relation to Pentecostal Christianity. These churches have positioned themselves against the social forces perceived to be responsible for inequality, forces that are locally understood to be supernatural as well as political and economic. However, the growth of Pentecostalism is associated with popular discontent over poverty and inequality and with people’s aspirations to achieve wealth and prosperity. In addition, in the aftermath of the riots public debates about prosperity, poverty and black magic came to implicate some of the churches that preached against “traditional” supernatural beliefs and practices.

This article examines the place of religion in the Owerri crisis, particularly the complex and contradictory position of Pentecostal Christianity in the popular interpretations of the riots. The analysis depends on recognising the relationship of Pentecostalism to structures of inequality rooted in patron–clientism, and in understanding the ways in which disparities in power in Nigeria are interpreted and negotiated through idioms of the supernatural. It is argued that Pentecostal churches encouraged interpretations of inequality that tied economic and political power to the world of the occult and,

unintentionally, invited suspicions of their own involvement in satanic practices. This is because of their association with the world of witchcraft.

Throughout the course of the paper the theoretical context is set for an interpretation of the events in Owerri, exploring the issues of prosperity, power and inequality in the realms of Pentecostalism, the occult and the patrimonial system. A more detailed ethnographic account of the crisis is presented, leading to conclusions that the riots reveal the tensions created as Nigerian Christians try to manage and negotiate aspirations to wealth, desires for a meaningful Christian life, and the changing structure of inequality as power becomes more detached from obligations of kinship. This tension is set against a backdrop in the 1990s of increasing formal education, rising rates of urban migration, and a growing exposure to global media which heighten individual ambitions and expectations at a time when the country's political economy weakened the ability of networks of kinship and community to deliver assistance. Such tensions helped make Pentecostalism popular, as well as the lure of prosperity, yet increasing prosperity in a situation of great inequalities has generated deep resentments, which explains why the Church became embroiled in the riots targeting "magical wealth".

In conclusion, it is found that in a situation of reconfigured relations of patron–clientism, which no longer carried the obligations of patronage, the message of the rioters was that a system of inequality in which the "haves" are obligated to the "have-nots" is preferable to one in which there is no obligation.

Kabeer, N., 2003, 'Making rights work for the poor: Nijera Kori and the construction of "collective capabilities" in rural Bangladesh', *DRC/IDS Working Paper 200*, Brighton: Institute of Development Studies

This paper begins with a brief review of the types of activities engaged in by NGOs in Bangladesh. Four main types are identified: alternative finance institutions, service providers, social development organisations and social mobilisation organisations. This latter group emphasises "political empowerment", challenging power structures and promoting rights. The paper is about Nijera Kori, an exemplar of this approach.

Nijera Kori was founded in the mid-1970s in response to destitute women who flooded into Dhaka city during the 1974 famine. Over time it has shifted its role from a relief-oriented to a more developmental perspective. The aim of the paper is to distil some of the lessons from Nijera Kori's long-term experience as an organisation that has defined its agenda from the outset in terms of building the collective capabilities of poor people to claim their rights as citizens, many years before the idea of a rights-based approach to development achieved its current prominence in the development discourse. It documents Nijera Kori's vision, goals and strategies, examines the evidence on what it has achieved and failed to achieve and reflects on what the outcomes demonstrate about the nature of social relations and processes of social transformation in Bangladesh.

The approach of Nijera Kori as an agent of social change distinguishes it from most other NGOs in Bangladesh which provide services, or compensate for state or market failures. It carries out this role through the provision of intangible resources, such as information, ideas and knowledge, and the promotion of new social relationships among the poor in order to build their collective capabilities to mobilise on their own behalf.

In broader, theoretical terms Nijera Kori focuses on the structural inequalities in society and seeks to explain how dominance and oppression are maintained. Change is seen to come about as a result of systemic conflict and the goal is to ensure radical transformation of the system itself rather than reforms that leave inequalities intact. Kabeer notes that organisations which focus only on the provision of services play an important role in bringing about change in the lives of the poor and marginalised, however, the nature and scope of this change is limited as they fail to effect deeper structures of inequality by focusing on individual accumulation or individual empowerment. Consequently, the improvements in individual lives brought about by service-oriented NGOs are constantly undermined by various forms of unruly practice on the part of more powerful sections of society.

Nijera Kori's approach to steer clear of a direct delivery role was informed by its belief and experience that it was more appropriate to persuade and enable such services to be provided by the government and other providers and to focus solely on the development of informed demand and social pressure by people. As a result, it has been able to concentrate on building group pressure for greater accountability and responsiveness on the part of both government and NGO providers, and it attempts to shape the direction of social change through a process based on the collective agency of the poor, rather than leaving it to "unintended consequences" of individual empowerment.

**Krishna, S., 2001, 'Race, amnesia, and the education of international relations',
*Alternatives, Vol 26***

This article begins with the hard-hitting opening statement that the discipline of international relations (IR) is predicated on a systematic politics of forgetting, a wilful amnesia, on the question of race. It is argued that two strategies of "abstraction" and "redemption" serve to contain and normalise the emergence of modern sovereignty, the genocide of the indigenous peoples of the Americas, the enslavement of natives in Africa, and the colonisation of societies in Asia.

IR discourse's valorisation of abstraction is based on a desire to escape this history. It is usually presented as the desire of the discipline to engage in theory building rather than descriptive or historical analysis, yet this rationalises the details of these encounters. Abstraction leaves open questions of land, violence and slavery, the three processes that have historically underlain the present unequal global order.

The containment strategy in IR of redemption operates by an eternal deferment of the possibility of overcoming the alienation of international society that commenced in 1492. Despite its near impossibility, its promise serves as the principle by which contemporary and historical violence and inequality can be justified and lived with. Such a strategy hinges on the prospect of deferred redemption: the present is inscribed as a transitional phase whose violent and unequal character is justified on the grounds of that which is to come. Of these two processes abstraction is focused on in this essay.

The first section of the article illustrates an act of abstraction that is central to the discipline of international relations: the depiction of nineteenth-century Europe as a pacific zone orchestrated by diplomatic virtuosity. This position is very tenuous given the scale of aggressive acts engaged in by the imperial powers outside the European zone.

In the second section three encounters are considered of the West with the rest of the world. In each of these abstraction works as a strategy of containment to what is legitimately included within the ambit of IR discourse. The first of these examines the narration of Hugo Grotius as a founding father within international relations and international law, and places it in context of the colonisation of Africa and the consolidation of the slave trade. Second, the encounter between the Spanish and the Mexicans in the mid-sixteenth century is considered which consolidated the national imagery of Spain and classified the Mexicans as a people without history and deserving of genocide, slavery and colonialisation. Third, the encounter between the British and the Indians is looked at in the nineteenth century to show how abstraction serves as the means to recuperate colonialism and conquest.

In light of this analysis some points are made to inform the direction of the discipline:

- It needs to be asked what is the relationship between practices of abstraction and the disappearance of race from international relations?
- Sensitivity needs to be given to the policing of the study to allow space for more relevant issues.
- What is the relationship between the repressed stories of racism, genocide and violence in the discipline and the more prominent objects of study of terrorism, international migration and insecurity?

Li Peilin, 2002, 'Introduction: changes in social stratification in China since the reform' and Wanli, Z., 'Twenty years of research on stratified social structure in contemporary China', in *Social Sciences in China*, Vol 23 No 1

Peilin's introductory article to a special issue of *Social Sciences in China* on social stratification, brings attention to the profound economic and social changes that have taken place in China since major market-based reforms began 20 years ago. As China changes from a traditional and distributing economy into a

modern industrial and socialist market one, the economic structural transformation has resulted in great changes in the social structure. The following broad trends are identified:

- Before the reform, with the disappearance of classes in possession of means of production and wealth, the hierarchy in order of administrative power became the sole social estate system and the social status of all was determined in reference to this system. After the reform the social stratification was enhanced according to the characteristics of wealth, power and social prestige.
- Before the reform egalitarianism dominated distribution in China under that planned economy. After the reform the incentive mechanism was introduced under a market economy allowing some people to become well-off first through hard labour and business. This has resulted in greater gaps in income and wealth between urban and rural areas, different regions, units with different power of resources allocation, and individuals.
- After 20 years of reform, achievements gained have convinced the Chinese people that reform and opening up are the only road to development for China.

Wanli's piece furthers Peilin's analysis by considering the characteristics of pre- and post-reform social strata, and the main status groups' interests within the current social structure.

In the pre-reform era leading government officials were the greatest beneficiaries of social resources, and the difference in status among members of society was the result of the division of the society into the status system, the work unit system and the administrative system. Additionally, residents of urban areas generally had a higher social status than those in rural areas.

The post-reform situation has been characterised by the possession and redistribution of power, as free-flowing resources and space for economic manoeuvre outside the old system have emerged. This has led to a reconfiguration of status groups, as new status groups have emerged outside the structure of the old system and resources possessed by new groups have significantly increased. For the main social groups, such as peasants, "cadres" in Party or government organisations, workers, professionals, and so on, their status has changed notably to bring about a process of polarisation between and within each group.

Another prominent issue which exacerbates this tendency is the unfair distribution of income, which has aroused general concern in China. The problem manifests itself through the emergence of a high-income stratum, of a new band of impoverished people, and the emergence of the practice of rent-seeking.

Issues requiring attention are an assessment of the declining status of the working class, the crisis of institutional control in the distribution of social interests, and the lack of attention paid to women's interests due to unfair social distribution in the social structure.

Mamdani, M., 2001, 'The Racialisation of Hutu/Tutsi Difference under Colonialism', chapter 3 in *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and Genocide in Rwanda*, Kampala: Fountain Publishers

This chapter looks at the construction of Tutsi and Hutu identities from the pre-colonial through to the post-colonial era. It considers the racialisation of the Tutsi/Hutu difference as historically, ideologically and institutionally constructed in the nineteenth-century colonial period.

Historically, Hutu and Tutsi changed as identities as did the organisation of power in the Rwandan state. Around the time of the foundation of the state of Rwanda, sometime in the fifteenth century, Tutsi was most likely an ethnic identity, and Hutu was a political construction under which were assembled different subjugated groups. Later, Tutsi was recast as an identity of power, and also a transethnic identity. This was reinforced by “royal” myths. In the colonial period both Hutu and Tutsi were racialised, Tutsi as a non-indigenous identity of power and Hutu as an indigenous identity of subjects. The idea that the Tutsi were superior because of the racial difference that they came from elsewhere and a “civilising” influence on Rwanda’s inhabitants, was an idea of colonial origin.

Ideologically, the colonial perception of Tutsis and Hutus was perpetuated by a number of measures: differentiation in education, with preferential treatment reserved for Tutsis; the incorporation of Tutsi hierarchy into the ecclesiastical one; and the construction of linkages of Tutsis to the Caucasian race and Hutus to Negros with reference to biblical sources.

Under colonial rule the institutions that led to the racialisation of Tutsi and Hutu difference were:

- the political regime that issued official identities confirming every individual as Hutu or Tutsi, thereby seeking to naturalise a constructed political difference between the groups as a legislated racial difference;
- the administrative regime at which at its lowest rungs was placed a Tutsi authority;
- the legal regime whereby a Tutsi had a special relationship to the sphere of “customary” law.

Thus, the nineteenth-century colonial intervention served to establish a new dynamic of indigeneity, whereby Tutsi symbolised power and Hutu subject. This was the first time that Tutsi became identified with an alien race and Hutu with the indigenous majority. The main difference was that from being at the top of the local hierarchy in the pre-colonial period, the Tutsi found themselves occupying the bottom rung of a hierarchy of “alien” races in the colonial period.

Mikhalev, V., 2000, 'Inequality and transformation of social structures in transitional economies', *Research for Action 52*, United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research (WIDER)

This paper considers issues relating to the transformation of social structures in countries of central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union during their transition from state socialism to market economies. This transition has entailed a move from largely egalitarian social structures to greater inequality and social stratification. The paper seeks to understand the determinants of change, the evolving patterns of social stratification, and the formulation of relevant policy approaches conducive to sustainable social development and social cohesion.

In the pre-transitional era socialist societies were stratified into “status groups” where social capital rather than economic capital determined a person’s status. With the transition, people’s prospects in life are being increasingly determined by their possession of assets, goods and income opportunities. The collapse of the centrally planned economic system, combined with major systemic change, resulted in massive economic decline and a fall in living standards. Indeed, social structures have been deeply affected by macroeconomic and social-sector reforms. For the majority of people living standards have fallen, unemployment and poverty are high, the distribution of assets and earnings has changed radically, and social benefits have fallen. The outcome of transition has also led to massive informalisation of the economy where the informal sector is absorbing an increasing proportion of the economically active population. Furthermore, the rise in income inequality in some of these countries has introduced sharp contrasts between expanding poverty and concentrating wealth in the hands of only a few.

The slowly reforming countries of the former Soviet Union have particularly high inequality and social polarisation, out of which an extremely wealthy and powerful economic elite has emerged. In contrast, in central Europe there have been smaller increases in income inequality, with many professional workers having successfully entered the market economy. It is argued that this social polarisation has large economic costs. Thus, a more active social policy could have large economic returns. But there is also a need for more effective public transfers and income redistribution policies to alleviate and reduce poverty. Such policies include:

- Promoting economic growth, stability and opportunities as a way to reduce inequality and poverty, such as through a coherent wage policy, support for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and agricultural policies and support for rural populations.
- Promoting human capital and access to social assets, particularly through education.
- Providing a social safety net which promotes social integration and social cohesion through social mobility and responsibility of citizens, as well as social assistance targeted to vulnerable groups.

Muzaffar, C., 1987, 'Equality and the Spiritual Traditions: An Overview', in R. Siriwardena (ed.), *Equality and the Religious Traditions of Asia*, London: Frances Pinter

One of the most significant similarities in the various spiritual traditions which is of most direct relevance to equality is the notion of common humanity. What makes us equal is our human status, our emotions and impulses, our motives and urges. The concept of equality expressed itself in different ways in the Indo-Aryan and Semitic traditions. In the Indo-Aryan religions like Hinduism and Buddhism there is a cosmic notion of oneness, a universal essence which equalises the human race. The Semitic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, also subscribe to a universal oneness, but articulated through the human's relationship with God. The Taoist notion of equality is closer to the Indo-Aryan tradition in its belief in the indissoluble bond between humans and nature as the basis for the equality that exists within the unity of the universe, while Confucianism recognises equality in the fundamental indivisibility of human nature.

While all religions espouse equality irrespective of ethnicity, there are varying degrees of emphasis. Buddhism and Taoism are concerned with the universal person in the truest sense, while the doctrines of Christianity and Islam embody a concept of an in-group against an out-group of non-believers. In Judaism the notion of "chosen people" by its very nature subordinates the status of non-Jews, although "chosen people" does not imply inequalities among different ethnic communities of Jewish people. Similarly, the status of women, in all religions is recognised as equal. However, in most religious traditions there has been a downgrading of women's status. The denial of an explicit role for women in public affairs in many religious doctrines is one of the more obvious of the political inequalities found in various traditions.

The chapter, then, considers equality as a secular, human value, particularly in the form of human rights. This is explored through an analysis of the development of the concept from the post-Renaissance Europe period, and finds that the content of equality reflected in the rights of individuals has similarities with non-western spiritual doctrines, for instance, in relation to a person's right to life, liberty and security. Regarding the question of the struggle for equality being divorced from religion it is argued that the secular tradition has distorted the meaning of equality in two ways. First, by seeing humans as the end goal the pursuit of equality may become obsessional to the point of refusing to accept certain aspects of life that cannot be made equal. The second point is that separation from the transcendental makes inevitable skewed perspectives and values. Thus, by stressing equality or freedom alone, the West and notions of human rights fail to appreciate the interrelationships among diverse and divergent values.

Nussbaum, M., 1995, 'Human Capabilities, Female Human Beings', in M. Nussbaum and J. Glover (eds), *Women, Culture, and Development: A Study of Human Capabilities*, Oxford: Clarendon Press

In this article, Nussbaum focuses on the universalist and essentialist factors of what is common to all human beings, and sees some capabilities and functions as more central to the core of human life than others. The questions are asked: what are the characteristic activities of the human being? What does the human being do as a member of a particular group or community? What distinguishes human life from other actual or imagined ways of life?

Nussbaum derives fundamental experiences that all humans share and can be regarded as the characteristic activities common to every human being. A list of grounding human experiences is arrived at, and two distinct thresholds are described in relation to capabilities: a threshold of capability to function beneath which a life will be so impoverished that it will not be human at all; and a somewhat higher threshold, beneath which those characteristic functions are available in such a reduced way that, though we may judge the form of life a human one, we would not think it a good human life.

From this, the conception of the human being outlined specifies certain basic functional capabilities at which societies should aim for their citizens. These are:

- *Life* – capability to live a life of normal length and not die prematurely.
- *Human body* – capability to be healthy, nourished, have opportunities for sexual satisfaction, choice in matters of reproduction, being able to move from place to place, and avoid unnecessary pain.
- *Senses, imagination, thought* – capability to use the senses, to imagine, think and reason in a way formed by education, freedom of expression, religion.
- *Emotions* – capability to express one's emotions without fear.
- *Practical reason* – capability to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's own life.
- *Affiliation* – capability to live with and in relation to others, to express concern for the other, to participate in various forms of social interaction.
- *Relatedness to other species and to nature*.
- *Play* – capability to laugh, play and enjoy recreational activities.
- *Control over one's environment* – capability to participate in political choices, and in material environment.

A life that lacks any one of these capabilities, no matter what else it has, will fall short of being a good human life. The argument is then put forward that a conception of the human being and human functioning is urgently needed in public policy. Concurring with Sen, the central goal of public planning should be the capabilities of citizens to perform various important functions. This is especially required in the case of women, who, because of their sex, are seen to lack support for the most basic central human functions, and this results in unequal capabilities.

Nyamu-Musembi, C., 2002, 'Are Local Norms and Practices Fences or Pathways? The Case of Women's Property Rights', in A. An-Na'im (ed.), *Cultural Transformation and Human Rights in Africa*, London: Zed Books

This article looks at traditional justice institutions in Kenya and assesses some of their major strengths and weaknesses in the case of women's property rights. Types of traditional justice institutions range from largely invisible intra-family negotiations to quasi-state bodies that apply customary norms to resolve disputes and allocate resources. Informal dispute resolution processes play a central role in rural sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in eastern Kenya. In general, traditional justice institutions are more affordable, accessible and less intimidating than formal courts, and as they are widely accepted as an alternative way to resolve family conflict, they have a lower "social cost" than taking one's relatives to court. In practical ways, they protect the vulnerable, giving legal force to claims or rights that formal laws fail to recognise. A key example is the upholding of "overlapping rights" between registered and undocumented claims to land. Formal courts more often than not dismiss the claims of all but the registered title-holder.

Since traditional justice institutions can be responsive to the varied and dynamic nature of local custom, practice and opinion they offer grounds for challenging the use of cultural abstractions to exclude and subordinate certain groups. Attempts to systematically collect and organise customary law have led to "customary rules" becoming more rigid, as reflected in judicial decisions that perpetuate inequalities justified as cultural.

However, there are a number of weaknesses to the systems:

- Differences in wealth, social status, gender and family circumstances can affect people's experience of local justice.
- There are few or no avenues to check discrimination or abuse, which is a direct result of an official failure to acknowledge that these fora exercise quasi-judicial functions.
- In some places, the structures are loose and diffuse which makes routine accountability difficult.
- Injustices can only be brought to the surface if dissatisfied people take the initiative to raise them.

Intra-family disputes make up the majority of informal disputing at the local level (one-third in the eastern Kenya case study). While not all decisions go against the interests of women, embedded ideas about authority within the family can lead to this bias. In land relations, for example, men are regarded as having the main authority to negotiate and finance the purchase of land. Even where women who have exercised such authority try to establish their land rights, embedded ideas are used to discredit their claims altogether.

Approaches to reform that emerge from the research in Kenya and elsewhere show that accessible justice is possible:

- Successful reform strategies are likely to be those that build on existing strengths and redress obvious weaknesses. One entry point is where there is already recognition of the need for change by the very people who are the “caretakers” of the institutions.
- Experience has shown, however, that some changes (for example, to permit gender equity) are less likely to be approved from within the system. The state has a direct role to play here: when the state incorporates or sanctions customary norms, it still has a constitutional obligation to uphold norms such as equality and non-discrimination.

**Ortner, S., 1995, 'Resistance and the problem of ethnographic refusal',
Comparative Studies in Society and History, Vol 37 No 1**

This essay traces what the author calls ethnographic refusal through a series of studies surrounding the subject of resistance. It is argued that many of the most influential studies of resistance are severely limited by the lack of an ethnographic perspective, in spite of their intention to adopt an interdisciplinary approach. A minimal definition of ethnography is the attempt to understand another life world using the self as the instrument of knowing, and the ethnographic stance is the commitment to “thickness”, that is, to producing understanding through richness, texture and detail. The term “ethnographic refusal” is defined by Ortner as involving a refusal of such thickness, a failure of holism in the contextualisation of research.

Following on from a discussion of the literature on resistance and domination, three forms of ethnographic refusal are identified. The first finds studies of resistance focusing on the relationship between the dominant and the subordinate in the realm of politics at the expense of an adequate exploration of politics among subalterns. This impulse to “sanitise” the internal politics of the dominated is charged with being fundamentally romantic. The second refusal is to see subalterns as having an authentic, and not merely reactive, culture. Ortner argues that some of the most influential studies of resistance are characterised by such cultural thinning, which recognises that subalterns are responding to domination as ad hoc and incoherent, springing only from some set of ideas as a result of the situation of domination. This is opposed to having a certain prior and ongoing cultural authenticity. The third aspect relates to the deconstruction of the subject: the important question is how to get around ideological constructs of the individual yet retain some sense of human agency.

The main findings are that resistance studies are thin because they are ethnographically thin. This is because of several factors: the failure to address questions of the internal politics of dominated groups and of the cultural authenticity of those groups; the set of issues surrounding the crisis of representations, that

is, the possibility of truthful portrayals of others; and the capacity of the subaltern to be heard. It is suggested that resistance can only be appreciated as more than opposition and instead be truly creative and transformative, if one appreciates the multiplicity of projects in which social beings are always engaged, and the multiplicity of ways in which those projects feed on as well as collide with one another.

Perlman, J., 2003, 'Marginality: from myth to reality in the *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro, 1969–2002', paper presented at the 'Staying Poor: Chronic Poverty and Development Policy' conference, 7–9 April 2003

The objective of this paper is to trace the life histories of people originally interviewed by Perlman in 1968–69 across time, looking for patterns in inter-generational mobility. The original sites of the research were three low-income communities in Rio de Janeiro, in *favela* (squatter settlement) areas. The main goals are to understand the dynamics of urban poverty, exclusion and socioeconomic mobility; to investigate the meaning and reality of marginality over the period; to trace patterns of life history in relation to macro political and economic transformations at the city and national levels; to investigate the impact of public policy interventions; and to explore the mediating effects of civil society and social networks.

The original research was incorporated into a book, *The Myth of Marginality* (1973), which argued that the prevailing 'myths' regarding social, cultural, economic, and political dimensions of marginality were found to be empirically false, analytically misleading and insidious in their political implications. For instance, the marginality myth was so strong in Brazil in the 1970s that it created a self-fulfilling prophecy; in particular, the *favela*-removal policy it justified perversely created the population it was designed to eliminate.

The research undertaken in 2002 is set in a considerably changed context 30 years on. The single biggest difference on *favelas* is identified as the pervasive atmosphere of fear, the sense of vulnerability both physically and psychologically. In the late 1960s people were afraid of being forcibly relocated by the housing authorities of the dictatorship. In 2002 they were afraid of dying in the crossfire between police and dealers, or between opposing gangs. Another major finding is that although collective consumption of urban services and individual consumption of household goods has increased notably over the three intervening decades, the gap between rich and poor has increased even more. There was also great hope that the gradual reintroduction of democratic rights and principles in 1984 would bring new opportunities for the underclass. While some grassroots organisations emerged, a number of factors hampered their development and activities: lack of resources, the appearance of drug dealers, and the fickleness of party politics. In contrast to the more negative factors presented so far, it was found that attitudes, beliefs and values of community members reflected much less passivity and paternalism, and a stronger belief that political participation can make a difference.

Peters. P., 2002, 'Bewitching land: the role of land disputes in converting kin to strangers and in class formation in Malawi', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol 28 No 1: 155–78

This paper argues that conflict over land underlies and is central to most of the disputes leading to the division of matrilineal families, and consequently to the invisible process of social differentiation and class formation in agrarian societies. The article concentrates on this “hidden” process, sketching some of the key past and present patterns of differentiation in Malawi, and presents detailed family histories to support the argument.

Disagreements over land can take many forms: quiet mutterings, stifled anger, overt quarrels, repeated fights and witchcraft accusations. The disputes have the effect of turning family members into “strangers”, or those who do not belong on the family land. Family oral histories suggest that the matrilineal groups split up not only along cleavages between sisters’ daughters but between sisters. A final rupture of a matrilineal family occurs through increasingly bitter quarrels, often including accusations of witchcraft and the move of a group of sisters to a different area, thereby ceding the matri-family’s land to those who remain.

The frequency and intensity of disputes is unsurprising given that land is the foundation of agrarian society. It is suggested that, as well as being a source of livelihood, land continues to define social and personal identity. The primary basis of Malawian social identity is kinship, and kinship groups are located, which makes a rupture with kinship group over land a rupture of identity. Hence, differentiation is taking place as a result through a narrowing definition of belonging and a constriction in rights to family land, as well as through the emergence of types of land transfers within kinship groups and between strangers.

Reichman, R. (ed.), 1999, *Race in Contemporary Brazil: From Indifference To Inequality*, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University

This volume is one of the first to bring Brazilian voices together and to the international debate on racial difference and equality. Its aim is to inform the worldwide dialogue on multiracial polities. The contributors focus on the policy relevant areas of: colour-classification systems; access to education, employment and health; inequality in the judiciary and politics; and black women’s status and roles.

The background to the study puts these issues into context. To outside scholars, artists and travellers, Brazilian society has been seen to comprise a harmony of relationships between its diverse inhabitants: the descendents of African slaves, indigenous peoples and European immigrants. Brazilians’ own interpretations of racial dynamics have gradually come to take as authoritative such impressions. In reality, race remains one of the most contested territories in contemporary Brazil. In recent years there has been

increasing sensitivity to racism. This is attributed to the voices of activist Afro-Brazilians and others who have been working to dispel the prevalent national myth of racial democracy.

To elaborate on these points four areas are considered:

- *The shifting colour line and the myth of racial democracy*: the colour line is seen as providing great contention, dividing those who believe that Brazil is a racial democracy from those who perceive discrimination based on colour.
- *The political construction of the Negro*: this has been carried out by Brazilian black movements to reclaim African culture and to refute the official national myth that black poverty and social exclusion are unrelated to racial discrimination.
- *Black movement politics*: abolition of slavery in 1888 gave birth to a robust black movement.
- *To target or not to target*: the *Negro* as a political subject was recognised for the first time in Brazilian history in 1996, for the purpose of targeting for public policies. Why racial discrimination has risen so high on the political agenda is unclear as the Cardoso administration did not commit to specific policies, and maintained the perspective that class factors explain racial inequalities.

The importance of this study is highlighted by the fact that until the late 1990s Brazilian scholarship on race and the Afro-Brazilian experience had avoided contemporary social inequality and racial politics. This was perhaps because of the 2.5 per cent of Afro-Brazilians who go on to higher education, and the vulnerability of white scholars to explore these issues. Despite barriers, current Brazilian scholarship on racial dynamics is breaking new ground that adds to ongoing work on culture and religion. Researchers are revisiting the construction of race and ethnicity and examining how they function in Brazil's unique social setup. More systematic attention is given to the role of the black movement in claiming rights, and for the first time Brazilian scholars are adopting comparative perspectives.

Sayed, Y. and Soudien, C., 2003, '(Re)framing education exclusion and inclusion discourses: limits and possibilities', *IDS Bulletin*, Vol 34 No 1

This article examines discourses of educational inclusion and exclusion. It looks at the diverse and contested meanings of the concepts and argues that the key weakness of current understandings is their failure to adequately engage with social justice concerns.

The article begins by introducing some caveats to discuss the notions of educational inclusion and exclusion. First, the usage of these concepts comes with the strong normative stance that inclusion is good and exclusion is bad. Second, inclusion operates on the principle of "normalisation", in which groups are defined in their "ideal" forms, and relative to others. As a consequence, such groups need to be targeted for special inclusive measures which would overcome their exclusion.

A review of the diverse meanings of inclusion and exclusion finds that social inclusion of some is supposed to imply exclusion of others, but it is too simplistic. It does not explain the fact that citizens may consciously choose to exclude themselves from certain processes. Nor does it explain who determines the status of the included and the excluded, the processes that lead to this, nor how discourses of inclusion and exclusion obscure agendas of cooperation and control. Instead, the following questions should be asked: does the inclusion of citizens in programmes lead to their incorporation in ways that subject them to the status quo? Do inclusion programmes help students shape their educational contexts so that these contexts are enriched by new perspectives? The “one size fits all” approach assumes that social inequality can be overcome by providing the same opportunities for all citizens. But as not all citizens are found in the same societal positions, inequalities cannot be lumped together so that one prescription is assumed to cure all problems. Thus, inclusive education does not guarantee an unproblematic integration of students.

In an ideal situation, educational inclusion should challenge normative understandings of what groups are and how they are constituted, and thereby bring about fundamental change and transformation. The complex interrelationship of race, class, gender and the like, means that programmes promoting equality often focus on one of these at the expense of the others and so lose the thread connecting the others. An interlocking framework recognises the complex ways in which these categories intersect and interrelate to produce unique individual and group experiences.

Regarding public policy, the following four dominant discourses are identified:

- *Rights and ethics discourse*: this view emphasises the need for “well-resourced” countries to redistribute resources globally so that those in the “developing” world are able to meet the basic rights of their citizens.
- *Efficacy discourse*: this argues that inclusive schools are more cost-efficient than segregated special schools.
- *Political discourse*: in this discourse, groups argue for their political rights by organising politically to advocate and lobby for their special interests, and to secure a greater share of resources and representation.
- *Pragmatic discourse*: the belief that inclusive schools possess characteristics which distinguish them from non-inclusive schools.

Some policy considerations are also noted:

- Is the educational policy feasible and implementable at the national, regional and institutional level?
- It ought to be part and parcel of broader educational policy, a policy broad enough to address the multidimensional nature of educational exclusion.
- It should be democratic in nature, which implies democratic representation and real consideration of what conflicting issues may be present and may arise.

- It should address the culture of domination and the patterns of social and structural behaviour that generate domination.
- It should have flexibility and adaptability with regards to regional and local conditions, and the ongoing mechanism of reflexivity and innovation.

Schwalbe, M., Godwin, S., Holden, D., Schrock, D., Thompson, S. and Wolkomir, M., 2000, 'Generic processes in the reproduction of inequality: an interactionist analysis', *Social Forces*, Vol 79 No 2: 419–52

What kind of inequalities exist? How large are these inequalities? How are these inequalities created and reproduced? A great deal has been studied about patterns of resource distribution, political power and status issues relating to the first two questions. Yet, the authors argue that the third question needs to be explored to understand interactive processes that move beyond the study of inequality as the study of its measurable extent, degree and consequences.

A theory of generic processes is derived through which inequality is reproduced. Four major processes are identified and explored: othering, subordinate adaptation, boundary maintenance and emotional management.

Othering: refers to the process whereby a dominant group defines into existence an inferior group. This entails the invention of categories and ideas about what marks people as belonging to these categories.

- *Oppressive othering*: when one group seeks advantage by defining another group as morally and/or intellectually inferior.
- *Creating powerful virtual selves*: to induce a feeling of trust, awe and/or fear to legitimate inequality and deter dissent, no matter the reality.
- *Defensive othering among subordinates*: done by seekers of dominant group status or those deflecting stigma, this is a reaction to an oppressive identity already imposed by a dominant group.

Subordinate adaptation: the strategies that people use to cope with the deprivations of subordinate status. These can have dual consequences, challenging some inequalities and reproducing others.

- *Trading power for patronage*: accepting subordinate status while seeking to derive compensatory benefits from relationships with dominant group members. This can also entail legitimating inequality.
- *Forming alternative subcultures*: this can be individual or collective, the latter involving the creation of alternative signs of status which tend to echo the dominant culture.

- *Hustling or dropping out*: hustling implies the acceptance of conventional goals while working at the margins to create a niche. Dropping out is a response to inequality and is simply the withdrawal of participation.

Boundary maintenance: preserving the boundaries between dominant and subordinate groups.

- *Transmitting cultural capital*: without the right cultural capital one cannot make the right connections, interact competently or be taken seriously in certain situations. Schools and the workplace are central to this.
- *Controlling network access*: the right credentials are required for access to networks.
- *The threat and use of violence*: when people get ‘out of place’ as inequalities become too much to bear.

Emotional management: feelings are an essential part of maintaining ordered social relations. As sustaining a system of inequality can generate destabilising feelings of anger, resentment, sympathy and despair, emotions need to be managed. Thus, inequality is reproduced subtly by symbolic and material culture.

- *Regulating discourse*: this is to impose a set of formal or informal rules about what can be said, how it can be said, and who can say what to whom.
- *Conditioning emotional subjectivity*: as people’s feelings towards things depend on the meanings they learn to give those things.
- *Scripting mass events*: finding ways to reaffirm the desired conditioning and even induce desired emotions in masses of people.

Arguing for the conception of the reproduction of inequality in terms of these generic processes can resolve theoretical problems concerning the connection between local action and extralocal inequalities, and concerning the nature of inequality itself. It also gives rise to a number of questions for future research. Under what conditions do these processes arise? How are the processes related? What are the processes through which oppression and exploitation are resisted? How are the symbolic resources that sustain these processes jointly created? How do people create and reproduce inequalities? And what role, if any, do race, class and gender play?

Scott, J., 1997, ‘The Infrapolitics of Subordinate Groups’, in M. Rahnema and V. Bawtree (eds), *The Post-Development Reader*, London: Zed Books

This chapter approaches the study of power relations from the author’s viewpoint that the powerless often have to adopt a strategic pose in the presence of the powerful. For this reason a comparison is made between the “hidden transcript” through which subordinate groups express a critique of the powerful, and

the “public transcript” of the powerful, dominant forces in society. Such comparisons can lead to new ways of understanding resistance to domination.

The chapter begins by questioning the notion that the offstage discourse of power is either empty posturing or a substitute for real resistance. After noting some of the logical difficulties with this line of reasoning, Scott tries to show how material and symbolic resistance are part of the same set of mutually sustaining practices. This emphasises that the relationship between dominant elites and subalterns is very much of a material struggle in which both sides are continually probing for weaknesses and exploiting small advantages. Finally, it is shown how each realm of open resistance to domination is shadowed by similar strategic goals but with a lower profile, better adapted to resisting an opponent who could probably win an open contest.

Overall, infrapolitics, it is argued, is real politics. It is where real ground is lost and gained, where resistant subcultures are created, where counter-hegemonic discourse is elaborated. It is always testing the boundaries of what is permissible, and is the building block for the more elaborate institutionalised political action that could not exist without it.

Sen, A., 1992, *Inequality Reexamined*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press

The central question in the analysis and assessment of equality is: ‘equality of what?’ Sen argues that a common characteristic of approaches to the ethics of social arrangements is to want equality of something. This can include demand for equal incomes, equal welfare or equal weights on the utilities of all. Asking ‘equality of what?’ suggests seeing disputes between different schools of thought in terms of the type of equality demanded. It serves as a basis of classifying different ethical theories of social arrangements.

From this starting point, Sen concentrates on our capability to achieve valuable functionings that make up our lives, and more generally our freedom to promote objectives we have reasons to value. Two concepts of freedom are developed: “agency freedom”, which is the freedom to bring about the achievement of one’s values; and “well-being freedom”, which is freedom to achieve those things that are constitutive of one’s own well-being. Given that there will be inequality in agency freedom, the discussion of equality centres on well-being freedom.

The notion of capability is then considered and contrasted with the notion of primary good. Capability centres on doing and being, that is, freedom to achieve valuable functioning. The relevant functionings can vary from such elementary things as being adequately nourished, and being in good health to more complex achievements such as being happy and having self-respect. The well-being of a person must be dependent on the nature of his or her being, or functioning. Insofar as functionings are constitutive of well-being, capability represents a person’s freedom to achieve well-being. Achievement is seen as different from capability and the difference can be what we manage to achieve, and capability is

more like freedom, the real opportunity that we have to accomplish what we value. Capability to achieve functionings will constitute a person's freedom.

Once it becomes accepted that the capability space in which equality is a worthy goal to pursue, it is argued that certain inequalities should not be allowed to persist. This is done through an examination of the implications of this approach for assessing freedom and advantage, for theories of justice, for the assessment of poverty in both rich and poor countries, and for analysing inequalities associated with categories such as class, gender and other groups.

**Smouts, M., 1995, 'International organisations and inequality among states',
International Social Science Journal, No 144: 229–60**

This article looks at the inequality between states in the international system since the Second World War and the role of international organisations, particularly the UN, during this period. Smouts begins by noting two waves of large-scale emergence of new states during this period, namely, as a result of decolonisation and the collapse of the Soviet bloc. Whilst the facilitation of these politically fragile and economically weak entities was aided by the UN, new states have gained only a partial foothold in the international networks. The remainder of the article considers the conditions that have influenced the situation of developing country states and their relationship with developed states.

First the notion of "sovereign equality" is considered. Disparaging the realist postulation that all states are the same and perform the same functions, only with different means at their disposal, it is argued that no account is taken of the dynamics of non-western societies where the "imported" state model did not work, or turned out to be very different to how it is understood in the West. In addition, in many countries the state is proving unable to withstand the demands of groups seeking to brandish their differences. Inequality among states lies, then, not only in differences in tangible and intangible resources, but also in the nature of relations between the state and the people, in the varying gap between societies and the official machinery that is supposed to defend their interests on the international scene.

From this standpoint, the main concern of the paper is to determine how multilateral cooperation can establish a minimum level of regulation within a disparate configuration. From a legal point of view, the UN system strictly observes the principle of sovereign equality. During the 1960s, the majority of member states tried to go beyond its narrow legal meaning and use it to make up for disadvantages due to geography or history. One example is the Group of 77, supported by UNCTAD, which met with favourable response on the part of northern elites. However, this, and other fora, were undermined by the debt crisis which put an end to Third World solidarity, the fall from favour of dependency theories, and the desire to see a reduced role played by the state. In effect, development took a back seat to humanitarian activities, human rights and the environment.

The last area considered by Smouts is the marginalisation of the UN system. This can be seen in the fact that financial and commercial concerns have ousted all other considerations and the place for effective bargaining has moved. All fora in which countries from the South could speak with a collective voice have been discredited. This can be seen in the large-scale offensive against UNESCO for raising the issue of inequality among states, threats made against the World Health Organisation and the Food and Agriculture Organisation, and UNCTAD being effectively replaced as a site for negotiation by the World Trade Organisation. Hence, issues of importance are not raised at the UN but elsewhere. Furthermore, since the end of the cold war, with the exception of Cuba and North Korea, no state has objected to the ideology of a market economy, and especially not China.

In conclusion, despite the profusion of international institutions and the firmly established network for cooperation and co-ordination that exist in the West, multilateralism is quite unsuccessful. The countries of eastern Europe and the South no longer have access to a forum where they might have a say in the agenda, take part in any major decisions, or offer alternative solutions to the pursuit of free trade and unbridled capitalism. In these circumstances it is perceived that these countries have no reason to trust the multilateral system or find it legitimate.

Stewart, F., 2002, 'Horizontal inequalities: a neglected dimension of development', *QEH Working Paper 81*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Inequalities between culturally formed groups, "horizontal inequalities", are seen as a neglected but important part of development. In this paper, Stewart seeks to disrupt the persistence of development practices that place individuals at the centre of concern for analysis and policy, and argues why groups are important for individual welfare and social stability.

Regarding social stability, what differentiates the violent from the peaceful is the existence of severe inequalities between culturally defined groups. Unequal access to political/economic/social resources by different cultural groups can reduce the welfare of the individuals in the losing groups over and above what their individual position would merit, because their self-esteem is bound up with the progress of the group.

Two reasons are given for the importance of assessing group well-being. First, instrumental reasons: if group inequality persists then individuals within the depressed group may be handicapped and therefore not make the contribution to their own and society's prosperity that they might have. Second, direct welfare: what happens to the group to which an individual belongs may affect that person's welfare directly, that is, the individual depends not just on a person's circumstances but the prestige and well-being of the group with which they identify.

So, group membership is an intrinsic part of human life. It has a fundamental influence on our identities, behaviour, on how we treat others, and on well-being. Nine case studies are considered in which

horizontal inequalities have led to a range of political disturbances. In measuring these some points are made: a descriptive measure rather than an evaluative one is required; as horizontal inequalities are multidimensional the issue of aggregation arises; the number and size of groups in a society may have implications for the impact of group differences; perceptions are also relevant to outcomes.

Some conclusions from the case studies are that:

- Horizontal inequality is an important dimension of well-being, and it has economic and political consequences which can be highly damaging to development.
- On the data side, information needs to be collected by cultural categories.
- Large policies are required to correct horizontal inequalities.
- On the economic side, such policies involve a range of actions from public investments, public sector employment policies, policies towards land reform.
- On the political side, there is a need for inclusivity.

Sweetman, C., 1994, 'North–South cooperation', *Oxfam Focus on Gender*, Vol 2 No 3

This issue of *Focus on Gender* looks at the process of promoting cooperation between South, East and North towards achieving gender equity in development. The overarching issues it addresses are the differences between women, the consequences of unequal power relations for North–South alliances, and which women are represented.

North–South cooperation is focused upon as the process of building alliances for change demands paying attention to the differences that exist between women, and not simply to the similarities between women. It recognises that women's differences are constructed not only through their different experience as individuals depending on differences in class, race and ethnicity, but upon the different economic and political factors which affect life in each region of the world.

Applying a gender analysis to the issue of North–South cooperation exposes the unequal power relations between funding agencies and their southern partners. This calls into question what is meant by partnership. Women's linking initiatives, in common with all North–South development interventions, depend on funding from the North, yet how can true North–South co-operation happen in this atmosphere of unequal power? In the example of Oxfam's Women's Linking Project (WLP) southern women stressed that northern agencies must acknowledge the obstacles which hamper southern women from benefiting from development initiatives. This would mean the North accepting southern women's own analysis of situations. In this way North–South cooperation can strengthen women in each society to challenge opposition from their own men.

Examining cooperation and partnership between regions of the world also requires assessing who represents who in those regions. Which women are actually brought together in linking initiatives? Cooperation and linking are needed between all constituencies concerned in promoting empowerment of women, yet in reality, the gender and development establishment in the North and South is staffed by middle- and upper-class women. Hence, there needs to be more work done to develop ways in which grassroots women can represent themselves.

The essays presented in this volume address and elaborate on these issues through the areas of making global links between women and poverty; linking for solidarity; listening to the South; issues around women, participation and international fora; working with existing partners; and feminising work culture.

Tilly, C., 1998, *Durable Inequality*, Berkeley: University of California Press

Tilly, in what has been described as a manifesto, presents an approach to the study of persistent social inequality. The main aim of the book is to investigate how long-lasting, systematic inequalities in life chances arise, and in what ways they come to distinguish members of different socially defined categories of persons. This is achieved through a methodology of exploring representative paired and unequal categories, such as male/female, black/white and citizen/non-citizen, in which Tilly argues that the basic causes of these and similar inequalities greatly resemble one another. This is in contrast to contemporary analyses that explain inequality case by case, rather than as a process.

A further dimension of the analysis concerns categorical distinctions which arise and offer solutions to pressing organisational problems. In all types of organisations, households and governments alike, the resulting relationship of inequality persists because parties on both sides of the categorical divide come to depend on that solution, despite its drawbacks. Following on from this, the social mechanisms that create and maintain paired and unequal categories are explored through a number of strategies: exploitation, opportunity hoarding, emulation and adaptation. Finally, possible territories for future relational study of durable inequality are mapped out.

Velaskar, P., 1998, 'Ideology, Education and the Political Struggle for Liberation: Change and Challenge among the Dalits of Maharashtra', in S. Shukla and R. Kaul (eds), *Education, Development and Under-Development*, New Delhi: Thousand Oaks; London: Sage Publications

This article looks at the significance of education as an agent of social change in the context of the *dalit* struggle against caste inequality and untouchability. Focusing on the libratory ideology and education of the Mahar subcaste of Maharashtra, their educational and social transformation is assessed since conversion to Buddhism 50 years ago.

Dalits who have entered the education system suffer from “backwardness” in terms of the quality and quantity of education they receive. While the traditional linkage between caste, education and occupation has been breaking down, status change for *dalits* has largely transformed them from menial, caste-imposed occupations to low-paid, low skilled jobs in modern occupational structures.

An historical overview of the impact of the colonial period reveals that the spread of education among low-caste masses resulted mostly out of political struggle waged by the low castes. The militant actions of the figures Phule and Ambedkar constitute milestones in this struggle. In this period education became the avenue of advance and awakening as well as the site of conflict and struggle against caste, imperialist and nationalist-elite forces.

In the post-colonial situation education has played a key role in emancipatory struggles of the “neo-Buddhists” of Maharashtra. The acquisition of education, in particular higher education, has resulted in positive social, political and cultural changes. This has been used by *dalits* to break the exclusive barriers of the elite occupational domains and to challenge the hegemony of upper castes. Education has also helped the attainment of equal opportunities and equal rights, and *dalit* educational institutions have played key roles in the processes of cultural challenge and cultural regeneration, and have given rise to a new cultural politics of difference. These conditions have helped spawn strong protest movements, such as the Dalit Sahitya and Dalit Panthers, a wave of *dalit* literature and many protest phenomena.

Difficulties remain given continued unequal social relations and social behaviour of upper-caste staff and students which reinforce and sustain perceptions of inferiority among the *dalit* students. There has even been the creation of new, ‘rational’, stigmatising identities of *dalits*, which play out casteism in verbal and non-verbal behaviour and attitudes of non-*dalits*. To address these challenges requires creative political and cultural responses from *dalits*, in which education can play a significant role.

Wade, P., 1997, *Race and Ethnicity in Latin America*, London: Pluto Press

This volume tackles changing perspectives on race and ethnicity in Latin America, tracing similarities and differences in the way populations have been seen by academics and national elites. The focus of this book is indigenous peoples and the descendants of African slaves, who have formed organisations and social movements that call for a variety of reforms including land rights, political rights, cultural autonomy, and even the right to life itself.

The different ways these issues have been understood historically is examined, giving a critical overview of the debates about the significance of racial and ethnic identities and how to analyse them. This facilitates a greater understanding of practical issues. It puts into context the academic study of black and indigenous peoples in a wider framework of how these people have been understood by their observers, masters, rulers, missionaries and self-proclaimed protectors, as well as how they have understood themselves.

Beginning with an analysis of historical debates about the emergence of mixed societies in the colonial and republican era, the author then traces theoretical understandings of race and ethnicity from early functional approaches, through Marxist and interactionist perspectives to more recent concerns with the politics of culture and identity in nation states that exist in increasingly globalised networks. Brief contrasts are made with North American and Caribbean contexts. Lastly, race and ethnicity as analytical concepts are re-examined in order to demonstrate their embeddedness in the history of western social science and to assess their continuing usefulness in a world which is increasingly divided by inequalities of power.

White, S., 2002, 'Thinking race, thinking development', *Third World Quarterly*, Vol 23 No 3

This paper presents a challenge to the dominant “colour-blind” stance of development, in which there is virtually no analysis of development institutions by race, few programmes on anti-racism or racism awareness training, or analysis of differential outcomes of development policies by race. Arguing that the silence on race is a determining silence, in that it masks its centrality to the development project, White makes the case that the politics of race in development deserves consideration and suggests some tools for doing this.

This is carried out by means of reflections on personal experience; an exercise in defining development to overcome ambiguities in the discipline; exploring what is meant by race and some key conceptual tools for investigating its significance; and considering how these tools may be applied in the context of development.

Through an exploration of many of the continuities with colonial formations, three critical dimensions of development are identified. The first is its materiality: the construction of roads, irrigation projects, schools and hospitals, etc. It is about the means to achieve these: bureaucracies, corporations, businesses and NGOs; and through these means the extension of markets and state structures, environmental degradation, the expansion of science and technology, the movement of populations, and the transformation of the means of production. The second critical component of development comprises the techniques of transformation: the institutions, and the techniques and processes by which change is to be brought about, of which the central tool is the development plan. The third characteristic of colonialism was the disassociation of colonised societies from their own histories and reintegration within the western economy and the master narrative. To achieve this it was necessary to isolate a sector of reality, to identify certain characteristics and processes proper to it, to make its features notable, and to account for them according to certain explanatory schemes. These processes, far from being neutral, embody a particular understanding of the way the world is, and actively constitute the world in their own image.

Following on from this, three positions are set out which express basic paradigms in understanding race. The conservative position is a robust assertion of difference which sees it as essential. The liberal position seeks to deny difference and claims that it is 'colour-blind'. The structuralist position asserts difference but from the standpoint of the radical self-assertion of the marginalised, which disrupts the conventional associations and reclaims a stigmatised status. These paradigms illustrate the contested meaning of race, and that understandings of race are irreducibly political, as arise from different political positions and are often used to directly motivate towards particular distributive outcomes.

These points offer guidelines for the study of race in development.

- One should expect to find diverse and contested meanings of race. Paradigms of race do not exist in isolation from one another, but rather are part of a common fund from which present meanings are drawn.
- The explicit and intentional notion of "racial project" seems difficult to reconcile with the "colour-blind" character of development. However, colour-blindness is but one of the approaches to race.
- The process of racial formation is embedded and intricately linked with other dimensions of social difference such as gender, class and age.

Finally, two qualifications are made which serve as cautions to this research: the danger of essentialism, which the sensitivity of race makes it vital to avoid; and that the critical issues in development remain power and poverty, with the lens of race, gender and the like providing particular approaches to these.

Wood, G., 2003, 'Staying secure, staying poor: the "Faustian bargain"', *World Development*, Vol 31 No 3: 455–71

This article argues that the determining condition for poor people is uncertainty. It attempts to calibrate the western origins of social policy to the fledgling capitalisms and predatory states of post-colonial economies through engagement with the literature on vulnerability, livelihoods, poverty and social development.

It is proposed that some societies perform better than others in mitigating this uncertainty, and in such societies it is observed welfare regimes which reduce the uncertainties of the market to provide for all citizens minimum conditions for reproduction. However, such societies are in a minority, and elsewhere, destructive uncertainty is more pervasive. Most governments are seen to fail to enable a state of secure, sustained, non-vulnerability as they are implicated by reproducing the social, political and economic conditions which create the uncertainty and insecurity barriers to that movement. Under these conditions, the poor have less control over relationships and events around them, obliging them to live more in the present and to discount the future.

The paper then presents an analysis of such insecurity, represented as a trade-off between the freedom to act independently in the pursuit of improved livelihoods and the necessity of dependent security, drawing from extensive ethnographic studies carried out in rural south Asia over a period of three decades.

It becomes clear from these encounters that poor people are dominated by dysfunctional time preference behaviour, in which the pursuit of immediately needed security places them in relationships and structures which then displace the longer-term prospects of a sustained improvement in livelihoods. Hence, risk management in the present involves loyalty to institutions and organisations that presently work and deliver livelihoods, whatever the longer-term cost. Strategic preparation for the future, in terms of personal investment and securing rights backed up by correlative duties, is continuously postponed for survival and security in the present: this is what is meant by the Faustian bargain.