



## A Sociology of Modelling and the Politics of Empowerment

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## A sociology of modelling and the politics of empowerment\*

### ABSTRACT

Sociology suffers from a myopic focus on change as fashioned by tests of strength between interests that are settled in favour of the most powerful. A contrary view is that more of the variation in institutional form may be accounted for by configurations of modelling than configurations of power. Yet modelling is structured: the periphery models the core more than the core models the periphery in the world system; subordinates model superordinates more than the reverse. Even so, in the political realm 'model mongering' is a more useful technique for the powerless than the powerful. Model mongers float a variety of models until they find one that catches opponents off balance through striking a resonant appeal to the sense of identity of a people. Because the model frames the terms of the debate, clever model mongering can deliver the weak a decisive advantage over the strong. In this sense, the article supplies a concrete analysis of why we should reject what Hindess calls a capacity-outcome model of how struggles are decided – an analysis that enables one to read off the likely outcome of struggles from a knowledge of the resources backing competing interests. A dialectics of modelling is one key to understanding the major institutional changes that sweep the modern world.

### INTRODUCTION

Why was there a revolution in Rumania in 1989? Theories of revolution can supply a variety of plausible and implausible answers to that question.<sup>1</sup> An answer I wish to explore is that one reason the revolution occurred was because the Rumanian people (and the Rumanian military) activated social movements modelled on movements they perceived to have achieved at least partial success in Poland, then China, then Hungary, then East Germany, then Czechoslovakia, then Bulgaria. Later Albania, various Soviet Republics and

then the Soviet Union itself followed. In turn, the democratic movements in each of these other countries used as models the Communist nations that had turned away from Communist orthodoxy before their turn arrived. Structural explanations may have less appeal than an action explanation based on modelling because these countries faced dramatically different structural conditions in 1989 – some were more oppressive Communist regimes than others, some were more economically successful than others, some were small states while China and Russia were vast, some more ethnically fractured than others, some had strong political leaders, some weak, some of the leaders were supporting a gradual evolution toward a market economy, others were communist hard-liners. After the event we can construct some appealing theories of why the collapse of communist governments was inevitable, but the special appeal of a modelling theory is that it explains why the tumult of so many different regimes was almost simultaneous.

Consider the most important institutions of my own country, Australia – the parliament, the cabinet, the High Court, the army, navy and air force. How did those institutions come to be exactly the way they are? The parliaments and cabinets (state and federal) are modelled on Westminster. While they have been adapted to local conditions in many important ways, not only the core characteristics of the institutions but also a great deal of the detail (even the seating arrangements) replicate the model faithfully. Australia's High Court was very substantially modelled during our Federal (constitutional) Conventions in the 1890s upon the US Supreme Court (Galligan 1987). It is not coincidental that Australia has separate institutions of the army, navy and air-force with separate traditions comparable to those of Britain, even with configurations of hardware that look much the same as we see in the British or American defence forces. The reason is that even though what is needed to defend the sparsely populated continent of Australia is rather different from the defence needs of Britain or the US, we, perhaps reasonably, have sought to model past or present super-powers who can demonstrate a track-record of military accomplishment. Moreover, as I shall argue below, Australia cannot afford to reinvent the wheel or the tank. At an earlier point of history, the English in turn modelled the configuration of their defence from other powers which were regarded as more successful in this respect. The English modelled the modern concept of the navy, for example, from the Spanish and Portuguese (Trevelyan 1985).

The contention of this paper is that there is a worldwide patterning of major institutions and a recurrent dynamic of institutional change that can be understood by modelling the process of modelling. While an objective is to suggest that modelling has explanatory power across the range of matters that are important in social life, it will be seen as

an unproductive enterprise to seek to prove that modelling has more power than structural explanation. What I will find interesting about a sociology of modelling is its connection to emancipatory politics. The sociology of modelling certainly shows that structural explanation will often be wrong because the world can also be understood through the dynamics of modelling. But the important thing is that it also shows how strategic use of processes of modelling can be the best hope for the structurally weak to defeat the strong.

Marx had an explanation of the world that motivated an emancipatory politics. Unfortunately, the historical explanation turned out to be flawed and the emancipatory politics enslaved citizens with a new set of structures. This disaster motivates an attempt to forge an explanation-emancipation interface that starts with micro-process rather than macro-structure. Along the way, using the tools of modelling to effect change from below comes to grips with the brute force of structures of power. Yet in the end, there is no new set of structures to be got right. There is only continuous struggle because new structures enable new dominations. The most useful sort of emancipatory politics is therefore not myopically structural; it illuminates the *processes* of struggle available to whoever are the losers from the structures prevailing at any point in history. Conceptual tools to analyse processes of modelling become the crucial resources for emancipation.

A sociology that explains why those with the guns and the money win most of the time is hardly an accomplishment. Explaining their defeats is the challenge. Marx was on a fruitful track with the idea of contradiction. Where he took a wrong turn was with a conception of contradiction that was structurally determinate. I shall attempt to show that a fertile conception of contradiction is one that is processual and imagined rather than structural and determinate. The following ten propositions will be advanced toward an explanation of when the weak defeat the strong.

1. A consequence of domination is reaction formation. Those imputed low status by a dominant power can choose to solve their status problem by creating new status systems that invert the hegemonic status system. An inverted status system guarantees success to those who are failures under the hegemonic status system (e.g. inversion of the housewifely virtues by 1960s women's liberationists with career aspirations).
2. Model missionaries popularize the oppositional models that are the product of such reaction formation (e.g. 1970s feminist writers such as Greer, Millett and Oakley).
3. When model missionaries get a toehold, in the world capitalist market there are model mercenaries whose market niche involves specializing in turning such toeholds into footholds

(e.g. publishers promote women's magazines with a feminist orientation).

4. The work of model missionaries and model mercenaries does little more than give oppositional groups a start. The crucial step to empowerment is moving into institutional politics by model mongering. Model mongers experimentally float many oppositional models, rather than commit resources to a single preferred model (e.g. the work of Australian femocrats, hawking feminist models around various branches of the Australian bureaucracy (Yeatman 1990)). Dominant groups generally find it unwise to model monger. Rather they commit their resources to defending the extant models that confer their privilege. In doing this, the dominant group hands to its opposition the capacity to set the framework for debates. Because the model has a power that is independent of the interests that advocate it, a weak interest group with a strong model can defeat a strong interest group.
5. Model mongering is a key to the powerless acquiring a strategic advantage over the powerful because persistent application of the strategy eventually draws out contradictions in the identities propagated by dominant models (e.g. contradictions between the position of women and a national identity valuing equality of opportunity).
6. Because modelling is not only about pursuing interests, but also about sustaining identities, model mongers prevail by pulling on identity crises that prise open cracks in hegemonic structures (e.g. identity crises among nations that claim to be democracies cause a succession of nations to give women the vote).
7. Model mongers often prevail when they find a model miser or a model modernizer who needs a pre-packed quick fix to an institutional problem (e.g. a political candidate, lagging with female voters, in the market for a 'bold policy' to project an image of commitment to women's rights).
8. Model mongers succeed when they experiment with insurgent models until they strike one that poses an insoluble collective action problem for the dominant group. Every actor in the dominant group may have an interest in defeating the insurgent model. But each actor may also have an interest in free-riding on the resistance of others while parleying support from the opposition group, privately succumbing to their demands (e.g. the businessman urges others to resist affirmative action laws, but takes the heat off his firm by succumbing to demands for in-house reforms.)
9. Guns, money and institutional control constitute the self-efficacy of the powerful. For the powerless, the self-efficacy that

enables continued struggle against overwhelming odds comes from the inspiration of models of successful struggle from other places and times (e.g. the suffragettes).

10. Self-efficacy that sustains strategic model mongering over an extended period of human history is more important than the capacity and resources available to the weak in their struggles against the strong.

These propositions serve to signpost where we are headed. But because my aspiration is for processual understanding, they only illuminate when they can be linked together into a processual explanation. Figure I and the accompanying text in Part IV are an illustration of how this might be done. Before we can proceed to imagine processes of social change, however, we must lay some foundations for a sociology of modelling in the next part of the paper. In the first section of Part II, we discuss what modelling is. A provocative modelling formulation is advanced that is then distinguished from diffusionism as it has traditionally been studied in sociology. Next, a more conciliatory formulation is advocated that incorporates structural explanation. The final section of Part II summarizes what we know about the patterning of diffusion in the world system.

On these foundations, Part III then seeks to explain the diffusion of models using new tools for diagnosing the process. The key conceptual tool for comprehending the possibility of a politics of empowerment is the process of model mongering. Part IV illustrates how the micro-process tools of Part III can be combined to explain a transformation of the world system that involves weaker actors prevailing over stronger ones.

## II. FOUNDATIONS FOR A THEORY OF MODELLING

### *What is Modelling?*

Modelling is conceptualized here as more than mere imitation – where imitation means one actor matching the actions of another, usually close in time. For Bandura (1986), the leading psychological theorist of the subject, modelling means observational learning with a symbolic content, not just the simple response mimicry implied by the term imitation. Modelling is based on conceptions of action portrayed in words and images. As the concept psychologists use, modelling has the appeal of interdisciplinary comity that is lacking in more popular sociological formulations, such as ‘diffusion of innovation’, which will be discussed below.

The nice thing about modelling is that it lends itself to a generality of

abstraction that makes it a useful concept for psychologists, sociologists and for political scientists who study international relations. It has an analytical multiplexity that facilitates micro-macro synthesis. When the fashion model parades, we say she is modelling, and when the observer copies her, we say she is modelling the model, and we call the whole pattern of fashion diffusion of which this is a part, modelling. This is a good usage because the fact of the process is that the woman who goes to fashion parades herself becomes a model for others. Modelling is therefore defined as action(s) that constitute a process of displaying, symbolically interpreting and copying conceptions of action (and this process itself). A model is a conception of action that is put on display during such a process of modelling. A model is that which is displayed, symbolically interpreted and copied.

Models as symbolically interpreted by those who 'invent', 'adapt' and 'copy' them is foundational to my analysis. However, it is not my purpose to make a contribution to the understanding of these foundations; it is to build on them. Those interested already have access to rich literatures on these micro foundations from both psychological work in the social cognitive tradition (Bandura 1986) and the sociological literature in the symbolic interaction tradition (Mead 1950; Burke 1945; Duncan 1969; Turner 1974). That foundation is of a world of humanly articulated futures formulated from reflection on the past enactments of others. Knowing the structural facts about the past and present will make for poor prediction unless we also discover the models that key actors have constructed of a future toward which they wish to move

### *A provocative formulation*

A structural problem of social science is that as in most other important institutions, there is a hegemony of thinkers from countries that see themselves as model-builders rather than model-copiers. But how could that be other than a good sort of hegemony? The problem is that the model-builder bias drives sociology to a narrow focus on social change as fashioned out of tests of strength between constituencies who struggle to build particular institutions and opposing constituencies who seek to tear them down or build other institutions. We have a sociology of wheel invention fashioned in cultures with inventive identities and an impoverished sociology of wheel copying. It is therefore a science particularly poorly adapted to social explanation outside the North Atlantic powers. But I shall also argue that there are limitations even within the North Atlantic nations because the identity that social scientists share as citizens of countries which are creators of institutions is based on a certain degree of delusion.

A provocative statement of the modelling thesis is that more of the variance in culture and institutional structure is explained by patterns of modelling than by configurations of interests and their relative

power. The clash of interests is not only quantitatively less important as an explanation, it is causally secondary: interests are constituted in response to received models; they do not pre-exist institutions that they shape *ab initio*. The idea of the working class and its organization through unions and socialist parties, the idea of women as an interest and of feminist politics, have been crucial in Australian history. Yet these were not ways of thinking about interest politics that were structurally inevitable in Australia; they were interest group concepts modelled from the North Atlantic powers precisely at those points in history when these models became influential there, not at some later point when Australia's structural conditions reached alignment with those in the North. Received models set the framework for the debate more often than creative institutional design forged by pre-existing interests. It is hard for interest groups to break free of the frameworks imposed by received models.

Hence, in Australia we have a law criminalizing rape not because of any titanic struggle between a women's movement (or some other interest) which demanded rape laws and others who resisted it; rather, we acquired them without debate from British criminal law. This having occurred, it is now near impossible for any interest group with any amount of political power to argue for a way of dealing with rape that disposes of the criminal law model in favour of a radically different strategy.

It also follows from this formulation that relatively powerless groups can have influence disproportionate to their resources if they are skilled at putting models on the political agenda in the terms of which more powerful groups are forced to react. Indeed, I will argue that the best way for politically weak groups to be powerful is to model monger, and that when they do it well, they can be quite powerful.

### *Diffusionism in the History of Sociology*

Before moving to a more conciliatory formulation of the modelling thesis, comment is required on why extant sociologies of modelling have been theoretically marginalized. After some nineteenth-century skirmishes between structuralists and diffusionists, the theoretical zenith of diffusionism in sociology was the publication of Gabriel Tarde's (1903), *The Laws of Imitation*. Tarde introduced the seminal idea of opinion leaders and the S-shaped curve for the diffusion of innovations (slow at first, then a rush of imitation followed by tapering off). There were also vigorous German-Austrian and British schools of diffusionism in anthropology, though, as Rogers and Shoemaker (1971: 48) concluded twenty years ago, 'neither today has much of a following'.

Empirical research on the diffusion of innovation, however, has continued on a massive scale – over 1,200 published studies by 1983



(for post-1983 studies, see Musman and Kennedy 1989). This work has been theoretically marginalized in sociology, however, because it tended to ignore the modelling of major institutions. Studies of states modelling market or democratic institutions have not been significant in the literature. This is hardly surprising since markets and democratic institutions are not new ideas; they do not sit comfortably under the rubric of diffusion of 'innovations'. The empirical studies that have dominated this literature have been in the rural sociology tradition (farmers adopting improved strains of seed) and in marketing (getting consumers to model themselves on the beautiful people in the advertisement), though there have also been important studies in educational and medical sociology (e. g. Coleman *et al.* 1966; see Musman and Kennedy 1989).

The theoretical and political impotence of diffusionism in sociology has been connected to this selection of subject matter. For the left academy, the conclusion that structuralism rather than diffusionism held the key to emancipation seemed affirmed by an empirical focus on getting Bangladeshi farmers to join a misconceived green revolution or American housewives to want whiter than white washing. Structural sociology always seemed more theoretically potent because of its connection with allegedly emancipatory praxis, notably Marxism, while diffusionism never offered an emancipatory praxis, its practitioners seeming all too content to accumulate research grants on how to get people to do what elites wanted them to do.

The purpose of this paper is to suggest some small steps toward a more theoretically fruitful diffusionism by: (a) redefining the field as the sociology of modelling instead of the more narrowly conceived notion of diffusion of innovation; (b) emphasizing the modelling of major societal institutions; and (c) giving prominence not just to top-down modelling but to how model mongering from below can be the stuff of empowerment.

### *A Conciliatory Formulation*

To say that we have the rape laws we do because we modelled them is to say something rather banal unless we can also say something about why modelling occurs and how it is patterned. This is a challenge I begin to meet in the next section. The modelling perspective causes the social scientist to look for different kinds of explanations than are sought within the framework of structural explanation.

Consider the explanation of the rise of the welfare state in Britain or Australia. Traditionally in sociology, one would analyse outbreaks of worker unrest, the threat to the legitimacy of the capitalist system posed by unbridled exploitation of workers, the rise of the trade union movement and then the Labour Party, threats to the peaceful reproduction of labour on the demand side for the welfare state, and

rising affluence as making the welfare state fiscally possible on the supply side. The modelling perspective broadens our focus away from these structural variables and toward the process of adapting models. So we will attend to data like the speeches of Churchill, Lloyd-George and Campbell-Bannerman when they argued in favour of the welfare state as a program to replicate Bismarck's strategy of defeating socialism in the nation which was emerging as the great power of the time (see Jones 1951; Semmel 1960)<sup>2</sup>.

It should be clear from this example, however, that the modelling explanation and structural explanation can be complementary rather than contradictory. Both direct our attention to different aspects of an integrated understanding. Indeed, in this conciliatory formulation it becomes possible either for a structural problem to precede a model which is sought for solving it or for a successful model to be grasped first (with structural forces subsequently aligning around different parameters of the model). My critique of sociology is that the quest for structural explanations for the forging of romantic new institutions tends to suppress consideration of whether what is going on is perhaps a more mundane copying of old institutions. The point is now a commonplace in discussions of Japanese economic success: has our search for grand structural explanations for the Japanese economic miracle blinded us to the less romantic explanation that the Japanese have become very good at the art of model mongering? In short, the conciliatory formulation of the modelling perspective is advanced as a corrective, as a particular form of action-oriented complement to structural explanation.

### *The Patterning of Modelling*

A politics of empowerment grounded in a sociology of modelling must begin with a sensitivity to the strong tendencies for structures of power to be both constituted by modelling and constitutive of modelling (see generally Giddens, 1984). In this section, we will argue that the periphery models the core in the world system more than the core models the periphery. This is the most important special case of a general tendency for powerful actors to be modelled more than less powerful ones. The upshot is that modelling constitutes a world system dominated from the core and a tendency toward international homogenization.

Both the psychological literature on modelling and the sociological work on diffusion of innovation overwhelmingly support the hypothesis that modelling is patterned according to configurations of power. Modelling is gendered (Bandura 1986: 92–8). Children model adults more than adults model children. Less powerful people model powerful adults more than the reverse (Lefcowitz, Blake and Mouton

1955; Bussey and Bandura 1984; Rogers and Shoemaker 1971: 354–7, 377). Advertisers exploit these facts by projecting their models as economically successful men or wives and girlfriends of economically successful men. It is likely that we can build on this solid micro-foundation by showing also that struggling organizations model economically successful organizations more than the reverse.

Modelling is patterned in many other respects. Actors are modelled more when they are attractive in ways independent of their wealth or power. When Marilyn Monroe committed suicide, many others followed (Phillips 1974). Modelling is stronger between homophilous actors (Rogers and Shoemaker 1971: 376; Rogers 1983), actors who share similar attributes. A common world view is important here, especially a common political or religious ideology. Islamic states model other Islamic states frequently; Communist states used to model other Communist states; Australian Catholics send priests to Rome, so that when in Australia they can do as the Romans do.

Spatial proximity facilitates modelling (see Walker 1969 for US states; Poel 1976 for Canadian provinces). Papua New Guinea is more likely to model Australia and Indonesia than Canada and Mexico. Modelling is stronger within common language communities: Anglophones model Anglophones; Francophones model Francophones. Important as these other patterns of modelling are, they are becoming progressively less important because of the growth in communications technology,<sup>3</sup> in the sway of English and the growing power of other constitutive features of the world system.

If Australia, in common with other countries of the semi-periphery, has historically derived its models from the USA and Britain, then these countries of the core must be remarkable centres of creativity. But in fact there is surprisingly little creativity anywhere in the world, though there is a lot of worthy synthesizing of pre-existing models. Even intellectual life, which one would expect to be an outlier in the creativity stakes, is essentially about learning how to run standard analytical techniques or learning how to suggest a nifty twist from within a theoretical tradition which is received and constrictive (Kuhn 1970). A good formula for success is to take a model that is standard in one discipline and translate it into the discourse of another; this will sometimes be accepted in the second discipline as an accomplishment of great invention and virtuosity. It is a formula I am attempting to follow with the idea of modelling in this article.<sup>4</sup>

If we seek to find creativity in its most developed form, we look to New York, Paris and London, because even within the First World, modelling is mostly from centre to periphery (Walker 1969: 883; Gray 1973: 1184), and at the micro level earlier adopters of new models have more cosmopolite characteristics than late adopters (Rogers and Shoemaker 1971: 369). So after London claimed to have invented the idea of a professional police force in 1829, it spread throughout

England, and then to every single city in the world. Ideas people in the pre-eminent world cities become extremely powerful in the world system. But in fact these creative power-brokers at the core are not so creative; they are scavengers and adapters of models – models they find in an interaction they see in the street or in a Shakespearian play. While it is true that Louisiana models New York more than the reverse (Walker 1969; Gray 1973), this is partly because New York sucks up the ideas of all the Louisianas and defines them as its own. Model developers, however, mostly have an interest in obscuring their limited originality. They must cultivate a creative mystique. The artistic genius from Greenwich Village will not usually disclose, or even want to admit to himself, that his genius is the art of modelling through with the ideas of peripheral figures – songs of black women from Louisiana. The creative geniuses of our history tend to be plagiarists, clever at appearing not to be so and deluding themselves that they are not so. The ancients, who appear the most original of all scholars, may only appear so because the work of those they imitated has been destroyed (Weinsheimer 1984: 57)

Managing the impression of originality is differentially important between core and periphery. In Taiwan, it will often be strategic to market a model with 'This is how they do it in America', even if this is a misrepresentation. America will be less willing to use or believe the fact that it received a certain idea from Taiwan; it will generally not help in selling to say 'Made in Taiwan'. The creative genius who poached the idea from Taiwan will mostly have a career interest in cooperating with the delusion that this is an American idea.<sup>5</sup> There are many reasons why Americans win more Nobel prizes than scholars from any other country; this is one of them.

This dynamic is clear in sociology itself. Read this journal and you find citations mostly to Americans and Britons; in an Indian journal, citations are mostly to Americans and Indians; in an American journal, citations are mostly to Americans and Americans. Americans are good authorities everywhere, but Australians are mostly only authoritative in Australia, Indians only in India.<sup>6</sup> A recent study of citations in criminology shows this to be the case (Cohn and Farrington 1992).

This is not to deny that reactions in the periphery assert and cultivate local values that are distinctive from those of the centre. Debate over broadcasting and film industry policy in Australia is continually infused with pleas to counter the Americanization of Australian television. Yet the Americanization has already happened in an overwhelming way. The very existence of centrifugal forces as *oppositional* movements confirms the empirical claim that what are being railed against are paradigms from the centre that dominate.

There is competition between greater and lesser powers of the core. European community nations compete with the Americans as a source

of models for the periphery; they want to assert most emphatically that their models are German or Swedish and therefore better than American models. But this competition is only partial. Some Swedish filmmakers will create Swedish films, others will hand over their ideas to Hollywood so they can be sold to the world as American products.

A progressive homogenization of the world is the upshot of this emerging world system (Meyer 1980). The effect of modelling mediated by the internationalization of communications, economic interdependency and transnational corporations that operate as cultural transmission belts into the periphery is accelerating homogenization. There is no prospect of a universal world culture (Featherstone 1990) since local models, as we shall see later, are continually used to resist and feed back into the models from the core. Yet tendencies in the direction of homogenization there are, and if not a global culture, at least global cultures are emerging (Featherstone 1990). Much of the world can see its future in Canada – a nation dominated by US models, yet significantly influenced by other First-World models from Britain and France, and almost totally uninfluenced by indigenous models such as Iroquois, Huron or Algonkin. The patterned nature of modelling is causing the Canadianization of the world.

Much of the patterning of modelling that we observe is sustained as much by fidelity to identities as by economic interests. Sustaining identities – as an Islamic people, a US citizen, a Catholic church – is a central impetus to modelling at the macro, micro and meso levels. Hence, patterns of modelling that superficially seem driven by economic interests may be more profoundly identitive. A wealthy person may wish to model other wealthy people so that her identity is clear as a wealthy person. She drives the car not because she needs a car so big and exquisitely engineered so much as to draw on the signification of its model type. As a sociologist, I read Parsons not to learn, not because I am attracted to his ideas; I read Parsons, even though it is painful, because that is what sociologists do; it is part of managing the impression of being a sociologist to others and to myself.

Human actors seize models that help them to display and discover who they are. The centrality of this struggle for identity becomes most clear when we observe the insecurity or confusion of identity that typifies the immiseration of many we call mentally ill or adolescents (Erikson 1968). Politics is not simply a sequence of power-plays to compete for scarce resources; it is also a 'contest over who we are to become' (Bowles and Gintis 1986: 8), a contest in which identities are both starting points and outcomes of political struggles. In organizational life, identitive power (power derived from symbols of identity or belonging) is often greater than Etzioni's (1965) other two fundamental forms of organizational power – coercive and utilitarian power. The reason, according to Etzioni, is that identitive power is

superior at generating commitment, while utilitarian and particularly coercive power risks greater resistance (Etzioni 1965: 651). Hence, at the levels of individual action, organizational action and political action, we are identity-seeking and identity-projecting animals. This is why modelling at all three levels is about sustaining and adjusting identities.

### III. EXPLAINING THE DIFFUSION OF MODELS

In the last section we showed how models tend to become the intellectual property of the centre. Empirically we can see this in the ownership of patents.<sup>7</sup> Actors in the periphery who crave money or influence for their ideas are often best to hand them over to the core; and the core will often have good reason to claim these as ideas of the core. The result then is a concentration of models at the centre. How then do these models get adopted throughout the periphery? What is the dynamic process that accounts for the static pattern?

In the discussion that follows, I will illustrate diffusion with the dominant case – core-periphery diffusion. But similar processes are at work when diffusion is core-core or periphery-core. To understand these processes, we consider five types of actors – model missionaries, model mercenaries, model mongers, model misers, and model modernizers. The first two, missionaries and mercenaries, play their most important role on the side of the model source; the remainder on the side of the emulator. Just as in the psychological theory of modelling (Bandura 1986), modelling is likely to persist when both she who models and she who is modelled are motivated to support modelling. When the child models the eating habits of the family both the child and the family enjoy more pleasant meal times devoid of flying food and interruption. With modelling of the major institutions in the world system, I will argue that modelling is likely to persist when actors on both sides of the process are motivated to model by economic, political and identitive concerns.

I will now define the five types of actors involved in the diffusion of models and then consider, in turn, how each of them operates.

*Model missionaries* are promoters of models who, motivated by belief in a model sourced in their part of the world, travel abroad to spread the word about the model.

*Model mercenaries* are promoters of models in the world system who commercially exploit models.

*Model mongers* are agents who pursue their political agenda by experimental floats of large numbers of (mostly foreign) models.

*Model misers* are adopters of models who have a preference for copying over innovating because of a desire to economize on model

debugging and to economize on marshalling political support for the idea.

*Model modernizers* are actors who adopt models from the core for reasons of legitimacy – in order to harness the identitive power of being perceived as modern, civilized or progressive.

It is possible, particularly for organizational actors, to satisfy the requirements of more than one type at once – for example, for missionaries to be mercenaries and modernizers as well.

### *Model Missionaries*

In the next section, we emphasize the role of model mercenaries who make money by promoting models. In this section, we emphasize that promoting models is not only about money; it is also about power and affirming a sense of identity. When a student models a scholar's way of thinking, the scholar enjoys savouring her intellectual power, and she enjoys the affirmation that her way of thinking must have value to be voluntarily embraced by others. And because the scholar becomes so persuaded, she is motivated by the belief that she is doing good by passing on her models.

Christian missionaries have travelled for centuries from the First to the Third World to spread the gospel. Missionaries sincerely believe that models dominant in their homeland are superior to those of the lands where they go to spread the word. For true believers in the home country it is an affirmation of the superiority of their ways to see that well-motivated people should devote their lives to spreading these ways in less fortunate lands. Tithing to support missionary work is a potent self-vindication of the superiority of that to which we adhere. More generally, it may be that part of what is necessary to remain a great power is the ability to persuade its own citizens that what is good for the great power is good for the world. Hence, when Panama or Afghanistan or Iraq are invaded, it helps in sustaining political support for citizens of the superpower to believe that the invasion is not only good for the superpower, but also good for those invaded, and good for the peace and stability of the world.

The model missionaries push not only religious and philosophical models. The Liberty Fund sends out missionaries for American models of libertarian capitalism. The Alliance Française is a missionary organization for French culture. The Academy Awards Presentations are telecast throughout the world as a missionary institution for promoting icons of the Hollywood model of excellence. The International Sociological Association is a missionary organization for North Atlantic sociology.

Why is it more usual for model missionaries to succeed when they travel from core to periphery than when they migrate from the periphery to the core? A simple answer is the concentrations of power

at the centre. The Christian missionaries spread Christianity so successfully throughout Latin America because of the military might of the Conquistadors. Soviet Glasnost in the 1980s had an influence that exceeded the Hungarian equivalent of the 1950s or the Czechoslovakian equivalent of the 1960s because the former was backed by the authority of the centre while the latter were challenges to that authority. If the Australian Film Industry Awards were televised in America, the hegemony of Hollywood would ensure that insufficient Americans would be interested to make the telecast profitable.

Model missionaries seek to expand their influence by penetrating local education systems. The Alliance Française promotes the teaching of French in the schools of the periphery. Christian missionaries lobby for religious instruction in schools. Sociological missionaries came from the Northern hemisphere in the 1950s and 60s to urge the setting up of sociology departments in Australian universities, and then other missionaries came to fill the chairs in these departments after they were established. The Australians who filled most of the junior positions in these departments were rewarded when they satisfied the criteria established in the North.

Model missionaries, because they have a career investment in the models they have mastered, seek to proliferate central institutions of control which reward those who follow their models. So sociological model missionaries will establish prestigious sociological journals which reject articles that do not conform to the models the missionaries have mastered; then the missionaries will argue that publication in these journals should be a passport to career success.

In these ways, systems for rewarding modelling become institutionalized. It is not just that actors with an interest in rewarding modelling mould an education system that dispenses a wide panoply of rewards for modelling. More fundamentally, education systems themselves are created through modelling. Having schools, then high schools, then universities in the South became part of the model of being a modern, civilized nation. And when the universities of the South were established, it was on the Northern model, with the same range of disciplines, every one of them received from the North, and even curricula modelled from the North. Benavot *et al.* (1991: 85) have shown empirically that 'Despite national variation in political, economic, or social structures, primary school curricula are very similar throughout the world. This similarity is not predicted by existing theories' (see also Meyer, Ramirez *et al.* 1977). Benavot *et al.* (1991: 86) explain the striking curriculum similarities in terms of an 'emergent world cultural system'.

### *Model Mercenaries*

Model mercenaries make money out of the proliferation of the model. The difference between missionaries and mercenaries is not simply a



motivational one – the difference between identitive and utilitarian motivation (Etzioni 1965) is commonly muddled by a mixture of motivations. However interpenetrated, this motivational divide has a structural basis in the location of mercenaries in capitalist market institutions. Missionaries tend to have their base in pre-capitalist institutions such as churches, universities and states.

Often there is a sequence where the periphery is softened up for the new model by missionary endeavours; then model mercenaries move in to do the hard sell and execute model implementation. Missionaries of privatization first came to Australia in the 1980s from the Thatcherite and then Reaganite faiths. They told us that many of our state functions should be privatized – airlines, banks, railroads, hospitals, even prisons could and should be privatized. Then came the Prisons Corporation of America – model mercenaries – to actually consummate the setting up of our first private prison. Worldwide capitalist markets thence amplify modelling effects; whenever missionaries get a toehold, there are mercenaries to be found who have discovered a specialized market niche in turning such toeholds into footholds.

The model mercenaries and missionaries we have discussed so far come from the core to the periphery. But local missionaries and local mercenaries are soon recruited – the education system bestows careers on locals hired to teach the models, the Prisons Corporation of America employs local executives (and may later encourage local investors with the local political contacts to lobby for further proliferation of the model).

The seduction of the periphery with models from the core is not simply mediated by particular firms with an interest in such seduction. At a more aggregated level, First World nations have a collective interest in promoting generalized dependency and reverence from the periphery. It is in America's interests, when it decides to go to war in Vietnam or Iraq, that Australia should be in the habit of modelling American strategic thinking, and therefore decide to join the fight. Collectively, it is in the interests of American economic growth that things are viewed as good in the periphery just because they are American. To the extent that this generalized prejudice holds, all American exporters are advantaged. And by things, I do not mean just consumer durables. When Australian hospital administration follows American models, there are American architectural firms, management consultants, educational institutions and hospital supply corporations poised to take advantage of this. The First World has an economic and strategic interest in encouraging a general propensity to model them in the periphery. Thus, the American Information Service is one of the best investments American taxpayers make.

*Model Mongers*

Modern democracies, and to a lesser extent, contemporary totalitarian societies are densely populated with reform groups. The USA manifests this tendency in its most developed form.<sup>8</sup> It is a fair generalization that in the US reform groups are more impressive in their number, resources, lobbying and in the quality of the policy research they do than in other countries. Yet in a sense they need all of these superior qualities to be effective because they operate in a different way from reform groups in other countries. To some extent, they are victims of their own parochialism. Many American consumer groups, for example, are poorly informed about what the consumer movement is accomplishing in other parts of the world. This is especially ironical because these foreign groups are in important ways their own off-spring. The 'Consumers' Union' model and the Nader model have been clearly the leading trend-setters in the international consumer movement.

American reformers work harder because so often they tend to operate by working up reform proposals from first principles. In contrast, reform groups in much of the rest of the world operate more as model mongers. Because their resources are so thin, the best way for them to be effective is to eschew the detailed work their American counterparts do (such as in actually producing draft legislation). Instead, they scan the international horizon for pre-packaged models. The USA enacts a Freedom of Information law, so an Australian group gets hold of it and the lobbying materials produced for it, modifying them only slightly in its own campaign. The bureaucracy ends up changing the American model substantially at the end of the day, but it is the American package that sets the framework for the debate.

For consumer groups in the periphery there are so many worthy models out there. The International Organization of Consumers Unions facilitates communication about new models. So a rational strategy for an organization with meagre resources is to run many campaigns with half-baked off-shore models. Those of them that gather serious support, as by being incorporated into the election platforms of major parties, then become the subject of more rigorous development and lobbying. This is what I mean by model mongering.

The models which do not pick up serious political support are not forgotten under this political strategy. They are left on the back-burner, continuing to appear in consumer movement policy documents as needed reforms. In the ensuing years, it may happen that other model-mongering national consumer movements have more success on this reform. Eventually, the point may be reached where this campaign can be put on the front-burner under the banner that 'Ours is the only country in the region that has failed to introduce this reform'.

Politics from the modelling perspective is not about problems looking for solutions. It is about solutions waiting for the right problem (to justify their implementation). We can see this with agenda-setting by activist Senators, lobbyists and crusading journalists in the US Senate.<sup>9</sup>

Often solutions may become known before appropriate problems can be found to which they can be applied, or before a convincing case can be made for the seriousness of the problems that they are meant to address. Activist senators or interest groups dedicated to the value of a given solution – such as income grants in lieu of services, or administrative decentralization – are frequently out looking for social problems to which their nostrum can be applied, or are anxious to define problems in such a way that their pet solutions will be applicable. (Walker 1973: 431)

While conservative politics is about reluctantly scratching when the electorate gets an itch, entrepreneurial politics is about scratching all over until a spot is found that makes the electorate itchy.

Pre-packaged models have enormous appeal to actors in both legislative and executive branches of the state for a simple reason. They have limited time and energy and a limitless range of issues on which they would like to be seen to be making progress. So Simon's (1957) satisficing model of decision-making applies to them rather well. They do not – cannot – search for the best solution to the problems they would like to do something about. Solutions that are good enough will do. Hence, when someone can deliver to them a pre-packaged model that is good enough, it is often an efficient use of their time to buy it instead of initiating a search for the best solution. This is how it can come to pass that twenty American states can copy almost verbatim a Californian law, with ten of them even copying two serious typographical errors (Walker 1969: 881–2).

The more powerless, disorganized, poorly resourced a group is, the more likely that model mongering will be their best strategy. It is a strategy that produces many political victories for powerless groups. At the same time, it is a strategy that does not refute the proposition that powerful groups generally prevail over powerless ones. Most of the model monger's models are put on the back burner for precisely this reason. Yet the strategy means that resources are not wasted on the detailed development of losing campaigns. The effective model monger puts in significant resources only when she can smell victory.

A sociological theory of modelling, by taking the model mongering of powerless groups seriously, should cause us to take a different view of the way power is exercised in the modern world system, a less pessimistic one if you will. In addition to the reasons already adduced, this source of power for the powerless arises from the fact that persuasiveness depends less on the power of the promoter than on the

power of the model. The power of a model that is taken seriously is that by being taken seriously it sets the framework of debate. The model monger has succeeded in putting on the table the terms of debate – the terms in the model. Moreover, she can insist that they are not terms of her creation – they have an existence and authority that are independent of her constituency.<sup>10</sup> The model is the product of a cross-constituency consensus in another polity, or so it is said by the skilful model monger.

Such claims can be disingenuous. The most gifted model mongers will be strategic model misrepresenters. ‘When they tried this in country A, they found that feature X was essential for the program to work.’ The model misrepresenter gambles on no one bothering to check that feature X was even a part of the program in faraway land A. Model misrepresentation occurs unintentionally as well. One nation models another’s food safety laws when these are not food safety laws at all but non-tariff barriers to competitive foods from other nations (disguised as food safety laws). Modellers routinely misunderstand and misrepresent what they are modelling. Some of the models that have been most influential in shaping the way we think and struggle – such as the model of republican democracy – bear little resemblance to any real political regime. The republican model of political community uses highly selective abstractions from ideal models in use at various times in Athens, Rome and elsewhere.

There is power in the choice within the model of what are the central issues, in what is left off the agenda by the model (Lukes 1974) and in the terms of its discourse (Clegg 1989). There is power in what is said, what is unsaid and how the saying is framed. There is power in framing whether rape is a problem of penal law, of sex education, of family counselling, of oppression of women, or of protecting women as the property of men (Smart 1989; Naffine 1985). The model can seduce wider audiences than the reformers can capture without the model because of properties of the model. These wider audiences are the model misers and the model modernizers who we will now discuss. We will see that model misers and modernizers are persuaded not by the imperatives of solving the problems addressed by the model, but by the virtues of the modelling as modelling.

### *Model Misers*

Thinking through new ways of doing things is costly in time, money, mental effort and conflict. It is inefficient to reinvent the wheel. This is especially true in less affluent (or indeed affluent but small) societies where the pool of research resources is tiny. The centre has a comparative advantage over the periphery in developing new models; the periphery a comparative advantage in adapting existing models to local conditions. It may therefore be that periphery business in a

competitive world economy, just like reform groups in the periphery, will do best to perfect the art of model mongering. While the USA has an interest in enforcing the international intellectual property order of patents, designs, copyright and trademarks (because it owns most of them), the periphery has an interest in subverting this order. An ironic testimony to the power of modelling is that so many Third World countries model First World intellectual property law in preference to subverting it.

Model misers are actors who can see that the resources are not available for a research effort to solve a problem from first principles. We might say that model misers are those who are happy to satisfice by rummaging through a garbage can full of models that have been known to have been applied to similar problems elsewhere (Cohen *et al.* 1972). But this characterization paints too negative a picture of the advantages of modelling. Model-following balances the advantage of debugging against the disadvantage of less-than-perfect fit to local conditions. Some solutions to a problem will entail defects so glaring once implementation begins that the solution will be abandoned as soon as these problems are brought to light. While they are agreed by everyone to be glaring in retrospect, they were not so in prospect. Such solutions rarely survive as models, and the modeller has the advantage of avoiding them. For the creator, they are unavoidable. Any solution to a problem is likely to entail some defects that are universally agreed to be defects but that can be readily debugged with a little experience. Received models have the advantage of being cleared of these obvious bugs. This does not mean of course that they will not be full of features that are bugs in the eyes of one constituency, things of beauty in the eyes of others. Nevertheless, it is an undoubted advantage of buying rather than writing a computer program that it is debugged, independently of the judgment of how well designed the program is for any given purpose. Model misers are not only miserly on the costs of creation but also the costs of debugging (or the costs of falling into the traps hidden in a program that has not been debugged).

Modelling is efficient in many contexts. But model misers risk becoming model morons when they attempt transplantation without local adaptation. Debugging removes the glaring bugs that will appear to be uncontroversially bad in any context. But equally, new contexts breed new bugs. Hence for organizations or nations to be efficient they do not have to invest in research to build new models. But they must invest both in model search and in model development to make sure their models are adapted in light of local understanding.

In the modern world system the rewards of being a model miser are increasing. In previous centuries, the horizon the emulator could scan looking for ideas was limited. Twentieth-century communications have expanded those horizons. The possibilities for efficient search

for good ideas to copy have increased enormously. It follows that the advantage of inventive societies over imitative societies is shrinking. Indeed, societies that spend most of their R and D on R of their own ideas may do poorly in comparison to societies that spend a high proportion on the D of others' ideas. Some cultures, particularly Eastern cultures, teach more by example than by exhortation (Bandura 1986: 163). In a world with a high supply of accessible ideas waiting to be developed, it is possible that cultures where learning is acquired through modelling (as opposed to enactive learning or learning by exhortation) will enjoy an increasing comparative advantage.

Good public policy analysis and good strategic decision-making in business is not the art of muddling through as Braybrooke and Lindblom (1970) would have us believe. It is the art of modelling through. The effective policymaker does not allow herself to be surrounded by a muddle; she is surrounded by an information system about the problem and about models that have elsewhere been applied to analysing and solving such problems.<sup>11</sup>

At the same time it is true that model morons are common. The ubiquity of model morons is explained by the seductive exaggerations of model missionaries who are insensitive to cultural difference and the dollar appeal of model mercenaries. Furthermore, we will see in the next section that the identitive appeal (Etzioni 1965) which grips model modernizers can also readily account for the adoption of patently ineffective models.

### *Model Modernizers*

Models are adopted when they appeal to identities that we hold dear. An identity that is particularly crucial in this regard is that of being successful, modern, civilized, advanced. The periphery models the core in the world system partly because of this pursuit of modernity in identity (or postmodernity for certain intellectuals). However grudgingly, and often very grudgingly, the centre is recognized as more 'advanced' or 'sophisticated' than the periphery. And so the periphery seeks to model the symbols of progress.

This process is not simply a matter of model envy. It is more fundamentally a matter of legitimacy. Meyer and Rowan (1977) have argued that the formal structures of many organizations in the modern world reflect the myths of their institutional environments instead of the demands of their work activities. For example, part of the institutional environment of many organizations has involved the rise of professionalized economics. This has made it useful for organizations (including public organizations) to employ groups of economists even though no one reads, understands or believes their analyses. What the econometric analyses deliver is not efficiency but

legitimation of the organization's plans in the eyes of investors, customers and indeed insiders. Thus, Meyer and Rowan (1977: 352) hypothesize: 'Organizations that incorporate societally legitimated rationalised elements in their formal structures maximise their legitimacy and increase their resources and survival capacities.' I am asserting here that in the periphery, much of this legitimation is more colonial than 'societal': organizations in the periphery (including states themselves) maximize their legitimacy by demonstrating that they have incorporated the most advanced First World models into their structures.

Meyer and Rowan (1977: 356) go further and suggest that to thrive organizations must not only conform to myths that are crucial to legitimacy; they must also maintain the appearance that the myths actually work. Hence, the perceived efficacy of the modelling is reproduced even when it is not in fact efficacious. Modelling connected to sustaining organizational legitimacy is especially pervasive and tenacious. If modelling Japanese quality circles were just a matter of attempting to improve efficiency by seeking out efficient organizations and learning from them, then we would still have a lot of modelling of Japan. But we have much more modelling than this because modelling legitimates management as committed to quality, and up-to-date, even if the Japanese quality circles do not work. Moreover, when they don't work, there are reasons to pretend that they do, thereby encouraging other quality-conscious, up-to-date but unfortunate organizations into the ranks of the model morons.

In a federal system, reform lobbyists will identify some states, or some legislators within some states, as attached to the identity of being 'progressive' or a pace-setter. For such targets, the lobbying pitch might be: 'Sweden has been the first state in Europe to enact this model; you should be the one to take the lead here.' Other states will be conservative but nevertheless concerned to avoid the stigma of being 'backward'. For these targets, the model monger will concentrate scarce resources on models mostly adopted elsewhere: 'Most governments in the Western world are moving toward this reform; within a decade we expect all will be doing so.' In short, the model monger sees the domino-theory not as a matter of structural explanation, but as an effect she seeks to cause through purposive lobbying action. In seeking to make the dominos fall, the appeal of legitimacy and modernity are the model-monger's most powerful weapons.

### *The Dynamics of Oppositional Models*

While there have been tendencies for North Atlantic, particularly Anglophone, models to progressively increase their sway in the world, important countercurrents exist. To understand how this is possible, consider the school as a system that dispenses extremely potent

rewards for modelling. Yet the school is also a competitive institution, and in a competitive institution there will be those who are defined as failures. Albert Cohen (1955) pointed out that those who fail in the status system of the school have a status problem and are in the market for a solution. One solution is what Cohen calls 'reaction formation', wherein a delinquent subculture creates a status system with values which are the exact opposite of those of the school – immediate impulse gratification instead of impulse control, contempt for property and authority instead of respect for property and authority, violence instead of control of aggression. For a child who fails in the status system of the school, the inverted status system of the delinquent subculture supplies him with status criteria on which he is guaranteed of success. His status problem is solved, at least for a time.

In core-periphery modelling in the world system we can see many examples of reaction formation. Iran is a clear case with the sharp anti-American turn after the fall of the Shah. More important cases were the turn of Protestant nations away from Rome with the Reformation and the reaction of Eastern Europe against communism. It follows that a dialectical imagination is required to understand the patterning of modelling. We must abandon linear thinking about A causing B in favour of finding the seeds of the future enfolded in the contradictions that shape the present (Morgan 1986: 233–72). The modelling of Eastern European subservience accomplished by Moscow in Hungary (1956) and Czechoslovakia (1968) had enfolded within it the seeds of the reactive modelling of 1989.

Consider the application of the dialectics of modelling to the oppression of women. Before considering reactive modelling in the next paragraph, first let us diagnose patriarchal models. These are reproduced by modelling, literally in the case of fashion magazines. Women who spurn the models will not be rewarded by male suitors, by the admiration of those female peers who are slaves to fashion and may even jeopardize conventional careers in business and the professions. These micro-processes of modelling reproduce the oppressive structures of cosmetic, fashion, film and advertising industries that appeal to success against the yardsticks of patriarchal models. The economic interests of model mercenaries in these industries are important to understanding the reproduction of patriarchy, as are those of model misers in periphery industries who find it efficient to mimic Paris and New York. But so are model missionaries (e.g., *Women Who Want to be Women*). Moreover, model mongers among writers for women's magazines continually speculate in the market for reconstructing new year models of an enduring female identity.

All this makes reaction formation difficult to sustain. Yet one of the blessings of urban life is that it can sustain communities of oppositional influence. This is also one of the blessings of universities, which have been incubators of reaction formation against patriarchal



models in so many countries. Furthermore, institutions which seek to segregate those who subscribe to oppositional models – prisons, mental institutions, reformatories for wayward girls, streaming in schools, ghettos, interdisciplinary departments within universities – can actually enhance the subcultural vitality of reaction formation (Scheff 1966).

Once oppositional models have currency, they become a resource for drawing out contradictions in the identities propagated by majoritarian models. Hence, even though a feminist identity may have very circumscribed support in a society, the national identity that ‘we are a society that values equality of opportunity’ might have wide support. Feminists can then create openings for model mongering by highlighting contradictions between patriarchy and equality of opportunity. Interstices within patriarchy can be prised open. Feminists can put powerful actors on the spot – force them to make a choice between their egalitarian and patriarchal identities. And they can mobilize disapproval first against shocking instances of denying the ideal of equality of opportunity, and later against more subtle manifestations of patriarchy.

Since modelling is not only about the pursuit of interests, but also about the sustaining of identities, weaker interests can prevail against domination by bringing on an identity crisis. Ideas are important in history when new models are synthesized to resolve the identity crisis. Intellectuals can be influential not only as model mongers but also as synthesizers who, observing the reactions to a range of models advanced by others, reconcile the contradictions among acceptable and unacceptable identities.

### *Capacity and Outcome*

Once structurally weak model mongers succeed in pulling on an identity crisis against the hegemony of majoritarian models, they create a minority constituency for their oppositional model. Where this minority constituency passes a critical threshold, model mercenaries can put substantial marketing resources behind expanding that minority. So Rupert Murdoch, never the model missionary but ever the model mercenary, will invest in the international feminist magazine *New Woman*. Similarly, the Australian Fairfax group bought the American magazine *Ms*.

Thus, while it is true that models emanating from and serving the interests of the powerful are most likely to be copied, modelling can be effectively harnessed by the powerless. Because the powerful often see their interests as simply maintaining a status quo their power has shaped, they are vulnerable to model mongering in the political system (even when their own success is based on model mongering in the economic system). If a conservative elite does not want to put new

models on the table, and if the strategic advantage rests with the actor who chooses the model that sets the terms of a reform debate, then powerless model mongers can reverse the disadvantage which would otherwise be their lot. This is especially true when the powerless realize that battles over models are not just battles won and lost in terms of economic interests (where, if this were true, the stronger interests would always prevail), but are also battles over identities. The most economically powerful transnational corporation can find it difficult to compete with a weaker public interest group in a contest for the high moral ground of the identitive power of the 'national interest'. In such a battle for models that satisfy cherished identities, the very visibility of the international money power of the transnational can be a deficit. Moreover, we have seen that weak actors can play a game of ju-jitsu, using against the power structure the identitive power of extant models supported by the power structure. This is the game of prising open interstices within social structures by drawing out contradictions between the identities sustained by different majoritarian models.

Here we have a concrete illustration of why what Hindess (1982) calls 'capacity-outcome' approaches to understanding struggles are misguided. A capacity-outcome approach assumes that all one need do to determine the likely outcome of struggles is identify the resources or capacities available to the conflicting interests; the outcome of the struggle can then be read off in an *a priori* fashion. We have seen that the effectiveness of the model monger depends less on the power of the promoter than on the power of the model. Moreover, we have seen that the model monger can use scarce resources efficiently by mongering among many (losing) models until a model is selected that uses identitive power to catch the powerful adversary off balance. Then all the limited resources of the model monger are momentarily thrown into a feat of political ju-jitsu that flips the off-balance adversary.

Models, we have seen, are empowering. Although economically powerful actors have a greater capacity to make models work for them, they do not need to model through, and they are typically too conservative to gamble with the risks that political model mongering poses to a status quo that suits them. A conservative elite installs politicians who refrain from scratching with new models of state intervention until popular itches become unbearable. Though the disenfranchised have less capacity to get their models accepted, model-mongering (scratching everywhere until an unbearable itch is inflamed) can be their most efficient path to empowerment.

The powerless also desperately need models to nurture self-efficacy. Powerlessness begets hopelessness and political paralysis. What the powerless need to conquer the psychology of defeatism is models of other powerless actors in similar circumstances in other

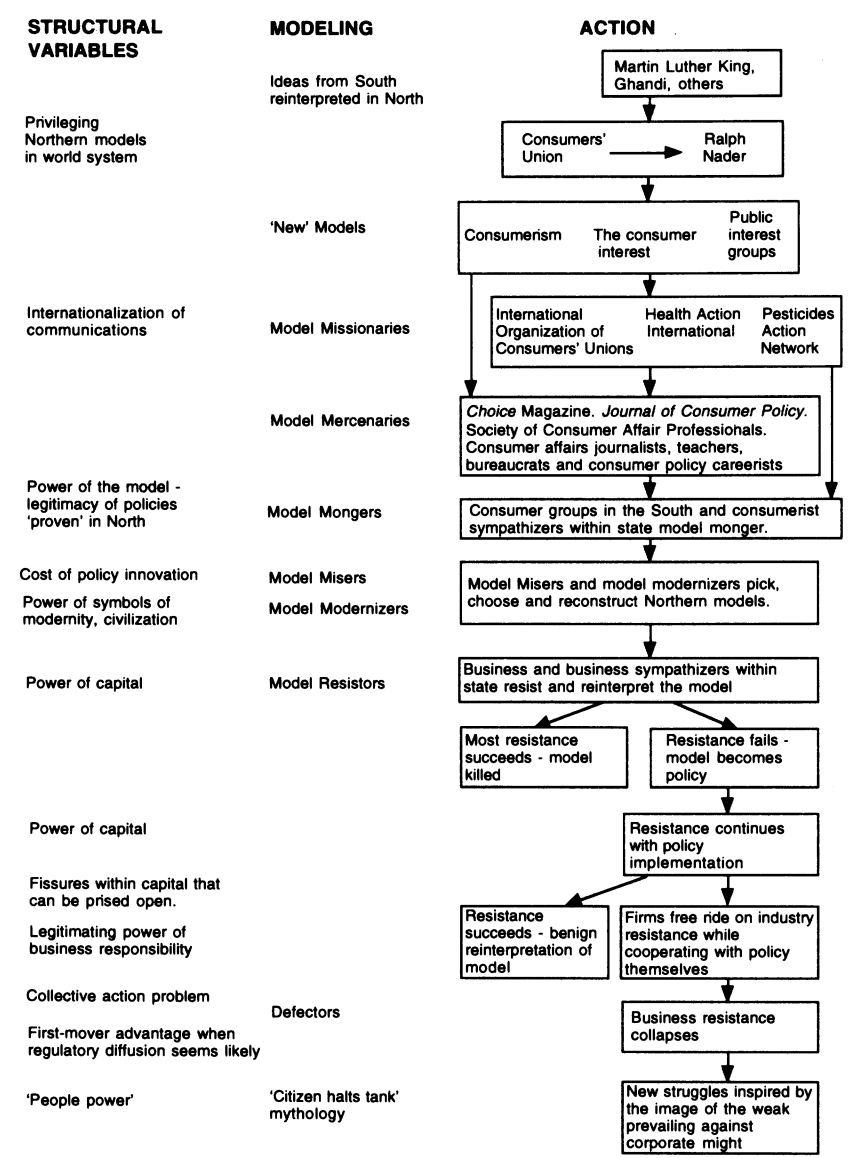
places prevailing against powerful odds. This, I suspect is an important part of the answer to why there was a revolution in Rumania at Christmas 1989. At that historical moment, citizens who had been paralyzed in the face of a brutal, seemingly all-powerful, regime, threw off their paralysis, found a new belief in their self-efficacy inspired by models of the successful struggles waged in other Communist countries throughout 1989. The powerful do not need models to convince them of their self-efficacy; the powerless do. Stalin did not need a model; but American blacks needed Martin Luther King and Rumania needed Poland, China, Hungary, East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria.

#### IV. USING THE CONCEPTS FOR MICRO-MACRO SYNTHESIS

A case has been made as to why a number of world system structural variables (Part II) and processual modelling variables (Part III) are crucial to understanding how the world acquired its present institutional shape. How do we put all these variables together in an integrated explanation? Useful tools should be used in different ways to solve different problems. In Part V, I will argue that sustained world-system empirical work is crucial to elaborate different integrated theories appropriate to each crucial aspect of the system. In this section, I will illustrate integrated explanation with a phenomenon for which I have already laid some explanatory foundations – the impact of the emergence of an international consumer movement. Figure I summarises this endeavour. On the left of Figure I are structural variables that enable the political action on the right of the figure. The modelling variables in the centre conceptualize this action. In the following paragraphs, I will put some flesh on the bones of the explanation in Figure I. The explanation is processually integrated in that it starts with initiatives of model missionaries that are exploited by mercenaries, brokered by model mongers, then adopted by misers and modernizers as contradictions fracture the collective strength of business resistance.

The explanation begins with individual actors and ends with a transformed world system. First, a number of individuals in the USA – the most important being Ralph Nader and the founders of Consumers' Union – apply extraordinary energy and flare to the construction of a new interest group model. The consumer movement is born with the founding of Consumers' Union in 1936, but only acquires significant political power in the late 1960s after drawing inspiration from civil rights struggles in the South. Both the Consumers' Union model (based on product-testing and a mass circulation magazine), and the Nader model (cells of crusaders producing exposés commending regulatory reforms) are quickly imitated in

FIGURE 1: *Integrated explanation of the importance of modeling to consumer protection regulation in an emerging world system*



every country in the developed world. By the 1970s, these national consumer organizations have formed international networks in collaboration with pre-existing organizations with bases in the Third World, such as churches and environmental groups. Specific

campaign networks, such as the Nestlé boycott and the breast milk substitute campaign generally, have been crucial to building consumer groups in the Third World. Most crucial of all, however, is the International Organization of Consumers' Unions, which opens regional offices in the South. These are the model missionaries. But there are model mercenaries as well.

The crucial model mongers are to be found within the consumer organizations and regulatory agencies. Some of the model mongers within the state have backgrounds in the consumer movement; most are just fellow-travellers. The emphasis is on statutory models for regulating business. Ideas for new regulatory agencies are continually floated. Most are quashed by model resisters in the business community. But some succeed. A flood of new regulatory agencies was created in the Nixon era in the USA, generally later in other developed nations, and only in recent years has the process of establishing such agencies begun in most Third World countries. Their growth is internationally cumulative.

Support for consumer rights has become a necessary ingredient to securing an identity as a progressive political leader. The staffers even of conservative politicians seek to polish the progressiveness of their masters' images by having them sponsor consumer protection reforms. But because these are not 'important' issues – like the economy, defence, foreign policy and law and order – the staffers are miserly in the time they devote to consumer affairs. They scan the horizon for pre-packaged models, which the consumerist model mongers enthusiastically supply.

All of this politicizing and media lauding of consumerism does not leave business executives untouched. Certainly they resist most reforms initiated by the consumer movement with success. But everyone in business realizes that an improved sense of corporate responsibility is a price they must pay to sustain legitimacy (Snider 1987). Defection from resistance to consumerist models also occurs in a more insidious way. Once the consumer movement has prised open a fissure in business resistance to regulation by creating a cadre of capitalists with a serious commitment to business responsibility, having this commitment turns out to be a good way of keeping the consumerists, but more crucially, the regulators, off your back. Now business confronts a classic collective action problem. When the regulators knock on your factory door, the best strategy is to welcome them with open arms: 'These new regulations don't worry our company. Our corporate standards have exceeded these requirements for years because we have always been a company with a responsible . . .'. Executives believe, sometimes wrongly, but mostly correctly, that these tactics are the best way to divert regulatory and consumerist scrutiny away from themselves and onto their competitors. The incentive structure facing the individual firm is to encourage

other firms to resist new regulations, to pay industry associations to do so on your behalf, but to refrain from resisting regulation yourself. The business temptation to free-ride on the resistance of others is unspoken but profound.

In an empirical project on nursing home regulation in four nations, Valerie Braithwaite, Diane Gibson, Toni Makkai, David Ermann and I have interviewed a number of industry executives who have spoken frankly about this incentive structure. Moreover, we have directly observed its effect – individuals observed to speak vigorously against the evils of the regulators and their regulations at industry association meetings who welcome them enthusiastically when it comes to their firm's regulatory encounters; new regulatory models opposed by the industry association at enactment that are supported by over 90 per cent of chief executives in the industry within two years. Aggregated free riding on industry resistance can cause business resistance to collapse totally in a short space of time.

Moreover, Michael Porter's (1990: 585–8; 647–9) massive study on *The Competitive Advantage of Nations* concludes that firms that are early movers in meeting higher regulatory standards gain a competitive advantage in the world system. Similarly, nations that move first to set new standards that will eventually spread internationally give their firms a competitive advantage. If automobile air-bags will ultimately be required throughout the world, first-movers will get the jump on their international competitors in finding technological solutions to incorporating the safety devices efficiently onto their designs. The first-mover nations are the ones that are likely to become exporters of air-bags and of the intellectual property of air-bag know-how (licences, patents, designs). Porter gives various examples of just this happening – from Swedish companies dominating technology for the handicapped as a result of early Swedish regulation in this area to US firms gaining markets for anti-pollution technology as a result of the USA being a first-mover on certain environmental regulations during the 1970s. The lobbying opportunity this analysis implies has not been lost on the model mongers of the consumer movement (Australian Consumers' Association 1991). When the international consumer movement can signal that it is likely to campaign effectively throughout the world for a new standard, a sympathetic national government or firm can then be targeted for a campaign of persuasion to seize the first-mover advantage. The consumer movement's tacit appeal to the first-mover is: 'We'll be the model missionaries that will make you a rich model mercenary'.

It is common, however, for an industry to at least partially solve the collective action problems that risk a tightening regulatory ratchet. A new and interesting strategy is for business to form its own 'public interest' organizations – such as 'Consumers for World Trade' (a coalition of transnational corporations seeking to use the GATT to

lower health, safety and environmental standards) and 'Citizens for Sensible Control of Acid Rain' (a front for coal and utility corporations) (Corporate Crime Reporter 1992). Another is to co-opt pre-existing citizen groups, such as the international pharmaceutical industry's successful harnessing of gay rights groups to lobby for fewer regulatory hurdles to the marketing of new drugs. Business can also partially solve its collective action problem even after it has lost a battle over a new regulation at the legislative stage. It then wages an effective war of resistance at the implementation stage. This is a common outcome because while model-mongering consumerists may have the tactical advantage of setting the terms of a legislative debate, they never have the resources adequately to monitor industry capture at the implementation stage. Hence, we get the result first identified by Edelman (1964): Diffuse interests get symbolic rewards at the legislative stage, while concentrated interests protect their tangible rewards at the implementation stage.

Even the symbolic victories are important, however, in sustaining an international momentum for citizen empowerment. When the citizen appears to stop the tank in view of the television camera, this is an inspirational victory for people power. In truth, it likely involves a mythological construction of people power in one of two ways: either the tank stopped because there were other ways of crushing the citizens without doing it on television, or it stopped because its commander was already a defector to the citizens' cause. Models of empowerment are the crucial ingredient for continuing the cycle of struggle for people power, whether the slaying of the corporate dragon by the plucky consumerist is symbolic or real.<sup>12</sup>

Figure I therefore is a model of how to bring together: (a) an analysis of structures – the internationalization of communications, the power and legitimacy of First World models, the power of capital, the structure of collective action problems in competitive markets, and (b) an analysis of modelling actions of strategic varieties; to show (c) how cumulative changes of major import can spread rapidly throughout the world, thereby constituting a world system; and (d) how effective political action is possible to constitute weak individuals as an interest that can wage struggles with some degree of success. In short, the incipient model encompasses an understanding of how the institutional form of the world comes to be the way it is and informs the practice of emancipatory politics from below in such a world.

## V. CONCLUSION

Figure I is an unsatisfactorily sketchy illustration of how a modelling analysis can accomplish a sweep of micro-macro synthesis from individual to world system. Other preliminary work suggests that

transnational modelling has some significance in the rise of many of our most fundamental institutions – the institutions of education (Benavot *et al.* 1991; Meyer 1980; Meyer, Ramirez *et al.* 1977), the welfare state (Collier and Messick 1975),<sup>13</sup> indeed the model of a centralized state itself as a monopolist of force enabling commerce to flourish within pacified spaces (Trevelyan 1985; Garraty and Gay 1981), not to mention the spread of the world's major religions. Modelling seems important in the most significant political changes that have occurred in our lifetime (such as the falling Communist dominos) as well as the most important economic changes of our lifetime – the deregulatory shifts of the 1980s, OPEC as an outcome of the modelling of the Algerian and Libyan oil nationalizations in the early 1970s by 'virtually every other producer in the mid-East, Africa, Asia and Latin America' (Kobrin 1985: 26).

What is needed now is some serious sociological empiricism in such domains to elaborate (Vaughan 1992) starting sketches like Figure I. Unfortunately, few sociologists are interested in understanding our rapidly metamorphizing world system as something shaped by human imaginings. Rather, they look backward to a 'British society' structurally determined by the push of a mute past. Yet only the pull of a humanly articulated future enables the possibility of emancipatory politics. Only the futures once formulated in forgotten models can allow us to understand our present. This means attending to model-making voices from the past that have been rendered mute by our science.

Voices belong to actors – individual and collective. Sociology's abstractions tend to be non-actors – American society, the ruling class, 'women' as a group, social movements (Hindess 1987). The model monger is a more useful abstraction than the social movement, first, because it acts. Second, its action is not dependent on a circumscribed type of institutional oxygen – such as social movement politics. Model mongers act in political parties, courts, bureaucracies, the military, the church.

My mission has been to show that modelling can link structural analysis to both a processual account of the constitution of a world system and to a practical politics of empowerment within that emerging system. Models of successful struggle help the structurally weak to imagine and believe in the possibility of emancipatory collective action. Model missionaries are the actors who inspire this self-efficacy. Model mercenaries cash in on it. But the key players in transformative politics are the model mongers – pragmatic, empirical practitioners of experimental politics. When the structural reality is that the odds of the weak defeating the strong are 100–1, the weak need advocates with a hundred agendas.

Those with little to lose can take the risks of setting a hundred agendas running. For those who have entrenched power, it is foolish



(or brave in the case of a model monger like Gorbachev) to set off a hundred agendas, any one of which could unseat them if it ran out of control. The more vast the organizational empires controlled by the powerful, the more profound their collective action problems, the more fissures that can be prised open to turn part of the empire against itself. Strength engenders these specific weaknesses that can be exploited by the strategy of model mongering. This is the modelling account of how and why the world is regularly transformed.

In the increasingly networked world of the new information order, the rate and international pervasiveness of these regular transformations will increase. The powerful may be less able to control the future of the world when the future they want is the present. Model mongers hold the future in their hands, though they have a hundred different guesses on what that future might be.

If change is dialectical rather than linear and if agenda-setting roulette is a key to that change, then we cannot predict or plan the future. But by modelling the process of modelling, we might understand it, steer it, and imagine means of purposive struggle to bring the future under more democratic control. A sociology of modelling could supply some conceptual tools to meet these challenges.

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#### NOTES

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1. The most plausible is perhaps the most simple – Gorbachev lifted the lid on the Eastern European states after he assumed power in 1986. This however is not a plausible explanation for the uprisings in China and Albania, which were not under Soviet hegemony.

2. 'It is not enough for the social thinker in this country to meet the socialist with a negative. The English progressive will be wise if in this at any rate, he takes a leaf from the book of Bismarck who dealt the heaviest blow

against German socialism not by his laws of oppression . . . but by the great system of state insurance which now safeguards the German workman at almost every point in his industrial career' (H. Spencer, Lloyd George's publicity agent in 1902 quoted in Gilbert 1966: 257)

3. This includes telecommunications, desk-top publishing of customized printed communication and air travel. At a level intermediate between the micro and the world system, we also know that the degree of communication integration in a social system is positively related to the rate of adoption of innovation (see the studies reviewed in Rogers and Shoemaker 1971: 352 and Rogers 1983).

4. The discourse of science is geared to propping up delusions of creativity. A

US National Science Foundation reviewer said of my modelling proposal: 'I found the terminology confusing, wondering whether the modelling being done was a social act (i. e., by the social actor being studied) or a scientific act (i. e., by the scientist).' Apart from being more complex and formal, scientific models do not seem fundamentally different from the other models discussed in this paper. They are social constructions that are put on display and imitated by other actors who I will describe as model misers, model modernizers and model morons. It is intriguing though, that scientists do not use the word modelling to refer to the imitating of models. 'Modelling' is meant to refer only to an act of creation in scientific discourse, even though in scientific practice, modelling is more fundamentally imitative.

5. I do not want to deny that there will be occasions when it will be chic for First World creators to explicitly recognize the African input into their music, or indeed occasions when they acknowledge this openly as a matter of principle and pride. I will argue below that there is a dynamic to how counter-hegemonic models can come to acquire appeal. Even so, the fact that the African input is up-front in Paul Simon's 'Gracelands' still leaves open the question of whether most American listeners so identify the work.

6. I believe I am indebted to Bob Connell for making this point in a talk I once heard him give.

7. Thirty-nine per cent of the patents issued in Australia in 1990 were issued to US owners; 30 per cent to European Community owners; 16 per cent to Japanese; 8 per cent to Australian; and 7 per cent to owners from the rest of the world (Data supplied by the Australian Patents, Trademarks and Designs Office).

8. This is perhaps a manifestation of McCarthy and Zald's (1977: 1224) hypothesis: 'As the amount of discretionary resources of mass and elite publics increases, the absolute and relative amount of resources available to the Social Movement Sector increases.'

9. Mayer's (1991) study of agenda-setting on consumer issues begins with

the conventional presumption of three stages in the emergence of an issue: 1) publicity in the mass media; 2) arousal of public opinion; and 3) only then, the issue is addressed by policymakers. Mayer found (with US consumer protection from 1960–87) more often that the process was more or less reversed, with policymakers seeking to seize the agenda, thereby arousing media publicity and public opinion.

10. 'The very activity of institution-building, if visible as such, could thus easily end up in the hyper-rationality trap (Elster) of "willing what cannot be willed". It cannot be willed because if it is seen as being *willed*, rather than "inherited" or "replicated", it will be more controversial and less binding than if it is seen as a legacy or imitation.' (Offe in press: 25).

11. Hugh Stretton has been a prominent advocate of this strategy in Australia. He suggests a National Research Bureau to assemble exemplary policy solutions to critical problems from around the globe.

12. Kenneth Boulding's (1973: 122, 126) is the seminal work on the importance of an optimistic image of a better future to any successful struggle for progress (see also Duncan 1968: 48, 236). It is a theme picked up by the social cognitive psychologists under the rubric of perceived self-efficacy (Bandura 1986: 390–453).

13. Collier and Messick (1975) juxtapose against a diffusion explanation the structural explanation that adoption of social security is a function of modernization. According to the structural analysis, social security policies should not be implemented until certain levels of modernization are reached. "If a pattern of diffusion is present in which countries tend to imitate other countries that are at higher levels of modernization, this should be reflected in a tendency for each successive adopter to adopt at a progressively lower level of modernization." (p. 1308). This indeed is what is found – a fairly strong tendency for later adopters to be less modernized at the time of adoption.

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