

# Structures, Cultures and Biographies

- *a conceptual framework for understanding difficulties  
minority students face in their daily lives*

Sunil Loona

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Kurt Lewin (1890 –1947)  
American psychologist

“There is nothing so practical as a good theory.”



**Michel Foucault** (1926 – 1984)  
French philosopher and historian

## **Power, knowledge and resistance**

“There is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations”

- **Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish (1977)**

“Where there is power, there is resistance.”

- **Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality (1978)**



**James Morris Blaut (1927-2000)**

Professor of anthropology and geography, University of Illinois, Chicago.

Author: The colonizers model of the world

## A Eurocentric World History

*«...one of the most powerful beliefs of our time concerning world history and world geography ...is the notion that European civilization - «The West» – has had some unique historical advantage, some special quality of race or culture or environment or mind or spirit , which gives this human community a permanent superiority over all other communities, at all times in history and down to the present».*

J. M. Blaut (1993): The Colonizer's Model of the World: Geographical Diffusionism and Eurocentric History. Guilford Press. N.Y.



**Prof. Dr. Florian Coulmas**

Senior Professor for Japanese Society and Sociolinguistics  
Institute of East Asian Studies, University of Duisburg-Essen

## The Nation-State and Minorities

“The nation-state as it has evolved since the French Revolution is the natural enemy of minorities.”

**Florian Coulmas:** Language rights: Interests of states, language groups and the individual. *Language Sciences* 20, 63-72

## Structures

- Work
- Housing
- Income
- Education
- Gender
- Race/Ethnicity

## Cultures

- Progressive evolutionism
- Orientalism
- Cultural relativism
- Universalism
- Cultural Capital
- Culture as an expression of one's social and material life-experiences
- Cultures of resistance

## Biographies

- Personal life crises
- Traumas
- Individual choices
- Fortune
- Misfortune

## The Foreign Worker System

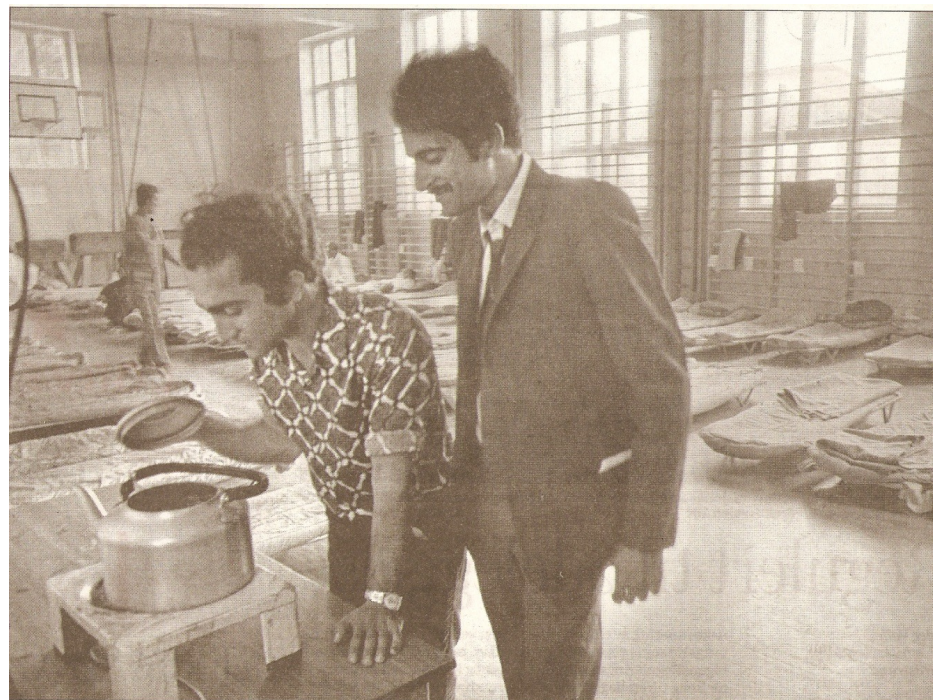
The foreign worker system was a system for recruiting cheap, unskilled labour on short-term contracts, that was to produce here, but reproduce there, that is to say, in their home countries.



## FROM PAKISTAN ON A TOURIST VISA (1971)

"... They came to Norway on a tourist visa to work and earn money which they sent to their home country. In the absence of a residence, they were given a temporary stay at Majorstua school... Here they make coffee in the gymnasium. They slept on the camp beds with blankets we see in the background."

(Aftenposten after, 23.09.09)





## Race and Migration

*"Who in the South is going around dreaming of a job among polar bears?"*

*"The unnatural and one-sided influx of foreign workers from a particular country is in itself very unfortunate."*

Arnulv E. Jøraandstad, Director, State Immigration Office (1971)

(The “unnatural and one-sided influx” consisted then of 472 Pakistanis out of a total of 13000 foreign workers just in Oslo)



**Professor Stuart Hall (1932 – 2014)**  
Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies  
Open University, Birmingham

## Race and Class

«The class-relations which inscribe the black fractions of the working class function as race relations. The two are inseparable. Race is the modality in which class relations are experienced».

**Stuart Hall, 1978: Policing the Crisis. Mugging, the State and Law and Order.**

When people are oppressed which comes first  
- theory or practice?

A common perception is that people are more easily oppressed if they are initially seen as belonging to another category - as inferior or different.

In reality, it is the other way around. People who are subjected to oppression are more easily perceived as being inferior or different. Scientific racism came after, not before, the slave trade.

## Racism is first and foremost a social practice

Racism is first and foremost a social practice that leads to an unequal relationship between social groups, both in terms of their access to and participation in society.

The practice of racism often involves both economic exploitation, discrimination and/or social exclusion within societal institutions. It can either be systematized as rules and regulations or be ritualized in everyday practice towards racialized groups.

## Racism is thereafter an ideology

If a social practice is ritualized long enough, it will need an ideological foundation that justifies and legitimizes why it is natural to act as one does. Dehumanizing the “other” is therefore a necessary part of all forms of oppression.

The more the ideology gets rooted in the population's consciousness, the easier it becomes to implement the practice.

No matter where and when in history such a practice has gained power, it has led to an "ethnicization" of the whole of society, with reduced opportunities for work, housing, income, education and legal security for those affected by the practice.

# Neoliberalism

- free trade
- privatization
- minimal government intervention in business
- reduced public expenditure on social services, etc.
- New Public Management - principles and methods for the organization and management of public activities with the market as the model.

## Structural adjustments

– forcing neoliberal economic reforms on poor countries of the South

In the 1980's and 1990's the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, acting on behalf of the major banks in the West, with the support of US governments, "offered" poor countries loans against certain "structural adjustments":

- devaluation of the currency
- abolition of import restrictions
- abolition of subsidies on industrial and agricultural goods produced locally
- privatization or reduction of public services - schools, health
- deregulation of the labor market

# Globalization

1. Exports of industrial production and jobs to low-wage countries. Initially, the industry moved from the old centers of capitalism (Western Europe, USA, Japan) to China, India and other low-wage areas.
2. Imports of low-wage immigrants in the construction industry, retail, cleaning, restaurant and fast-food industry, etc.
3. Introduction of new technology in industrial production. Computers, robots, and artificial intelligence are increasingly replacing workers.

A combination of these three factors has contributed to an increase in production of goods and services, but at the same time a cut in wage costs for many companies. Multinational companies have been the big winners of globalization. Workers in all countries have been the losers.



# Consequences of neoliberalism and globalization

The changes were most noticeable in the big cities, where industrial jobs almost disappeared during the 80s and 90s.

Many immigrant parents who had had a permanent job for 15-20 years became redundant, and they had few opportunities to be able to adapt to the changes in the labor market. By the year 2000 only 50% of the first immigrants were fully employed.

Unemployment among young people was relatively high during the period. By the end of the 1980s, for example, as many as 40% of the unemployed were under 25 years of age.

Immigration policy was also accompanied by an ideology of "anti-kindism" towards disadvantaged groups, especially aimed at immigrants and asylum seekers.

# Failed states

- A state characterized by economic decline and war
- A state where a large part of the population experiences a marked deterioration in living conditions
- A state that does not have complete control over its own territory
- A state that fails to provide satisfactory public services to its own people - school, health, law and order etc.
- A state characterized by widespread corruption, violence and crime



**Professor Béchir Chourou**  
Sociologist, International Studies  
University of Tunis

## The world's poor are knocking on the doors of Europe

“North Africans who are knocking on the doors of Europe want food, housing, schools and hospitals for themselves and their families. If they get them at home, they stay there. If not, they will continue to knock. If necessary, they will use the back door - or break open the door. So, help us, otherwise, we are coming.”

International Conference on Migration at Steyning, England i 1991



**Eric Hobsbawm (1917 – 2012)**

British historian, specializing on the growth of industrial capitalism

## Identity Politics and the Left

*“The political project of the Left is universalist: it is for all human beings. However we interpret the words, it isn’t liberty for shareholders or blacks, but for everybody. It isn’t equality for all members of the Garrick Club or the handicapped, but for everybody. It is not fraternity only for old Etonians or gays, but for everybody. And identity politics is essentially not for everybody but for the members of a specific group only.”*

*Identity politics and the left. New Left Review 217, 1996*



Filippo Grandi  
UN High Commissioner for Refugees

In Europe, there has been a hostile political climate. Irresponsible and unscrupulous politicians feed on fears of refugees and migrants, to manipulate voters who feel marginalized by globalization.

VG, 31.01.19



Sylvi Listhaug

Minister for Migration and Integration (2015–2018)

Leader of the Norwegian Progress Party

The goodness tyranny rides Norway like a mare (2015)

«Of course I'm worried about my children's future. If we do not gain control over the number (of asylum seekers) who come to Norway, it will mean that we will have to cut back on the welfare schemes and welfare services to which we have become accustomed.»

## Nationalism and racism on the rise

The Progress party is not alone. There are now over 60 such political parties in Europe, all of them with a political platform based on anti-immigration and Islamophobia.

Each of the countries represented here today have at least one such party in their respective countries.

## Structures

## Cultures

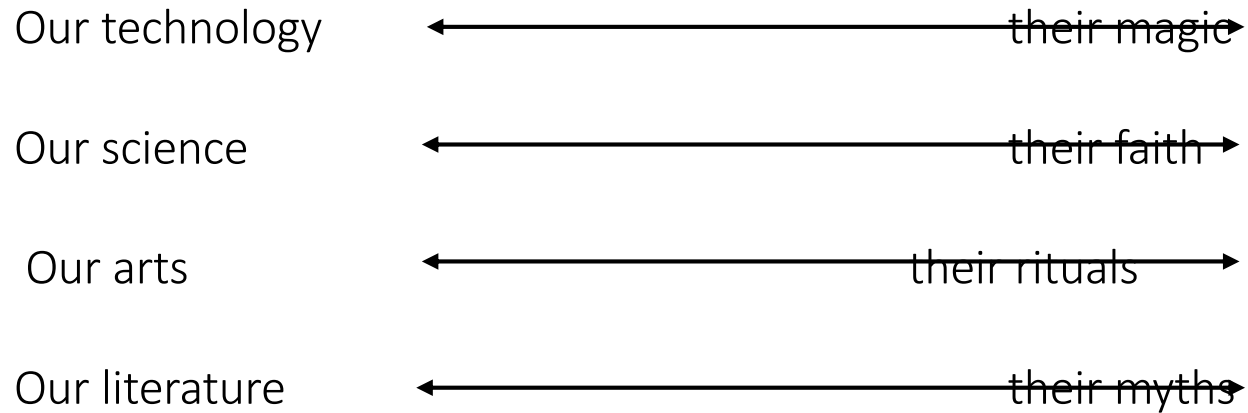
## Biographies

- Progressive evolutionism
  - Orientalism
  - Cultural relativism
- 
- Universalism
  - Cultural Capital
  - Culture as an expression of one's social and material life-experiences
  - Cultures of resistance



# The “West” versus the “Rest”

- describing other cultures in opposition to "Western culture"



# Progressive Evolutionism

To the European colonizers, the superiority of their culture was a total superiority. Not just of technology and productive systems, but also of ideas and values.

The first of these theories within anthropology was progressive evolutionism. It was assumed that societies differed according to their degree of advancement on a universal scale of progress, and that those at the bottom of the hierarchy, the so-called inferior races, were doomed to extinction in the face of modern, industrial civilization.

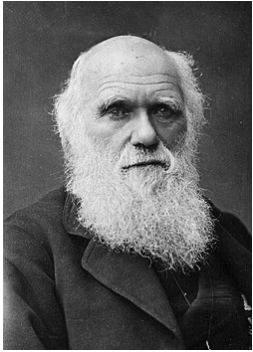


**Knud Rasmussen (1879 – 1933)**  
Danish polar explorer and author

## Culture vs. Nature

The Danish polar explorer Knud Rasmussen published the book “Lapland” in 1907. The background for the book was that he had lived with a reindeer herding Sami family in northern Sweden for a month in 1901. This is what he writes about the Samis in the book:

*"We had traveled together, slept together, eaten together, suffered pain together; and it seemed to me that I had experienced very strange things with these Children of Nature, whose only condition of life is precisely the great wildernesses, which Civilization has not yet placed under it's control"*



**Charles Darwin (1809-1882)**

British naturalist

Credited for the theory of natural selection.

## **Was Darwin a "progressive evolutionist" and a sexist?**

"In a future...not very distant, the civilized human races will surely exterminate and replace the wild races all over the world."

"The chief distinction in the intellectual powers of the two sexes is [shown] by man attaining to a higher eminence, in whatever he takes up, than woman can attain--whether requiring deep thought, reason or imagination, or merely the use of the senses and hands."

**Charles Darwin: The Descent of Men (1871)**



Edward Said (1935-2003)

Professor i engelsk litteratur, Columbia University

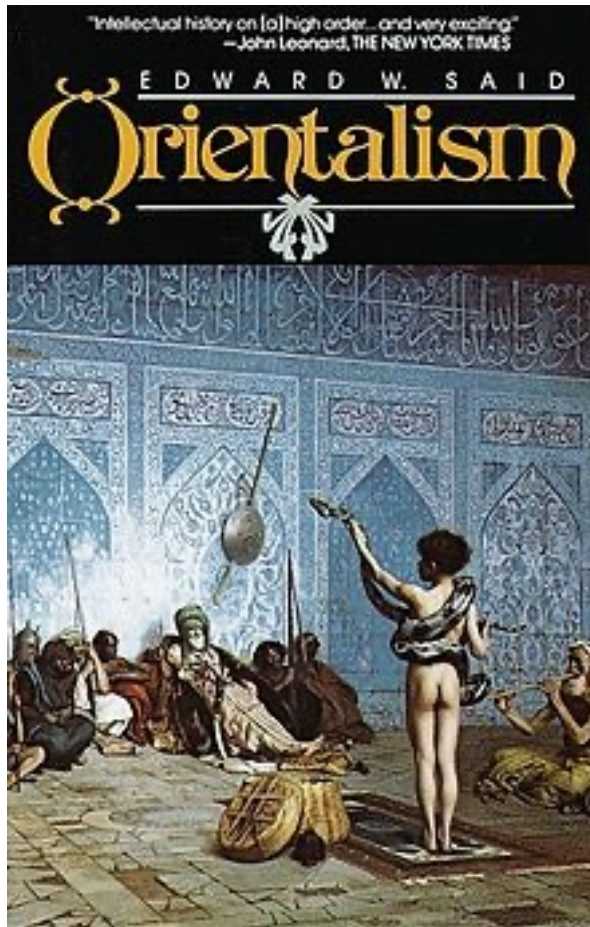
Author: Orientalism (1978)

## Orientalism

"..as its cultural contestant and one of its deepest and most recurring image of the Other...the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality and experience.

(...)European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self (...) Thus a very large mass of writers (...) have accepted the basic distinction between the East and West as a starting point for elaborate theories, epic novels, social descriptions, political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, "mind" destiny and so on."

**Edward Said, Orientalism (1978)**



## Orientalism

Orientalist descriptions are usually based on a series of dichotomies between "us" and "them", which are perceived as natural, self-evident and obvious.

People in the western world are described as rational, sensible, orderly and tolerant. The people of the East are described as exotic, irrational, superstitious, unreliable, intolerant, and at times, dangerous.



Franz Boas (1858 -1942)

German-American anthropologist.

Argued for a relativistic approach to other cultures.

## Cultural Relativism

While animals are controlled by their biology, human behavior is determined by their culture. Culture is an independent system of symbols and values. People learn their culture through socialization in their society. Differences between cultures are large and have arisen arbitrarily.

In contrast to ethnocentrism, cultural relativism is the idea that all cultures are equal and must be understood on their own terms. To understand alien cultures on their own terms, long-term fieldwork is used as a method.

## Immigrant research in Norway in the 70s and 80s

Cultural confrontation in school (Sætersdal 1972)

Cultural disqualification (Grønhaug 1979)

Cultural factors in adaptation to housing and the labor market (Tams-Lyche 1978)

Pakistani dilemmas (Lien, 1982)

About having two countries and a future (Lien, 1982)

About having your feet in one country and your heart in another. (Kramer, 1982)

About belonging to two different worlds at the same time. (Kramer, 1982)

Between two cultures (Lie, 1986)

Bi-culturation in a mono-ethnic society (Oppsand, 1977)

Pakistani ideology (Lien, 1986)

The Norwegian way of being (Klausen, 1984)

Children of Islam (Åhlberg, 1989)





**Fatemeh Keshavarz**

Professor of Persian literature and language

University of Washington

Author of the book: *Jasmine and Stars: Reading more than Lolita in Tehran* (2007)

## Neo-Orientalism: an "Islamization of Evil" and a "Westernization of Goodness"

“Thematically, they constantly focus on the public's phobia (for Islam and the Islamic world): blind faith and atrocities, political underdevelopment, and women's social and sexual oppression. They offer a mixture of fear and conspiracy - a basis for green light in the use of coercion in the region and Western self-glorification”.

# Neo-orientalism

In Norway, neo-orientalist thinking is represented in the writings of organizations such as Human Rights Service, Resett, Dokument.no and SIAN.

In contrast to classical orientalism, which was an academic endeavour to understand the Middle-East, neo-orientalism holds an ideologically motivated agenda characterized by a total absence of professional knowledge.

It is a form of Eurocentrism that openly feeds on conspiracy theories that Europe is threatened by Muslims and migrants. Neo-Oriental literature is not found in bookstores and libraries, but on Twitter, WhatsApp, Facebook and other so-called alternative media.

## Immigrants have become part of the class structure in Norway

Theories that tell us that "cultural collisions" are at the very core of what is usually also called the "immigrant problem" discipline us to think in a certain direction, to perceive conflicts and tensions that arise as a result of race/class relations in society to be conflicts between two incompatible value systems.

In reality, immigrants have no "alternative" institutions with regard to the labor market, the political system, the legislation, the education system, etc. They have both become part of the class structure in Norwegian society and will influence it in the years to come. This is precisely why their cultural development cannot be understood independently and isolated from their social and material reality in this country.

Source: Sunil Loona (1986) Migration, culture, education. Pedagogue, 1986

## So, what is culture?

Culture, in short, is the way in which social groups both understand and express their social and material life experiences.

It's about opinions, values and ideas which are embodied in institutions, in social relations, in belief systems, in habits and in the use of objects in the group's life.

Existing cultural values form a kind of historical reservoir that the group takes up, transforms and develops.

# Countercultures

Worsening living conditions and an experience of discrimination created a basis for the formation of countercultures among young people.

Countercultures express their opposition to the prevailing culture in different ways - some are law-abiding, creative and inventive, others violent and destructive. The resourceful participate in the public debates on migration. They write newspaper articles, books and novels. The resourceless form gangs.

# Unemployment

Registered completely unemployed	3.9 %
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Population excluding immigrants	2.7 %
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All immigrants	9.2 %
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Resettlement refugees living in Norway	46 %
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(SSB, 2021)

# Cramped Households

20 per cent of immigrant households are considered cramped. Those from Somalia top the list. Here, 4 out of 10 households are cramped.

(SSB 2018)

# Child Poverty

115,000 children live in households with persistent low income in Norway.

Children with an immigrant background are increasingly overrepresented and make up 6 out of 10 children in this category. The proportion of children with persistently low household incomes has increased steadily since 2006.

Households with a weak connection to the labour market are most exposed to low income.

SSB, 2021



# Education

Pupils with an immigrant background perform lower on national tests, obtain lower grades, and complete upper secondary education to a lesser extent than other pupils.

- National tests - the biggest differences in performance is in reading ability.
- The parents' level of education is important for the children's school performance.
- Dropout-rate in upper secondary education is double that of majority pupils.
- Immigrant students have the greatest problems getting an apprenticeship.

**Source: Norwegian Directorate of Education 2017**

"We do not want to play with you because you are brown"  
- a survey of perceived racism among young people



One of the social arenas where young people to the greatest extent report experiences of racism, is in school ...

As many as 24 per cent, or one in four, experienced racism, discrimination or unfair treatment regularly, ie 2-3 times a month or more often, in primary school, and as many as 25.6 per cent in upper secondary school.

Project manager Maria Wasvik  
Anti-Racist Center

## Structures

## Cultures

## Biographies

- Personal life crises
- Traumas
- Individual choices
- Fortune
- Misfortune

## When I first arrived in Norway

When I first arrived in Norway I cried all the time. I did not understand why I cried .. I did not know what it meant to be depressed. I had not heard of it. Had it been today, I would have gone to a doctor. (...) We had to move a lot. First, we lived in an asylum reception center, then we got an apartment where we lived for a year. My children started kindergarten. Then we had to move to a hospice and the children had to start in a new kindergarten. Then we had to move again. My family moved six times before we could buy an apartment. It was a very difficult time. It took a long time before I understood everyday things, such as what clothes the children needed in kindergarten (Nora).

Bleka, M. (2013): How to understand and prevent corporal punishment in upbringing? Master in Kindergarten Pedagogy HiOA, unpublished

# IDENTITY AND SELF-CONCEPT

Definitions of self are undoubtedly central to our personality. Our self-image is based on several factors:

**The physical self:** Our awareness of our own body - how it looks, how it feels, smells and tastes.

**The psychological self:** Perceptions we have about our qualities, our intelligence, our generosity, ability to empathize with others.

**The social self:** The awareness we have about whether others like us, are attracted to us, perceives us as being kind and friendly.

**The kinship-based self:** The perception we have about our belonging and connection to society, to family, friends, neighbours etc., and about whether this connection and belonging is valued by others.

# Intercultural dialogue

A genuine dialogue between equal partners presupposes reciprocity, ie that one sees similarities between oneself and the other:

- That their way of life is as meaningful, coherent and understandable as ours.
- That their lives, like ours, are structured by economic, political and cultural conditions.
- That they, like us, have the ability to adapt to their surroundings and, if necessary, change their reality.
- That they are individuals with their own identity and opinions and not a result of our analysis of them.



## Challenging structures of authority, hierarchy and domination

“I think it only makes sense to seek out and identify structures of authority, hierarchy, and domination in every aspect of life, and to challenge them; unless a justification for them can be given, they are illegitimate, and should be dismantled, to increase the scope of human freedom.”

— Noam Chomsky