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Power, Hegemony, and World Society Theory: A Critical Evaluation

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Abstract

World society theory has been one of the better published theoretical paradigms of the past 30 to 40 years. But despite its publishing successes, world society theory and research are beset by a number of theoretical and empirical problems that call into question the theory's ability to accurately describe and explain the global diffusion of government practices, policies, and structures. The authors summarize world society theory's key claims, demonstrate that the theory has trouble explaining a set of diffusion outcomes that it needs to be able to explain, and show that a key reason for this is that the actors highlighted by the theory are embedded in hierarchical and power-laden organizations, networks, and fields that strongly limit the kinds of actions these actors can take and the kinds of cultural scripts they can follow.

Keywords

world society, political economy, world system theory, development, diffusion

World society theory occupies a central position in key sociological debates regarding the global diffusion of isomorphic state structures and Western conceptions of human and organizational agency, autonomy, and rationality, with numerous world society articles published in sociology's top general-interest and specialty journals over the past 25 years (Dobbin, Simmons, and Garrett 2007; Frank, Hironaka, and Schofer 2000; Mathias 2013; Meyer 2010). Arguing that pervasive similarities in the organizational and institutional structures of nation-states indicates the existence of a world culture and a group of professionals and globally institutionalized organizations and associations that diffuse this culture and its associated structures and policies throughout the world, the authors of a highly influential world society article noted,

> We are trying to account for a world whose societies, organized as nation-states, are structurally similar in many unexpected dimensions and change in unexpectedly similar ways. A hypothetical example may be useful. . . If an unknown society were "discovered" on a previously unknown island, it is clear that many changes would occur. A government would soon form, looking something like a modern state with many of the usual ministries and agencies. Official recognition by other states and admission to the United Nations would ensue. The society would be analyzed as an economy, with standard types of data, organizations, and policies for domestic and international transactions. Its people would be formally reorganized as citizens with many familiar rights, while certain categories of citizens—children, the elderly, the poor—would be granted special protection. Standard forms of discrimination, especially ethnic and gender based, would be discovered and decried. The population would be counted and classified in ways specified by world census models. Modern educational, medical, scientific, and family law institutions would be developed. All this would happen more rapidly, and with greater penetration to the level of daily life, in the present day than at any earlier time because world models applicable to the island society are more highly codified and publicized than ever before. Moreover, world-society organizations devoted to educating and advising the islanders about the models' importance and utility are more numerous and active than ever. . . . Thus, without knowing anything about the history, culture, practices, or traditions that obtained in this previously unknown society, we could forecast many changes that, upon "discovery," would descend on the island under the general rubric of "development." Our forecast would be imprecise because of the complexity of the interplay among various world models and local traditions, *but the likely range of outcomes would be quite limited* [italics added]. (Meyer et al. 1997:145–46)

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Meyer et al. (1997) are correct that we could accurately predict many of the changes this island would experience. The problem, however, is that these changes are predicted not just by world society theory, which holds that a specific set of widely held progressive Western values is the primary driver of organizational and institutional diffusion, but also by theoretical perspectives that view factors such as greed, inequality, power, geopolitics, the drive for corporate profits, and the expansionary logic of capitalism as key drivers of organizational and institutional diffusion. For instance, one can imagine nearly identical outcomes on Meyer et al.'s fictitious island as those listed in the preceding paragraph if those who had discovered the island did not, as appears to be the case in Meyer et al.'s example and in world society research more generally, have the best interests of the islanders at heart. If, for example, the organizations devoted to educating and advising the islanders were both more powerful than the organizations already on the island and intent on exploiting the island's labor power and natural resource wealth, one can imagine these organizations forcing the islanders to adopt state institutions and structures that were similar to the ones in the advisers' home countries if doing so would allow more efficient exploitation of the island's labor power and natural resources. Conversely, one can imagine the state institutions and structures these organizations impose on the islanders being only superficially similar to those in the advisers' home countries if the superficial similarities legitimated the structures in the eyes of the "home" countries' citizens and the differences allowed for the efficient exploitation of the island.

Additional alternative explanations do, of course, exist. But the important point for now is that the "existence" of this fictitious desert island and the widespread publication of quantitative world society research that examines only superficial organizational similarities between countries and simply assumes that "world society organizations" are carriers of specific world society cultural attributes do not, by themselves, prove that the theory is valid or invalid.[1] To make such a determination, researchers must investigate whether isomorphically similar state structures really do exist around the world and, if so, whether the global diffusion of these structures results from the cultural and organizational processes world society theory posits.

It is our contention that despite the regular placement of world society articles in sociology's top general-interest and specialty journals, the fact is that world society researchers have done neither of these things and, thus, that they have not provided convincing proof of their overall theoretical argument. The goal of this article, then, is to clearly delineate the perspective's key theoretical arguments and demonstrate that the perspective has trouble explaining the cross-national diffusion of a set of institutional structures whose diffusion the theory needs to be able to explain.

More specifically, we argue that these key institutional structures, although nationally based, are both globally significant and central to world society theory. We further argue that political economy theories that highlight power, inequality, hegemony, systemic conflict, and the ways in which "world society" actors (professionals, organizations, and associations) are embedded in organizational and network-based power structures do a better job than world society theory of explaining why many of the institutional structures highlighted by the theory take the form they do.

Other critiques of world society theory have, of course, been written (see, e.g., Carney, Rappleye, and Silova 2012; Schneiberg and Clemens 2006); and in recent years, scholars have begun conducting research that tests the competing claims of world society and political economy theorists, mostly but not entirely in a quantitative context (see, e.g., Jorgenson, Dick, and Shandra 2011; Longhofer and Jorgenson 2017; Shandra et al. 2011; Sommer, Shandra, and Restivo 2017; Weaver 2008). Nevertheless, our approach is unique in several respects. First, we offer a political economy critique that takes organizational and institutional embeddedness seriously, albeit in ways that differ substantially from how organizational theorists and world society scholars generally conceive embeddedness. Second, we present a set of case studies that empirically demonstrate that the processes producing the institutional structures we examine differ from the processes posited by world society theory, that the actors highlighted by the theory are often bearers of power rather than or in addition to being bearers of culture, that the cultural scripts world society actors follow and disseminate are often not those identified by the theory,[2] and that the key decision makers at important world society institutions are often not those predicted by the theory.

Third, our case studies provide methodological clues for how to move research forward that differ in key ways from suggestions set forth in prior critiques, which tend to recommend that researchers better specify their quantitative models and measures, spend more time identifying the cultural scripts world society actors actually use, or investigate whether local implementations of world society phenomena support or contradict world society theory (Carney et al. 2012; Schneiberg and Clemens 2006). We agree with much of this. We also agree that using statistical models that test competing world society and political economy claims is a clear improvement on testing world society claims without reference to political economy.

However, by demonstrating that the empirical associations world society theorists expect to find are usually the

[1]Throughout their article, Meyer et al. (1997) treat their fictitious island almost as if it were proof of their argument despite the fact that the island is entirely fictitious.

[2]We are not arguing that actors necessarily hold the values upon which their actions and decisions are based. Indeed, power-laden social structures often force actors to act against their values, whether they recognize this to be the case or not.

same as those expected by competing theoretical approaches, and by showing that the only way to adjudicate between these competing approaches is to examine the power-laden organizational, national, and international processes that produce these associations, our case studies suggest an additional path forward. Specifically, they demonstrate that scholars wanting to test or reconceptualize these competing theoretical approaches need to move beyond quantitative tests of association, which dominate the literature, and begin conducting qualitative historical examinations of process that are attentive to the embeddedness of organizations, nations, and professionals in power-laden organizational, national, and international networks. Cultural scripts clearly shape individual and organizational behavior in these networks and must therefore be taken seriously. But because of the power-laden nature of these networks, it is likely that these scripts often operate in ways that are inconsistent with world society theory. As a result, they must also be the subject of process-oriented historical investigation.

We turn now to a detailed description of world society theory.

Literature Review

Rooted in the neoinstitutionalist perspective and developing out of investigations conducted by John Meyer and colleagues in the 1970s and 1980s (Schneiberg and Clemens 2006; Schofer et al. 2011), world society theory and research have been published in numerous books (Boli and Thomas 1999; Drori et al. 2003; Hironaka 2005 ; Krucken and Drori 2009), in sociology's top general-interest journals (Hafner-Burton and Tsutsui 2005; Mathias 2013; Meyer et al. 1997; Schofer and Meyer 2005), and in journals covering a broad array of sociological subfields, including organizational sociology (Drori Jang, and Meyer 2006; Finnemore 1996; Jorgenson 2009), cultural sociology (Elliott 2007, 2014), theory (Meyer and Jepperson 2000; Schneiberg and Clemens 2006; Strang and Meyer 1993), and environmental sociology (Givens and Jorgenson 2013; Jorgenson et al. 2011; Shandra, Shor, and London 2009).

According to the theory, a world society and culture exist that view individuals, organizations, and states as rational, autonomous, competent, sovereign, self-interested, and purposive actors (Strang and Meyer 1993). These culturally constructed actors follow culturally ordered scripts that (1) shape these actors' interests, goals, and behavior; (2) prize modern "universalistic . . . models like citizenship, socioeconomic development, and rationalized justice," and (3) are similarly oriented toward "the nature and value of such matters as citizen and human rights, the natural world and its scientific investigation, socioeconomic development, and education" (Meyer et al. 1997:148). The theory further holds that as these modern values, models, and orientations have spread throughout the world, so too has the diffusion of state and market structures, techniques for monitoring and evaluating government and market actors, and educational and research systems derived from these values, models, and orientations.

Two key mechanisms explaining this diffusion have been theorized. First, because culturally constructed modern actors have very similar goals and values, they look to one another for solutions to problems, borrowing structures, techniques, policies, systems, and so on, that seem to work for others and that have already been legitimized in relation to modern values (Strang and Meyer 1993). A typical example of this given by world society researchers is that because modern actors believe that there is a direct causal pathway leading from education and science to economic growth, many developing countries have willingly adopted the educational and research systems of wealthy nations (Drori et al. 2003).

Second, theorists argue that scientists, professionals, international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) such as the World Wildlife Fund and CARE International, and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) such as the United Nations and World Bank play a key role in diffusing modern organizational practices, policies, structures, and values as they work globally to achieve progressive goals such as promoting human rights (Hafner-Burton and Tsutsui 2005), economic development (Meyer et al. 1997), and environmental protection (Frank et al. 2000; Shandra, Esparza, and London 2012). At times, these actors put pressure on recalcitrant organizations and states to adopt progressive policies, structures, and values, but more often they work with governments and other organizations to achieve goals these governments and organizations want to achieve because they are following similar cultural scripts as those held by Western scientists, professionals, INGOs, and IGOs (Frank et al. 2000). It is important to note, however, that for world society theorists, the goals of professionals, INGOs, and IGOs never seem to be to exploit, use, or harm those governments and organizations they work with or pressure. Instead, the sole causal force leading to this second type of diffusion appears to be world society cultural scripts and the career interests of scientists and professionals who work for INGOs and IGOs.

Scientists and professionals are central actors in world society theory not only because they are believed to be key carriers of world society values, policies, structures, and practices but also because they are viewed as playing a key role in theorizing world society's modernizing project. As "theorists of the modern," scientists and professionals supposedly work to make world society values and practices compelling to broad audiences and to provide potential adopters with abstract models that can be "import[ed] into local situations or use[d] to inform the construction of new social arrangements" (Strang and Meyer 1993:494).

Strang and Meyer (1993) do place scientists and professionals in a hierarchy with unnamed and unspecified superordinates and subordinates. But neither they nor the theory seems to consider the possibility that scientists and professionals might play an important role in harming or exploiting those who adopt their models, that the superordinates Strang and Meyer vaguely refer to may be the dominant force (or a dominant force) shaping scientists' and professionals' theorizing and diffusion activities, or that superordinates might hold values that differ from those highlighted by world society theory.

Finally, world society theorists argue that nations often adopt world society structures and policies in name only such that there is often a disjuncture between world society values and the actual practices of states that have adopted these values. This "decoupling" of practices and values arises for several reasons. Meyer et al. (1997:) noted, for instance, that,

> Decoupling is endemic because nation-states are modeled on an external culture that cannot simply be imported wholesale as a fully functioning system. . . . World culture contains a good many variants of the dominant models, which leads to the eclectic adoption of conflicting principles. Diffusion processes work at several levels and through a variety of linkages, yielding incoherence. Some external elements are easier to copy than others, and many external elements are inconsistent with local practices, requirements, and cost structures. Even more problematic, world cultural models are highly idealized and internally inconsistent, making them in principle impossible to actualize. (p. 154)

In addition, developing nations often lack the resources needed to implement or effectively use the world society policies and structures they adopt (Meyer 2010; Schofer et al. 2011), and nation-states sometimes adopt world society policies and structures they do not intend to follow in order to gain national or world society legitimacy (Buhari-Gulmez 2010).

World society theory is a wide-ranging theory, and its emphasis on the culturally embedded nature of interest and goal formation and INGO, IGO, and state activity is clearly important. It is also clearly drawn from neoinstitutional theory, which, like world society theory, downplays power while highlighting the roles culture, values, mimetic processes, institutional embeddedness, and professionals play in producing organizational behavior and, thus, isomorphism and decoupling (Bromley and Powell 2012; DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Lawrence 2008; Vallas and Hill 2012).

The relationship among culture, values, institutional embeddedness, and individual and organizational behavior can be theorized in alternative ways, however. For instance, political economic theories as different as classical Marxism, world systems theory (Wallerstein 1974), unequal ecological exchange theory (Rice 2009), power structure theory (Domhoff 1990), Sklair's (2001) and Robinson's (2004) theories of the transnational capitalist class, and Downey's (2015) "inequality, democracy, and the environment" theory all view culture as a product of competing material interests in which a nation's or an organization's dominant cultural scripts are hegemonic, favoring the group that holds the most economic or organizational power.

These theories also hold that IGOs, nations, and international relations are dominated by economic and core-nation elites, with some theories positing or assuming a hegemonic transnational or core-nation-based capitalist class rooted in the corporate community. This class, these theories hold, creates and deploys organizational networks, IGOs, and a procapitalist network of professionals and scientists that ensure capitalist rule by (1) imposing exploitative and oppressive institutional structures and monitoring mechanisms on developing countries that often mimic the institutional structures and monitoring mechanisms of wealthy countries, (2) developing and transmitting cultural values and scripts that legitimate and rationalize capitalist power and the institutional structures and monitoring mechanisms that support and maintain capitalist power, and (3) providing skills and cultural training to new cadres of procapitalist professionals in core, semiperiphery, and periphery countries (Downey 2015; Goldman 2005; Robinson 2004; Sklair 2001).

It is thus clear that political economy theories such as these highlight many of the same global actors as does world society theory and that these political economy theories expect these actors to impose the same kinds of institutional structures and monitoring mechanisms on developing countries as world society theory expects will benignly diffuse to them. These political economy theories thus predict many of the same outcomes and virtually all the empirical associations that world society theory predicts will occur.[3] As a result, the only way to empirically adjudicate among them is to study the processes that produce these associations.

In addition to highlighting the foregoing, political economy theories also describe capitalism and capitalist culture quite negatively, using words and phrases such as *brutality, exploitation, oppression, greed*, "the savage sorting of winners and losers," "savage developmentalism," and "development and violence" (Escobar 2004; Quan 2012; Sassen 2014). This contrasts quite strongly with world society theory's near total focus on the positive values of world culture. Indeed, reading world society theory and research, one wonders what happened to values, scripts, and behaviors such as greed, neoliberalism, neocolonialism, the profit motive, cutthroat competition, racism, sexism, rape, oppression, exploitation, forced submission, objectification, warfare, and nationalism. Not only are such values, scripts, and behaviors widespread in the modern world (see, e.g., Downey 2015; Escobar 2004; Quan 2012; Sassen 2014), they are also often held and carried out by the world's most powerful Western organizations, leading to the plausible conclusion that it is perhaps these values, scripts, and behaviors, and not those highlighted by world society theorists, that best characterize world society (if, in

[3]These political economy theories predict outcomes and associations that go beyond the bounds of world society theory too.

fact, a world society actually exists). The existence of these negative modern values and the fact that they are held by some of the world's most powerful organizations and states may also provide the basis for a better explanation of cultural diffusion, isomorphism, and decoupling than that provided by world society theorists.

World society theorists might reasonably counter that the nonprogressive values highlighted in the preceding paragraph represent the reverse "negative" side of the universalism and individualism they argue lie at the heart of modernity and thus that the widespread existence of these values does not contradict their theory since these values represent the dark side of modernity. It is difficult to imagine that world society researchers really believe this, however. Otherwise, they would highlight these negative values in their theory and research instead of only rarely making passing reference to them (see, e.g., Frank et al. 2000:100). Indeed, it seems to us that the best proof that world society researchers do not believe that these negative values are drawn from a similar source as the values they do highlight is that these researchers do not, in fact, highlight values, scripts, and behaviors such as greed, exploitation, racism, sexism, and the glorification of violence in their theory and research.

We discuss these and other issues highlighted by political economists in the remainder of this article, in which we present a set of case studies that empirically contradict world society theory's key claims. At its most basic level our argument in these sections is that world society theory does not adequately explain the processes, factors, and motivations that produce diffusion, isomorphism, and decoupling. It is, of course, very difficult to demonstrate or fully understand the motivations that produce specific behaviors and policy outcomes, but we believe that attempting to do so is important in this case because world society theory holds that a very specific set of cultural scripts plays a more important role than any other factor in motivating world society behavior and producing world society outcomes. Thus, if we uncover evidence that values such as greed or the desire for profits over the well-being of others play a key role in motivating behavior that leads to diffusion, isomorphism, or decoupling, such evidence will contradict world society theory. The explanatory power of world society theory will also be called into question if we find that embeddedness in hierarchical, power-laden, and elite-dominated organizations and networks severely constrains the behaviors of those who might otherwise follow world society cultural scripts or if such embeddedness plays a more important role than world society cultural scripts in producing world society outcomes.

Diffusion Processes

World society theory holds that the diffusion of state and market structures, modern educational and research systems, and techniques for monitoring and evaluating governments, organizations, and individuals occurs for two reasons. First, culturally constructed modern actors mimic one another. Second, scientists, professionals, INGOs, and IGOs following world society cultural scripts work actively to spread modern organizational practices, policies, structures, and values around the world. These professionals and organizations sometimes put pressure on recalcitrant organizations and states but more often work cooperatively with them to achieve mutually shared goals. In all cases, however, world society cultural scripts play the key role in guiding the behavior, interests, and goals of world society actors, whose chief aim is to help those individuals, organizations, and states that have not fully adopted world society values and structures.

Cultural scripts clearly play an important role in shaping interests, goals, and behavior. However, the interests, goals, and behavior of those organizations and states that have historically played key roles in ensuring the diffusion of national and global market structures, rationalized monitoring and evaluation techniques, and modern educational and scientific research systems do not, in many cases, follow the kinds of cultural scripts or diffusion processes highlighted by world society theorists. To demonstrate this, we present two case studies in the following subsections, one on structural adjustment and the other on the Green Revolution, that highlight the roles that global inequality, competing interests, embeddedness in organizationally and internationally based power structures, and cultural scripts ignored by world society theorists play in both shaping the behavior of globally powerful organizations and diffusing a wide range of Western policies, organizational structures, and monitoring techniques to developing countries.

As we shall see, these cases, and those we present later in the article, are not mere exceptions to the world society rule. Instead, they describe events and processes that have played significant roles in shaping the policies, structures, and behavior of nearly all the world's developing nations. They also examine institutions, structures, and policies that are central to world society theory, including ones that structure markets, intensify the monitoring and evaluation of governments and markets, and create and shape modern educational and scientific research systems. The isomorphic structures, policies, and institutions described in the case studies are thus ones that world society theory has to be able to both predict and explain, not only because they are globally important and central to the theory but also because they are predicted, for different reasons and as the result of very different historical processes, by many political economists. The question, then, is whether the historical processes described in the case studies provide stronger support for world society theory or its political economy alternatives.

Structural Adjustment Loans

The World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), through the use of structural adjustment and other conditional lending policies, have played a key role since the

1980s in shaping developing nations' economic and governmental structures. Structural adjustment loans, which have gone by various names over the years, are provided to low- and middle-income countries experiencing severe balance-of-payment problems. But regardless of what name they are given, structural adjustment loans come with conditions that require debtor countries to adopt specific fiscal, monetary, exchange rate, and structural policies designed to reduce the role of the government in the economy, increase the role of markets and the profit incentive in determining economic outcomes, strengthen private property rights, alter debtor nations' macroeconomic environments, and reduce trade barriers that impede the flow of capital, goods, and natural resources (Peet 2003).[4] In practice this means that countries accepting structural adjustment and other conditionality loans have had to enact policies such as reducing government spending on health, education, and welfare, reducing or eliminating tariffs and other import restrictions, removing restrictions on foreign investment, increasing interest rates, weakening labor legislation, privatizing state enterprises, reducing government regulation of the market, and rewriting mining codes to lower costs and increase profits for foreign mining companies (Bello, Cunningham, and Rau 1999). Many of these policies mimic those of Western nations,[5] though often in more exaggerated forms, and the ultimate market structure outcomes of these policies—the drastic reduction of trade and investment barriers and the minimization of government intervention in the market—are extreme versions of the structured market outcomes produced by neoliberal economic policies in powerful Western nations, particularly the United States.

Structural adjustment and other conditionality loans often also require borrowing countries to restructure government agencies, adopt new self-monitoring techniques, and drastically alter the balance of power among government agencies (Goldman 2005; Harrison 2004; Meltzer 2000; Woods 2006). For instance, in Uganda and Tanzania, structural adjustment conditions adopted in the 1990s required these nations to undertake budgetary management reforms that increased the power of these nations' ministries of finance, providing them with new "technologies of control" that allowed them to monitor and "ensure fiscal prudence throughout much of the state" (Harrison 2004:84). During this time period Uganda and Tanzania were also forced to adopt extensive administrative (personnel) reforms that reconfigured government operations and increased the power of these nations' civil service ministries (Harrison 2004:85–86).

World Bank budgetary management reform programs have been undertaken in at least 30 developing nations and have included the adoption of "financial management information systems . . . [and] medium-term expenditure frameworks, . . . [reform of] procurement, auditing, monitoring and evaluation, [and] the strengthening of key budgetary accountability institutions, like public accounts committees of the legislature and supreme audit institutions" (Wescott 2008:19).

Administrative reforms resulting from World Bank conditionality loans were also widespread in the 1980s and 1990s (Nunberg and Nellis 1995; World Bank, Operations Evaluation Department 1999). For example, in the 1980s, 60 World Bank structural adjustment loans and 30 World Bank technical assistance loans featured significant civil service reform programs, with 55 of these loans going to 25 African nations, 20 going to 10 Latin American and Caribbean nations, 9 going to 7 Asian nations, and 6 going to 3 Middle Eastern and North African nations (Nunberg and Nellis 1995). These reform programs, and those carried out in the 1990s, included requirements such as civil servant training initiatives; wage policy reforms; staff reduction programs; organizational redesign; the use of self-monitoring tools such as organizational audits, functional reviews, and manpower audits; and changes to civil service labor codes, staff regulations, and bidding requirements (World Bank, Operations Evaluation Department 1999).

Thus, when low- and middle-income countries accept structural adjustment and other conditionality loans, they are essentially turning over control of significant chunks of their economies, government organizational structures, and government oversight activities to the World Bank and the IMF, which make the key decisions regarding which adjustment policies are included in the loans (Eurodad 2006; Harrison 2004). In accepting the terms of these loans, developing countries are also adopting state and market structures and rationalized monitoring and evaluation systems that are supported by important world society actors, including the World Bank, the IMF, the professionals and economists who work for these two organizations, and many economists and development specialists around the world. As a result, over the past 35 years these countries' economic and government structures, though still exhibiting significant differences from those of Western countries, have become increasingly similar to one another and to those of Western countries. Moreover, most of the world's developing countries have undergone structural adjustment. Eighty-nine developing nations accepted 566 structural adjustment loans between 1980 and 1991 (Bello et al. 1999); in 2000, some 70 countries were involved in IMF structural adjustment programs, with many of these nations having received IMF funding for at least 20 years (Meltzer 2000); and between 1980 and 2013, at least 47 African nations accepted World Bank

[4]The World Bank and the IMF argue that compared with the loans they made in the 1980s and early 1990s, their more recent loans have been less conditional and based more on the wishes and desires of borrowing countries. This is patently false (Eurodad 2006; Goldman 2005; Griffiths and Todoulos 2014; Harrison 2004; Hernandez 2016; IMF 2009).

[5]Not all structural adjustment conditions mimic the policies of powerful Western countries, which helps partially explain why decoupling often occurs in developing countries.

conditionality loans (Hernandez 2016). In addition, between 2002 and 2009 the IMF approved 126 new conditionality arrangements with developing nations, with an average of 9 conditions included in each of the loans approved between 2002 and 2008 (IMF 2009), and from October 2011 to August 31, 2013, the IMF approved structural conditionality loans for 22 developing nations (Griffiths and Todoulos 2014). IMF and World Bank conditional lending has thus played a key role in producing a wide range of isomorphic outcomes in most of the world's developing countries.

The question, then, is why developing countries accept structural adjustment and other conditionality loans, particularly given that structural adjustment and conditionality have done significantly more harm than good to developing nations' citizens and economies (Bello et al. 1999; Peet 2003; SAPRIN 2004; Toussaint 2005; Vreeland 2007). One likely reason is that at least some developing nation leaders and economists have come to accept or partially accept neoliberal cultural scripts that support IMF and World Bank policy (Goldman 2005). Another likely reason is that specific government agencies and specific economic elites in developing countries benefit from at least some conditionality policies or from the flow of loan money to their countries. However, the chief reason developing countries accept structural adjustment and other conditionality loans is that they usually have very little choice in the matter. Nations that seek out these loans generally do so because they are experiencing severe economic crises that require outside funding they cannot obtain without IMF and World Bank support. This support comes not only in the form of World Bank and IMF loans but also from the seal of approval that debtor nations receive from the IMF and World Bank, which provides them with access to other sources of funding that are otherwise unavailable to them (UNCTAD 2000; Vreeland 2007).

But if developing countries' acceptance of structural adjustment is based on necessity rather than choice, then we must ask why the World Bank and IMF have been such strong supporters of structural adjustment. One possibility, of course, is that the economists and professionals who work at the World Bank and IMF adhere to the kinds of cultural scripts that world society scholars highlight. There are two problems with this answer, however. First, even if this is true, it does not explain why World Bank and IMF lending policies have so consistently harmed developing countries. Second, these economists and professionals are not the key power holders at the World Bank and IMF.

Instead, the United States is the dominant power at the World Bank and IMF, mainly because of these organizations' voting and funding structures (Babb 2009; Boughton 2001; Downey 2015; Kapur, Lewis, and Webb 1997). This was particularly true in the early and mid-1980s when structural adjustment was adopted by these organizations as their key policy tool to fight a debt crisis that was sweeping through the developing world at that time (Bello et al. 1999; Kapur et al 1997). Indeed, former U.S. Federal Reserve chairman Paul Volcker claimed that in the 1980s, the Federal Reserve and the U.S. Treasury Department essentially "directed the lending of the [World] Bank" (Gwin 1997:236). Stanley Fischer, World Bank chief economist from January 1988 to August 1990, further noted that during the mid-1980s,

> The US squelched [World Bank] research on [debt relief as a possible solution to the developing world's debt crisis]. . . . [W] e had to keep [this] research quiet, because the institution was under political orders (not only from the US, also the Germans, and the Brits) not to raise issues of debt relief. (Kapur et al. 1997:1195)

Thus, it is not at all surprising that when Mexico signaled the severity of the developing world's impending debt crisis in 1982 by announcing that it might have to default on its loans to private banks, the lead actors involved in solving the crisis were Volcker, U.S. secretary of the treasury Donald Regan, IMF managing director Jacques De Larosiere, and Mexican secretary of finance and public credit Silva Herzog, with Volcker taking the lead role in adopting structural adjustment as the solution for the crisis (Boughton 2001; Kapur et al. 1997). Nor is it surprising that when major changes were made to World Bank and IMF structural adjustment lending policy in 1985 and 1989, the key people involved in directing these changes were Volcker and U.S. secretary of the treasury James Baker in 1985 and U.S. secretary of the treasury Nicholas Brady in 1989, with the World Bank apparently unaware of the expanded lending role Baker's plan envisioned for it until Baker publicly announced the plan (Boughton 2001; Woods 2006).

Volcker, Regan, Baker, and Brady were not world society professionals tirelessly spreading modern cultural values and policies around the world and ceaselessly looking out for the interests of developing countries and their citizens. Instead, Baker was a long-time Republican Party operative with strong business ties, and Volcker, Regan, and Brady were former bankers and financiers, presumably looking out for the interests of U.S. banks, businesses, and investment firms rather than the interests of the developing world. For instance, at the time of his appointment to head the Treasury Department in 1981, Regan was CEO of Merrill Lynch, and from 1972 to 1975 he was vice chairman of the Board of Directors of the New York Stock Exchange. Likewise, when Brady was nominated to become secretary of the treasury in 1988, he was chairman of the board and managing director of Dillon, Reed, a Wall Street investment banking firm. He also sat on the boards of directors of Doubleday and NCR.

Volcker had similar ties to the finance industry, which was directly threatened by the developing world's inability to pay back its debts. In addition to being Federal Reserve chairman from 1979 to 1987, Volcker had been president of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York from 1975 to 1979, undersecretary of the treasury from 1969 to 1974, and vice president and director of forward planning at Chase Manhattan Bank from 1965 to 1969 (Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs 1979). Volcker was also a member of the Trilateral Commission when he was appointed by President Jimmy Carter to head the Federal Reserve. The Trilateral Commission was a very influential policy discussion group in the 1970s whose members filled 25 prominent positions in the Carter administration. It was founded by David Rockefeller in 1973 and in the 1970s received nearly all its funding from corporations, individual capitalists, and foundations created by capitalists, including the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, the Ford Foundation, Exxon, General Motors, David Packard (of Hewlett-Packard), and the Lilly endowment (see Sklar 1980 for details on Trilateral Commission funders). Describing the Trilateral Commission's policy positions on global trade and government market intervention in the late 1970s, Cox (quoted in Peschek 1987) stated,

> The fundamental commitment of the [Trilateral] perspective is to an open world market with relatively free movement of capital, goods, and technology. Government interventions should be of a kind that support this goal, and such interventions as would impede it are to be condemned. *Powerful governments are to enforce this code of conduct upon weaker governments, using for this purpose especially the international organizations they control* [italics added]. (p. 84)

It is quite clear, then, that Volcker, Regan, and Brady all had strong ties to the finance industry. It is also clear that Volcker was a member of an influential, capitalist-funded policy discussion group that wanted to use international organizations such as the IMF and World Bank to force weak countries to reduce their trade and investment barriers so as to promote the international free flow of capital, goods, resources, and technology. These, of course, are exactly the kinds of policies enforced by the IMF and World Bank under structural adjustment.

Using structural adjustment to reduce trade barriers and promote international trade clearly harmed developing countries (UNCTAD 2000; Toussaint 2005; Woods 2006). But it benefited U.S. corporations, including financial corporations, by providing them with new markets and new investment opportunities and by increasing their supply of labor and natural resources. Structural adjustment further helped the finance industry by providing debtor nations with the money they needed to repay their debts to the private banking system.

It is thus apparent that the global isomorphism in government and market structures and government monitoring systems brought on by structural adjustment was not the result of progressive world society cultural scripts that spread relatively benignly throughout the world. Instead, structural adjustment was designed to promote a set of U.S. economic and political interests that were directly opposed to those of developing nations and their people (Babb 2009; Bello et al. 1999; Toussaint 2005). These U.S. interests were based in greed and the profit motive and achieved through the exploitation and political subordination of developing nations and the exertion of power, a set of culturally sanctioned values, actions, and processes that we believe are more central to the functioning of the world capitalist system and to the organizational and institutional isomorphism highlighted by world society theorists than are the cultural values highlighted by these theorists.

We agree with world society theorists that many of the economists and professionals employed by the World Bank and IMF likely follow, at least in part, the kinds of cultural scripts highlighted by world society theory. We also agree that economists and professionals play an important role in theorizing the IMF's and World Bank's "modernization" project. Where we differ from world society theorists is in recognizing that these economists and professionals and the World Bank and IMF themselves are embedded in larger power structures in which economic and political elites in the United States (and Europe) determine the basic policies carried out by the World Bank, the IMF, and the professionals and economists who work for these organizations. We also recognize that U.S. economic elites play an important role in shaping the theorizing activities of economists and professionals through their funding of policy planning organizations such as the American Enterprise Institute, the Brookings Institution, and the Trilateral Commission (see, e.g., Domhoff 1990; Sklar 1980).

Whether the economists and professionals who work at the World Bank and IMF really hold progressive world society values or merely profess them is an empirical question that falls outside the scope of this article. But even if they do hold these values, our point is that these values play little, if any, role in determining the broad policies that the World Bank and IMF follow. They thus play little, if any, role in producing the organizational and structural isomorphism brought about by these organizations' lending policies, except perhaps by providing ideological legitimation among World Bank and IMF employees and wealthy nation citizens for policies that promote global exploitation and harm (Gramsci 1971; Sklair 2001). Put differently, these values do not operate in the ways world society theory expects them to operate, either because World Bank and IMF professionals do not hold them or because they hold them but are embedded as subordinates in hierarchical and power-laden organizations and networks that strongly limit the actions they can take.

Finally, we recognize that the actions of economic and political elites who shape World Bank and IMF policy are likely guided by cultural scripts that use modern notions of autonomy, competence, self-interest, and purposive action to justify exploitation, oppression, and other unequal political, geopolitical, and market outcomes. However, as noted previously, world society theory does not seem to recognize the existence or potential causal significance of this darker side of modernity.

The Green Revolution

The Green Revolution in India provides researchers with another important test of world society theory. Not only did the Green Revolution result in India's adoption of a broad range of agricultural technologies and policies borrowed and adapted from the West, it was also accompanied (and preceded) by India's adoption of a set of agricultural research and education institutions clearly modeled on those developed by the United States in an earlier era. Goldsmith, writing in 1988, noted for instance that

> India now possesses what most experts agree is one of the biggest and best systems for farming research in the [developing] World . . . a system that borrows heavily from the model that proved successful in the earlier modernization of American agriculture. India's leaders laid the foundation for this research system in the 1950s and early 1960s, well before they introduced high-yielding strains of foodgrains. They got considerable technical assistance for this task from the United States government, American universities, and private US-based foundations [most importantly the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations]. (Goldsmith 1988a:317)

Among the most important of India's modern research and educational institutions were a set of agricultural universities created in the late 1950s and early 1960s that adopted many U.S. university practices and values and that helped tailor agricultural research to India's specific needs (Goldsmith 1988a). Also important were a set of nonuniversity agricultural research institutions that connected Indian researchers to an international network of agricultural research centers that played a key role in developing Green Revolution technologies and diffusing these technologies to developing countries around the world (Perkins 1997; Rockefeller Archive Center n.d.; Shiva 1991). The question, then, is whether India's adoption of these key education and research institutions resulted from the kinds of cultural scripts and diffusion processes highlighted by world society scholars or from some other set of factors.

It is clearly the case that there were a group of Indian and U.S. researchers and Indian government bureaucrats who supported the Green Revolution and the development of India's agricultural research and educational capabilities, likely for many of the reasons set forth by world society researchers (Goldsmith 1988a; Sharma 1999). Nevertheless, these researchers and bureaucrats occupied subordinate positions in the national and international organizations and networks in which they were embedded. Moreover, the building of India's agricultural research and teaching capacity, the development of Green Revolution technology, and India's decision to pursue the Green Revolution would not have occurred without the support of the United States' Ford and Rockefeller foundations and without the support and coercion of the U.S. government, with these latter three actors supporting the Green Revolution for decidedly "non–world society" reasons.

For instance, integral to the development of India's research capacity were a set of exchange programs that allowed Indian and U.S. universities and researchers to work with one another. Support for these programs came primarily from the Rockefeller Foundation and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), with the Rockefeller Foundation providing 90 Indian leaders with short-term travel grants from 1956 to 1970 and USAID providing educational training grants for 2,000 Indians to visit the United States (Shiva 1991). USAID also funded 35 rural development contracts between 1956 and 1966. These contracts allowed U.S. universities to work on agricultural "institution building [in India] in one or more of three areas—education, research, and/or extension . . . [with] most contracts . . . focused on efforts to create an agricultural university, in the land-grant university tradition" (Brown 1970:69).

In the 1950s the Rockefeller and Ford foundations also helped create an institutional infrastructure in India that accomplished several goals: it enrolled Indian researchers and government officials in the foundations' agricultural modernization project, helped build support among Indian researchers and government officials for the Green Revolution, tested and demonstrated the efficacy of intensive agricultural practices, and connected Indian researchers to a global agricultural research network that the Rockefeller Foundation helped create (Perkins 1997; Rockefeller Archive Center n.d.; Rosen 1985; Shiva 1991; Varshney 1989). In 1952, for example, the Rockefeller Foundation established its Indian Agricultural Program (IAP) (Perkins 1997). Although not fully implemented until 1956, the IAP conducted agricultural research in India that helped improve cereal yields. The IAP also helped Indian officials reorganize the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (Perkins 1997), where an Indian agricultural scientist, M. S. Swaminathan, began taking interest in high-yield wheat varieties. Swaminathan also arranged for Norman Borlaug, the creator of the semidwarf wheat variety that would be at the center of the Green Revolution, to come to India in 1963.

Finally, the Ford Foundation's Intensive Agricultural District Program provided a small number of farmers with fertilizer, high-yield variety seeds, and infrastructural support (transportation, credit, training, etc.). By providing these farmers with all the necessary inputs to undertake intensive agriculture, the program demonstrated how a "package" approach similar to the one eventually adopted during the Green Revolution could increase agricultural yields (Lewis 1995; Perkins 1997; Rosen 1985; Varshney 1989). Although the Intensive Agricultural District Program was small, it and other similar projects conducted by the Rockefeller and Ford foundations played an important role in demonstrating the efficacy and viability of new Green Revolution technologies.

The Rockefeller Foundation also played a key role in developing an international network of agricultural research institutions that provided the technological breakthroughs that made the Green Revolution possible and that helped spread Green Revolution technologies around the world (Perkins 1997; Shiva 1991). These research institutions included the Mexican Agricultural Program (MAP), which opened in 1943; the Philippines' International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), which was founded in 1962; Mexico's International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center, which opened its doors in 1963; Colombia's International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), which opened in 1967; and Nigeria's International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), which was founded in 1967. According to the Rockefeller Archive Center (n.d.) these research institutes

> were staffed from the close-knit network of agricultural professionals fostered by the RF [Rockefeller Foundation]. The RF's rice program in Asia was headed by Richard Bradfield, one of the three original authors of the report on agriculture in Mexico that led to MAP. Sterling Wortman, IRRI's first assistant director, had been the RF's corn breeder in Mexico. CIAT's first director general was Ulysses J. Grant, a plant breeder in the RF Colombia program and former RF Director of Agriculture. IITA was closely connected to the University of Ibadan, a major focus of the RF's University Development Program.

Thus, when India decided to pursue Green Revolution policies in 1965 and to keep pursuing these policies in subsequent years, its agricultural research centers and scientists were part of a global research network that was created largely by two U.S. foundations and that with the assistance of the World Bank grew in the 1970s to include 13 research centers and their coordinating organization, the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR n.d.; Rockefeller Archive Center n.d.).

World society researchers would likely argue that the Ford and Rockefeller foundations, USAID, their professional employees and scientists, and other key supporters of the Green Revolution were following world society cultural scripts that prized the use of science and social science to improve individual and social well-being and modernize economic activity, in this case by attempting to decrease world hunger through agricultural modernization. The problem with this argument is that the United States and the Ford and Rockefeller foundations appear to have been more interested in the geopolitical than the humanitarian ramifications of hunger in India and the rest of the developing world. Indeed, the historical record shows that the United States and U.S. foundations were mainly interested in promoting agricultural modernization in developing countries because demographers had convinced them that without agricultural modernization, population growth in these countries would produce political instability that would harm U.S. interests and potentially result in successful communist revolutions (Hess 2003; Perkins 1997).

Specifically, at the core of the Green Revolution was an ecological neo-Malthusianism that held that poverty and hunger resulting from high population growth rates and finite agricultural limits in the developing world was as great a threat to U.S. economic and political interests as Soviet and Chinese adventurism and military power. Thus, in addition to standing up militarily to the Soviet Union and communist China, the United States would have to use its financial power and scientific, institutional, and organizational expertise to reduce poverty and hunger and promote economic growth and agricultural production in the developing world, albeit in a manner that would ensure U.S. hegemony and sizable corporate profits (Hess 2003; Perkins 1997).

The Rockefeller Foundation, along with university experts and other foundations, was a major proponent of this population-national security theory (PNST). The foundation was also particularly influential in the development of the theory: it played a "prime role in funding [and coordinating] population studies before, during, and after [World War II] . . . [and] was at the center of the network that produced PNST" (Perkins 1997:124). It also helped integrate population studies into U.S. strategic thinking.

By linking population and national security concerns, the proponents of PNST were able to gain the attention of U.S. policy makers. As a result, in his 1949 inauguration speech, President Truman, relying in part on ideas drawn from PNST, presented a four-point plan for U.S. foreign policy, the third point of which called for the collective military defense of Europe against the Soviet Union and the fourth point of which called on the United States to share its scientific resources and expertise in agricultural and industrial production so as to foster peace and prosperity in the developing world (Perkins 1997; Truman 1949). Truman presented his fourth point in mostly humanitarian terms, but the goal was clearly to protect U.S. interests. For instance, referring to the developing world, Truman (1949) noted, "Their poverty is a handicap and threat both to them and to more prosperous areas." Indeed, even USAID (2016) argued that Truman's four-point plan was designed primarily to protect U.S. economic and geopolitical interests:

> Building on the success of the Marshall Plan, President Harry S. Truman proposed an international development assistance program in 1949. The 1950 Point Four Program focused on two goals: Creating markets for the United States by reducing poverty and increasing production in developing countries [and] diminishing the threat of communism by helping countries prosper under capitalism.

To meet the goal laid out in his fourth point, Truman created the International Development Advisory Board in 1950, with Nelson Rockefeller appointed to chair the board. Rockefeller's appointment to chair the board was important not only because he had ties to the Rockefeller Foundation but also because as U.S. coordinator of inter-American affairs during World War II, he had strongly argued that promoting the welfare of Latin America was central to protecting U.S. economic and military interests in the region (Perkins 1997). Moreover, in 1941 he and U.S. vice president

Henry Wallace played a key role in getting the Rockefeller Foundation to support agricultural research in Mexico as a means to forestall communism and protect investments made by the Rockefeller family (Dowie 2001).

It should be quite clear, then, that the resources and organizational linkages that made India's Green Revolution possible probably would not have been provided to India in the absence of U.S. geopolitical concerns and the procapitalist and militantly anticommunist cultural scripts that guided the Ford and Rockefeller foundations and the White House.[6] Moreover, India decided to pursue the Green Revolution in 1965 not only because the United States and the Ford and Rockefeller foundations helped lay the groundwork for the Green Revolution in India and not simply because an important group of Indian political leaders supported agricultural modernization, but also because the U.S. government used food aid as leverage to coerce India into modernizing its agricultural practices and policies (Lewis 1995).

The United States was able to coerce India because U.S. Public Law 480, which promised surplus grain to India and other developing countries, was set to expire in 1965, at the same time as India was experiencing a severe food crisis exacerbated by prolonged drought (Prasad 1982). At this critical juncture, U.S. president Lyndon B. Johnson decided that rather than providing India with the food it needed according to a regular schedule and at the levels India requested, he would adopt what was referred to as a short-tether policy, under which U.S. food aid would not be released until the last moment and only with the approval of Johnson himself.

Johnson adopted this policy for several reasons, one of which was to persuade India to modernize its agricultural policies, a point he made quite clearly in several statements both at that time and later (Frankel 2005; Lewis 1995; Prasad 1982; Sharma 1999). Johnson knew that India's political leaders would take his threat seriously, not only because of India's food crisis but also because U.S. food aid represented roughly 80 percent of all food aid to India between 1965 and 1967 (Prasad 1982).

In this context, and in the midst of strong disagreements among leading Indian government officials about the future direction of Indian agriculture, Chidambaram Subramaniam, Green Revolution supporter and India's minister of food and agriculture, met with U.S. secretary of agriculture Orville Freeman in November 1965. During this meeting, Subramaniam and Freeman made a secret agreement on Indian reforms that if enacted would, among other things, drastically increase India's investment in agriculture, promote fertilizer production and foreign private investment in fertilizer production, modify India's agricultural credit system, and commit India to what was referred to as an "intensive areas approach." This approach would focus Green Revolution efforts in specific areas of India, with "favored areas hav[ing] first call on seed, fertilizer, and other inputs" (Lewis 1995:112). In return, Freeman promised to secure emergency food aid for India (Lewis 1995). The following month, Subramaniam received cabinet approval for these reforms, which he had been unable to secure in August of that year, and four days later, President Johnson released 1.5 million tons of wheat and provided India with a $50 million loan for fertilizer (Goldsmith 1988b; Lewis 1995).[7]

It is thus apparent that India's decision to pursue the Green Revolution and adopt the technologies, policies, and educational and research infrastructure that made the Green Revolution possible did not follow the diffusion script set forth by world society theorists. Although it is likely that many of the Indian and U.S. scientists and professionals involved in bringing the Green Revolution to India held the types of values highlighted by world society theory, the key people and organizations providing the resources that made the Green Revolution in India possible did not provide these resources for progressive, humanitarian, world society reasons. Instead, they wanted to protect U.S. economic and geopolitical interests against the spread of communism. Moreover, rather than regarding India as rational, competent, autonomous, and sovereign, as world society theory holds should have been the case, President Johnson clearly used power politics to force India to adopt policies that the United States but only some Indian leaders wanted India to adopt (the World Bank and IMF also forced India to adopt pro–Green Revolution policies India did not want to adopt; Frankel 2005; Lewis 1995; Shiva 1991).

All this suggests that if world society cultural scripts did play a role in diffusing Green Revolution technology and U.S.-style educational and research institutions to India, it was a different or more minor role than expected by the

[6]It is, of course, possible that the demographers who helped develop PNST followed world society cultural scripts and merely used geopolitics and anticommunism to trick the Ford and Rockefeller foundations and the U.S. government into supporting world society modernization efforts. But that seems highly unlikely given the militant anticommunism prevalent in the United States at the time and the fact that these demographers received funding from the Rockefeller Foundation, which was therefore in a position to shape their careers and the broad contours of their research.

[7]Although Subramaniam and India's prime minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri, both supported India's move to intensive agriculture, other Indian policy makers, led by the finance minister, T. T. Krishnamachari, and members of India's Planning Commission, strongly opposed such reforms. Thus, in August 1965, when Subramaniam released an outline for a new agricultural strategy that advocated the use of high-yield variety seeds and other modern inputs and promoted intensive agricultural production concentrated in select areas of India (Frankel 2005; Perkins 1997; Sharma 1999), Krishnamachari and the Planning Commission prevented implementation of the strategy. They also successfully blocked the Ministry of Food and Agriculture's attempt to implement an Intensive Agricultural Areas Program in October 1965 (Frankel 1971, 2005; Perkins 1997).

theory. For instance, the U.S. and the Ford and Rockefeller foundations may have used world society cultural scripts to legitimize the Green Revolution and enroll Indian and U.S. scientists, bureaucrats, educators, and universities in a modernization project that was ostensibly designed to promote humanitarian goals but was really designed to serve the economic and geopolitical interests of the U.S. In other words, world society cultural scripts may have represented a form of ideological power that economic and political elites used to gain support and weaken resistance among scientists, professionals, and developing nations.

Conversely, these scripts may have helped influence the decisions the United States and the Ford and Rockefeller foundations made to use technology, science, and education to solve the threat that peasant hunger purportedly posed to U.S. hegemony. Nevertheless, maintaining U.S. hegemony was the dominant value shaping these decisions and the reason for making these decisions. In addition, the technological approach the United States and the Ford and Rockefeller foundations supported clearly helped corporate profits and U.S. hegemony more than alternative solutions such as land redistribution would have done (Carolan 2011; Shiva 1991), suggesting that cultural values such as the profit motive and geopolitical dominance may also have led to a reliance on technological solutions.

It must also be recalled that when peasant threats reached a certain level in the 1960s and 1970s, the United States generally reverted either to direct military action (in Vietnam and Laos, for instance), which clearly violated the autonomy and sovereignty of those nations the United States attacked, or to supporting repressive governments that did not respect the autonomy and sovereignty of the individual or abide by universal models of citizenship and rationalized justice. This suggests, of course, that world society cultural scripts were not the driving force behind U.S. actions. It is therefore quite difficult to maintain that these cultural scripts played a central role in bringing the Green Revolution and its associated research and educational institutions to India in the 1950s and 1960s.

The Green Revolution did, however, play a key role in diffusing a set of policies, technologies, and institutions of a kind central to world society theory: scientifically based agricultural modernization policies, scientifically rationalized agricultural technology, and modern educational and research institutions that supported and disseminated rational scientific research. The Green Revolution also helped diffuse those modernized economic structures it was designed to support, and its policies, technologies, and institutions were disseminated to many developing countries, not just India.

The fact that the dissemination of Green Revolution policies, technologies, and institutions to India did not result from the kinds of diffusion processes posited by world society theory, that India and the professionals and scientists involved in the Green Revolution were embedded as subordinate actors in hierarchical and power-laden organizational networks at the national and international levels, and that world society cultural scripts did not push the Green Revolution forward in ways expected by world society theory are very damaging to the theory. The same processes and cultural scripts that are damaging to world society theory do conform, however, with the expectations of many political economists, who like world society theorists expect isomorphic policies, structures and institutions designed by wealthy countries to diffuse to developing countries but for decidedly non–world society reasons. This case study and the one before it thus demonstrate that to determine whether world society theory or its political economy alternatives better describe the diffusion of isomorphic state, market, research, educational, and other structures to the developing world, researchers have to study the processes that produce these structures rather than simply documenting that positive associations exist between the presence of these structures and a nation's ties to specific global actors.

Explaining Decoupling

Borrowing from neoinstitutional theory, which has posited a number of plausible mechanisms for decoupling within domestic organizational fields, world society theorists argue that nations often adopt world society structures and policies in name only (Bromley and Powell 2012). The result, these theorists argue, is that there is often a disjuncture between the adoption of world society values, structures, and policies and the actual practices of states that have adopted these values, structures, and policies. This "decoupling" of practices from structures, policies, and values arises, they argue, for several reasons: external cultures are not easily adopted, countries often adopt conflicting world society principles, world society values often conflict with local practices, world society values are often too idealized and internally inconsistent to put into practice, some values are easier to adopt than others, developing nations often lack the resources or infrastructure needed to put into practice or make effective use of the world society policies and structures they adopt, and nations often adopt world society policies and structures they do not intend to follow in order to gain national or world society legitimacy (Buhari-Gulmez 2010; Meyer 2010; Meyer et al. 1997; Schofer et al. 2011).

Defending one's theoretical approach by arguing that rather than explaining what it was originally designed to explain it only explains surface institutional forms and structures is strange to say the least, as is the fact that a theory that advertises itself as explaining a "surprisingly ubiquitous" isomorphism has to turn to decoupling so often because the outcomes it wants to explain are so often nonisomorphic. One is also left wondering both how useful the theory is if all it explains is surface appearances rather than actual state behavior and how one is supposed to falsify a theory that seems to say it explains everything. However, rather than focusing our attention on these issues, we would like to critique world society researchers' additional claim that their theory offers the best available explanation for the widespread disjuncture that exists between world society values, structures, and policies and the actual practices of states that have adopted these values, structures, and policies (Meyer 2010; Meyer et al. 1997; Schofer et al. 2011).

We believe that a better, and certainly less theoretically strained, explanation of this disjuncture would, like the political economy theories described earlier, highlight the conflicting interests and great power differences that exist among countries.[8] Such an explanation would hold that powerful countries are often able to force developing countries, through mechanisms such as structural adjustment, international treaty negotiations, and the withholding of resources, to adopt policies and structures that government officials and other powerful actors in developing countries do not want their countries to adopt. In some cases where this occurs, powerful countries are likely able to make developing nations' practices line up with these policies and structures. In other cases, however, developing nations or groups within these nations may have enough power to weaken reform efforts such that policies and structures are adopted in name only; and in still other cases disjuncture might arise because of insufficient economic, political, or organizational infrastructure, because powerful countries sometimes only want policies and structures to be adopted in name only, or because the policies powerful countries previously imposed on developing nations reduce the resources and infrastructure developing nations have to implement future reforms.

Structural adjustment is a good case in point. Over time, structural adjustment has pushed developing countries to adopt increasingly liberalized economic systems that in many key respects mimic those of wealthy countries (UNCTAD 2000; also see earlier discussion). Nevertheless, the historical record demonstrates that the diffusion of neoliberal market structures has been uneven because of a variety of factors, including the ability of developing nations that do not want to adopt structural adjustment policies to slow down (but not halt) the pace of liberalization (Vreeland 2007) and resistance to liberalization on the part of specific groups within and outside the governments of developing nations (Bello et al. 1999; Goldman 2005; Harrison 2004). Also important has been the fact that structural adjustment policies have reduced economic growth in developing nations (Dreher, Sturm, and Vreeland 2015; Vreeland 2007), weakened developing nation governments' institutional and infrastructural capacities (Bello et al. 1999), and intentionally forced developing countries to reduce government spending (Griffiths and Todoulos 2014), making it very difficult for these countries to find the resources they need to actually implement adjustment policies and pursue other "world society" reforms (including, for instance, environmental, public health, civil service, and educational reforms; Bello et al. 1999; Carney et al. 2012; Downey 2015; Harrison 2004; SAPRIN 2004; Toussaint 2005). In addition, developing countries that the United States and Western Europe support receive less stringent structural adjustment conditions and less harsh treatment from the IMF and World Bank for violating these conditions than do other developing countries (Dreher et al. 2015; Vreeland 2007), suggesting that the United States, Western Europe, the World Bank, and the IMF do not always care whether developing countries follow through on their structural adjustment commitments.

We are not arguing that the specific reasons for disjuncture highlighted by world society theorists never shape structural adjustment outcomes. We just noted, for instance, that insufficient government resources and infrastructure have played an important role in producing "structural adjustment disjuncture." However, world society theory does not provide any explanation for why the United States, Western Europe, the IMF, and the World Bank have, through structural adjustment, deprived developing nations of these resources and infrastructure.[9] Nor does the theory expect that this would happen. Moreover, as explained earlier, the decisions developing countries make regarding structural adjustment and its associated policies are all made in a context in which the IMF and World Bank essentially dictate to developing countries the policies and structures they must adopt. As a result, regardless of whether developing countries fully or partially adopt and implement these policies and structures, the decisions they make are sharply constrained by the coercive power of the IMF and World Bank. It thus appears that in the case of structural adjustment, even when factors highlighted by world society theory do play a role in producing disjuncture, they do so for reasons and in a context that are consistent with what many political economists expect but that differ markedly from what world society theorists expect.

The global diffusion of a U.S.-style intellectual property rights regime provides another good example of the role power and conflicting interests play in producing disjuncture. A critical milestone in the diffusion of this property rights regime occurred in 1994 with the ratification of the World Trade Organization's (WTO) Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of International Property Rights (TRIPS). TRIPS

> sets minimum standards in copyright, trademarks, geographical indications, industrial designs and layout-designs of integrated circuits. TRIPS [also] effectively globalizes the set of intellectual

[8]Conflicting interests and power differences within countries likely also play an important role in producing disjuncture.

[9]Some people argue that the IMF and World Bank wanted to help developing countries but simply misdiagnosed the reasons these nation's economies were doing so poorly in the 1980s. The problem with this argument is that World Bank and IMF lending policy have only changed superficially since the 1980s, suggesting quite strongly that structural adjustment achieved the goals it was designed to achieve, namely, reducing developing nation governments' intervention into their economies and opening up these economies to U.S. and European corporate activity.

> property principles it contains, because most states of the world are members of, or are seeking membership of, the WTO. It also has a crucial harmonizing impact on intellectual property regulation because it sets, in some cases, quite detailed standards of intellectual property law . . . [and] obliges states to provide effective enforcement procedures against the infringement of intellectual property rights. (Drahos and Braithwaite 2002:10–11)

The ratification of TRIPS thus resulted in the diffusion of a broad set of isomorphic intellectual property rights standards to nearly all the nations of the world. However, contrary to world society theory expectations, the diffusion of these standards occurred because of international power differences among countries and cultural scripts that prized profit and greed rather than the diffusion of progressive world society values.

The idea for TRIPS was developed in the 1980s, when the pharmaceutical giant Pfizer realized that developing nations were beginning to use their superior numbers at the World Intellectual Property Organization to develop property rights rules that benefited them at the expense of corporate profits. To solve this problem, Pfizer convinced corporations in the United States, Europe, and Japan whose profits also depended on strong global intellectual property rights standards to get their governments to include intellectual property rights as a key negotiating item in the talks that produced the WTO and TRIPS (Drahos 2003; Drahos and Braithwaite 2002; Sell 1999).

During these international talks, the United States, Europe, and Japan made the most important negotiating decisions regarding TRIPS among themselves (May 2007), bringing other nations into and leaving them out of the negotiations as required and rejecting developing nation counterproposals they did not like (Drahos 2003; Drahos and Braithwaite 2002; Sell 1999). The United States also placed extreme pressure on developing nations that opposed the TRIPS agreement, particularly on those that voiced the strongest opposition, such as India and Brazil, using the threat of trade sanctions and other withdrawals of support to force these nations to accept TRIPS (Drahos 2002; May 2007).

The TRIPS agreement, which was designed largely to maintain U.S., European, and Japanese dominance in the digital and biotechnology sectors (Drahos 2003), was thus the result not of mimicry and the diffusion of world society cultural values but rather of the ability of the United States, Europe, and Japan to force developing countries to accept an agreement developing nations did not like because it allowed Western corporations to monopolize profits derived from intellectual property and favored corporate profits over public health by increasing corporate control over medicines and the genetic basis of food (Drahos and Braithwaite 2002; Shadlen, Schrank, and Kurtz 2005). However, though the United States, Europe, and Japan had the power to force developing countries to ratify the TRIPS agreement, developing nations' continued resistance to TRIPS has meant that not all developing nations have fully followed through on their TRIPS commitments. There is thus great variation in the degree to which developing countries have met and enforced their TRIPS obligations (Deere 2009; Endeshaw 2005; Sell 1998, 2006; Shadlen et al. 2005).

To some degree, variation in countries' adoption of TRIPS-related legislation results from variation in cultural support for TRIPS among government officials (Deere 2009). But variation in TRIPS-related legislative and enforcement practices appears primarily to be a function of four other factors: the degree of pressure that the United States and Europe have placed on developing nations to meet or exceed their TRIPS obligations; developing nations' dependence on U.S. markets for their exports; variation in the degree to which the United States is concerned with the intellectual property practices of specific nations, which shapes the amount of pressure the United States places on these nations; and the institutional capacity developing nations have to resist unwanted U.S. and European pressure (Deere 2009; Shadlen et al. 2005). Moreover, variation in cultural support for TRIPS among developing nation officials has been shaped, sometimes quite strongly, by the same organizations and nations that forced developing countries to accept the TRIPS agreement in the first place (Deere 2009).

It thus appears that the ratification of TRIPS and the disjuncture that exists between many developing nations' intellectual property rights obligations and practices are the result both of power differences between developing and developed nations and strong disagreements between these nations over a set of policies designed to harm developing nations and their citizens and benefit the United States, Europe, and Japan. This, of course, is consistent with political economists' expectations that conflicting interests, greed, and power differences between countries play a key role in shaping national outcomes but contradicts world society theorists' expectations regarding the role world society cultural scripts and diffusion processes play in promoting isomorphism and disjuncture.

Structural Isomorphism and the Nature and Autonomy of the State

Two important tenets of world society theory are that developing nation governments mimic the organizational and decision making structures of wealthy nations and that world society culture views individual actors, and the state in particular, as being rational, autonomous, competent, and sovereign. Yet as we have seen, powerful "world society actors" such as the World Bank and IMF fail to respect the autonomy and sovereignty of developing nation governments, forcing these governments to adopt policies designed by external agents in an undemocratic process that treats developing nations as though they are incompetent, irrational, and unable to take care of themselves.

Moreover, the World Bank's violation of developing nation autonomy and sovereignty actually became more extreme in the late 1990s and early 2000s, with the World Bank and other donor agencies taking a direct and active role in at least some developing countries' governmental practices. Writing about Uganda and Tanzania in the late 1990s and early 2000s, for example, Harrison (2004) noted,

> Rather than conceptualizing donor power as a strong external force on the state, it would be more useful to conceive of donors as part of the state itself. . . . [For instance,] there are donor subgroups which meet [with government officials] every fortnight or every month, depending on the group. There is a group for each major ministry which receives donor funding. Donors select from within their own groups a chair—most often a larger donor with a particular specialism. In Tanzania, the governance sub-group is chaired by the UNDP; in Uganda the same group is chaired by the World Bank. The permanent secretary of a particular ministry is invited to the sub-group meetings. The meetings discuss policy progress, monitor the disbursement of funds and consider further funding [and thus policy] options. They are a routine part *of the way the government works* [italics added], and the higher echelons of the civil service routinely produce information for donors—both within the sub-group meetings and as part of the donors' desire to maintain a closer monitoring of their money. In Uganda, the USAID governance advisor attends about five sub-group meetings per month. (pp. 87–88)

These meetings were thus an integral component of the Tanzanian and Ugandan governments' decision-making structures in the late 1990s and early 2000s, allowing major financial donors to work directly with these country's ministry heads to make ministry policy and chart, evaluate, and guide monthly ministry progress (Harrison 2004). During this time period, donors also placed numerous advisers in these countries' government agencies, sometimes in high-level positions (Harrison 2004), with one adviser interviewed by Harrison (2004) seeing his "job explicitly as acting as a conduit for new internationally accepted management techniques" (p. 90).

Monthly donor meetings with government officials also occurred in Ghana at this time (Whitfield 2005), and in the 1990s and early 2000s the World Bank worked directly with the Laotian government to restructure state agencies and rewrite environmental, natural resource, and property rights laws. Indeed, important decrees in these areas from the prime minister's office were often "motivated and largely written by consultants to international finance institutions (IFIs), donor trust funds, or international NGOs" (Goldman 2005:202). Laotian state agencies that received significant donor funding in the late 1990s and early 2000s also housed foreign consultants and Northern experts who often had more authority than their Laotian counterparts and who in some cases "[set] up or staff[ed] . . . shadow organization[s] that conduct[ed] the work of an existing state agency, but without the obvious representational or bureaucratic constraints" (Goldman 2005:208).

These interventions by the World Bank and other donor agencies resulted in the adoption of policies, laws, state structures, management plans, and monitoring systems modeled at least in part on those of the United States and Western Europe (Goldman 2005; Harrison 2004; Whitfield 2005). Yet it is quite clear that the direct infiltration of these (and other) developing nation governments by donor agencies neither follows world society cultural scripts regarding democracy, autonomy, sovereignty, and diffusion, nor does it mimic how Western governments operate and are structured. The U.S. government, for example, is not structured so that U.S. officials must meet monthly with, write reports to, follow the advice and dictates of, and justify their actions to foreign officials; and U.S. government agencies are not staffed by foreign consultants who often wield more power than do U.S. officials.

It is thus not entirely clear that the structural isomorphism highlighted by world society theorists really exists except in exceedingly superficial ways. In particular, though specific policies, laws, and agency structures found in developing nations are sometimes quite similar to those of wealthy nations, it is also the case that these policies, laws, and agency structures are integrated into overall government structures that are quite different from those found in wealthy nations. And one key reason for this is that many important decisions that wealthy nations make for themselves are made for developing nations by the IMF, the World Bank, other donor agencies, the United States, and Europe. In some cases these foreign organizations and countries act as external governing bodies to developing nations and in other cases they become part of the internal governing structures of developing nations, with wealthy countries often well represented in these internal governing structures (e.g., the United States is the most powerful actor at the World Bank and IMF, and USAID is a U.S. government agency; so when these organizations become part of the governing structure of a developing nation, so too does the United States). But in all these cases, developing nations' autonomy and sovereignty are violated, and their governing structures include foreign agencies and organizations that are never part of the governing structures of wealthy nations.

Thus, determining whether the government policies and structures world society theory highlights are isomorphic depends not just on the policies and structures themselves but also on the larger organizational and institutional context within which these policies and structures are embedded. And this context, in turn, is strongly shaped by the manner in which nations are incorporated, or embedded, into the larger world system, which plays a key role in determining how much power nations have vis a vis IGOs, INGOs, and other nations and whether the cultural scripts powerful actors apply to them describe them as being irrational, nonautonomous, and incompetent.

The World Bank, the IMF, and the United States might respond to all this by saying that developing nations do not deserve autonomy and sovereignty because they have behaved irrationally and incompetently in the past and therefore must be treated much as parents treat adolescents. One might further argue that such a response is consistent with world society theory. However, this response ignores the important role the World Bank, the IMF, the United States, and other powerful nations have played in producing the economic outcomes that supposedly demonstrate the irrationality and incompetence of many developing nations. Moreover, this response would be consistent with world society theory only if world society theorists are prepared to argue either that only some nations and peoples possess the core world society attributes of rationality, autonomy, competence, and sovereignty or that world society actors only view some nations and people as possessing these attributes. But this is a very difficult argument for world society theorists to make because nearly all the world's developing nations have experienced structural adjustment, suggesting that if these theorists were to make this argument, they would have to admit that world society is not global at all but only Western.

Worse still for the theory, powerful governments such as the U.S. government also lack the kind of autonomy highlighted by world society theorists, though for reasons that differ from those operating in developing nations. In the United States, for instance, capitalists and their nonelected representatives disproportionately occupy key positions in the U.S. government, weakening democracy and violating the autonomy of the state (Domhoff 1990, 2002; Dreiling 2001). As a result, in the 1980s three of the four U.S. government officials who decided to use or continue to use structural adjustment to address the developing world's debt crisis were former finance capitalists; and when the pharmaceutical, agriculture, and digital technologies industries decided to pursue what became the TRIPS agreement, Pfizer CEO Edmund Pratt became a member and, in 1981, chairman of the U.S. Advisory Committee on Trade Negotiations, which was and is the most important of a set of committees set up in the 1970s to provide the U.S. Trade Representative's office with direct advice from U.S. industry regarding U.S. trade policy and international trade negotiations (Drahos 2003; Sell 2003). These advisory committees, which are still active today, are staffed by numerous industry representatives who help guide U.S. trade policy, help the United States write trade and property rights treaty text, and help the United States monitor other nations' compliance with international trade and property rights treaties (Drahos 2003; Ingraham and Schneider 2014; Sell 2003), thus violating the autonomy of the U.S. government and doing some of the government's work for it.

In addition to placing themselves inside the U.S. government and on key government advisory committees, corporate leaders also finance think tanks and policy discussion groups such as the American Enterprise Institute, the Council on Foreign Relations, the Trilateral Commission, and the Business Roundtable that are directly linked to the U.S. government and that directly influence U.S. policy, in large part by having their affiliates occupy mid- and high-level positions in the U.S. government (Domhoff 2002). Scholars disagree on the exact import of these connections, but the existence of these connections and those described in the preceding paragraph make it impossible to maintain that the U.S. government is autonomous in the manner described by world society theory.

World society theory is thus left in a tenuous position. The theory is based on the argument that there is a global culture that views individual agents as being bounded and autonomous such that autonomous developing nations mimic the structures and policies of autonomous wealthy nations. Yet it turns out that neither developing nations' governments nor the U.S. government is autonomous and that this lack of autonomy is the result not of mimicry but of the fact that governments are embedded in power-laden organizational networks and fields that do not value universal autonomy. It also turns out that when policy and structural isomorphism between developing and developed nations does exist, it is often relatively superficial. These findings not only contradict world society theory but along with other evidence presented in this article suggest that world society cultural values are not nearly as widely followed as the theory expects and do not produce social outcomes in the ways the theory expects. This, of course, undermines the theory's key claims regarding isomorphism, diffusion, and disjuncture.

Conclusion

Despite holding a central position in key debates regarding the global diffusion of Western values, policies, and structures, world society theory is beset by a number of critical problems. Its strong belief in the positive and progressive nature of modern values is empirically problematic; its characterization of diffusion, isomorphism, and disjuncture and explanation of the processes and values that produce diffusion, isomorphism, and disjuncture are not supported in the critical cases presented here; the professional actors it claims are the chief bearers of world culture are often less important in producing diffusion, isomorphism and disjuncture than are political and economic elites, whose values do not appear to be positive or progressive; and governments in developing and developed nations are not autonomous and sovereign in the manner suggested by the theory. In addition, "world society actors" are embedded in hierarchical and power-laden organizations, networks, and fields that strongly limit the kinds of actions they can take and the kinds of cultural scripts they can follow. The case studies presented here thus contradict world society theory's key claims while providing general empirical support for the kinds of political economic theories described earlier.

World society theorists might respond by arguing that no theory can explain everything and that the case studies presented in this article are either random exceptions to the world society rule or highlight just one type of outcome, with most other types of diffusion outcomes better explained by world society theory. We disagree with this argument for several reasons. First, though it is true that no theory can explain everything, theories do have to explain what they are designed to explain. Second, in highlighting the World Bank, the IMF, the WTO, the Ford and Rockefeller foundations, TRIPS, structural adjustment, and the Green Revolution, the case studies presented in this article examine some of the world's most important "world society" organizations and explain much of the world's most important diffusion, isomorphism, and disjuncture. The case studies also highlight examples of diffusion, isomorphism, and disjuncture that have been among the most central to world society theory and its development, including diffusion and disjuncture related to market structures, property rights regimes, research capacity, science- and social science-based approaches to development, university education, and government self-monitoring and market-monitoring.

Third, the IMF, the World Bank, other donor agencies, the United States, and Europe continually violate the autonomy and sovereignty of developing nations by acting as external governing bodies to these nations and at times becoming part of the internal governing structures of these nations, shaping these countries' economic and government structures and economic, environmental, educational, spending, tax, and health policies, among other things. As a result, (1) many policies and structures that were not examined in this article have likely been shaped by these violations to autonomy and sovereignty and (2) developing nation structures and policies that appear to be isomorphic with those of Western nations are not isomorphic because they are inserted into entirely different governing structures and policy environments than they are in Western nations.

Fourth, other examples of isomorphism and disjuncture that contradict world society theory also abound. For instance, the World Bank, through its lending policies, has forced many developing countries to adopt environmental, mining, and natural resource management laws and regulations patterned on those of wealthy countries (Goldman 2005); major shifts in World Bank thinking and policy in the 1980s led to the adoption of isomorphic educational reforms in many developing nations, including "the increased use of . . . user fees, the privatisation of more educational activities, and the direct connection of management and financing of education to measurable output" (Klees 2008:312); and austerity measures that Germany has forced the European Union to impose on Greece since 2010 (Eddy 2015; Stiglitz 2010) demonstrate that the market-related isomorphism enforced by the European Union is as much the result of coercive as cooperative processes. In addition, U.S. acceptance of and adherence to weapons treaty and torture treaty bans supported by "world society" actors usually occurs only when (1) the United States is able to shape these bans in ways that do not weaken U.S. military power, (2) the bans cover weapons the United States does not need to possess to maintain its military advantage over potential adversaries, or (3) the U.S. can continue using the banned weapons or torture techniques despite the existence of the bans (Bonds 2011, 2012, 2015).

It should be quite clear, then, that the kinds of organizations, structures, and policies that are highlighted in this article play a critically important role in both the world and world society theory and that they are neither random exceptions to the world society rule nor just one kind of outcome that world society theory cannot explain. We therefore conclude this article by asking, Where should world society theory go from here?

At a minimum, the theory needs substantial revision. But what sort of revision? One possibility is to apply stricter and more limiting scope conditions to the theory. We suspect, however, that world society theorists would prefer not to limit the theory as much as we believe would be necessary to keep the theory intact. Given the grand claims the theory makes, it is also unclear to us that applying highly limiting conditions would be consistent with the theory.

Several other possibilities also exist. One is that the theory is fatally flawed and that the changes required to make it work—such as incorporating power, hegemony, and "negative" cultural values into its explanatory apparatus—would alter it to such a degree that it would no longer be the same theory. Another is that the theory is fatally flawed but includes a few key insights that political economists should incorporate into their theories, particularly regarding the role culture plays in shaping identity, behavior, and interests. And yet another possibility is that we should blend the key insights of world society theory with key insights drawn from various political economy theories so as to create new theories that explain a fuller range of phenomena than any current theory currently explains.

Unfortunately, no single article, even one as critical of world society theory as this one, provides enough evidence to determine which of these options will be most fruitful to pursue. Additional research must therefore be conducted to definitively determine which of the four paths described above should be followed. But what should the nature of this research be?

On this topic, we believe we can make a more definitive statement. First, quantitative research is not the answer, at least on its own. Quantitative research can demonstrate associations among "world society" variables. It can also show that nations that have stronger or more numerous ties to world society actors are more likely than other nations to adopt world society policies, structures, and institutions or to experience more progressive (or less regressive) social, environmental or political outcomes. In addition, it can ask whether a specific world society organization has some programs that are associated with progressive outcomes in developing countries and other, "contradictory," programs that are associated with nonprogressive outcomes in these same countries.

But what quantitative research cannot do is tell us whether the ties that exist between developing nations and world society actors result in the diffusion of culture to developing nations, the exertion of power over developing nations, or some combination of the two. Moreover, in cases in which culture is diffusing through these connections, quantitative research cannot tell us whether the diffusing culture represents the progressive or dark side of modernity and whether it stresses the autonomy of developing nations or the belief that developing nations lack autonomy and rationality and are incapable of taking care of themselves. Similarly, it cannot tell us whether the progressive, regressive, and "contradictory" associations and outcomes it uncovers result from world society processes, political economy processes, or some combination of the two. In short, quantitative research does not allow researchers to examine and evaluate the historical processes and cultural values that produce the associations such research is able to document.

However, as we have argued throughout this article, what is in dispute in the literature, and what distinguishes the different theories found in the literature, are not the associations they predict (they all predict the same or similar associations) but the processes, values, and meanings that both produce and result from these associations. The case studies presented in this article, for example, all highlight organizations (the World Bank, the IMF, the Rockefeller Foundation), social groups (scientists, educators, government officials), and outcomes that are central to world society theory. But rather than providing support for the theory, the case studies demonstrate that the processes and values producing the case study outcomes differed in key respects from the processes and values highlighted by the theory, thus contradicting the theory despite the clear existence of associations and outcomes expected by the theory.

In saying this, we are not arguing that quantitative research is unable to test theory. There are clearly many situations in which competing theories can be tested by comparing their predictions with empirical associations among variables. But this is not one of those cases. Nor are we arguing that world society theory and political economic theories always make similar predictions regarding associations among variables. Nevertheless, both types of theory do see the same types of organizations being responsible for the same types of isomorphic and disjunctural outcomes. Therefore, quantitatively assessing associations among "world society" variables cannot and does not provide a proper test of these theories' predictions.

This implies that to determine which of the four paths to follow, researchers must use qualitative case study methods that allow them to answer process-oriented historical questions such as the following: Who made the key decisions? Who most benefited from and who was most harmed by these decisions? What cultural values and scripts shaped these decisions? What role did scientists, social scientists, and other professionals actually play in producing the social outcomes under study? Are scientists, social scientists, and other professionals the dominant actors in national and international organizations and networks or are they embedded in organizational and network hierarchies that severely constrain the goals they can pursue and the cultural scripts they can follow? If they are subordinates within such hierarchies, do their organizational superiors or the people their superiors answer to hold the same values and goals or follow the same cultural scripts as they do? Are the scripts they value the ones they actually follow? To what degree do scientists, social scientists, and professionals shape the goals, values, and scripts their superiors hold and follow, and to what degree is this causal flow reversed? When organizations such as the World Bank and the U.S. government push developing countries to adopt environmental, agricultural, educational, economic, human rights, and other policies, are they doing so because they are following world society cultural scripts, because promoting these policies supports their economic, geopolitical, or bureaucratic interests (as defined by world society or non–world society values), because they have been forced to do so by more powerful actors, or because promoting these policies, either in good faith or superficially, strengthens their legitimacy?

Answering questions such as these is, of course, what we have done in this article, focusing in particular on who made and who most benefited from the key decisions we highlighted and on identifying in broad terms the cultural scripts key decision makers followed. It is, of course, very difficult to identify actors' values and motivations or, to put it more accurately (since we cannot know an actors' true values and since actors may follow cultural scripts they do not believe in), to identify the cultural scripts upon which actors' decisions are based. But as we have demonstrated, the historical record often provides us with clues. For instance, we know that the capitalist-dominated Trilateral Commission advocated using international organizations such as the World Bank and IMF to force developing countries to reduce their trade barriers and that in 1982 the key person making the decision to use structural adjustment to solve the developing world's debt crisis had been a banker and recent member of the Trilateral Commission. We also know that the United States was the dominant power at the World Bank in the 1970s and 1980s, that for more than 35 years structural adjustment and conditional lending have greatly benefited the U.S., Europe, and the private banking system while severely harming developing nations (Bello et al. 1999; Downey 2015; Toussaint 2005), and that rather than supporting poor and oppressed groups around the world, the Reagan administration supported the brutal South African apartheid regime and brutal antileftist violence in Central America. In addition, we know that U.S. and Rockefeller Foundation support for the Green Revolution was motivated not by humanitarian goals but instead by U.S. economic and geopolitical interests. All this strongly suggests that the values motivating these decisions were not those highlighted by world society theorists.

We do not know the values and motivations of the scientists, social scientists, and professionals at the organizations highlighted in our case studies, but we think it reasonable to assume that many of them wanted to help developing countries by helping them modernize. More important, however, our analysis demonstrates that their values did not matter in the way that world society theory expects professionals' values to matter because they were not the key decision makers in the organizations that made the key decisions. And this, in turn, suggests that elites either took advantage of or actively worked to create a set of progressive cultural scripts that in combination with conservative anticommunist and neoliberal cultural scripts helped elites achieve goals that were hidden or partially hidden from the professionals, scientists, and social scientists who worked for these organizations. This, of course, is consistent with the idea that elites exert ideological power over nonelites, as is the fact that the U.S.-dominated World Bank devotes tremendous resources to training developing nation economists, scientists, journalists, and government officials, many of whom also directly benefit from World Bank spending and lending (Goldman 2005; Gramsci 1971; Harrison 2004). Indeed, one might argue that rather than promoting world society outcomes, the existence of many scientists, social scientists, and professionals in developed and developing nations who support "world society" values simply makes capitalist exploitation and Western domination more complete, efficient, and hegemonic.

To be clear, we recognize that we have not shown—nor did we try to show—that elites exert ideological power over professionals. Nevertheless, our evidence does shed light on the matter. And this, along with our discussion in the last three paragraphs and much of the rest of the article, demonstrates our larger concluding point: that qualitative historical case studies allow researchers to answer process-oriented questions in such a way and with sufficient context and detail to accomplish several important tasks. These include (1) determining when world society professionals are and are not key decision makers; (2) isolating the processes producing specific diffusion outcomes; (3) identifying which cultural scripts are guiding key decision makers, whoever these decision makers happen to be; and (4) determining when world society actors' embeddedness in power-laden organizations, networks, and fields constrains them so much that it does not matter what actions they would prefer to take, what outcomes they would prefer to see, and what values they would prefer to follow. Finally, and most important, the information obtained from answering process-oriented historical questions, when drawn from a sufficient number and variety of cases, can be used to determine whether we should apply scope conditions to world society theory, declare it fatally flawed, selectively incorporate its key insights into theories that highlight power and hegemony, or create new theories by blending its key insights with those of various political economy theories. This is a critically important and unfinished empirical task that will require much additional research to complete. But accomplishing it will provide us with a much better understanding of power, development, and culture than we currently possess.

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