Socheolas
Limerick Student Journal of Sociology

Volume 3, Issue 2

# *Marxist and Interaction theories: an exploration and application to the topic of work and employment.*

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February 2012

**University of Limerick**
**Department of Sociology**

Available at http://www.ul.ie/sociology/socheolas/vol3/2
ISSN 2009-3144

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# Marxist and Interaction theories: an exploration and application to the topic of work and employment.

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Social theory provides social scientists a system of explanatory concepts that help explain the social world within which we live. The purpose of this article is to consider the world of work and employment using Marxist and Social Interactionist modes of explanation. The first half of the discussion relates to Marxist concepts relevant to work and employment which will be discussed and explained by citing empirical evidence of both sociological research and news events. The second part of the article will consider Social Interactionist theories. Again, the relevance of this theory will be related to world of work and employment. The third and concluding part of the article discusses the relative merits and failings of both theoretical schools of thought. Although considered diametrically opposite (i.e. Marxist macro theory versus Social Interaction micro theory), it will be argued that they are complimentary theories.

## Introduction

The purpose of the discussion is to consider the realm of work and employment by way of reference to Marxist and Interactionist theoretical positions. In doing so this paper will be divided into two sections. The first will consider Marxist theory, while the second will relate to Interaction theories. In discussing how these theoretical positions are applied to the real world, each section will be broken-down into the following formats. Firstly, Marxian concepts that relate to the world of work and employment, with particular mention of: *class ownership*, *surplus value*, *commodification of labour*, *species being*, *alienation*, and *false consciousness*. Each of these concepts will be discussed and explained

by citing both academic research and news events. Following on from there, the second part of the article will move on to relating concepts concerning Interaction theories, namely: *Symbolic-interactionism*, *Dramaturlogical-interactionism* and *Social-constructivism* will be outlined. Again, the relevance of these theories will be illustrated through academic research. The third and concluding part of the article will discuss the relative merits and failings of both theoretical schools of thought.

**Marxist theory**

Marxist theory is a grand macro-social theory. At the crux of this school of thought is the assertion that the story of modern civilisations has been about societal division and class struggle. Writing in their synonymous work the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels succinctly observed that: "The history of hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles." (Marx and Engels 2007, p.98). It was their contention that modern society has developed a societal structure that is: "splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat." (Marx and Engels 2007, p. 99). So what were Marx and Engels referring to when they described society being split between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat? On the one hand there is the capital owning bourgeoisie – employers - who own the means of production, such as places of work, such as factories, offices, shops and hospitals. While on the other, there is the labour selling proletariat – workers - like you and I, who sell their labour to the employers in exchange for cash payment.

The basis of modern working practices involves a worker being paid cash payment by way of a salary or wage by an employer. According to Marx wages are merely a unit of payment for carrying out a specific job which he describes as being a: "sum of money paid by the capitalist for a particular labour time or

particular output of labour" (Marx 2007a, p.122). Moreover, under this arrangement, Marx (2007a, p.123) explained that:

> Labour is…a commodity which its possessor, the wage worker, sell to capital…wages are, therefore determined by the same laws that determine the price of every other commodity. The question, therefore, is, how is the price of a commodity determined? By competition between buyers and sellers, by the relation of inquiry to delivery, of demand to supply.

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According to Marxist thought, workers seek to attach meaning to their occupational work, as a furniture maker might do when making a table and chairs; this he describes as *species-being*. Because modern working practices involve not only the treatment of workers as mere commodities due to the competition that exists in the labour market, but workers are also subjected to working practices that can be considered dehumanising. These two factors, not only run counter-intuitive to a worker's *species-being*, but also lead to the *alienation* of the worker from the products they produce (Marx 2007b, pp.86 - 93).

So how does alienation on the part of the worker come about? It is a consequence of employers attempt to acquire surplus labour from workers. By investing their capital in establishing a commercial business, an employer expects to own the fruits of a worker's labour. In doing so an employer hopes to sell the products produced by a worker in excess of the value of the wages the worker has received. The net result for the employer under this arrangement is that they acquire the surplus value (i.e. profit). This, as Marx and Engels pointed out, led to a set of social relations between employers and workers where workers are exploited by employers who are intent on paying as little as possible in order to accumulate capital (Marx and Engels 2007, pp.105 - 106).

In acquiring surplus value from the workers, employers employ various methods to rationalise the process of production so that costs are kept to a minimum. In the first instance, as mentioned above, employers attempt to reduce their labour costs by using the law of supply and demand in relation to the labour market to buy workers' labour as cheaply as possible (Marx 2007a, pp.122 – 124). In order to do this, employers rationalise production processes by reducing complicated processes that require high levels of skill and specialised knowledge into smaller tasks that are easier to learn. This is achieved by, as Marx wryly observed: "The less the period of training, therefore, that any other work requires the smaller is the cost of production of the worker and the lower the price of his labour" (Marx 2007a, p.124). For an employer, the benefits of this method of organisation are twofold. On the one hand, because the division of labour involves deskilling, it is easier to hire and fire employees. While on the other, because it is easier to hire and fire, workers can be paid less thereby reducing operation costs. Accordingly, this makes production processes more flexible to vagaries of the boom and bust cycles that are inherent with modern market economies. Although a follower of Weber, George Ritzer (1993, p.25) in his book *The McDonaldisation of Society*, astutely noted how the processes of rationalisation are still prevalent. In doing so he identified that in relation to car production that:

> It is an efficient system for manufacturing an automobile. It is far more efficient to put a large number of highly specialised, unskilled workers along a moving conveyor belt than it is to put a number of craftsmen in a room and ask them to build a car.

Secondly, a process of mechanisation is used to replace human labour by mechanical labour, as Marx (2007a, p.127) noted:

> the more gigantic the scale on which machinery is introduced the more does the cost of production proportionately decreases, the more fruitful is labour. Hence

> a general rivalry arises among the capitalists to increase the division of labour and machinery and exploit them on the greatest possible scale.

Examples of mechanisation in the modern workplace include the automation of manufacturing processes in factories by the use of robotic machines and computers which are to be found in factories or information technology systems that are used in modern office call centres. Again, as Ritzer notes, this form of production allows employer's manage absolute control over the way in which are employed, in that they are not allowed to deviate from the pre-assigned modes of production, which turns workers into "human robots" (Ritzer 1993, p.26).

Thirdly, the working day is highly regulated to ensure workers do not interrupt the production process, such as strict start and finish times, as well as regulated break times. In this form of production the workers and the production process is highly monitored and supervised by supervisors and technology, such as the way offices and call centres use computers to log work rate metrics. On this issue Ritzer concedes that employers are attempting to better understand how best to employ their workers as efficiently as possible by carrying out time-and-motion and scientific management studies. However, it should be remembered that these methods not only subject workers to a system of surveillance where they are constantly monitored and measured to determine how efficiently they are working, but also these methods are used to establish the best way to reduce complicated tasks to much simpler ones for the purpose of dividing the labour process up (Ritzer 1993, p.24).

Fourthly, the modes of production (i.e. the processes that produce and provide goods and services) are centralised in factories, offices, call centres and the like. For employers this process of centralisation facilitates reduced production costs

because it allows, as mentioned above, systems of organisation and production that involve automated forms of technology. Moreover, by bringing the process of production together in a centralised location the division of labour is made easier to organise. Lastly, by having all workers in a single location makes it easier for employers to closely monitor production and worker productivity.

The working practices described above are repetitive and monotonous. This, as Marx argued, is unnatural and contrary to an individual's *species-being*. Not only are workers forced to work in ways that are boring and unpleasant, but also, because of the division of labour, they become dislocated from the products they produce. The end result for the worker is *alienation*, not only from the products they produce, but also from their selves, their fellow workers and from their places of work (Marx 2007b, pp.86 – 93). In his study of the car production workers in a Vauxhall car production plant in England during the 1970s, Goldthorpe noted that 69 per cent of the workers he interviewed experienced some form of deprivation, (e.g. incessant lethargy, estrangement from their colleagues) whilst working on the production line (Goldthorpe 1966, p.228). Further still, he also noted that the working conditions along the line produced alienation between workers because they impeded the formation of group relations between colleagues (Goldthrope 1966, p.231). Moreover, Blauner in his study entitled *Alienation and Freedom* that investigated the working conditions of workers in the printing, textile, car and chemical manufacturing industries in the United States identified four aspects of alienation, that of: powerlessness in relation to the production process; meaningless and apathy toward work and the products produced; isolation from other workers; and self-estrangement (Blauner 1964). However, interestingly, he noted that alienation was not an absolute phenomenon. He suggested, depending on the type of industry and the associated technologies the industries used to the produce products, led to a variance between the actual levels of

alienation encountered by workers (Blauner 1964, p.5). In validation, Twining, in his paper 'Alienation as social process', contended that alienation appeared to show itself in varying degrees depending upon subjective and relational factors, such as whether workers felt as though they were treated positively or negatively by their employers (Twining 1980). Again, this was an issue Goldthorpe identified in his study where 77 per cent of the workers he interviewed responded positively to relations within the factory between workers and management. This, Goldthorpe (1966, p.238) acknowledged:

> indicated fairly clearly that, in the eyes of the majority [of workers], a co-operative attitude towards management was important to the effective operation of the plant, and would also, in most cases or 'in the long run', turn out to be in their own interests

The modern system of economic production supposes that the bottom line of employers is to acquire and accumulate profit. Consequently, employers are pitted against employers in a system of commercial competition where the pools of profit can become diluted. In order to mitigate these pressures employers are forced to extend rationalised processes to further reduce their operation costs. The easiest way to do this is to reduce labour costs (Marx 2007a, pp.127 – 129). In recent times, common approaches have included to the outsourcing of production by either using specialist outsource firms, such as Capita who claim to be able to: "deliver measurable benefits for our clients," by way of "streamlined administration processes" (Capita 2010). Alternatively, production is off-shored by moving production to places where operation costs, including labour costs, are cheaper. Such was the case when Dell relocated their European manufacturing from Ireland to Poland (RTE 2009). According to Kirkegaard, whose analysis of the prevalence of off-shoring production from European Union 15 countries, acknowledged that for the years 2004 to 2005 that 56 per cent of jobs losses in manufacturing and 44 percent of redundancies in service

industries, were attributable to off-shoring production outside of European Union 15 countries (Kirkegaard 2007, p.10).

Marx and Engels argued in the *Communist Manifesto* that employers in the pursuit of surplus value, aggregated and replicated many times over would have a detrimental effect on the social relations that exist under a modern market economy because workers are subjected to exploitation. (Marx and Engels 2007, pp.105 - 106). It is for this reason that that Marxist thought continues to be relevant today despite the fact his ideas were formulated over 150 years ago. As a theoretical tool Marxism provides social scientists with an all encompassing theory that considers the totality of human existence under capitalism (Calhoun et al 2007a, pp.79 - 80; Joseph 2006, p.1). The relevance and the crux of Marxist theory lies in the fact much of his thought was backed up by scientific empiricism. But not only that, Marx was also able to translate incomprehensible statistical facts into explanatory concepts such as *surplus value, species-being, alienation, exploitation etc cetera,* thereby enabling readers of his works concepts with which to come to a better understanding of modern capitalism, which also provided with the tools with which to challenge it's negative effects. (Calhoun et al 2007a, p.79). Concurring, Ollman indicated that Marxist concepts have provided scholars with the theoretical frameworks that have become useful aids with which to understand nature, man-kind and society. By understanding these concepts it would be possible to the 'common sense' view of the worlds that dominated (Ollman 1971, p.240).

It must be remembered that that Marxist thought does have its downsides. There is too much emphasis on the abstract social structures and processes, whilst paying too little attention to social actors and the influence they have on society (Joseph 2006, p.31). Moreover, some of the theoretical concepts can be viewed as being fallible. We should also not forget that Marxist notions relating to class

are somewhat blunt in their argument. Firstly, when Marx was writing he was acutely aware how the means of production were owned by employers to the exclusion of workers; today this premise is opaque. Production is not necessarily owned by a small stratum of society, as it was at the time Marx was writing. Today workers have direct access to the ownership of their employing companies through ownership of share capital by way of company share save schemes and the like, or indirectly through membership of pension and insurance funds (Pridham 2005; Harrington 2009). In 1998 for example it was reckoned that pension fund assets in the United States and in the United Kingdom were valued at $7 trillion and £1.5 trillion, respectively[1]. With regard to employee share save schemes, it quite possible these forms of ownership could be construed as a form of false consciousness in that workers accept the social relations under capitalism because they buy-in to the notion that they as holders of shares they are owners of their employing companies. In addition, as a paper published by the National Economic and Social Council testifies, these schemes are designed to reduce labour costs by issuing shares as the form of remuneration rather than paying cash for increased productivity (Cahill 2000, p7).

What this tells us is that Marxist assertions relating to the ownership of the means of production, and therefore societal relations, are not absolute (Calhoun et al 2007a, p.80). Secondly, Marx did not take into account the subtleties of class and social status that Weber went on to identify (Adams and Sydie 2001, p.187). Taking Weber's thoughts further, A.J.P. Taylor pointed out that Marx had failed to acknowledge the role of the state in society and that the state and its practitioners would go on to develop their own interests contrary to the

[1] It is admitted that it is difficult to contextualise those figures in comparison to total ownership of share capital. Further still, it is not possible to determine which strata of society are actually members of pension schemes. It is this author's guess that pension scheme members are certainly going to be the wealthier strata of society.

interests of both the property owning employers and the labour-selling workers (Taylor 1967, p.29). Take for example, the way in which public sector trade unions working in unison were able to negotiate the Croke Park Agreement. Or taken to another level consider the media revelations of the ways in which senior state sector employees, such as government ministers using military helicopters for personal usage, senators claiming travel expenses for residences they were not residing in, or chief executives of state bodies who were claiming entertainment expenses for their own private usage. In this sense, Niskanen (1971) in his work *Bureaucracy and Representative Government* portrayed bureaucracies as developing specific departmental interests that are distinct and separate, not only from other bureaucratic departments, but also from the traditional class interests. This notion was taken further by Kellner and Crowther-Hunt's (1980) study of the British civil service in which they portrayed it as being inept and led by a professional civil servant class who quashed any attempts to make - the upper echelons at least – meritocractic.

**Interaction theory**

Interaction theory is derived from Weber's interpretivism and is made up of several micro bottom-up theories that use the individual as their point of reference in explaining how societies function. (Calhoun et al 2007b, p.26 - 27). Broadly speaking Interaction theory is split into two schools of explanation: the first grouping relates to the ways in which individuals interact and relate with each other (Shultz 2007; Goffman 1959; Blumer 2007), whilst on the other, there are those theorists who contend that societal relationships are formed around the combined interactions of individuals that then develop into the building blocks of society (Berger & Luckman 2007). In elaboration, Calhoun *et al* have noted that Interaction theory seeks to convey how the actions of a small number of individuals can impact society; such as the way in which the decisions of a board of directors can affect thousands of workers. Or how

individual micro-interactions can be aggregated together and impact society in its totality, such as workers coming together and acting collectively, as was the case with the formation of the trade union movement. The fundamental premise of Interaction theory is that society is a socially constructed entity that is fluid and evolving (Calhoun et al 2007b, p. 25-27). Because Interaction theory uses a different point of reference – that of the individual as opposed to the social, economic or political perspectives that grand macro-theories use as their points of reference - sociologists are provided with a tool of analysis that can provide intimate contextual information, such as camaraderie, obedience, team work and image cultivation, which are absent from the grand macro theories. It is with this thought in mind that we will consider how Interaction theory, with particular reference to Symbolic-interactionism and Dramaturlogical-interactionism, and Social-constructivism has provided sociologists with a greater understanding of the world of work and employment

As Herbet Blumer remarked: "Symbolic interactionism is a down-to-earth approach to the scientific study of human group life and human conduct. Its empirical work is the natural world of such group life and conduct" (Blumer 2007, p.68). He went on to further explain that when individuals interacted with each other there were four component parts to those interactions, namely: i) individuals attach meaning to their interactions and the world around them; ii) when more than one individual comes into contact with other individuals, those individuals assess each other; iii) these combined social interactions lead to situations where the individuals involved in these intimate social interactions are constantly assessing and counter-assessing each other; and iv) the net result of these interactions is a complex system of fluid relationships that have a bearing upon societal structures (Blumer 2007, p.69). To elaborate, when each of us goes to work we are constantly interacting with our colleagues. Through those interactions we are all assessing, interpreting and attaching meaning to

everything we have seen, heard and done, while the same can be said of our colleagues in relation to us; there is a constant process of assessment and reassessment, in which each of us asks: "So-and-so said X, what did they mean by that?" It is through this process that we come to terms of our surroundings, the individuals who inhabit our immediate space and how we learn the rules of interaction.

Within the realm of work this system of evaluation is commonly used in the field of industrial relations analysis by corporate managers and trade union negotiators who use it to come to terms with negotiation processes and tactics. Bednar and Curington have argued: "interaction analysis can supplement…the study of impasse determinants and the analysis of concession behaviour" (Bednar and Curington 1983, p.392). In illustration of their statement they carried out analytical research into the negotiation process that took place between the Barrington Oil Company and the Oil Workers International Union. They were able to demonstrate how a behavioural variance between the union's local negotiators - who presumably understood the behavioural parameters - and an international negotiator - who did not, affected the negotiation process. They also analysed how particular stances and tactics adopted by each side, either promoted or hindered the negotiation process. Adding credence to Bednar and Curington's research, Bacharach and Lawler also demonstrated how industrial labour negotiators would systematically evaluate their own tactical options in relation to their opponent's tactical stances (Bacharach and Lawler cited in Lewin and Feuille 1983, pp.351-352).

It is through Symbolic-interactionsim we can come to terms with how managers manage organisations. Biggart and Woolsey's study sought to explain how chief executives charged with managing state bureaucracies managed and mobilized human resources. In doing so they identified the ways in which they executed

their authority. In particular they noted how chief executives projected their authority through an acute understanding of the scope and limits of their authority, whilst also being aware of how to manipulate the shared symbols that provided them with their authority, while at the same they understood how to cultivate an authoritative persona (Biggart and Hamilton 1984, pp.543 – 547).

At another level, Stuber (2005, pp.157 -158) was able to demonstrate how individuals who transcended social classes were able to use their unique knowledge of the symbolic rules of interactions, such as food, music and language that allowed them to cultivate effective working relationships with colleagues from different social classes, as one of her interviewees explained:

> I can hang out with a bunch of factory workers who made bombs for the Pentagon and sort of shoot the shit and talk about kids, etc. etc, and then walk directly from there into a room full of lawyers [and know] they're not any better than I am. You want to talk big words with, I can talk big words. I know how to put the posture on. I know how to dress; I know what quiche is. But seriously, I'm not lost if you want to talk to me about quiche or sushi. I've had good red wine and all that stuff.

Another component of Interaction-theory is the concept of of Dramatology that was was proposed by Goffman (1969, *Preface*) in his study entitled *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, in which as he indicated was intended to be:

> The perspective of employed in this report is that of the theatrical performance; the principles derived are dramaturgical ones. I will consider the ways in which the individual in ordinary work situations presents himself and his activity to others, the ways in which he guides and controls the impression they form of him, and the kinds of things he may and may not do while sustaining his performance before them.

At the crux of his thesis is that individuals are acutely aware of how they portray themselves. Accordingly, they go through a process of impression management whereby they create a 'front-stage', public facing persona (Goffman 1969, p.15 – 19). In order to ensure the veracity to the performance the performer must also make use of physical props, such as possessions and clothes, and specific modes of language (i.e. 'sign insignia'), which he argues: "It is sometimes convenient to divide the stimuli which make up personal front into "appearance" and "manner," according to the function performed by the information and the these stimuli convey" (Goffman 1969, p.19 – 21). These forms of character formation are intended to create, cultivate and to add credence to an intended persona. The converse to the 'front-stage' is 'back-stage' private persona. This is where an individual lets go of their contrived front-stage public facing characters and becomes more relaxed and lets their guard down (Goffman 1969).

The front stage and back stage personas can manifest themselves in a number of ways. Take, for example, this author's own personal experience of working for an investment firm. In this firm there was a director who was closely involved in providing investment advice to wealthy clients. In this capacity the director needed to cultivate a front-stage image that not only conjured an image of respectability and trust, but also of success and an ability to produce investment returns. In creating this image, when he met clients he would wear a tailored bespoke suits, and make use of other expensive high-status signifying props such as Dunhill cufflinks, a Mont Blanc pen set, the Filofax folio and an i-pad. And when talking to clients he would use esoteric forms of language. Each of these components when brought together in the act signified to clients: authority, knowledge and ability, whilst also enabling the director the means to believe the act himself. Interestingly was the director's back-stage persona was incongruous and contrary to the front-stage act. When outside of work, he could

only be described as 'surfer dude' where he wore surfing branded clothing and dropped the materialistic money orientated pretence: it was almost a case of never the twain should meet.

On a related theme, Lerum's study of a restaurant and nightclub staff showed and how they interacted between themselves and their customers. It was demonstrated that there were front-stage staff-customer personas/relationships and back-stage inter-colleague personas/relationships. In each of these contextual interactions, staff would switch in and out of particular modes of behaviour and language depending on who they were interacting: with follow colleagues, staff would partake in friendly joking and banter, and when with customers their demeanour would be more professional and aloof (Lerum 2004, p.760 - 761).

An added dimension to Interaction and Dramatulogical theories is the Social-construction argument espoused by Berger & Luckman (2007, p.43). They argued that:

> All human activity is subject to habitualization. Any action that is repeated frequently becomes cast into a pattern, which can be reproduced with an economy of effort which, *ipso facto,* is apprehended by its performer *as* that pattern. [Which then leads to] Institutionalization [which] occurs whenever there is a reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors.

It is their argument that when more than one individual comes into contact with another they will typically learn to interact with each other in such a way that they develop what can be described as crystallized institutional modes of behaviour. That is not to say that institutional forms of behaviour cannot dialectically evolve and change. But should there be oppositional change,

Berger & Luckman (2007, pp.48 - 49) also contend there may also be resistance, where they assert that:

> one will deviate from programs set up for one by others than from programs that one has helped establish oneself. The new generation posits a problem of compliance, and its socialization into the institutional order requires the establishment of sanctions…children must be "taught to behave" and, once taught, must be "kept in line." So of course, must adults.

Berger & Luckmans' arguments relate to the world of work and employment in a number of ways. Take for example the Reskin and Padvic's study entitled 'Supervisors as gatekeepers: Male supervisors' response to woman's integration in plant jobs' (1984), where they were charged by an electrical utility company to investigate what outcomes there might be in male attitudes toward the employment of females, who were used to break a strike at a power station, and where the women were hired to perform traditional male roles within the power station. Prior to and during their research Reskin and Padvic were able to discern that the majority of male supervisors held stereotypical views that the female workers were incapable taking on roles that were usually carried out by men, and as such assigned them tasks that would be considered traditional menial females roles, such as cleaning. However, at the end of the study they were able to identify positive changes in the attitudes of some of the male supervisors, which Reskin and Padvic (1984, p.546) acknowledged:

> UU's decision to use women in men's jobs as positive from the standpoint of advancing sex equity. At least among supervisors able to evaluate women fairly, the chance that women could do the work paved the way for women holding similar jobs in the future.

They went on to observe and urge that if the stereotypical male views were to be challenged in the work place that: "These social manifestations require social solutions" to challenge male stereotypes (Reskin & Padvic 1984, p.547).

In describing the ways in which modes of behaviour are socially constructed and can therefore evolve, is Menchik and Tian's (2008) study of email etiquette in the workplace. Their analysis showed the ways in which email users have sought strategies to counteract misunderstandings that are common place in email exchanges. In particular, they acknowledged the use of semiotic signs better known as emoticons (smiley faces and the like) were invented and have evolved to indicate nuanced tones of exchange, which are difficult to convey by email, such as irony or sarcasm. It is their assertion that these strategies were initiated as idiosyncratic strategies to counter this problem but they became such a common email strategy in email exchanges, that software engineers have taken them into account when developing software, and end-users use them as a matter of course in electronic communications (Menchik and Tian 2008, pp.360 - 362).

The advantage of interaction theory is that it provides insights into the minutiae of human and societal relations. With regard to the realm of work and employment, it provides the means through which social scientists can understand organisational processes, and how those processes are implemented by both the leadership and staff (Prasad 1993, p.1401). It is also a case of rather than discussing the abstract, as grand-macro theories tend to do, they also discuss the tangible and the relatable. The examples given above have demonstrated that human relationships are based upon intimacy and contextualised information that are absent from the abstract concepts that grand macro theories are formed of. Consequently, interaction theories are heavily used by social scientists to carry out qualitative research into the dynamics of the relationships, with particular reference to individuals' motivations, experiences and opinions. In doing so, it seeks to demonstrate how society is socially constructed, often under conditions that are involuntary. However, because interaction theories only consider the specifics of human experience,

they are limited in their scope because they fail to consider the structural processes of society. This is something Giddens has pointed out when he has argued for meso-theories that bridge the micro/macro gaps in sociology (Adams and Sydie 2001, p.517; Calhoun et al 2007b, p.30)

## Conclusion

Marxist concepts and theories, although somewhat grand and abstract are useful tools in describing how modern societies, particularly modern capitalist societies that are based around market economic forms of organisation are structured and operate. This viewpoint is particularly useful when explaining the realm of work. Conversely, Interaction theories, although diametric in the sense they provide such specific information about social relations, are useful because they provide rich contextual information about individual's behaviour that to we can all identify with, and therefore relate to.

It is, therefore, my suggestion, particularly when investigating the realm of work, that both theoretical positions are complementary and dovetail well together: Marxism explains bigger structural aspects, such as why companies make people redundant, while Interaction theories provide readers with the personal insights as to how individuals feel and cope when they have been made redundant, and more importantly, how they develop strategies to mitigate redundancy and challenge structural impediments.

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