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A cultural analysis of information technology offshore outsourcing: an exercise in multi-sited ethnography of virtual work

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A CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY OFFSHORE OUTSOURCING: AN EXERCISE IN MULTI-SITED ETHNOGRAPHY OF VIRTUAL WORK

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

During one of the first few days of fieldwork in India for this dissertation, I was taught what it meant to be an American by some of my Indian informants and by an American businessman who I happened to meet on site. After a few days of fieldwork, some of the Indian engineers in the team I was studying felt comfortable enough with me to ask me some questions about life in the U.S., as none of them had ever traveled there. Two questions that stuck out first were if I drink alcohol on a daily basis, and second, if I had my own limousine for transportation. The engineers explained to me that in the American television programs aired in India over the years (namely, the sitcoms “90210” and “Friends” from the 1990s), Americans in those shows were regularly shown drinking alcohol at home, school and work and riding in limousines. I quickly responded that no, I didn’t drink alcohol much and had ridden in a limousine only a couple times in my life. I went on to say that in America limousines are typically rented for only formal occasions, and that while alcohol is frequently available in many social places, most Americans do not drink during the day while at home, school, or work. The moment reminded me of the international perception that Americans live lives of excess and immodesty, which as an anthropologist from the U.S. I found hard to dispute compared to some other places in the world to which I’ve traveled.

Later that same day after the lunch hour, I made the acquaintance of an American businessman visiting another work team in the building. He immediately asked me where I was from (he was from the Midwest) and told me he recognized my Midwest accent and that I was American when he heard me in the cafeteria speaking in a louder voice than anyone else. I can recall with certainty that I had not spoken any louder than I would normally when eating lunch back at home. This conversation with

the American businessman, like the one I had with the Indian engineers earlier in the day about American daily life, was a great fieldwork moment. In addition to inspiring me to lower my voice the next day in the lunchroom, it reminded me that perceptions about cultural difference can be vivid until local experience with these differences comes into play.

In today's era of globalization, populations around the world are connected through electronically-mediated communication and are engaging with moments of cultural difference like I experienced in my own fieldwork conversations described above. In a world that becomes increasingly connected through transnational flows of people, business and ideas by the minute, it is the job of social science to document the scope and impact of these connections on society and people's daily lives. Particularly the discipline of anthropology—a field that describes itself as the, "study of humans, past and present (AAA 2011b)"—would seem an appropriate fit to contribute to the discussion of humanity's flows and knowledge about the intersections of cultural difference. Unfortunately, due to the limits of a field whose methodological tradition is primarily based on micro-level, face-to-face, relational fieldwork, anthropology has been outpaced by some its disciplinary sisters and brothers (e.g. sociology, political science, psychology and others) in the study of transnational, multi-sited research in contemporary contexts. That being said, the researcher's voyage into the field has changed in the past fifteen years within anthropology.

Ethnographic practice has evolved (Marcus 2009; Marcus 2010; Mitchell 2010). What was once traditionally an explorative journey far from home to a distant village is now increasingly a direct plane ride or telephone call to a contemporary institution or community. Unlike before when theory and debates about culture predominated

motivations to go into the field, today's anthropologists are driven to fieldsite selection more so by a sense of activism and personal interest in the current conditions of the world (Marcus 2009). The field now is a place where many anthropologists have direct and lasting impact on the lives of their informants through community development and social or political change at the local level through field study (Lassiter and Campbell 2010).

Another recent development is that the world of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century is one, "that has not been easy to study within a traditional ethnographic frame (Fortun 2009:168)." With the information technology revolution behind us, the rules of engagement with prospective fieldsites have changed. As Fortun points out, "people, ideas, artifacts, and information have circulated with unprecedented scope and speed," where, "for many cultural analysts, focusing on one particular locale or people just didn't make sense (Fortun 2009:169)." This is especially true for researchers studying the relationship between the Internet and anthropological fieldwork, like that found in ethnographies of cyberspace (Freidenberg 2011; Guimaraes 2005). For anthropologists interested in studying global cultural phenomenon, Holmes and Marcus argue, "…ethnographic interest and staging of research on the global field requires a rethinking of basic assumptions and regulative ideals of the anthropological research process (Holmes and Marcus 2005:248)." This rethinking includes attention to the issue of space or the boundedness of fieldwork. To this point, Jordan remarks that, "the despatialization of the locus of activity through Internet connectivity has added an additional factor that has undermined the traditional focus on the fieldsite as a bounded physical space (Jordan 2009:186)." This has spawned arguments for a refunctioning of

ethnography[1] (Marcus 1998; Marcus 2009) and the advancement of multi-sited ethnography for contemporary anthropological research.

Multi-sited ethnography refers to fieldwork that is unbound by a singular location, where researchers are, "extending their ethnographic inquiry to a multiplicity of sites, flows and circulations (Berg 2008:15)." Mitchell explains, "multi-sited ethnography involves following processes in motion, rather than units in situ (Mitchell 2010:7)." Processes in circulation cannot be studied ethnographically by focusing on a single site of investigation (Marcus 1995), they must be researched at the places of activity relevant to the connection of these processes. The purpose of multi-sited ethnography is not simply to contrast the perspectives found at each site but rather to obtain a more holistic view or what Burawoy calls, "the greater insight into the whole, into the connections, disconnections and reconnections (Burawoy 2001:156)." Multi-sited ethnography involves data collection concerning networks, movement and multiple perspectives of interest.

There are documented challenges with doing multi-sited fieldwork (Berg 2008; Marcus 1995), including shorter visits at each field site as opposed to traditional prolonged study (Wood 2000), as well as diminished opportunity to forge deeper-level relationships with study participants in the absence of long-term participant observation (Berg 2008; Fish 2009). Shorter field visits, typically related to financial practicality, forces the incorporation of a wider range of methodological tools beyond observation or

[1]According to the American Anthropological Association, "Ethnography involves the researcher's study of human behavior in the natural settings in which people live. Specifically, ethnography refers to the description of cultural systems or an aspect of culture based on fieldwork in which the investigator is immersed in the ongoing everyday activities of the designated community for the purpose of describing the social context, relationships and processes relevant to the topic under consideration. Ethnographic inquiry focuses attention on beliefs, values, rituals, customs, and behaviors of individuals interacting within socioeconomic, religious, political and geographic environments (AAA 2011a)."

participant-observation, such as an emphasis on targeted interviews (Fish 2009), focus groups or life histories (Mitchell 2010) to mitigate the limitations of decreased time on site. As Holmes and Marcus explain, "this condition of orienting ethnography in a multi-sited project changes fundamentally many of the norms and forms of the established model of fieldwork and ethnographic writing (Holmes and Marcus 2005:250-251)." While the argument can be made that the practice of multi-sited ethnography represents innovation for the field of anthropology, as a methodological approach it is at present still in development and requires increased exposure and formalization for widespread use.

Purpose of Study & Research Question—

Adding to anthropology's more recent foray into the world of multi-sited field research, this dissertation represents an anthropological exercise to explore the following question:

> What happens when ethnography is used to study global, multi-sited phenomena, such as international business; and in doing this, what cultural insights are possible?

For a close examination of the ethnographic reality and cultural insight possible for an anthropological approach to studying global, multi-sited research settings, this dissertation delves into the context of the transnational and virtual business environment[2] of information technology (IT) offshore outsourcing. Speaking to this specific field context, *the research question for this dissertation is the following:*

[2] A virtual business employs electronic means to transact business as opposed to a traditional brick and mortar business that relies on face-to-face transactions with physical documents and physical currency or credit. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virtual_business

> What are the cultural norms, beliefs and values about work among members of IT offshore outsourcing work teams, where culture is defined as an adaptive system of learned, shared and symbolic meanings and behaviors that characterize a group,[3] and what is the relationship between cultural difference and virtual communication[4] in such teams?

Cultural difference, here, refers to differences associated with various forms of culture that can exist in these kinds of relationships, which include but are not limited to national, regional, ethnic, organizational and occupational culture. With only a handful of anthropological discussions on the topic of offshoring or outsourcing to draw from (Blomberg 2009; Chet 2004; Freeman 2000; Kreeger and Holloway 2008; Skipper 2006) and a few related studies on call center outsourcing (Krishnamurthy 2008; Palm 2006; Sonntag 2005), this dissertation is an opportunity to make visible for the field of anthropology some of the methodological adaptations and cultural insights that are possible for the practice of ethnography in technology-mediated multi-sited research contexts.

In addition to the potential benefit of advancing the practice of virtual and multi-sited research within anthropology, this study provides the opportunity for cultural analysis in an area that has self professed a need for it. In the recent practice of IT offshore outsourcing, it is well documented that organizations do not take into account enough, if at all, the role of culture in their IT sourcing strategies and relationships (DeLone, et al. 2005; Hoffman, et al. 1994), despite the point that cultural issues have been documented to occur regularly in such relationships (Nicholson and Sahay 2001;

[3] This definition of culture is derived from a combination of thought from the scholarly work of anthropologists Allen Batteau and Ann Jordan, as well as the viewpoint of the American Anthropological Association (AAA 2011b; Batteau 2000; Jordan 2003).

[4] Virtual communication refers to communication that is dependent upon electronic means, such as the internet, email, phone, etc.., in order to communicate due to the absence of face-to-face interaction.

Zarrella and Udhas 2007). It is also the case that the predominant theories on offshoring and outsourcing tend to be heavily focused on cost incentives and do not typically engage with culture (Gurung and Prater 2006; Hendry 1995; Schniederjans, et al. 2005), revealing a hole in the existing literature, where an anthropological perspective of culture would be a valuable addition. Given the 50 percent failure rate for offshore outsourcing initiatives (Rottman 2006) and that outsourcing problems are often identified as people-related (Zarrella and Udhas 2007), new approaches to understanding the significance of cultural difference in this business context would be useful.

The next chapter discusses the origins and theories of offshore outsourcing, its specific practice and reputation in India and why anthropology is an appropriate fit for studying the phenomenon.

Chapter 2 - Background of Offshore Outsourcing

What is Offshore Outsourcing?—

Offshore outsourcing is a term that refers to the simultaneous practice of both offshoring and outsourcing products and or business functions from an external provider. Separately, offshoring refers to the sourcing of a client's production of goods and or services internationally (Skipper 2006), while outsourcing refers to the sourcing of a client's production of goods and or services from a provider external to the client's organization (Amiti and Wei 2005; Ritzer and Lair 2006; Sarkar and Reddy 2006; Schniederjans, et al. 2005). Combined together, the practice of offshore outsourcing occurs when a client firm hires an outsource provider located in another country to develop or manufacture products and or services. Agrawal et al explain that, "outsourcing of services from distant locations was made possible through the improvement in telecommunication and reduction in the cost of Information Technology (Agrawal, et al. 2010:240)." Inda and Rosaldo add that, "as technologies of communication and transportation have made capital more and more mobile, the search to reduce the costs of production has led corporations farther and farther afield, resulting in a rapid shift of labor-intensive industrial production and service work from the United States, Japan, and western Europe to new and highly dispersed low-wage sites around the globe (Inda and Rosaldo 2008:4)." One example of offshore outsourcing is when Chrysler LLC or Home Depot in the U.S. selects an IT firm, like Wipro located in Bangalore, India, to write code, create software and maintain their computer systems. Offshore and outsourced functions are typically non-core functions of an organization that are moved out of an organization (out-of-house) in an attempt to save on the cost of producing a given good or service inside the organization (in-house) (Schniederjans, et

al. 2005). Service-sector jobs, such as information-based jobs, are more likely to be outsourced or offshored because of the digital nature of the work (Blomberg 2010b).

As a work process, the practice of outsourcing is a newer term for what was historically called contracting or sub-contracting within American business. In fact, one can trace sub-contracting in the U.S. back to the end of the 18th century, during early industrialism. This period was a transitional phase from craft production to industrialism. In this system, capitalists would provide materials for craftsmen to complete jobs on a piecework basis or contract basis from their homes (Braverman 1975). Per this lack of control over the labor process, capitalists often dealt with problems such as irregular delivery times, lost parts, embezzlement, and irregular quality. Three centuries later, organizations (capitalists) are still dealing with these similar problems in the practice of offshore outsourcing.

Even without the prefix of the word "offshore" before it, the term outsourcing often maintains an international or foreign country connotation to its usage (Amiti and Wei 2005). One reason for this may be due to the public discussion of outsourcing during the American presidential race at the beginning of the 21st century. For example, Palm states that outsourcing, "became a source of fear and loathing on the 2004 campaign trail (Palm 2006:1)." Mankiw and Swagel similarly remind us that:

> "Interest in outsourcing exploded in 2004, with over 1000 references to the subject in four major newspapers that year, compared with fewer than 300 references in each of the previous 2 years. Discussions of outsourcing figured prominently in the popular culture, including jokes by late night television talk show hosts, scores of editorial cartoons, and ongoing attention on television programs such as the Lou Dobbs Tonight show on CNN (on which the first author appeared as a guest). In the electoral battleground state of Ohio, outsourcing was the focus of numerous political television and radio commercials by the Kerry campaign and like-minded groups such as MoveOn.org. In Washington, DC, and elsewhere, outsourcing was the subject of countless press conferences and panel discussions (Mankiw and Swagel 2006:1029)."

As Mankiw and Swagel's remarks highlight, the subject of outsourcing has been a prominent issue in American politics and media, particularly during election time. The trend has grown over the past two presidential elections as the American economy has struggled and experienced a recession.

As a political issue in the U.S., the debate on outsourcing has to do with job loss and whether the economic gains are worth the export of American jobs to foreign outsource providers. Davis et al point out that, "all of the varieties of domestic outsourcing and international offshoring are very visible in discussions in the popular press and are often cited as sources of unemployment in the U.S. (Davis, et al. 2006:773)." In this way, the general subject of outsourcing has sustained over the years as a political issue regarding the role of foreign manufacturing in the U.S. economy, despite the fact that the term 'outsourcing' technically does not refer to foreign business involvement. One need only watch either the movie, "Outsourced," a cross-cultural romantic comedy (ShadowCatcher_Entertainment 2010) about an American call center manager in Seattle who is sent to India to train his replacement once his job becomes outsourced, or the American television sitcom "Outsourced" (based on the same titled movie) about an American manager overseeing an Indian call center in Mumbai, to get a sense of how the concept of outsourcing has developed specific business (job loss) and cultural (outsourcer = primarily India) connotations among mainstream American audiences.

IT Offshore Outsourcing in India—

Though the origins of offshore outsourcing in India can be traced back to the seventies, it was economic liberalization policies in India during the 1990s that

catapulted India into its global outsourcing role (Agrawal, et al. 2010; Dossani 2005; Hirschheim, et al. 2004). Agrawal et al state:

> "Outsourcing to India began after the country's economic liberalization in 1991. It came to centre stage with the Y2K problem, which established India's capability in IT services. Outsourcing activities in the country generated total revenue of US$12.5 billion in 2007-2008 and is continuously increasing its contribution to the national GDP. This shows the importance of outsourcing in the Indian economy (Agrawal, et al. 2010:240)."

As the Agrawal et al explain, IT services outsourcing has evolved to become a sizable part of the Indian workforce. In the current international market economy, India is the undisputed world leader in the export of IT services for several reasons (Dossani 2005; Eischen 2006; Shirhattikar 2005; Skipper 2006). The first and most often cited reason for this is the low cost IT labor that India is able to provide. This is supported by an abundance of highly qualified workers—Indian engineering graduates and computer professionals who are willing to work at 10-15% of the pay for equivalent work in the U.S. (Dossani 2005). Some have argued that India's rise to the top is proportional to the decline of IT engineering graduates and professionals in the U.S. and the UK (Shirhattikar 2005). Also, since the information revolution and explosion of the dot-com era, developed countries around the world have experienced an increased need for IT workers. India has responded to this need with appealing qualities such as its large English-speaking population, worker attitude, a mature judicial system, local entrepreneurship and solid infant industry protection policies that support growth (Palm 2006; Sarkar and Reddy 2006; Shirhattikar 2005; Skipper 2006). Women also make up a significant minority proportion of the new IT workforce in India, whereas they are almost non-existent in the older manufacturing industry management structures (Fuller and Narasimhan 2006). As a result of the development of India's IT services industry, it

has become the business site of many companies from the U.S. and other foreign industrialized countries, including “Toyota, Motorola, Honda, Nokia, Fujitsu, HSBC, General Electric, American Express, International Business Machines (IBM), Electronic Data Services (EDS), Accenture, Daimler Chrysler, General Motors (GM), Ford, Coca-Cola, Citibank, Microsoft, Conesco, Toshiba, McDonald, Pizza Hut, Ernst & Young, Reebok and dozens of others (Sarkar and Reddy 2006:48).” Impressively, India’s “software and services exports (includes exports of IT services, BPO, Engineering Services and R&D and Software products) reached US$ 47 billion and contributed nearly 66 percent to the overall IT-BPO revenue generated in India during 2008–09 (Agrawal, et al. 2010:245).”

Ironically, despite its success, India has faced several challenges in the development of its IT services industry. The first of these initially was that the most popular type of IT service offered in India was focused mostly on application development. Some attribute this to India’s early protectionist conditions that restricted the variety of IT services development to ensure low barriers to entry (Dossani 2005). Application development is the most standardized type of IT work, which consists of writing code or basic software programming. Application development is typically a non-core service and easily segmented from a client firm’s long term needs, thus rendering it low value-added in the IT service stratum (Dossani 2005). This restricted the potential for Indian IT service providers to create long-term inter-dependencies with their clients.

Another important challenge for India’s IT services industry has been to acquire the domain knowledge necessary to expand its IT service offerings. Domain knowledge is code-specific business knowledge that is usually only acquired in the client firm’s local context and is a necessary part of higher value-added IT services, such as consulting.

Domain knowledge is frequently associated with core business functions and competencies of an organization. In their study of outsourcing satisfaction across twenty-nine U.S. and British companies, Lacity et al found, "problems arose…when participants realized that certain IT functions—such as strategic planning, development of business-specific applications, support of critical systems—should have remained in-house because they require detailed business knowledge (Lacity, et al. 2009:43)." Domain knowledge or detailed business knowledge is deeply tacit, and represents the local familiarity an IT worker has with the context or culture for which a technology solution is developed. Without being co-located with their client firms, it is very challenging for outsourced Indian IT teams to develop domain knowledge. In the last decade, however, India has expanded its variety of IT service offerings to include more than non-core services. Agrawal et al state, "with the development of offshoring work and increased capability and maturity of service providers, complex, value-added works and sometimes even works related to core competencies of firms are also offshored (Agrawal, et al. 2010:252)." Although India's IT services industry has matured since its initial rise twenty years ago, difficulties associated with the development of higher value IT service, such as acquiring domain knowledge, persist in the absence of collocation with customers.

India also faces several other challenges in the growth of its IT services industry. One such challenge is the high cost of working in the global IT industry. As Eischen explains, offshoring—or the provision of IT services from a foreign country—is known for having high global coordination costs (Eischen 2006). In other words, working in IT is quite expensive, both for clients and Indian outsourcers based in a primarily poor, agricultural country. A second challenge has to do with the fluctuating reputation of

India's IT service quality. Studies show that quality and productivity of IT services vary by region in India (Eischen 2006), much like the vast differences in quality among Indian universities to train IT engineers (Sarkar and Reddy 2006). This puts interested client firms and multi-nationals, like those from the U.S., in a constant battle to strike a balance between low priced IT service and quality. Some argue that variable quality and productivity may be related to India's poor public infrastructure (Shirhattikar 2005). Daily power outages, high levels of road traffic congestion due to poor road conditions and public plumbing problems are frequent in India's IT hubs, such as Bangalore and Mumbai. During my own fieldwork in one of India's major cities, it would take anywhere between thirty to fifty minutes to travel the eight kilometer distance from my hotel to the fieldsite, and I observed regular power outages throughout the business days. Poor infrastructure of roads and communications network problems are internationally recognized as two of the main deterrents for foreigners offshoring their business to India (Sarkar and Reddy 2006).

The global IT services industry has expanded in the last decade, causing effects on India's IT services economy. Two such effects of this growth include competition from other Southeast Asian countries, like China and the Philippines, who are venturing into the global IT services industry, and India's reputation for high employee turnover rates (Rottman and Lacity 2009). Another effect is an increase in the cost of sourcing IT work from India. For example:

> "Salaries of IT professionals in the popular locations such as Bangalore, Hyderabad, Mumbai, and other large metropolitan centers are reported to be rising at the rate of 15-20% per year. The high turnover among engineers suggests that the demand for high skilled professionals in IT is beginning to exceed supply, and this provides an opening for other low wage countries to challenge India's dominance (Sarkar and Reddy 2006:49)."

As Sarkar and Reddy point out, the rising salary costs for IT labor in India has triggered an increase in the development IT services outsourcing in other developing countries. High turnover rates of Indian IT workers also raises the transaction costs of offshore labor for clients as new hires have to be retrained (Rottman and Lacity 2009), particularly if the IT service work involves substantial business knowledge or domain knowledge.

There are also cultural assumptions about India that mark its IT services industry. Studies show that India has a history of ranking low in cultural compatibility with firms from developed nations (Shirhattikar 2005). With respect to IT outsourcing, specifically, authors Nicholson and Sahay argue that Indian communication norms and behavior do not lend themselves well to the level of client-provider interaction required for application development, much less consulting services (Nicholson and Sahay 2001). They posit this is due to the fact that Indian IT service providers are known for being shy and unassertive, with a communication style influenced by Indian cultural norms to communicate with co-workers based on hierarchy and social stratification. In their review of Indian software team performance, Nicholson and Sahay found that Indian IT service providers have the reputation among U.S. client firms as exhibiting a “yes-men” syndrome. They found that Indian IT service providers will often agree to unrealistic deadlines for product delivery in an effort to please and avoid confrontation, but then fall short in meeting the deadlines, thereby aggravating their clients with late deliverables (Nicholson and Sahay 2001). Given these kinds of cultural presumptions, new methods for understanding cultural differences would be helpful for India’s IT services industry and offshore outsourcing partnerships, generally.

Theories of Offshore Outsourcing—

As mentioned before, the study of IT offshore outsourcing is at present only at an infancy stage of development within the discipline of Anthropology. The majority of studies on offshoring and outsourcing come out of business schools and management literature, and almost all of these discussions exclusively focus on the cost and efficiency gains that the processes can offer (Agrawal, et al. 2010; Gurung and Prater 2006; Hendry 1995; Schniederjans, et al. 2005). In some of these studies, culture is mentioned as an important variable in offshore outsourcing decisions, but it is not studied significantly. The most common theoretical foundation for offshoring and outsourcing is *Transaction Cost Theory* (Schniederjans, et al. 2005). Transaction cost theory posits that the economic efficiency of a given firm can only be attained through the comparative analysis of transaction and production costs (Coase 1937). Thus, offshore outsourcing non-core IT processes translates to increased efficiency for a firm due to a reduction in transaction costs. A second common management theory on offshoring and outsourcing is *Agency Theory.* Agency theory argues that as a firm grows in size and complexity, it requires more human resources to perform necessary work processes, such as IT work (Laudon and Laudon 2004). Thus, the process of offshoring or outsourcing IT increases a firm's productivity by reducing the need for costly in-house (U.S.) IT labor (Agrawal, et al. 2010). A third and most common management theory for IT outsourcing is the *Theory of Comparative Advantage*, which states that if an external IT service provider or outsourcer can perform non-core business processes at a more efficient or cost-effective rate than a client firm, then the client firm should contract with the IT service provider for those non-core services and focus on its own core competencies in order to remain competitive (Forslid and Wooton

2003; Schniederjans, et al. 2005). *Core Competency Theory* is closely related to the Theory of Comparative Advantage which, "insists the corporate world to focus only on core competencies and outsource everything else (Agrawal, et al. 2010:242)." All of these theories contribute to the justification of IT offshoring and outsourcing as a means to increase a firm's efficiency through cost-savings of non-core IT labor. The strength of these theories is that IT offshoring and outsourcing have proven to result in significant cost-savings for some firms, although this does not occur in the majority of cases (McCue 2005).

Despite the potential benefits that the offshoring and outsourcing of IT offers, current management theories on outsourcing are limited in that they are too narrowly focused on cost and efficiency. The first major weakness of focusing too closely on cost is that firms run the risk of obscuring or downplaying the longer-term potential risks associated with offshoring or outsourcing. These risks can include poor quality and other difficulties after the initial financial gains (Agrawal, et al. 2010). Hendry explains, although outsourcing translates to immediate efficiency gains and short-term economic survival, unwanted effects or risks, often related to culture, only tend appear in the longer term of outsourcing partnerships (Hendry 1995). Hendry argues further that firms looking to outsource must balance efficiency with organizational learning in order to ensure prosperity and long-term survival. In his view, organizational learning is dependent on a firm's culture and community. A second limitation is that current management theories on outsourcing tend to ignore the informal side, or organizational culture, of a firm in outsourcing considerations. As Hendry explains, the organizational culture of a firm affects performance just as much as the formal side of a firm, but the tools used to study the formal side of a firm cannot be used to study its organizational

culture (Hendry 1995). In other words, Hendry's argument implies that the informal side or 'organizational culture' of a firm requires its own set of managerial frameworks or tools in order to evaluate or predict the way in which it will respond to organizational changes such as outsourcing. Finally, predominant theories on offshoring and outsourcing tend to evaluate outsourcing decisions solely from the perspective of the firm that is looking to offshore or outsource its work. Krishna et al argue that it is unrealistic to assume that an external IT service provider will think or act in the same way that a client firm will (Krishna, et al. 2004). Some studies also show that new outsourcing partnerships require a period of cultural adjustment since new IT service suppliers will not have the shared understanding and experience with a client firm that is necessary for successful performance (Hendry 1995). In fact some discussions have show that, "mutual understanding of each other's cultures remains an important consideration in doing successful outsourcing of jobs and businesses to India (Sarkar and Reddy 2006:50)." This suggests that further study of the significance of cultural differences in the services offshore outsourcing industry is needed.

Towards an Anthropology of Offshore Outsourcing—

Aside from there being an expressed need for academic studies of the role and effects of culture and cultural difference in offshore outsourcing partnerships (Rottman and Lacity 2009; Willcocks and Choi 2009), the discipline of anthropology is a good fit for studying this phenomenon for several reasons. What the anthropological perspective can first bring to the discussion of IT offshore outsourcing is its preference to look at the relationship between the global and the local and the impact of each upon one another (Sonntag 2005). Part of the problem with the subject of offshore outsourcing is that the macro benefits of the practice mask the meso (or organizational) and micro (or

individual) levels of the phenomenon. The local understandings of the global and how these understandings are intertwined in practice must be studied (Tsing 2000). As Korff explains:

> "As an alternative to the global – local perspective that is common in most discussions of globalization, a perspective from the local to the global can be developed from anthropology. Such a perspective implies looking at globalization from a local point of view and analyzing how global aspects are put into local frames, but beyond this rather common view, it is possible to indicate how local contents are globalized, on how to find locality within globalization (Korff 2003:2)."

As Korff's statement indicates, the anthropological approach to understanding cultural behavior at the local level is a necessary step for deciphering the living effects, interpretations, and active local expressions of globalization. This concentration on local reality is what Inda and Rosaldo refer to as anthropology's, "concrete attentiveness to human agency, to the practices of the everyday life (Inda and Rosaldo 2008:7)."

The anthropological perspective would also be helpful for studying IT offshoring and outsourcing because of its tendency to problematize a given situation (Palm 2006), which is to say, to question any broad assumptions and instead look for the emic (local) level understanding of offshoring and outsourcing's effects in the workplace. For example, in anthropologist Carrie Lane Chet's fieldwork interviewing unemployed U.S. high-tech workers in Dallas, TX, she was surprised to find "sanguine acceptance" of the job loss effects due to the practice of offshore outsourcing in the U.S. economy, despite the media's coverage that offshore outsourcing has had a disastrous effect on U.S. IT workers (Chet 2004; Chet 2005). Likewise, one cannot assume that because India's IT services industry is gaining economically its IT workers are necessarily content with their work environments simply because they are earning greater incomes.

Another major way in which the field of anthropology can contribute to the knowledge base of IT offshore outsourcing is to ask the questions of power, marginality and minorities. At the 2006 Global Informatics Conference at the University of Indiana—Bloomington, anthropologist Arturo Escobar gave a talk on the topic of modernity, globalization and difference. During his keynote address, Escobar discussed how modernity cannot be understood without taking into account its colonial underside, without seeing the differences of globalization at the local level and without contesting the dominant view (Escobar 1994). Applying his remarks to the practice of IT offshoring and outsourcing, the following questions can be considered:

- Is the practice of IT offshoring and outsourcing a form of "coloniality"[5]?
- How do the marginalized creatively resist, negotiate, appropriate, or interpret some homogenizing influences, such as Westernization, imposed from offshored and outsourcing activities (Graeber 2002; Sonntag 2005)?

These types of questions and considerations can help understand possible cultural inequities within the industry of IT offshore outsourcing across the contexts of work, culture and community in India. Some scholars in India have already posed these kinds of questions and have critically identified the Indian IT industry as a neocolonialist workplace that is known for homogenizing local cultures into Western IT culture, practicing culture management techniques and exploiting Indian labor (Chithelen 2006; Fuller and Narasimhan 2006; McMillin 2006; Upadhya 2005). For Indian IT professionals to be successful, "offshore service workers need to already have or be

[5] During his keynote address at the "Informatics Goes Global: Methods at a Crossroads" conference hosted by the School of Informatics at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana on March 3rd, 2006, Kenan Distinguished Professor of Anthropology, Dr. Arturo Escobar presented the thesis that there is no modernity without coloniality. The bulleted question listed here draws from Dr. Arturo's talk and asks: as processes of modernity, are offshoring and outsourcing an extension of the colonial process?

able to quickly gain a considerable degree of acculturation to the world of their American employers and clients" (Skipper 2006). These studies suggest that the impact of offshoring and outsourcing (representing the global) upon the work environments and labor in India's IT sectors (representing the local) is unbalanced, with an observable wearing away of local Indian language and identity. Anthropology's sensitivity to "culture management" and its understanding of culture as not frozen (Alvesson 2002) but rather emergent, negotiated and constantly in flux (Batteau 2000), would be especially useful here.

Anthropology's conceptualization of culture is quite different from the current understanding of culture in IT work, which predominantly regards culture as social psychologist Geert Hofstede has defined it. Hofstede defines national culture as, "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another (Hofstede 1991:5)." In Hofstede's view, culture is a concept that can be quantified across particular dimensions, such as individualism and collectivism and masculinity and femininity (Hofstede 2001). There are several problems with this conceptualization of culture. As Shachaf notes, "One of the weaknesses of a dimensional approach is the underlying assumption that a few dimensions can explain beliefs and values (Shachaf 2008:132)." This approach ignores the complexity and variation of cultural difference within and between cultures. Furthermore, it reduces cultural attributes into easily modularized, functional variables that organizations can manipulate. The reality, however, has shown that cultural challenges in IT offshore outsourcing can be quite unmanageable (Nicholson and Sahay 2001; Zarrella and Udhas 2007). Another problem with Hofstede's approach is that it fails to address the complex, "relationship between 'national' cultural values and culturally-influenced work-

related values and attitudes…(Myers and Tan 2002:28)." Given the inadequacy of existing culture theory in business for understanding the intricacy of intercultural work teams in the global virtual environment, the field of anthropology has a great opportunity to provide a new type of insight via its form of empirically-based qualitative cultural analysis that emphasizes fine-grained local level exploration of human culture.

Additionally, one of the most distinct qualities of anthropological theory is its holistic perspective. A holistic perspective takes into account multiple points of view and is pluralist, relativistic and usually incorporates longitudinal analysis (Hamada and Sibley 1994). A holistic approach applied to IT offshore outsourcing would emphasize consideration of all aspects of the organizations involved, including the emic (the local view) and etic (larger, outside social view) perspectives. This would be helpful since it has been suggested that a multi-level view of outsourcing is needed in current outsourcing theory, given that the effects of outsourcing decisions cut across worker, organizational and national/regional levels unequally (Niederman, et al. 2006). Using a holistic approach, discussions of culture also expand beyond the organization itself. Like Gluesing explained in her study of global teaming in turbulent environments:

> "The culture metaphor in its holistic orientation unites culture with various aspects of organizational phenomena such as organizational structures, language and other symbol systems. It also brings into consideration the wider environment such as the political and economic systems in which the organization is embedded…Anthropology, and the ethnomethodological approach so central to the discipline, offers a way to study and understand the organization and organizing as complex structures and processes situated within a larger society, a global society, and a particular historical context (Gluesing 1995:388-389)."

Gluesing's remarks point to the fact that holism is a defining concept within Anthropology for analyzing the social contexts surrounding cultural phenomena. This dissertation takes a holistic approach to take into account the environment levels encircling offshore

outsourcing partnerships. These levels include the actual work practice itself within organizations, the IT offshore outsourcing industry in particular, social and political contexts, and finally the virtual environment on which IT offshore outsourcing is dependent.

A final way in which the field of anthropology has the potential to contribute to research on IT offshoring and outsourcing is through its distinct method for studying culture, known as ethnography. The ethnographic method is a field research methodology that involves deep cultural immersion into a field setting, to the extent that the researcher becomes a member of the setting and can arrive at a local or native understanding of the society or organization in which he or she is immersed, otherwise known as the emic view. Wolcott describes the traditional underlying purpose of ethnographic research as, "to describe what the people in some particular place or status ordinarily do, and the *meanings* they ascribe to the doing… (Wolcott 2008:72-73)." Some research has shown that culture has a documented influence on the way client firms and IT service providers interact with one another (Beulen, et al. 2005; Hendry 1995; Krishna, et al. 2004; Rao 2004). Consider also Downey and Fisher's point that, "…ethnographers may be in a privileged position to observe the real changes in lived practices wrought at the interface of the cultural, social, and technical (Downey and Fisher 2006:22)." An ethnographic approach would be well suited for studying the cultural adaptation of client firms and IT service providers to working in IT outsourcing partnerships through in-depth interviewing and observation of the relevant parties over time. The ethnographic approach would also be useful for understanding how IT outsourcing teams interact or negotiate with the overarching virtual work context in which such teams are situated. This kind of qualitative data could inform new theory building

for offshore outsourcing that would supplement existing management theories with culturally-informed data, thereby, providing other types of analysis than cost. In summation, anthropology is an appropriate means through which to fill in the many gaps of present offshore outsourcing theory.

The next chapter describes the case study of the research participants and organizations that contributed to this dissertation.

Chapter 3 - Case Study

This chapter describes my entrance into the fieldsites of my dissertation, the participating fieldsite organizations, the research participants, and the work history and functions of the multi-sited, IT-based work team that became the focus of my analysis.

The research question for this dissertation was to determine the cultural norms, beliefs and values about work and the relationship between cultural difference and virtual communication in IT offshore outsourcing partnerships between U.S. client firms and Indian IT service providers. To that end, as a researcher, I obtained access and permission to follow the daily work practices of a global IT-based work team of a U.S. manufacturing company which, from this point forward for the purposes of anonymity, will be referred to as PPI (Parts Production International). PPI is a large manufacturing organization with over 20,000 employees worldwide. My initial introduction to PPI was in 2008 through faculty members from the engineering department of my University who were familiar with my dissertation interest and had recently been in a conversation with managers from the Safety Division of PPI, who expressed frustration over the challenges of working with foreign software developers in India.[6]

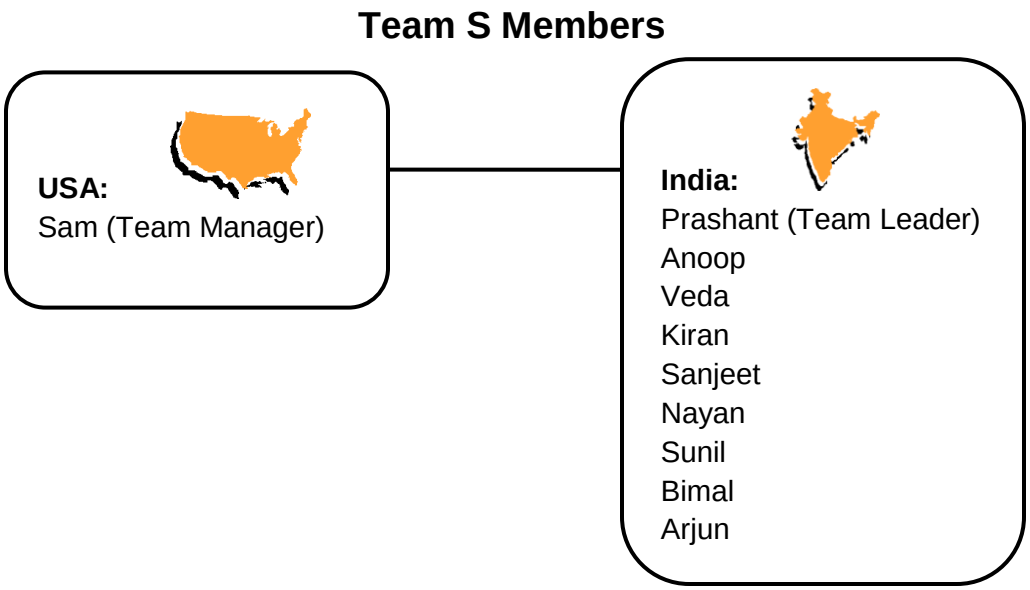
My first meeting with PPI occurred in July of 2008 and included one of the aforementioned engineering faculty members from my University, a Corporate Manager from the Safety Division of PPI, and a Safety Manager from the same division of PPI who would later become my key informant. During this meeting, it was agreed that we would move forward with a research collaboration, whereby I would be granted access to PPI to observe the daily work practices of personnel in the Safety Division. Within a

[6] I am eternally indebted to the engineering faculty members from my University for their efforts to connect me with PPI.

couple of months from that first meeting, I obtained letters of support from PPI and its IT service outsourcer located in India for my Institutional Review Board (IRB) application and was granted IRB approval. During my early fieldwork phase, I observed and informally interviewed managers and engineers from various teams within the Safety Division of PPI until it was decided through ongoing meetings with my key informant that I would focus my research on one particular global IT-based work team. Once this was decided, I began data collection for my dissertation that included regular trips to PPI's U.S. headquarters office and a three week trip to India to visit with PPI's outsourced IT provider.

The team that became the focus of my dissertation was a team from the Safety Division of PPI that my key informant managed. For the purposes of anonymity, this team will be referred to as Team S ("S" for safety). The function of Team S is to drive the processes and procedures around product compliance across PPI and to ensure that PPI is complying with all global legislation associated with product supply to customers in all regions. Team S was a new team formed in May of 2008, just a few months before my entry into PPI, as a replacement for a back-office team of PPI, also located in India, previously responsible for Team S functions. The new team consisted of one U.S.-based team manager, one Indian team leader located in India and eight Indian engineers co-located with the Indian team leader. See Figure 1 on the next page for a graphic representation of Team S's composition (the names of the team members have been changed to protect their identities).

Figure 1: Team S Composition



All team members in Team S speak English to communicate with each other. This is due, in large part, to English being the international standard for language choice in IT work, but also because of the linguistic diversity of the team. Besides English, several members of the team speak multiple local Indian dialects as well as other foreign languages. Furthermore, among the Indian members of the team, engineers were evenly split as native speakers of three separate states with unique dialects and cultural identities. Again, for the purposes of anonymity, the outsourced team's organization will be referred to as ISF (India Software Functions) from here onward.

Team S Work Functions—

Being a safety team responsible for enforcing safety compliance across global operations for PPI, Team S members interact with customers and suppliers from around the world on a daily basis. They do this using a wide variety of tools that include the

internet, telephone, audio conferencing, email, application sharing software[7], and live chat or instant messenger applications. It is not uncommon for Team S members to have between 12-20 different windows open at the same time on a given team member's computer screen in order to do their work. Team S members also incorporate planning and time management mechanisms to organize their work, including the practice of holding biweekly staff meetings and other project-specific meetings on an as-needed basis, storing data on common servers, and using automated calendar reminders to keep track of team goals and deadlines. When the opportunity to communicate face-to-face is available for acquiring information or discussing something within the team, Team S members will elect this form of interaction first. Being that the Team Manager Sam is located at PPI's U.S. headquarters, Sam is the only team member who is unable to communicate with other team members face-to-face.

The typical workday for a Team S engineer begins with checking emails for multiple accounts to organize and prioritize the customer and supplier safety requests or inquiries for the day. When a request or issue is resolved, it is recorded in the PPI parts database accessible by all team members. This constitutes the bulk of work activity for the team. The engineers on the team are encouraged to resolve as many requests as possible in a given shift. Performance is assessed based on these numbers. Expedient and on-time delivery of requests is dependent upon several factors that can include a short lead time at the time of the initial request, requests sent from different time zones, holidays or unplanned sick leave, or errors in the requests themselves. Team S

[7] Application sharing technology is a data conferencing capability that enables two or more users to interactively work on the same application at the same time. The application is loaded and running in only one person's computer; however, keystrokes are transmitted from, and screen changes are transmitted to, the other participants in the meeting. See http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/application+sharing

engineers receive between 25-30 new email requests each day by PPI customers and suppliers globally. It is not uncommon for a Team S engineer to spend between 2-3 hours per day just emailing. Team S engineers also attend weekly team meetings and other project-specific meetings that run in duration anywhere between 45 minutes to 3 hours.

As the leadership of Team S, Prashant and Sam similarly begin their workdays checking emails. As Team Leader, Prashant checks three email accounts daily—his ISF email and two customer-specific email accounts, one of these being his PPI email. Prashant is responsible for interviewing new team members and workload distribution among the engineers. He assigns customer requests to the engineers and addresses customer complaints when there is an issue with one of the engineer's accounts. Prashant is also responsible for training Team S engineers on how to use customer systems and databases, business development for ISF, generally, and keeping tabs on what new software is on the horizon for ISF's interests. Like Prashant, Sam checks a large amount of email on a daily basis. In the time between the end of one workday and the beginning of the next, Sam receives between 75-100 emails. During the workday itself, Sam usually receives another 30-50 emails. Sam divides the emails into those which need immediate responses and those which are just for information sharing. As the Manager of Team S, Sam is regularly copied on email communications sent from Team S engineers to PPI customers and suppliers worldwide. Like Prashant, Sam addresses customer complaints when there is an issue with one of the engineer's accounts. In addition to addressing emails, Sam is responsible for managing and planning Team S's long term performance. Sam also oversees the safety compliance

systems for all of PPI. Along with the Team S engineers, Prashant and Sam attend the weekly Team S team meetings and other project-specific meetings.

As an offshore and outsourced supplier of IT service, ISF's delivery model is such that it offers customers, like PPI, eighteen hours per day of access to its services. To maintain this delivery model, the ISF engineers on the team are divided up into four functional areas, with two work shifts—the day shift and night shift—for each area. Each engineer is assigned a partner engineer within the team who is on the opposite shift. Using this partner structure, ISF provides real time service to PPI customers and suppliers in the U.S., Europe, Latin America and Asia. The day shift runs from 6:30am to 3:30pm local Indian time, and the night shift runs from 3:30pm-12:30am local Indian time, Monday through Friday. Day shift engineers often stay later to transition their work to their night shift partners around the 3:30pm shift overlap. Night shift engineers often arrive thirty to sixty minutes early for their shift in order to attend team meetings or to assist with transitions with their partners. Engineer partners rotate to either day shift or night shift on a monthly basis. Prashant's (Team leader) schedule varies slightly day to day but generally is from 10:30am-9:30pm local Indian time Monday through Friday. Prashant and the Indian engineers frequently work on Saturdays to catch up on work that could not get completed during the work week. Sam works from 8am-5pm EST local U.S. time Monday through Friday. Due to the structure of the team with one team manager, one team leader and eight engineers divided up into four pairs of partners, each pair representing a key functional area of safety, there is a high level of dependency both within pairs and between the leadership and each partner pair.

Workspace Details—

The physical work environments of PPI and ISF team members, though both professional office spaces, differ greatly from each other in culturally specific ways. In terms of the exterior of the building, PPI's campus is located far from public transportation; thus, rendering personal means for getting to work a necessity for employees. In its interior, PPI's workspace has large aisle ways separating long rows of tall cubicle partitions. Each cubicle has one neighboring cubicle on either side of it, and the cubicle areas are spread out enough so that one cannot read the computer screen of a neighbor's computer. PPI employees must stand up to see other coworkers on the other side of a given cubicle wall. Each executive's cubicle is quite spacious, with room to fit up to three office chairs inside the seating area facing the center desk space. Each cubicle at PPI has its own tall storage cabinet, multiple drawers and compartments for storing desk supplies. Regardless of departmental area, most cubicle walls of PPI employees are filled with papers, charts and tables displaying information related to work function. All PPI cubicles observed have nameplates and usually several personal pictures of family members, friends, and or hobbies showing the individuality of each PPI employee. In summation, one can learn much about a PPI employee just by spending a few minutes looking at his or her cubicle space. The PPI employees I observed also tended to keep to themselves for most of the day unless in a meeting and did not appear to concurrently take coffee breaks or lunches with each other on a regular basis. Coffee and refreshments are available for purchase at PPI. Many PPI employees bring their own lunch to work and choose to eat their lunch at their desks. Many PPI employees also either bring their lunch to the cafeteria to eat or buy lunch from the cafeteria. In the cafeteria, PPI employees either eat alone or with coworkers.

In contrast to PPI, ISF's office is located in the heart of a downtown area where public transportation is abundant. I was informed that several ISF employees walk to work and specifically rent out flats near the office in order to avoid taking public transportation each day, as navigating around in India's urban areas can be quite cumbersome and time consuming. ISF's interior workspace has cubicles with neighboring cubicles on both sides, like PPI, except ISF cubicles are easily half the size of those at PPI and the cubicle wall separating one row of cubicles from the next is low, with a cutout opening in the center of each desk space so that one can easily see across the partition. The low partition walls and tighter chair spaces prohibit any sense of privacy for employees. Each ISF cubicle has modest storage accommodations, just three drawers for each employee. All cubicle walls at ISF have minimal decoration, few work related documents displaying, if any, and no personal photos or mementoes visible. It is quite difficult to ascertain which cubicle space belongs to which ISF employee from a given cubicle's characteristics alone. In contrast to workplace culture at PPI, ISF employees take frequent breaks with each other at the ISF-provided coffee break area which offers a complimentary cappuccino machine equipped with several flavors and coffee specialties to choose from. ISF employees almost always eat lunch together as a group and no one brings their lunch from home. Lunch is usually purchased at the ISF canteen.

The differences observed between PPI and ISF's physical workspace and social behavior during mealtime point to the cultural nuances of American and Indian culture. In his long-term study of intercultural business communication, anthropologist Edward Hall, measures "context" to differentiate cultural behavior. According to Hall:

> "Context refers to the fact that when people communicate they take for granted how much the listener knows about the subject under discussion. In low-context communication, the listener knows very little and so must be told practically everything. In high context communication, the listener is already "contexted," and so does not need to be told very much (Hall and Hall 1987:159)."

In Hall's analysis, he describes Americans as low-context communicators, where, "the mass of the information is vested in the explicit code (Hall 1976:70)." This is consistent with the explicit style of cubicle personalization found among PPI employees. In his study of business culture in Japan, Hall describes Japanese business people as high-context communicators, where day to day interactions in the workplace do not require much in-depth contextualizing due to the presence of extensive information networks among coworkers who share close personal relationships with one another (Hall and Hall 1987). While Japanese and Indian business cultures are certainly not identical, they do share some common Asian behavioral qualities, such as group or community orientation characteristic of high-context cultures and communication. The group orientation found in Indian workplace culture may provide an indication for why cubicle design and display among ISF employees (high-context communicators) is less private and nondescript compared to PPI employee (low-context communicators) cubicles. At ISF, spatial seclusion and individuality is irrelevant in a workplace culture that is focused on the group as a principal organizing factor of workplace norms. In contrast, at PPI cubicle design and explicit informational display around the cubicle area reflect the more American cultural norm where individual contribution to work achievement is highly valued.

The Lifecycle of Team S—

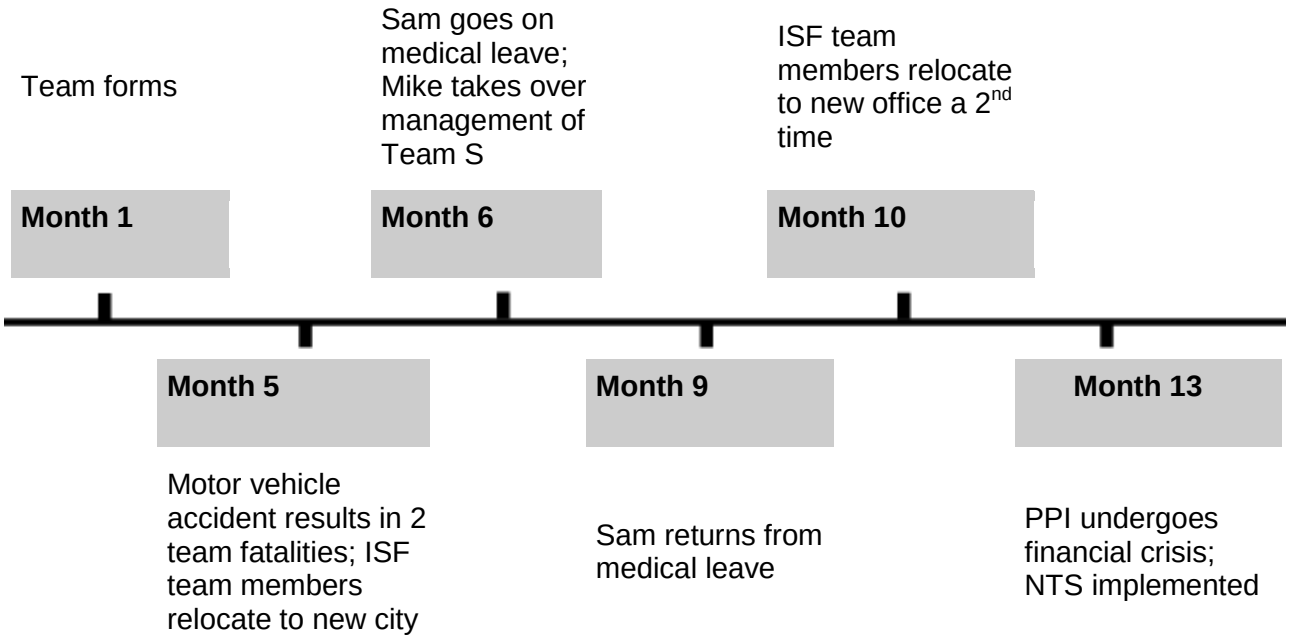
According to Sam, the decision to shut down PPI's back-office team and outsource Team S functions to a new external service provider (ISF), was related to

organizational and political challenges with remotely managing a back-office team in India. Prior to the move to outsource Team S functions, PPI's back-office Safety team had two sets of management—a local management in India and a remote manager in the U.S.—both considered in-house to PPI. Two sets of management for the same team made it difficult for the back-office to determine which management should take precedence. This translated to a misalignment of team objectives and global safety regulation practices. With the hiring and formation of a new Team S through an outsourced provider (ISF), Team S objectives were aligned and roles were clarified. PPI became ISF's customer for the service of Team S functions, with Sam as the sole manager of Team S.

Although the formation of the new outsourced Team S team resulted in greater alignment of objectives for safety functions, the team faced many challenges during the ten month span that I conducted my fieldwork. The first of these was an auto accident fatality a few months after the formation of the team that resulted in the loss of two of the most senior and highly respected engineers of the ISF team members, one of whom was related to a surviving ISF team member. This tragedy came only a day before the scheduled relocation of the ISF team members to a new ISF facility in another Indian city many hours away. ISF eventually reassigned two new engineers to the Team S project to replace the loss of its deceased members. Four weeks following the office relocation, Sam took a medical leave of absence for a few months, leaving the management of Team S in the hands of an interim manager (whom shall be referred to as Mike), a different manager from PPI's Safety Division located in the U.S. Shortly after Sam returned from medical leave, the ISF team members once again relocated to another ISF facility. Finally, in the months following that second office relocation, PPI went

through a major financial crisis and simultaneously launched the implementation of a new technology system (which will be referred to as NTS) that affected all aspects of Team S's work permanently. See Figure 2: Team S Team Timeline below for a representation of these events.

Figure 2: Team S Team Timeline



In summation, there was no shortage of major events to test the team's work performance or resilience to any potential challenges of cultural difference within the team throughout the data collection period.

The next chapter discusses the methods and fieldwork for this dissertation.

Chapter 4 – Methods & Fieldwork

This chapter includes a detailed description of the methods, data collection procedures, sample, data types and methodological adaptations used in this study.

Method—

The primary method used in the data collection for this dissertation is the qualitative methodology known as ethnography—the fundamental research method of cultural anthropology. Dating back to the mid-nineteenth century, "much of the uniqueness of the anthropological worldview is both a cause and a consequence of the process of gathering data in unfamiliar settings (Jordan 2003:21)." To this end, ethnography seeks to, "learn about a culture from the inside out (Schwartzman 1993:3-4)," and understand what is known as the emic, or local point of view of a group through in-depth cultural immersion. As a research method, ethnography, "requires researchers to examine the taken for granted, but very important, ideas and practices that influence the way lives are lived, and constructed, in organizational contexts (Schwartzman 1993:4)." This method entails extensive description of social life in a given location, usually focusing on a small number of cases over an extended period of time. Ethnographic data gathering field techniques include, but are not limited to, observation, participant-observation and interviews. What is different about this dissertation with respect to the traditional practice of ethnography in anthropology is that the majority of the fieldwork was conducted multi-locally—that is—in multiple physical locations as well as virtually. The practice of conducting ethnography in multiple geographic locations or communities as part of one large research sample is referred to as multi-sited ethnography.

Data Collection—

The research which this dissertation is based upon is the result of a multi-sited ethnography that was conducted over the course of a ten month period from September of 2008 through June of 2009 on the fast-paced work environment of IT offshore outsourcing. In this study, the client organization PPI was a US-based company and its IT supplier, ISF, was located in one of India's major IT cities. There were a total of twenty five participants in this study, but the primary focus of analysis was a ten-person global IT-based work team, comprised of one team manager from the U.S client firm (Sam), one team lead located in India (Prashant), and eight engineers from the IT supplier also located in India.

In keeping with a classic approach to ethnography, my research process included face-to-face observation and interviews with study participants at the US client firm location and the IT supplier location in India. Secondary data sources included PPI and ISF documents viewed only during meetings and some Team S emails regarding the scheduling of team meetings. Observation was of typical work days and spanned one hundred and seventy-five meetings, which ranged from one hour to three hours in duration per meeting and included internal Team S meetings as well as some Team S meetings with PPI employees outside of the team. Participant observation included my attendance at team lunches, and participation in coffee breaks, water cooler talk, talk between meetings and social outings with the team members. I conducted numerous informal interviews during events of participant observation and two rounds of formal interviews with the team (18 total interviews total)—the first round after the team was initially formed and then the second round seven months later. See Figure 3 on the next

page for a table representation of this fieldwork summary, including the intended purpose for collecting each data source.

Figure 3: Fieldwork Summary

Data Type	**Purpose and Details of Data Collection**
Observation of PPI at its U.S. headquarters location	To learn about PPI, its employees and daily work practices as a U.S. offshore outsourcing client.
Observation of ISF in India	To learn about ISF, its employees and daily work practices as an Indian outsource provider, and also to learn about the IT services industry in India.
Virtual observation of PPI and ISF team meetings	To learn about the patterns, styles and types of virtual communication in Team S as representative of an IT offshore outsourcing relationship.
Participant observation of PPI non-work activities (face-to-face and virtual)	To gather data about the customs and values of PPI employees in real time. This included going to lunch with PPI employees and participating in informal conversations.
Participant observation of ISF non-work activities (face-to-face and virtual)	To gather data about the customs and values of ISF employees in real time. This included going to lunch and snack breaks with ISF employees and participating in information conversations about politics, family and sports.
Informal interviews (face-to-face and virtual) with PPI and ISF employees	To ask about the work practices being observed or technology being used by Team S.
Highly-structured formal interviews with Team S members (face-to-face and virtual)	To learn about Team S, safety work, the beliefs of the team about their work, views about communication within the team, the significance of cultural difference in team performance and changes in the team's communication patterns, styles and preferences over time.
Secondary data sources—team documents, records and email	To develop better contextual understanding of Team S's work practices and the field of IT offshore outsourcing generally.

While this dissertation included standard ethnographic fieldwork—observation, participant observation and interviewing—the majority of data collection for this study occurred in a virtual space. This was methodologically acceptable, in my view, being that the function of Team S requires them to regularly interact with individuals and cross-

functional teams around the world that with whom they are not co-located with. Being a global IT team, their work requires them to communicate virtually, that is—dependent on electronic communication technology and social tools such as email, phone, messenger and application sharing software to perform work tasks. In total, of my one hundred and seventy five observation events, less than ten percent were completed face-to-face with the remaining ninety percent being conducted through audio-conferences using application sharing software, such as netmeeting. While I did attend in person meals and coffee breaks with team members during on-site visits, the majority of my participant-observation events were interactions with the team virtually, typically during the periods between meetings and at the beginning and ends of audio conferences. With regard to my interviews with study participants, the first round of interviews were all conducted face-to-face, and the second round of interviews was primarily completed via the telephone. I would estimate that close to eighty percent of my fieldwork was conducted virtually, in large part due to the multi-sited aspect of the research context.

Ethnographic Adaptations & Methodological Findings—

Conducting ethnographic fieldwork of a virtual work context is a practice within anthropology that is at an early stage of development. As Ruhleder explains, "Work in virtual spaces transforms ethnography in ways that are still new and experimental…Work in hybrid settings—worlds that cross and integrate both physical and virtual—pushes us to explore different ways of studying and representing technologically embedded activity (Ruhleder 2000:13)." Ruhleder's point resonated in my own research on the virtual workspace of IT offshore outsourcing. Within weeks after the onset of my dissertation fieldwork I came upon my first methodological finding that doing ethnography in a primarily virtual workspace calls for a certain higher level of

familiarity with communication technology and software than is traditionally thought of in anthropological field study. Furthermore, conducting the majority of my fieldwork in a virtual space resulted in unique ethnographic adaptations. For example, in order to fully enculturate into the technological process of daily work within the team, I learned and adopted the application sharing technology used by the team. Use of this technology was necessary given that the nature of the team's work was so virtually-mediated that the cultural reality of work for informants existed in a hybrid space—both a virtual space as well as physical ones (local). As a methodological strategy, this provided additional insight into the "cultural meanings, objects, and identities in diffuse time-space" (Marcus 1995:96) through the incorporation of virtual tools as a methodological technique. For this study, the use of virtual tools represented an additional, but also requisite, activity of data collection in order to effectively understand the nature of work in the IT offshore outsourcing domain.

Forced to adapt my methodological training into the virtual realm, I questioned how the ethnographic process might be altered by the reliance on information technology for the understanding of social reality. Marcus reminds us in his discussion of methodological anxieties when testing the limits of ethnography that, "ethnography is predicated upon attention to the everyday, an intimate knowledge of face-to-face communities and groups (Marcus 1995:99)." Specifically, I was interested in what the research data would be, primarily collected in the absence of face-to-face interaction. The answer to this and second finding from the research process was that relationship building and maintaining good relationships with informants was sustainable through virtual data collection. While there was, admittedly, no substitute for face-to-face fieldwork, informal conversations, jokes and personal exchanges did occur in the

process of virtually-mediated data collection. I developed and maintained relationships with study participants through regular emailing and informal discussions. Though these communications typically occurred through an asynchronous email exchange instead of in front of a snack machine, or during a phone call instead of in person, they were none-the-less effective in facilitating good rapport with study participants and a more nuanced understanding of their local work environment.

Methodological adjustment of the ethnographic method in a virtual field context was not without challenges. The majority of challenges were related to the lack of face-to-face interaction with study participants. For example, observation in a virtual environment renders group events, such as audio conferences, more difficult to follow. Unless meeting participants clearly identify themselves each time someone speaks (an uncommon practice in group discussion), the burden falls on the ethnographer to decipher who is talking at any turn, with only a speaker's voice as the clue. Similarly, without face-to-face observation during a data collection event, the ethnographer misses the opportunity to witness much of the non-verbal communication cues that classic ethnography affords. For instance, sentiments like frustration signaled by a frown or sarcasm shown through rolling eyes were difficult to detect in the virtual work environment, especially when dealing with cross-cultural work teams where norms for expressions of humor or irritation are culture-specific.

Despite the physical limitations of doing ethnography in the virtual environment, mitigating the physical barrier of non-collocated fieldwork was possible and included activities like the honing of listening skills and auditory memory as an observer. This meant identifying speakers not singularly by voice but also by other contextual clues such as a speaker's point of view, expertise, or by an earlier reference that was restated.

It also included watching out for pregnant pauses between speaker statements, and in general, documenting as much as possible the contextual details of the data collection event that may impact the content or flow of group discussion. For example, agendas or documents that are altered during real time in a meeting through application sharing technology provided helpful indications for who was speaking and who was next to speak. Reviewing email exchanged between study participants also provided clues about the type of relationships that exist between people. For example, the formality of salutations in team emails provided insight about the nature of a relationship between members, such as whether two people considered each other as peers or more hierarchically. Fish's assessment that participant observation in globally distributed methodology is, "alocal and exists not only in person-to-person interactions, but also within information and social networks of our subjects (Fish 2009:27)," was especially seen here.

Doing ethnography in a multi-sited and virtual context produced a third and final methodological finding. This was that digitally-mediated data collection through virtual mediums, such as audio conference calls, live chat, email and the use of application sharing technology, provided the opportunity to capture levels of cultural meaning located in a virtual space. The potential benefit of anthropological exploration of virtual space is timely as the world continues to become even more interconnected through virtual means. Like Ruhleder says about virtual environments, "they also create new opportunities for capturing and analyzing interaction in the hybrid spaces that are becoming integral parts of how people, institutions, and communities organize their work and their lives (Ruhleder 2000:14)." For this study, the application of virtual tools and communication mediums translated into observable methodological benefits. At a

minimum level, their output included a written record of group conversation and work, whether that be as a message log, text file, spreadsheet or database. With application sharing technology, specifically, I was able to see in real time a transcript of what was being discussed as well as the chance to get a better sense of the work context of the team by viewing their interaction with files and programs that impact their daily work. In this way, application sharing technology served as a site around which relationships and the cultural practice of work move. In the multi-sited field of global offshore outsourcing in which this study was situated, the incorporation of virtual communication tools, was integral to gaining a substantive understanding of the local work environment that primarily exists in a global workspace.

The next chapter discusses the data, analysis and observations from this dissertation.

Chapter 5 – Data, Analysis & Observations

This chapter describes the data from this study and discusses the data analysis procedures used. The chapter also includes a discussion of observations from the study.

Data—

As stated in Chapter 4, the primary focus of analysis for this dissertation was a ten-person global IT-based work team, named Team S, comprised of a US Team Manager (Sam), an Indian Team Leader (Prashant) and eight Indian engineers. The bulk of observation data collected for this dissertation was observation of Team S meetings. During the 10-month data collection period from 2008-2009, I observed the majority of Team S's regular meetings. In total, I observed one hundred and seventy-five Team S meetings, the majority of which I observed in the virtual context as opposed to sitting next to Team S members face-to-face. None of these meetings were tape recorded for analytical purposes in compliance with the proprietary regulations of the fieldsite organizations. Observed meetings included weekly staff meetings led by Sam as well as meetings to prepare for the rollout of NTS (new technology system) that would impact all aspects of Team S work in 2009. NTS meetings generally occurred twice a week but sometimes as often as three times a week. I also observed customer-specific PPI meetings, most of which were meetings for one particular PPI customer that I shall refer to as Chazu here onward. Lastly, I observed several other miscellaneous and infrequent meetings, such as meetings when Team S members would discuss a particular issue or project, metrics review meetings and software installation meetings. See Figure 4 for a summary of the meeting types observed.

Figure 4: Team S Meeting Summary

Meeting Name	**Frequency of Meetings**	**Total Number of Meetings Observed**
NTS meeting	2-3 times/week	83
Team S staff meeting	1time/week	39
Chazu meeting	1-3 times/week	26 (in 2009 only)
Miscellaneous	Infrequent	25
Other PPI customers	Rare	3

All observed Team S meetings used mostly the same information and communication technology (ICT) to support the meetings. This included telephones, audio conferencing and application sharing software to link meeting participants by voice and desktop, email for sending information or files during meetings and instant messenger applications. Team members used instant messenger applications during virtual meetings to send silent and rapid communication to one another without disturbing the audible discussions taking place during audio conferences. The number of participants varied across meetings, ranging from 2-11 people depending on the meeting type. The audio conferencing and application sharing software used at PPI tracks meetings participants. All PPI audio conferences have the option of being recorded by the host (initiator) of the call. To join an audio conference, meeting participants dial a toll-free PPI call-in number, enter in the meeting identification number and identify themselves by recording their name into the system. Similarly, the application sharing software records and displays meeting participants' names when participants are logged into the software application. Then the participant list

automatically displays on each participant's laptop or desktop that is logged into the meeting. In this way, participants are kept aware of who is logged into the meeting at any given time.

In addition to observation data of Team S meetings, the data for this dissertation also included two recorded rounds of interviews with Team S members, participant observation notes, and secondary data sources such as email records and PPI proprietary documents related to Team S's work activities. Regarding the interviews specifically, interview data consisted of two rounds of interviews with Team S members, one round at the beginning of my fieldwork and the second round eight months into the fieldwork period. The interviews were scheduled in this manner to determine if Team S opinions had changed over time. Interview length for the first round of interviews with Team S members ranged from 50-85 minutes per interview. Interview questions for the first round of interviews focused on learning about the role of Team S members, their views about working in an offshore outsourcing team, the structure and style of communication used for work activities, their views on Team S goals and finally their views on the cultural differences within the team with respect to the team's work. Interview length for the second round of interviews was slightly shorter overall compared to the first round, ranging from 30-65 minutes per interview. Interview questions for the second round of interviews focused on determining if Team S members felt there had been a change in the communication style or pattern among the team, what their communication preferences were for work activities, whether they had observed any cultural exchange in communication style or patterns and, once again, whether they felt cultural differences within the team affected the team's work. In addition to the interview

transcripts, interview data included handwritten fieldnotes of team member responses to questions.

In alignment with the Institutional Review Board's policy for data storage and protection, all fieldnotes, transcripts and digital files of the study's data was kept locked in a secure cabinet. Event cover sheets were created for each data collection event and assigned a discrete identification number known only to the Principal Investigator. Names and identities of research participants were anonymized to protect the confidentiality of the fieldsite organizations and their employees. Photography at PPI and ISF locations was prohibited, thus details about the physical structure and layout of the fieldsite workspaces was based entirely on handwritten fieldnotes taken during site visits.

Data Analysis Procedures—

Following the completion of data collection in the summer of 2009, I used Microsoft Office and the qualitative data analysis software known as Atlas.ti[8] for the coding and analysis of data. Using Microsoft Word, I transcribed all of the fieldwork interviews into Microsoft Word text files. I then imported all of the transcripts into Atlas.ti in order to read and review my data. From this review, I inductively identified and created a list of fifty patterns or "codes" of meaning spanning over nine hundred and ninety-seven selected text quotations. Selected quotations included text that ranged in length from one sentence to an entire paragraph. Frequently, I assigned several codes for the same quotation selection if the quotation contained data supporting multiple codes or patterns. Once every transcript had been coded for all fifty codes, I reviewed the code list with members of my dissertation committee to discuss the relative merits

[8] See http://www.atlasti.com/ for complete details of the Atlas.ti's analytic features.

and insights of each code. Next, I studied the density of each code or the number of quotations for each code (pattern) to determine which codes had the greatest prevalence in the selected quotations.

The prevalence of codes in the interview data can be divided up into three categories—high, medium and low occurring. High occurring codes are the codes that occurred 70 or more times. Medium occurring codes are the codes that occurred somewhere in the range of 40-70 times, and low occurring codes are the codes that occurred less than 40 times in the data. Although I took all coded data into consideration during my analysis, I paid particular attention to the medium and high occurring codes. This medium and high occurring code list consisted of codes about language, including discussion of accent, cross-cultural communication, Indian and American stereotypes, the client and service provider relationship, virtual communication, telephone communication, the complexity of email, problem solving, adaptation and learning, sharing information, team bonding and the compression of time or emphasis on time urgency.

After spending some time germinating with my code results and revisiting relevant theoretical literature on my topic, I identified and created three code families equal to three major thematic categories of findings using Atlas.ti. Once again, I read through all nine hundred and ninety-seven quotations for all fifty codes to determine which codes supported which families and then assigned codes to each of the respective three code families. Several of the codes co-occurred across code families. Code Family 1 contains codes pertaining to the complex cross-border communication and coordination activities that are associated with globalization. Code Family 2 contains codes pertaining to the way in which location and locality correlate with

globalization, and Code Family 3 contains codes relating to intercultural communication and virtual work. See Figure 5 below for a table representation of the code totals summary.

Figure 5: Code Totals Summary

Code Family	No. of Codes	No. of Quotations	Percent of Total Quotations
1	39	922	92%
2	29	843	85%
3	27	818	82%

As the table indicates, out of fifty codes spanning nine hundred and ninety-seven selected text quotations, 80% or more of coded data supports each of the three code families or major thematic categories of findings using Atlas.ti. While differences in the percent values of the supporting data may vary across code families due to variables such as the types of interview questions asked of informants or the different types of events observed, I've provided the percent values of supporting data for each code family here to show the weighted prevalence of occurrence of supporting data for the three major thematic categories of findings. Each of the following chapters represents a discussion of each identified code family.

Observations: Style and Structure of Team S Meeting Discussions—

As mentioned in Chapter 3, I began my fieldwork with Team S only a few months after the team was newly formed. The timing of my entry into the field gave me the opportunity to observe the growth and change of the team as it progressed over time. The death of two of the Indian team members, coincidentally a week before my trip to

India, was a devastating event for Team S. Following that tragedy, Sam and Prashant were instrumental in picking up the pieces, especially in terms of morale, for the rest of the team. The first Team S staff meeting after the tragedy was a critical moment in bonding the team together. Sam began the meeting expressing condolence and then praise and thanks for the remaining team members agreeing to meet for the call only days after the accident. Sam repeatedly stated concern for how everyone was feeling over the situation and urged the team not to worry about the workload piling up while the team grieved. I believe these actions had a lot to do with the initial formation of the Indian members' regard and respect for Sam following the loss of two of their members. Less than a month after this meeting, Sam left for a medical leave of absence and Mike took over management of Team S.

The observation data from the first half of the data collection period was markedly different from the second half of the data collection period. I attribute this to the time it took for all of Team S's members to get to know each other and become more comfortable as an established team. In the first few months of Team S staff meetings especially, the style of the meetings is best described as formal. No one joked or spoke of personal matters much at all. Team S members spoke clearly during meetings—the American PPI members of the team speaking much faster than the Indian ISF members. The American PPI members of the team did the majority of the talking and the Indian ISF members adhered to a mostly passive hearer role. In those meetings, Sam or Mike frequently would run the conversation and, when both present, speak to one another almost as if no one else was in the call with them. In contrast, the Indian participants would speak cautiously and only when asked a direct question. They did not speak amongst each other otherwise during the call. In most cases, Prashant was the one to

speak for the Indian members of the team, even if a question was asked that one of the other Indian team members could answer. Despite the imbalance of speaker turns between the American and Indian members of the team, the tone of these meetings was positive. No one criticized one another during meetings and all team members displayed respect for each other in the way they spoke and said please and thank you regularly. Meetings during this time often started 10 minutes late, with the Indian members of the team being the ones to arrive late.

The structure of Team S staff meetings during the first half of the data collection period was such that once a meeting began, Sam or Mike would go through a list of items they wanted to discuss and then at the end of the meeting ask Prashant and the rest of the Indian members of the team if they had any points they would like to discuss. If time was running out at the end of a call, discussion of items that the Indian side of the team raised would sometimes be cut short and pushed back to the following staff meeting. At the end of all calls with the team, Sam would always give praise and thanks to the team for their good work. This structure of staff meetings differs from team staff meetings during the second half of the data collection period which began shortly after Sam returned from medical leave in 2009.

Following Sam's return in 2009 and through the remainder of the data collection period, Team S meetings mostly began on time. The style and structure of the staff meetings also became less formal and more balanced over time. All team members spoke at relatively the same speed, which was a medium speed—not too fast but definitely not slow. Sam often began the staff meetings thanking and praising the team, as a whole, and called out the achievements of individual members of the team, too. Following this, Sam would engage the team in talk about non-work subjects such as how

the team's weekend was or upcoming Indian holidays. Especially toward the later end of my fieldwork, team members frequently spoke of family matters, such as a new birth or death in the family with each other informally while waiting for a meeting to start or even during meetings. During Team S's meetings in 2009, Sam was still the person running the meetings although more of the Indian team members besides Prashant became active participants in meeting discussion and took turns asking Sam questions. The tone of these meetings was positive but more light-hearted. When addressing engineers individually for the first time during a given staff meeting, Sam would greet the engineer and ask them how they were doing that day before launching into business discussion. Unlike in staff meetings during the first few months of the data collection period, Team S staff meetings in 2009 often began with Sam asking the Indian members of team what items they desired to discuss in the meeting. All staff meetings during this period ended like they began, with Sam giving considerable thanks and praise to the team for their work.

Another important change that occurred in work activities during the second half of the data collection period in 2009 was that Prashant started holding weekly internal ISF meetings to discuss Team S work activities without Sam. These internal ISF meetings among the Indian Team S members took place a couple of days after the weekly Team S staff meetings during which Sam was present. The purpose of the internal ISF meetings was to discuss Team S work issues, review task assignments and share information among members present. The structure of these internal ISF meetings was similar to the regular Team S staff meetings with Sam. An agenda was set at the beginning of the meetings and application sharing software was used for discussion, problem solving and group learning. Observation data from one observed

internal ISF meeting showed, however, that the style of these meetings was markedly different from the staff meetings with Sam. The Indian team members frequently interrupted each other and spoke over each, though no one interrupted when Prashant spoke. Conversation was more casual than the regular staff meetings with Sam, and at the conclusion of the meeting, everyone in the meeting clapped hands for about five seconds to end the meeting. The act of clapping reflected a sense of bonding and group identification. Overall, the style of communication and interaction during the internal ISF meeting demonstrated a distinct sense of community different from the regular Team S staff meetings with Sam.

Like the change between the 2008 and 2009 Team S staff meetings, the team's NTS meetings and PPI customer specific meetings, such as the Chazu meetings, similarly changed as Team S grew more comfortable as a team. NTS meeting attendees usually included Sam, Prashant, Anoop (one of Team S's Indian engineers), and a rotating number of other Team S engineers, as well as additional American PPI employees who were responsible for assisting with the implementation of NTS into Team S's work. Chazu meeting attendees usually included Sam, Prashant, Anoop and two Chazu employees in Germany. For both NTS and Chazu meetings in 2008, Sam was the person in charge of running the meetings. Sam would host the call and facilitate most of the discussion. Like in the early Team S staff meetings, the Indian members of Team S spoke more cautiously than the Western meeting participants and also less often unless asked a question directly. In contrast with the Team S staff meetings though, Sam addressed most of the questions or issues related to the engineers' work instead of Prashant. In this way, Sam was the main voice of Team S during meetings when there were participants outside of Team S present.

During the second half of the data collection period, I observed a change in the frequency and speed of speech among the Indian members of Team S participating in NTS and Chazu meetings. In particular, Anoop emerged in a more vocal role within these meetings, providing answers and asking questions of non-Team S meeting participants. Anoop's and other Indian team members' involvement in the NTS and Chazu meeting discussions contributed to greater clarification and understanding of work issues. As a result of the greater involvement in meeting discussion by other Team S members, Sam and Prashant spoke less often during these meetings. Meetings also became more efficient than in the earlier months of Team S's formation and a greater number of agenda items and issues were completed during all Team S meeting types in 2009. Particularly with regard to the NTS meetings, Team S members discussed in great detail the preparations for the NTS launch. I observed several NTS meetings during which team members expressed concern about getting everything ready in time to make the launch date. This preoccupation with time seemed to echo throughout Team S's other meeting types in 2009.

The observed changes in the style and structure of Team S communications during staff meetings, NST meetings and Chazu meetings suggest important findings regarding intercultural communication in IT offshore outsourcing relationships comprised of American clients and Indian service providers. One of these is that speed of speech and turn taking in speech is culturally-based in such relationships. As the observation data showed during the beginning of the data collection period, the American Team S members spoke quickly during meetings and tended to dominate meeting conversations, in contrast to the Indian Team S members who spoke more cautiously and infrequently. After some time had passed and Team S became more used to working with each other,

the Indian members of the team appeared to take on or adopt more of Sam's American communication style. Observation data from 2009 showed that Anoop and the other Indian engineers of the team participated more in group discussion, both asking and answering questions actively from non-Indian meeting participants. Data from that time period also showed that Sam became less formal and more personal with the Indian members of the team during meetings. It is unclear if Sam's engagement on an interpersonal level with the Indian members of the team translated to the changes in their communication behavior, but the correlation is possible. In addition to changes in the speed and style of meeting communications, Team S meetings, including the NTS and Chazu meetings, became more efficient over time. With more Team S members participating in group discussion, more material was covered quickly. This acceleration of meeting discussion occurred simultaneously with heightened awareness of the upcoming NTS launch date, reflecting within the team an overall preoccupation with being timely and on target for work deadlines.

To summarize this section, over the course of the ten months during which I followed the work activities of Team S, team members grew observably more comfortable and confident working together as a team. This was conveyed in the decreased formality of communications, albeit still polite, during meetings over the fieldwork period. Additionally, the Indian members of Team S began meeting internally at ISF separate from PPI, thereby establishing and developing a local group identity and medium for the additional management of Team S work. Furthermore, a larger number of the team members spoke up during team meetings at the latter end of the field study, compared to meetings earlier in the data collection period, when only certain senior members tended to participate in discussion. This behavior was concurrent with the

American manager of Team S becoming less formal and more personal with the Indian engineers of the team individually during meetings. I interpret these changes in the team's behavior to the Indian Team S members' adoption of more American-like communication during meetings, characterized by efficient (quick) and active discussions as well as a heightened focus on time and meeting deadlines. Second round interview data showed the majority of the team felt there was an improvement in communication within the team from the beginning of the study, including an increase in the frequency and speed of phone calls and meetings, an increase in the clarity and understanding of communications, and an improvement in speaking and emailing skills.

Although cultural differences existed within Team S, these differences did not translate to significant issues among relationships or in work performance. The observation data suggests two possible explanations for this. The first is that by Prashant holding internal ISF meetings to discuss Team S work, the ISF team members' local Indian identity was able to coexist along with the more American style of Team S meetings with Sam and other PPI employees. A second possible explanation for the lack of intercultural issues within the team was the quality of the work relationships. Overall, I would characterize the rapport and work relationships among all of the team members as quite good. Team members regularly supported one another by solving problems together, paying each other compliments and speaking nicely with each other consistently. The Team S members collocated at ISF also had strong personal associations with one another in conjunction with professional ones. Many of the Indian team members ate all of their meals together, socialized outside of work, and some even lived together in rental housing near the office despite being from different Indian states originally. At the close of the data collection period, indications suggested the team

would continue the pattern of working well together and increasing the quality of communications as time progressed.

Finally, the observed changes in the style and structure of Team S meetings over the course of the fieldwork period speak to the complexity in developing global virtual business partnerships. The data suggests that communication style and structure are culturally-based in such relationships and that adaptation to cultural differences is part of the skill set that facilitates coordination across borders. Together these points inform the forthcoming findings and discussion in Chapter 6 of this dissertation concerning the complexity of cross-border communication and coordination activities associated with globalization.

Observations: The 'Local' Spaces of Team S Interaction—

As stated in previous chapters, the work sites of Team S include both physical and virtual spaces. The physical spaces include the cubicles, offices and organizational facilities of PPI and ISF. The virtual workspace is a digitally-mediated space that includes synchronous and asynchronous interaction using information and communication technology (ICT) such as the internet, telephone, audio conferencing, email, application sharing and instant messenger applications. Team S members use all of this ICT as well as virtual private networks—networks which allow for secure, encrypted connections from outside corporate firewalls, such as from ISF's India facility, into servers and databases of PPI's central organizational network. To manage their work tasks and keep track of deadlines, Team S also uses calendar planning software that provides automatic reminders of meetings, target dates and other action items.

Because nearly all ICT is contingent on the Internet to work, global virtual teams, such as offshore outsourcing teams, are dependent on a secure power connection in

order to support their work activities. This proved to be a regular issue for Team S interactions, as I observed daily power interruptions at ISF's India office, a common characteristic of most Indian IT cities. For example, for every day that I was in India collocated with the Indian members of the team, there were at least 1-2 power outages per day in the office that lasted anywhere from 5-20 minutes. More often than not, Team S meetings experienced at least one disconnection or dropped call during the course of a meeting. These consistent power interruptions were especially troublesome for Team S's technical discussions, such as during NTS meetings.

Although I observed that emailing constituted the majority of Team S work communication, Team S members also regularly attended team meetings. Due to the distributed nature of Team S's membership, team meetings existed in a multi-local space—physical and virtual. As a general rule, when collocation of team members was possible, Team S members who were collocated sat together to participate in team meetings. For example, while attending Team S meetings where Sam and Mike were collocated at PPI, Sam and Mike would sit at their office workstations, which were located across an aisle way from each other, to call into the meetings. The proximity of their workstations allowed them to see one another while they were called in and logged in to the meeting using separate phones and computers. During those same meetings, Prashant and the rest of the Indian members of the team would sit together in a conference room with a phone, 2-3 laptops and a projector to call in and log in to the meetings. For the Indian members of Team S, one laptop was for logging in to the application sharing program used to support the meeting discussion and the other laptops were used by team members to look up information or update information in real time. The collocated Indian members of the team used the projector to display the

images from a laptop onto a large screen that was synchronized with the application sharing program for the meeting. This provided all of the team members in the conference room at ISF a way to see meeting images at the same time together.

There were observable advantages of collocation at both PPI and ISF. Collocation of Team S members provided opportunities for quick face-to-face communication and, in some cases, immediate problem solving. For example, during my observation of the Indian members of Team S at ISF, I witnessed team members get up from their desks and walk over to other team members to ask for help or to clarify an issue instead of emailing each other and waiting for a response. Similarly, Sam would approach collocated coworkers at PPI for matters such as IT support or to meet with PPI's Safety Division Manager. Another benefit of collocation that I observed was the opportunity for Team S members to bond. As stated in previous chapters, the Indian Team S members came from three culturally distinct states in India. Despite these differences, several members of the team either lived together or at least socialized together outside of the workplace. Since all of the Indian members of Team S were collocated at the same office, this contributed to an observable sense of camaraderie shared among them.

With respect to Team S meetings specifically, collocation in a physical space translated to advantages for the Indian team members as the service providers in the offshore outsourcing relationship. Because they were collocated in the same room for Team S meetings, the Indian members of the team were able to communicate non-verbally and sometimes verbally without Sam knowing when the speaker phone was on mute. This afforded them the opportunity to communicate messages between one another such as who should take on the task of responding to a given question posed by

Sam or one of PPI's other employees. Collocation also provided Prashant the ability to control the communication from the Indian side of all meetings to ISF's advantage. See the fieldnotes and short transcript of communication below from one of the Team S staff meetings I observed while in India:

(Sam speaking) "Team, what progress have you made on the NTS items?"

Note—There is audible background noise of Sanjeet and Nayan having their own conversation separate from the group discussion at hand.

(Prashant speaking) "Sam: Kiran has some updates to share with you about our efforts with the NTS preparations."

Note—While Prashant speaks to Sam, he simultaneously pats Sanjeet and Nayan gently on their arms to silence them while talking into the microphone. Sanjeet and Nayan quickly terminate their conversation and listen intently to Kiran's response.

As the transcript demonstrates, in this instance, collocation enabled the opportunity for Prashant to gain control over what voice communication Sam heard. Nonverbal communication helped Prashant avoid having to ask Sanjeet and Nayan to be quiet out loud where Sam could hear him. In addition, communicating in this way helped Prashant direct all of the engineers in the room to focus on the task at hand. Thus, collocation influenced the use of the technology in a manner that maintained the image and reputation of ISF as a quality service provider that is attentive to client needs.

One of the interesting observations about Team S working in a virtual space was the complexity of their interaction using ICT. This includes both the number of ICT selections and the overlapping ways that Team S used ICT for work activities. For example, Team S tended to use certain ICT for rapid and brief communication purposes. This included primarily an instant messenger application but also telephones in some cases. Team S members used this ICT for clarification of task, to ask a brief question or share some information with each other. They also used an instant messenger

application and sometimes email during virtual team meetings for secondary communication channels during meeting discussion, such as to spontaneously send a file relevant to the meeting in real time. In addition to telephone, email and an instant messenger application, Team S members consistently used application sharing software to join team member desktops while viewing a single application in real time. Application sharing software was a key tool in creating the enhanced virtual experience for Team S meetings compared to solely using audio conferencing and a meeting agenda to meet—the more common tools for virtual meetings a decade ago. Application sharing software provided Team S members a visual commonality during meetings that contributed to expedient problem solving and group learning. See Figure 6: Team S Information and Communication Technology use on the next page for a review of some of the overlapping ways in which Team S used ICT for work activities:

Figure 6: Team S Information and Communication Technology Use

Information and Communication Technology	**Team S Uses**
Telephone (usually for single users)	• Sharing information • Solving problems • A digital record
Audio conference Device (usually for multiple users)	• Sharing information • Solving problems • A digital record
Email	• Rapid or asynchronous sharing of information • Solving problems • Exchanging files • A digital record
Instant messenger application	• Rapid or brief text-based information sharing • Exchanging files
Application sharing	• Sharing information • Solving problems • Group learning

Using ICT in an overlapping way during team meetings reduced the opportunities for miscommunication between American and Indian members of the team by enabling team members' access to multiple channels of communication for achieving successful message transmission. Without having to rely solely on voice communication for the exchange of information in real time, ICT helped to support effective discussion and

information sharing during Team S meetings in a way that supplemented or complimented collocated communication.

To summarize this section, observation data of Team S interactions in this study demonstrate the multi-local texture of virtual work. In the context of IT offshore outsourcing, clients and service providers operate in both physically and digitally-mediated locations. For example, data showed that physical collocation provides advantages such as nonverbal communication, the opportunity to bond with coworkers and quick face-to-face information sharing or problem solving in work relationships. Data also showed that work activities located in a virtual space produce new opportunities for intercultural communication and exchange through the use of modern ICT. Team S's meeting behavior revealed the dynamic and overlapping way that ICT selection and use can facilitate complex interactions and more reliable message transmission in global virtual work teams. Taken together, these observations inform the forthcoming findings and discussions in Chapters 7 and 8 of this dissertation dealing with the subjects of location, globalization and intercultural communication in the virtual work context.

The next chapter discusses findings based on observation and interview data for Code Family 1, pertaining to the complex cross-border communication and coordination activities associated with globalization.

Chapter 6 - Findings & Discussion: Globalization as Complex Connections and Local Interpretations

The Globalization Debate—

> "Globalization has become *the* academic and media buzzword of the early 21st century (Lewellen 2002:7)."

Though it is a term that can be traced back to nineteenth century discussions among intellectuals about the topic of modernity (Held and McGrew 2003), globalization today is a concept that interests academics, business people and citizens all over the world. Some attribute the recent interest in globalization to the, "sheer amount of contemporary technological and cultural interconnectedness (Ganesh, et al. 2005:170)," since the late 1980s. While specific definitions of the term globalization and its causes vary greatly across academic disciplines (Ganesh, et al. 2005; Korff 2003; Nustad 2003), and certainly within anthropology (Geschiere and Meyer 1998; Graeber 2002), in a general sense, globalization can be said to refer to the transnational flow of trade, capital, people and ideas, facilitated by the advance of sophisticated telecommunications technology.[9] This interpretation differs from the more common economic view where globalization is, "the working of free world markets, demanding the opening up of national economies, de-regulation and in general a reduction of state control over national economic resources and international capital flows (Korff 2003:2)." Regardless of disciplinary training, most definitions accept the idea that globalization affects many populations, or as Held and McGrew deduce the concept of globalization, "suggests a growing magnitude or intensity of global flows such that states and societies become

[9] This general definition of globalization is a truncated adaptation of Ted Lewellen's definition of globalization in *The Anthropology of Globalization: Cultural Anthropology Enters the 21st Century,* 2002, Westport: Bergin & Garvey.

increasingly enmeshed in worldwide systems and networks of interaction (Held and McGrew 2003:3)."

Within the discipline of anthropology, globalization is a divisive concept. Thus far, the anthropological record of studying globalization has historically focused on discussions of capitalism and the nation state (Gupta and Sharma 2006; Ong 1987; Ong 2002; Trouillot 2001), migration and deterritorialization (Collins 2002; Kearney 1995; Nash 2001), commodities (Barber and Lem 2004; Bestor 2001; Ulin 2004), class (Friedman 2000; Friedman and Friedman 2008), culture (Ong 2002; Robbins 2004; Sylvain 2005), and more recently, the media (Mazzarella 2003; Mazzarella 2004; Murphy and Kraidy 2003), to name a few.[10] Among these discussions, one side of the globalization debate critically evaluates globalization as the destruction of cultural variation through the advance and worldwide domination of neoliberalism—"the theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can be best advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade (Harvey 2005:2)." In Harvey's view, neoliberalism is a hegemonic mode of practice that, "seeks to bring all human action into the domain of the market (Harvey 2005:3)." In other words, globalization is a force of Western capitalist expansion and supremacy that results in the consequential eradication of cultural identity. Like Tomlinson explains:

> "Globalization, so the story goes, has swept like a flood tide through the world's diverse cultures, destroying stable localities, displacing peoples, bringing a market-driven, 'branded' homogenization of cultural experience, thus obliterating the differences between locality-defined cultures which had constituted our identities (Tomlinson 2003:267)."

[10] This is far from an exhaustive list of anthropological scholars who have published works on these topics pertaining to globalization; it is rather a representative sampling of what kinds of discussions exist within anthropology under the heading of globalization.

It is understandable that a critical view of globalization exists today within Anthropology, given the social effects, such as forced migration, that globalization has had on non-Western populations (Nash 2001). Furthermore, as a discipline that has roots in colonial endeavors, the field of anthropology has for over a century been striving to correct its colonialist beginnings through the identification and protection of cultural variation.

Defining globalization as a force of capitalist expansion that destroys cultural identity and variation is synonymous with the homogenization of culture argument that views globalization as Western culture imperialism or Americanization. The cultural imperialist point of view takes the position that globalization involves the domination of certain cultures (Western, mostly American) over others (Third world countries) such that this domination leads to the cultural homogenization of the world or predominance of Americanism (Inda and Rosaldo 2008). Inda and Rosaldo identify two main visions of the cultural imperialist argument within the discourse of globalization. The first of these attributes the homogenization of culture associated with globalization to the global distribution of American goods, such as American television broadcasting and consumer goods, like McDonalds (Inda and Rosaldo 2008). The second vision of cultural imperialism attributes the homogenization of culture to the spread of Western influences more generally, including the "dissemination of all facets of the West's way of being: from musical forms, architecture, and modes of dress to eating habits, languages (Especially English), philosophical ideas, and cultural values and dispositions… (Inda and Rosaldo 2008:16-17)." Both of these visions of cultural imperialism point to a deterritorialization of American goods and values and transference of those goods and values to non-Western countries through consumption and exposure.

The discourse of cultural imperialism regarding globalization, however, is problematic. While admittedly there is an abundance of evidence showing the global prevalence of American goods and values, the cultural imperialist view fails to adequately capture the complexity of globalization. Indo and Rosaldo explain that assuming cultural homogenization via the dissemination of material culture presents Third World subjects as, "passive consumers of imported cultural goods (Inda and Rosaldo 2008:18)." The cultural imperialist position also assumes that globalization flows solely from the West outward (Inda and Rosaldo 2008), which is certainly untrue given the presence of non-Western concentrations, such as China Town in Chicago, in Western countries. Finally, the cultural imperialist position obscures attention away from the powerful links that exist between Third World countries independent from Western influence (Inda and Rosaldo 2008). Data from this dissertation shows that the cultural imperialist or Americanization argument fails to adequately explain globalization within the context of IT offshore outsourcing work practice. As a global virtual work environment consisting of the back and forth flow of ideas and culturally-informed communication, a different approach is required to understand the complexity of IT offshore outsourcing relationships.

The other side of the globalization debate represents a more locally-focused approach to thinking about globalization. This interpretation does not equate globalization with cultural homogenization or Americanization but rather views globalization as, although certainly driven by capitalist activity, a force that causes increasing fragmentation and differentiation, whereby local cultures actively appropriate what they deem necessary from the global system (Appadurai 1996; Burawoy 2001; Ching 2001; Inda and Rosaldo 2008; Lewellen 2002; Trouillot 2001; Ulin 2004). In this

view, the cultural identities of various populations are not automatically absorbed by Western-centric values, but instead undergo specific cultural adaptations to changing environmental conditions. In other words, globalization's effects are seen as situated in particular local realities and articulations (Inda and Rosaldo 2008). As Lewellen explains it, "By and large, specific cultures are inevitably transformed by changes in technology, mobility, and more porous and malleable boundaries, but rather than being absorbed by some global culture, *they* do most of the absorbing (Lewellen 2002:53)." It is Lewellen's interpretation of globalization, as a system of locally interpreted participation, which informs the analysis for this dissertation.

One central aspect of globalization is the interconnected quality of the actors involved. In their recent work, *The Anthropology of Globalization: A Reader*, Inda and Rosaldo describe globalization as, "…the intensification of global interconnectedness, suggesting a world full of movement and mixture, contact and linkages, and persistent cultural interaction and exchange. It speaks, in other words, to the complex mobilities and interconnections that characterize the globe today (Inda and Rosaldo 2008:4)." Similarly, in his book, *Globalization and Culture*, Tomlinson sees globalization as complex connectivity which he defines as, "the rapid developing and ever-densening network of interconnections and interdependences that characterize modern social life (Tomlinson 1999:2)." Both books point to the active and elaborate nets of contact involved with globalization. It is arguable that the linkages between actors in globalization represent interactions and relationships that would not likely exist to the extent that they do now were it not for the developments in telecommunications since the dawn of the information age. Technology, such as the internet, computers, telephones, email and more, facilitates intercultural contact and interaction among its

users in a rapid and intense way. This is certainly the case within the practice of offshore outsourcing, where intercultural work teams conduct business in a round-the-clock style as IT providers often work during the off hours of the Western business cycle resulting in a 24-hour stream of activity in offshore outsourcing partnerships. More generally, the tools (technology) of globalization enable people the ability to forge transnational, virtual, connections with others so that local reality is comprised of both local and global relationships, and global reality is the result of many types of local participation.

Another central aspect of globalization is the role of time and space in contemporary society (Hassan and Purser 2007a; Inda and Rosaldo 2008). Within globalization, there is an acceleration of social and economic processes, facilitated by telecommunication developments among other things, that seem to close, if not collapse entirely, the temporal and spatial gap between populations. One foundational author on this subject who has significantly impacted current anthropological studies of time and space is David Harvey. In his analysis and description of the postmodern condition, Harvey discusses the concept of “time-space compression” (Harvey 1989). According to Harvey, the rise of flexible accumulation or, “flexibility with respect to labour processes, labour markets, products, and patterns of consumption (Harvey 1989:147),” in the capitalist process has been the primary driver of time-space compression, whereby, “the time horizons of both private and public decision-making have shrunk, while satellite communication and declining transport costs have made it increasingly possible to spread those decisions immediately over an ever wider and variegated space (Harvey 1989:174).” Harvey believes that flexible accumulation was a capitalist response and innovation to the traditional models of Fordism:

> "The transition to flexible accumulation was in part accomplished through the rapid deployment of new organizational forms and new technologies in production. Through the latter may have originated in the pursuit of military superiority, their application had everything to do with bypassing the rigidities of Fordism and accelerating turnover time as a solution to the grumbling problems of Fordism…Speed-up was achieved in production by organizational shifts towards vertical disintegration – sub-contracting, outsourcing, etc. – that reversed the Fordist tendency towards vertical integration and produced an increasing roundaboutness in production even in the face of increasing financial centralization (Harvey 1989:284)."

He goes on to add that:

> "Accelerating turnover time in production entails parallel acceleration in exchange and consumption. Improved systems of communication and information flow, coupled with rationalizations in techniques of distribution (packaging, inventory control, containerization, market feed-back, etc.), made it possible to circulate commodities through the market system with greater speed. Electronic banking and plastic money were some of the innovations that improved the speed of the inverse flow of money. Financial services and markets (aided by computerized trading) likewise speeded up, so as to make, as the saying has it, 'twenty-four hours a very long time' in global stock markets (Harvey 1989:285)."

Harvey's remarks argue that the progression from the Fordist model of production towards current organizational forms, such as outsourcing, was the result of the capitalists' pursuit of accelerating turnover time and production. Moreover, Harvey attributes capitalist innovation and economic practices for the current social and cultural ideas about time and space. In a world dominated by commodity production and consumption, "money and commodities are themselves the primary bearers of cultural codes (Harvey 1989:299)." This in turn results in a society-wide effect to value instantaneity and disposability, since "objective conceptions of time and space are necessarily created through material practices and processes which serve to reproduce social life (Harvey 1989:204)."

Time-space compression is insightful for appreciating the significance of capitalist and technological advancement as actors in globalization. The impact of

economic and technological change in international business is irrefutable. The practice of IT offshore outsourcing is a direct outcome of these changes. Within globalization, the space between populations shrinks. Time accelerates as does human interaction. However minute of a change, business decisions can be felt quickly, if not instantaneously, across the world, or as Giddens says there is an, "intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa (Giddens 1990:64)." While different conceptualizations of globalization are abundant, for the purposes of this dissertation, the characteristics of globalization that include locally-appropriated interpretation of global forces (Lewellen 2002), elaborate interconnectedness between populations (Inda and Rosaldo 2008; Tomlinson 1999), an emphasis on the role of technological advancement (Harvey 1989) and the idea of time-space compression (Harvey 1989; Hassan and Purser 2007a; Inda and Rosaldo 2008), are most fitting for an understanding of the cultural norms, beliefs and values about work among IT offshore outsourcing team members.

Connecting Skills in IT Offshore Outsourcing Work—

Drawing from Inda and Rosaldo and Lewellen's conceptualizations of globalization as locally appropriated and involving complex mobilities between cultures, the role of communication and technology becomes a focus for appreciating the context of IT offshore outsourcing as a conduit of globalization. The ensuing section concentrates on the observation that globalization entails, "increased coordination of world markets (Friedman and Friedman 2008:269)," and, "complex relations and communication across borders and between continents (Hannerz 2003:25)." Though anthropological discussions of globalization have not typically focused on the angle of

contemporary cultural *and* technological interconnectedness, this dissertation's data abundantly supports these sorts of integrative aspects. Consider here also Downey and Fisher's point that, "leaving technology out of analyses of culture has the unintended implication that it is an autonomous realm of human activity…that technology is an uncaused cause, unaffected by culture, social relations, or even economic considerations (Downey and Fisher 2006:5)." In other words, technology and culture are interrelated (Batteau 2010). In total, thirty-nine coded patterns of meaning and ninety-two percent of fieldnote quotations from this dissertation show a correlation to the idea that globalization is synonymous with complex intercultural communication efforts across global borders and relationships that require specific connecting skills.[11] In reference to IT offshore outsourcing work specifically, I define connecting skills as technical skills, communication ability, and behavioral adaptation. Analysis from this dissertation shows that the complexity of cross-border communication and coordination inherent to the processes of globalization is a major factor and challenge for IT offshore outsourcing.

The first finding from this dissertation with regard to communication and coordination in IT offshore outsourcing work is the cultural norm for workers in this context to develop a superior mastery of communication technology relevant to the IT outsourcing industry. This applies to both the competent use of a tool, such as knowing how to operate software, and the implicit knowledge of how and when to use tools appropriately for coordination activities like problem-resolution or co-learning. In her discussion of digital technologies and their users, Sassen distinguishes use of digital technology from access, where use is, "constructed or constituted in terms of specific cultures and practices through and within which users articulate the experience and/or

[11] See the Data, Analysis & Observations Chapter Figure 5 for a Code Totals Summary of the sample.

utility of digital technology (Sassen 2006:311)." One example of this is the following remark from a Team S member, "Suppose you receive an email, then you can send them an acknowledgement. After that, while sending an acknowledgement, you can also tell him that what you are going to do and what is your plan to solve this issue which he has emailed you today. And following of this, resolve the same. So, that is what we do." As the statement illustrates, email can be used as a communicative mechanism for establishing transparent visibility between clients and service providers when it comes to work activities, such as problem solving. Maintaining visibility with clients is an important goal for IT service providers since, "shared information plays a role in enabling the development and sustainability of the client-provider relationship (Blomberg 2010b:63)." Furthermore, strong technical skills as well as a culturally-informed sense of knowing how best to make use of the tools is extremely valued in this work context due to the reality that the majority of tasks in the day to day are done virtually as opposed to face-to-face.

With respect to the virtual work environment of IT offshore outsourcing, the lack of face-to-face interaction between clients and service providers requires team members to learn how to work with each other, mediated by virtual means. This activity represents a process of behavioral adaptation. One anthropological theory helpful for understanding adaptation is the theory of cultural ecology. In his analysis of patrilineal bands,[12] Erickson defines the theory of cultural ecology as, "the study of the process by which a society adapts to its changing environment through its culture (Erickson 1998)." Moore also explains that man's environmental adaptation is dependent on, "technology,

[12] According to Julian Steward, a "patrilineal band" is a multifamily group whose essential features constitute a cultural core resulting from ecological adaptations. See Julian Steward, "The Patrilineal Band" from *Theory of Culture Change: The Methodology of Multilinear Evolution*. Copyright 1983 by Jane C. Steward.

the structure and needs of a society, and the nature of the environment (Moore 1997)." Within the realm of IT offshore outsourcing, adaptation to environmental conditions, such as engaging with culturally distinct work behavior, is part of the process of learning how to work as a global virtual team. As Sam explained:

> "I noticed in my personal style, something that I've been adopting a lot more is that I've noticed that not only in India but in many of the Asian cultures, their emails which I used to think was extraneous would go back and forth very conversationally. They would say, "Oh would you please do this. Well, yes, I'd be happy to do that." And then the next person comes back with "thank you very much", and "you're very welcome for doing that." There's this conversational exchange that to me I'm thinking okay we could've done this in one email, but we sent ten. But I've also noticed that it's kind of paves the way for getting things done. I've had to increase my patience level, and I've had to be more conversational in my emails, with thanking people with it. I always assumed thanks was implied because when work was completed, but now I make sure I thank people or answer with an email that makes a statement like, "thank you very much for handling this," or "you're very welcome" when someone thanks me for something. I've had to basically take, instead of my goal being how few emails I could send in a day to being more open to that dialogue over email, almost like a conversation."

Sam's remark reflects the importance of patience and understanding in global virtual work when working in multi-cultural teams. Similar to Sam, observation data from the study demonstrated that Indian members of the team also grew accustomed to, and in several instances, adopted some of Sam's American communication behaviors. One could further argue that Prashant's decision to hold weekly internal ISF meetings for the local Indian members of the team represented another form of adaptation to the possible cultural challenges of pleasing an American client. Interview and observation data illustrates the second finding of this discussion in the area of complex cross-border communication and coordination, which is that behavioral adaptation to the nature of the work environment, classified by intercultural work behavior, is another norm and connecting skill in IT offshore outsourcing relationships. This finding refutes the

globalization as cultural homogenization or Americanization argument since data from this study shows that IT offshore outsourcing work behavior involves cultural sharing and adaptation across borders.

In addition to the aforementioned connecting skills, a third finding is that professional speaking and writing ability is highly valued in relationships between U.S. clients and Indian IT service providers. In the services offshore outsourcing work environment, both clients and IT service providers acknowledge that Westerners are often wary to speak to someone with a different accent, especially Indians. This point was identified repeatedly in this dissertation's data. This indicates a bias that Western business people set the standard for what is considered appropriate professional speech and that speaking professionally (or like Westerners) is part of the expectation in the relationship between the client and service provider. As opposed to interpreting the adoption of Western accents or speaking style as a loss of cultural identity, the Indian engineers from this sample rather view speaking like their primarily Western clients as just part of the job and a competitive advantage if done well. Time spent with the Indian members of Team S face-to-face, showed that when not speaking to American clients but with someone from their own Indian state, Indian IT professionals seamlessly switch to speaking with each other in their own local Indian dialect. This harkens to the view that Western English can serve as a type of linguistic capital in certain work contexts, like call center outsourcing (Sonntag 2005), or in this case the field of IT offshore outsourcing. In describing the advantages of working in an outsourced team, consider the following remarks:

> "It is in fact very good…Advantages as you see is that we learn a lot of Western cultures which is very good for our career in India…I guess I believe Western people are more professional. I won't say we are not professional, but Westerners are very professional…I learn a lot, yes.

> "Transparency is another one I admire in Western professionalism. Everything is transparent within PPI, and actually, it comes along with professionalism. When you go up the hierarchy and come down the hierarchy, there are many communications that are transferred. There are a lot of communications about an issue which are transferred. I believe at PPI, irrespective of the hierarchy, you are provided with the necessary information and everything is transparent."

The team member statements indicate that the opportunity to work with Western clients is an attractive experience for Indian service providers. This includes learning American vocabulary and diction to be used during telephone calls, audio conferences and in documents and emails. Using the right words is important in IT offshore outsourcing, as Indian IT service providers compete to retain and grow their business with American clients. As one Indian engineer pointed out:

> "Another thing is reading and a good vocabulary should be there. So we read and listen to conferences, how the Americans speak and talk, what is their style, how often do they use certain sayings. I know they use "thank you" most often. But in our culture, I haven't seen people using "thank you' as often. We have to follow that culture because if we're on the phone with Americans, and they feel that we are speaking the wrong way, it's because we are not speaking in the way of their culture. So we have to learn and understand the way they speak in different conference meetings, talk to them on the phone, listen to their answers, the way they talk, how polite they are, and how often they say some words."

In this way, by speaking and writing professionally or Western-like, Indian IT service providers reinforce the cultural belief that the American communication style is considered professional speech and the appropriate style of speech for communicating with American clients.

The Emphasis on Time in Offshore Work—

Time in modern society is very focused on the moment—on the now. This value has been driven in large part by the internationalization of business. As discussed earlier, Harvey links current values of instantaneity to the effect of economic and

technological innovation in recent times. Today, time has been condensed in such a way that:

> "From communication to finance, transactions are now conducted at the speed of light. Real time, the absolute zero of temporal distance, is both a sign and element of an exclusive preoccupation with the present. From the short term to what is immediate, from a restricted horizon to the absence of any horizon, such is the time scale which has underlain the closing years of the twentieth century (Binde 2001:90)."

Binde's remarks speak to the manner in which time seems accelerated in today's global interconnectedness. Likewise, Hassan and Purser point to the augmentation of standard clock time by information networks:

> "Information networks, of course, act as another form of artificial temporality. Through them humans now create a *virtual* time and space. Networks may be seen as a kind of temporal ecology outside the centripetal force of clock time. People from any point on the globe can communicate in something approaching "real time" through video or email, voice, and so on, creating a temporal context where what the local time of the clock reads is of no importance (Hassan and Purser 2007b:10)."

In Hassan and Purser's view, virtual time has added a dimension of communication between populations such that the concept of 24/7 production is expected. This is certainly true in the relationships and practice of IT offshore outsourcing, where time is a central contextual factor of work.

With respect to the above discussion, the fourth finding of this chapter is that issues and concerns about time are believed to be a major challenge to communicating and coordinating well in the work environment of global IT offshore outsourcing. As Aneesh explains, "since the United States and India have an average time-zone difference of twelve hours, the client may enjoy, for a number of tasks, virtually round-the-clock office hours: when America closes its offices, India gets ready to start its day (Aneesh 2006:2)." In most cases, Indian IT service providers are structured to have both

night shifts and day shifts so that, “an offshore vendor in India can provide a virtual 24-hour access to a client in the US (Agrawal, et al. 2010:251).” This 24-hour vendor access creates expectations about service delivery time. In this work environment, time zones and time urgency are of paramount importance. Observation data from this study supports this point, where timely action and meeting deadlines evolved to be a central focus for Team S as it matured as a team. To adapt to these conditions, clients and service providers use a wide range of elaborate planning and time management mechanisms, such as biweekly staff meetings, storing data on common servers, application sharing software, and automated calendar reminders to communicate and organize communications with one another. One Indian engineer described these mechanisms:

> “If it is for country to country communication, then we use the telephone and the internet. We also have video conferences. We use emailing. We use appsharing so the customer can see my desktop and he or she can share her desktop. We use chatting. So for all that range of stuff, for each and every small activity, we cannot call or type email everything. In those cases, we have some internal chat, something like windows messenger, so that if the customer will be on-line and I’ll also be on-line, I can just ask what happened to this, figure out what should I do. So, in a small time, we’ll close this matter.”

As the engineer’s statements indicate, IT service providers employ a combination of mechanisms and tools to sustain the 24-hour access model for their customers.

With respect to timely action, clients expect offshore outsourcing service providers to be to be organized and motivated to address requests in a timely manner. As one Indian engineer described it, the highest priority of the team’s work is, “delivering the quality work on time.” Although the expectation of timely delivery of service exists, it is not always achieved. Factors such as unexpectedly shortened time frames to complete a requested service, employee sick leaves or turnover, time off for holidays,

power outages, technology failure, etc…, can and do interfere with the 24-hour access model of the offshore outsourcing work context. A certain degree of unpredictability, whether it be the delivery of tasks on time or a delay in payment for services rendered, is inherent to this business context. In such an environment where time is of critical importance, good communication is associated with rapid response and bad communication with delayed response. Like Sam explained with respect to problem solving:

> "In the context of what we're doing, good communication is the rapid resolution of a problem or the rapid resolution of a plan to solve a problem…and bad communication is taking an exorbitant amount of time to communicate your message or to communicate a message in a way that your receiver can not possibly understand its intent."

Along with rapid response to customer requests, time management is seen as a strategy for mitigating the expectations regarding time. As one Indian engineer explained:

> "When the question comes to challenges, the first one I would say is time management. It's not that difficult, but you have to be very careful with your time management. You should know what things to prioritize first and what not. That is one of the most important things working with in a business situation like this, as far as I'm concerned. There isn't anything more challenging than this one. I guess time management is the most important one."

The engineer's statement reflects the expectation within Team S work to manage time and one's work tasks appropriately. In combination, Team S members value rapid response to customer requests and time management skills as two methods for coping with the pressure of working in the offshore outsourcing environment, where timely delivery is of critically high value.

Summarizing this chapter on the subject of globalization as complex cross-border intercultural communication and coordination, I have discussed four major findings related to how offshore outsourcing team members locally appropriate the conditions of

globalization. The first finding is that workers in the IT offshore outsourcing industry exhibit advanced technical and culturally-informed knowledge of how best to use communication technology in order to do their work. The second finding is that behavioral adaptation to the nature of the work environment, classified by intercultural work behavior, is a connecting skill significant in IT offshore outsourcing relationships. Behavioral adaptation here includes cultural sharing and blending of communication practices, thus refuting the argument that globalization is equated with cultural homogenization. The third finding states that 'professional' or American style speaking and writing ability are valued for maintaining good relationships between U.S. clients and Indian IT service providers. In these relationships, professional speaking ability includes more than using a Western accent; it also includes vocabulary, diction and speaking style used during communication. The fourth finding for this chapter is that issues and concerns about time are of central focus when communicating and coordinating in the IT offshore outsourcing environment. To circumvent pressures about time and meet customer expectations, Indian IT service providers employ techniques such as rapid response time to customer requests and an array of time management mechanisms. Taken together, these findings support the characterization of globalization as an integrative and collaborative process of contemporary technological and culturally-interconnected global work relations that involves certain connecting skills and contextual adaptations. This view of globalization emphasizes the interplay of culture and technology in transnational work and is important for the participation of anthropology, and cultural analysis in general, in understanding the human linkages found in global business.

The next chapter discusses findings based on observation and interview data for Code Family 2, pertaining to how location and locality correlate with globalization.

Chapter 7 - Findings & Discussion: Location and Locality in IT Offshore Outsourcing

"…location, location, location…(Anonymous 1926)"[13]

Like the weight given to location as a consideration for real estate sales, geographic location within IT offshore outsourcing relationships is similarly important. Twenty-nine coded patterns of meaning and eighty-five percent of selected fieldnote quotations from this dissertation support the idea that location within the activities of offshore outsourcing is significant. As a force that is associated with the ever increasing flow of goods, ideas and people on a global scale (Barber and Lem 2004), globalization has reified, in many cases, the cultural identity of populations related to their location. Activities such as, migration, deterritorialization, and transnational business are moving people and their cultures away from native lands, creating cultural enclaves in new spaces and forming blended cultural identities. In the context of IT offshore outsourcing, one's location of work origin has special meaning given that most of the day to day "work" is virtually situated – electronically supported through the internet and phone. This renders face-to-face co-located intercultural interaction an infrequent, if not nonexistent, occurrence between clients and service provider. At the global level of the work relationship, cultural identity is primarily affiliated with national origin. Thus, if one is from Dallas, Texas, one is identified as an American, and if from Mumbai, Maharashtra, then one is identified as an Indian, regardless of variations in state or local culture. In this work environment, expectations and ideas about cultural difference are technologically-mediated, making commonality of communication style between client

[13] The exact publication date of this American adage has been historically difficult to trace, but discussion of the earliest printing of this common real estate broker phrase can be found at http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/28/magazine/28FOB-onlanguage-t.html

organizations and IT service providers a central issue. Based on data from this study of an offshore outsourcing relationship between an American client and Indian IT service provider, it was found that one's country of work origin has discernable cultural meaning for clients and impacts behavioral norms for service providers.

While in offshore outsourcing practice English is the language used for global communication purposes (Kobitzsch, et al. 2001), data from this dissertation suggests that—specifically among offshore outsourcing relationships between American clients and Indian IT service providers—geographic work origin has implications for communication expectations and practices. The first finding for this chapter is that geographic work origin is associated with expectation about the desired language style to be used during work communications between American clients and Indian IT service providers. As a norm in this work environment, Indian IT service suppliers speak and write in American English. As one Indian engineer stated, "…the thing is that our job is to interact with customers—those who can talk English well can interact well with the customer." Specifically, Indian IT service providers adopt American communication styles to mimic American client communication practices. Like one Indian engineer explained, "I have adopted some way of communicating or the way of talking from the US side. I do try to copy that style of U.S. communication. I do try to do that because in the sense that it's not only the language that's important. It's best when we try to copy the communication style…everyone does that." As the statement suggests, Indian IT service providers see it as a normative part of business in IT offshore outsourcing work to speak English and adopt certain American communication styles in order to work well with American clients. As the client in the relationship, Sam and Mike (Team S's interim manager during Sam's leave of absence), did not demonstrate any expectation to adopt

more Indian communication styles from the ISF members of Team S. Though observation data showed evidence of Sam making efforts to be more understanding of Indian communication styles and practices and communicating less formally during calls, for the most part, Team S communicated virtually using American communication norms.

A holistic interpretation of this behavior is useful here for appreciating the larger context of service-based industries and its impact on work practice (Kieliszewski, et al. 2010). Using a holistic view, one can interpret the service providers' decision to communicate like their American clients as reflective of the overarching professional culture that characterizes the services industry, where, "the character of provider-recipient interactions has major impact on the quality and appeal of the service (Blomberg 2009:123)." Thus, regular and successful communication opportunities between clients and service providers is what helps to define the quality of a service relationship (Blomberg 2009). Interpreting the behavior in this way broadens the levels of understanding for what certain business practices may mean in this particular work context. It also demonstrates the potential value of using a holistic approach in further study of the significance of cultural difference in the daily work practices of IT offshore outsourcing relationships between the U.S. and India.

There is another reason why speaking like their American clients is interpreted as an advantage for Indian IT professionals in the services offshore outsourcing industry. The second finding from this dissertation on the significance of location is that one's physical work origin has perceptible cultural meaning with respect to beliefs about English speaking ability. Work origin as it pertains to being American or Indian is often

seen as indicative of one's accent or intonation, writing style (formal or informal) and overall professionalism, respectively. As Sam explained:

> "I'd say the quality of communication with this current team is much better than it was with the former team. Again along with the staffing the proper skill set, one of things that I've noticed is that the new team has people with exceptional English skills…where basically their accent has a very low impact on their English. This is very helpful to us. I would have to say the quality with my new team is much better and that's due to the fact their accents are very clear."

> "Sometimes psychologically as soon as someone hears that someone's in India, they automatically assume that they can't help…maybe they've had a prior experience, you know, with a credit card company or another technical support in their private life where they just didn't have a good experience."

Sam's statements demonstrate the American perception that Indian companies have a distinct way of speaking English that could potentially make it undesirable or difficult to partner with Indian companies. Indian IT service provider companies are acutely aware of this perception. In fact, one of the most frequently asked questions I received during my fieldwork in India was what I thought of a team member's accent and whether I could understand his or her English. The Indian team members of Team S reported taking steps to overcome and prevent customer concern about their non-American accents by signing up for English accent training classes and striving for rapid response time to customer requests. Interview data from this dissertation showed that by developing English speaking skills, Indian IT service providers could dispel some of the cultural misconceptions about the ability of Indian workers to meet the linguistic preferences of American customer organizations. This finding is important for the dialogue on how differences of place within globalization can foster cultural inequities. Like Gupta and Ferguson point out, "the enforced 'difference' of places becomes… part and parcel of a global system of domination (Gupta and Ferguson 1992:17)." In this way, one location

of work origin or place is a way in which the power differential between client and service provider is sustained.

Related to discussions of location, the subject of locality is equally important in the functioning of business relationships in globalization. Within the discipline of anthropology, locality has been defined in several ways (Cooke 1990), much like the concept of globalization. Different from more traditional understandings of locality as referent to a geographical site or location, anthropological interpretations of locality align in that they expand the definition of the concept beyond the boundaries of physical space to include social components, such as modernity, the nation sate, human agency, and human linkages and interaction (Appadurai 1996; Cooke 1990; Gupta and Ferguson 1992). Upon reflection of her fieldwork on Mayan migration that spanned over a thirty year period (from roughly 1970-2001), anthropologist June Nash said, "…it is also apparent that identification with locality becomes increasingly important with globalization (Nash 2001:17)." Several other recent anthropological discussions of locality corroborate Nash's view (Collins 2002; Schiller, et al. 2006; Sider 2006).

For the purposes of engaging with the concept of locality with respect to this dissertation, the following conceptualization by Appadurai is appropriate, "I view locality as primarily relational and contextual rather than as scalar or spatial. I see it as a complex phenomenological quality, constituted by a series of links between the sense of social immediacy, the technologies of interactivity, and the relativity of contexts (Appadurai 1996:178)." This interpretation of locality as a conscious experience created by the interplay of social interaction, technology and intersecting contexts precisely describes the type of localities present in the IT offshore outsourcing work domain. Korff similarly conceptualizes locality as, "characterized by social relations and

interdependencies among those using a particular space, and having a common understanding of it (Korff 2003:9)." Both Appadurai and Korff's interpretations speak to the complex, multi-level dynamic of social relating that occurs within the localities of globalization. For IT offshore outsourcing, specifically, locality resides in multiple spaces—physical ones and virtual ones—and performs several functions. Thus, the third finding from this dissertation regarding the significance of location in IT offshore outsourcing is that locality, in this environment, informs behavioral norms for work and provides a support system to cope with the difficulties associated with the industry.

As a productive activity in the professional culture of IT offshore outsourcing, where culture is defined as an adaptive system of learned, shared and symbolic meanings and behaviors, the localities involved in IT offshore outsourcing partnerships are instructive for its participants. In other words, the localities provide guidance for members about how to work with each other. As it has been mentioned earlier in this section, the location of a client's work origin plays a determinative role in casting the expectations for language use and communication styles. Both American client organizations and Indian IT service providers recognize the informal rules for succeeding in a global virtual partnership. These 'rules' of locality, such as trying to mimic an American accent as an Indian service provider to help facilitate faster and quality communications with customers, are adaptive mechanisms for the challenges of a work environment where physical co-located interaction between clients and service providers is unavailable to smooth over potential conflicts due to cultural difference.

With regard to spatially bound localities on both sides of an offshore outsourcing partnership, which in this case, would be the PPI U.S. office and the ISF India office,

team members remarked about the advantages of collocation, such as for problem solving and immediacy of communication. See the statements below:

> "We decide, we sit together, whatever issue we take, we sit together. We make sure that we discuss internally whatever it is. Anything—we also sit together."

> "I think within our team, and I think we have fairly good communication, I think a lot of that has to do with proximity. We're all located in one area and we can just stand up and look over a cube. I think that allows us to be more effective because communication is more than just language, its signals and gestures that help with more effective communication."

The team members' remarks above illustrate the relativity of physical work spaces to virtual work spaces. In the absence of collocation between American and Indian team members in a virtual workspace, the physical collocation shared between the Indian team members provides advantages for the team as a whole. Recall Chapter 3's discussion of ISF workspace design (low partitioned cubicles) and group cohesion that extended outside of the workplace into personal life. Collocation resulted in a level of bonding and camaraderie among ISF employees that translated to enhanced problem solving and support of Team S tasks. Also, observation data of Team S meetings demonstrated how collocation provided team members the opportunity for non-verbal communication, which enhanced the virtual meeting experience. Furthermore, while there is no dispute that problem solving and immediacy of communication is easier to achieve face-to-face, analysis from this dissertation shows that such activities are also attainable in the virtual locality of offshore outsourcing work through ICT such as instant messenger applications. Observation data showed that through the use of virtual communication tools and mediums, Team S activities such as problem solving, immediate communication and opportunities for building team rapport among U.S and

Indian members was possible. In this way, the physical and virtual contexts of offshore outsourcing work link with each other and overlap in the duplicity of core work tasks.

Even with the above observations, the complexity of virtual interaction in the localities of globalization cannot be understated within the culture of IT offshore outsourcing. Referring back to Appadurai's conceptualization of locality above as relational and constituted by technologies of interactivity among other factors, the primary locality of offshore outsourcing partnerships resides in a virtual space. This kind of locality in a virtual era represents new territory for an anthropological tradition of inquiry trademarked by, "the analysis of local and spatially bounded patterns of direct interaction (Korff 2003:3)." In order to sustain an industry almost entirely on-line, IT offshore outsourcing clients and service providers use a wide range of overlapping devices and sophisticated technological applications to communicate with each other in a virtual space.[14] Appadurai's analysis of electronically mediated interaction is helpful for interpreting work in a virtual space:

> "These new forms of electronically mediated communication are beginning to create *virtual neighborhoods*, no longer bounded by territory, passports, taxes, elections, and other conventional political diacritics, but by access to both the software and hardware that are required to connect to these large international computer networks (Appadurai 1996:195)."

Just like traditional forms of locality which reflect, "a coordinate of interpersonal relationships (Batteau 1982:457)," virtual locality or 'virtual neighborhoods' can provide a source of belongingness and support through technological means. For example, in response to a question about the enjoyable aspects of working in the PPI offshore team, one Indian engineer responded:

[14] The complexity of this use will be discussed in a later section of the next chapter.

> "Yes, there are many things I enjoy. I love meetings—meeting with Sam or any other customers, clients, or suppliers. It's enjoyable. We tend to know what they're actually wanting. We know what we're communicating to them, and they way they respond, and if they appreciate us. We enjoy this. We like it. We get motivated."

The engineer's statement coincides with the observation data from this dissertation which noted good teamwork and respect among both American and Indian members of the team. Work meetings situated in virtual space were a forum for activities such as talking out problems, mourning the loss of a colleague, realigning goals, sharing praise and information, and celebrating successes. Like in Batteau's study of an Appalachian kinship system, where "peace, security, mutuality, reputation…is at the heart of the value of locality (Batteau 1982:454)," the virtual locality in offshore outsourcing partnerships can provide several social aspects traditionally found in co-located communities. This is much like the way, "virtual communities can provide meaning, belonging, and affect because their members share a larger set of cultural experiences… (Batteau 2010:79)." In combination with the collocated localities of offshore outsourcing work, the capability of virtual locality as shown in this dissertation's data set has great implications for what can occur in global workspaces where the local experience is multi-contextual.

In spite of existing discussions about locality within the anthropological scholarship of globalization (Appadurai 1996; Korff 2003), studies about culture in the virtual work environment are lacking. This is at odds with Anthropology's holistic approach which emphasizes the importance of the wider environmental contexts surrounding cultural phenomena. Based on its discussion of localities found in virtual spaces, this dissertation advocates for the conceptualization of the virtual context as a 'local' site for ethnographic investigation. In this view, the virtual context is another social level of analysis. This represents a major shift in the methodological thinking of

what is traditionally deemed a field site in Anthropology. As Jordan states, “the time-honored classical image of an ethnographic fieldsite has been that of a particular, specific place (Jordan 2009:186).” Anthropology’s attachment to bounded space restricts the potential for understanding culture that resides in virtual environments. This represents a theoretical hole in the existing anthropological discussions of globalization where the ‘local’ is spatially defined and the global is seen as some larger macro-level force difficult to analyze using ethnographic, location-bound inquiry.

In the research context of IT offshore outsourcing, the virtual space is a ‘local’ site of cultural activity. In this study, observation data showed that the majority of Team S’s work tasks took place virtually. In that space, members shared common beliefs, such as that good communication is defined by mutual understanding. In that virtual work space, members identified themselves as part of a group—a team called Team S. Team S members shared patterns of common behavior, such as responding to email requests immediately even if just to say no action was possible for a given request. When new members were added, rules of interaction, such as how to use certain software applications, were socially transmitted by leadership or senior members of the cultural group. Team S members shared a common language and communication style that focused around work tasks. They spoke and typed remarks during virtual meetings using specific lexicon based upon the material content of their work expertise. And finally, as a group, Team S adapted to the changing environmental conditions of their work context, such as when Mike managed the team in place of Sam for a few months or when NTS was implemented, thereby permanently altering the way in which Team S did their work. For Sam, Mike, Prashant, Anoop, Veda, Kiran, Sanjeet, Nayan, Sunil, Bimal and Arjun, the virtual context is a work space. It is as full of cultural norms, beliefs

and values as the physical brick and mortar office space in which each person sits. Based on this understanding, the fourth finding for this chapter on the significance of location in IT offshore outsourcing is that virtual space is a 'local' space for studying cultural interaction. This point adds new depth for anthropological discussions of globalization and supports a holistic analysis for studying IT offshore outsourcing. It prompts consideration for Sassen's point that the emergence of global electronic networks has altered the meaning of the local (Sassen 2006). Finally, the finding challenges the boundaries in Anthropology of what is traditionally viewed as a site of cultural inquiry.

To summarize this chapter on location and locality in globalization, I have discussed four findings based on the fieldwork and analysis of one IT offshore outsourcing partnership. The first of these is that geographic work origin is associated with expectations about desired language style to be used in work communications among IT offshore outsourcing partnerships consisting of American clients and Indian IT service providers. These expectations are, if using a holistic perspective, influenced by the professional culture of the services industry. The second finding makes the point that one's physical work origin has perceptible cultural meaning with respect to beliefs about English speaking ability in relationships between American clients and Indian IT service providers. The third finding of this chapter concerns the functions of locality in IT offshore outsourcing. In this environment, locality informs behavioral norms for work and provides a support system to cope with the difficulties associated with the industry. Related to this, the complexity of virtual locality was discussed as an implication of what can occur in global workspaces. Finally, the fourth finding of this chapter is that virtual space is a 'local' space for studying cultural interaction among global virtual work

groups. This discussion is significant for the discipline of anthropology as it continues to expand its methodological approaches for contemporary transnational research. Together, the findings for this chapter support the idea that concepts of location and locality are central to the workings of globalization and global virtual partnerships.

The next chapter discusses findings based on observation and interview data for Code Family 3, pertaining to intercultural communication and virtual work.

Chapter 8 - Findings & Discussion: Intercultural Communication and Virtual Work

> "Any culture is primarily a system for creating, sending, storing, and processing information. Communication underlies everything (Hall and Hall 1987:3)."

As anthropologist Edward Hall's statement points out, communication is a reflection of cultural processes. This is certainly true in the work environment of IT offshore outsourcing, where culturally diverse team members come together to work virtually, each person reflecting his or her own individual cultural identities through a variety of telecommunication choices. In total, twenty-seven coded patterns of meaning and eighty-two percent of selected fieldnote quotations from this dissertation support the idea that the relationship between intercultural communication and virtual work represents a complex dynamic of IT offshore outsourcing practice. Analysis from this dissertation validates the common assertion that cultural differences and the challenges of virtual work can behave as impediments to intercultural communication in the IT offshore outsourcing work environment. However, analysis from this study also shows that certain other contextual conditions and particular work practices can serve as enablers for intercultural communication to the extent that cultural difference and virtual work difficulties are minimized. These analytical points reflect Wilson and Peterson's point that, "the communication technologies that make use of the Internet's infrastructure share some special characteristics…they offer special possibilities and constraints for communicative practices and social interaction (Wilson and Peterson 2002:453)." In this way, findings from this study provide new insight towards the ongoing discussion of intercultural competency in the global virtual work environment.

Background of Global Virtual Teams (GVTs)—

Within academic discourse, globally-distributed work teams, like the one from this study, are frequently referred to as global virtual teams or GVTs to emphasize the virtual aspect of the work involved. An enormous amount of discussion is available on GVTs (Gibson and Cohen 2003b; Jarvenpaa and Leidner 1999; Kayworth and Leidner 2002; Maznevski and Chudoba 2000; Montoya-Weiss, et al. 2001; Sirkka L Jarvenpaa 1998)[15], especially since the 1990s. There has also been a lot of discussion about the impact of cultural difference in GVT success (Baba, et al. 2004; Kayworth and Leidner 2000; Massey, et al. 2001; McDonough, et al. 2001; Paul, et al. 2004). Some argue that business interest in the role of culture in technology-driven industries has much to do with management's attempt to reduce culture to a controllable variable (Batteau 2010; Kunda 1992). Twenty years later discussions about GVTs persist, as the complexity of intercultural communication is a more regular reality for a wider range of industries.

The connection can certainly be made that, "the rise of global virtual teams is a phenomenon of globalization (Zakaria, et al. 2004:15)," as more organizations adopt outsourcing and offshore strategies to reduce cost and compete in a global marketplace. Intercultural GVTs, "are not only separated by time and space, but differ in national, cultural and linguistic attributes, and use information and communication technologies as their primary means of communication and work structure (Zakaria, et al. 2004:17)." With still limited understanding of the impact of cultural difference on GVT work (Myers and Tan 2002; Shachaf 2008), research is ongoing on how best to facilitate intercultural communication in GVTs.

[15] These references on global virtual teams represent merely a small sampling of the vast literature available on this subject.

Intercultural Communication in GVTs—

To begin a discussion about the relationship between cultural difference and virtual communication, a basic definition of intercultural communication is a good place to start. Samovar and Porter state that intercultural communication, "occurs whenever a message produced in one culture must be processed in another culture (Samovar and Porter 1994:7)." They believe that intercultural communication can be difficult mostly due to the, "error in social perception brought about by the cultural diversity that affects the perceptual process (Samovar and Porter 1994:24)." In other words, it is the cultural translation of messages that is key in intercultural communication. Though this insight emphasizes the importance of developing cultural awareness with respect to language, there remain several other factors to consider that also affect intercultural communication among GVTs.

As mentioned before, analysis from this dissertation shows that there are particular contextual conditions which can behave as impediments to intercultural communication in the IT offshore outsourcing work environment. One of these is the non-collocated nature GVT work. One of the most frequently cited challenges in GVT work is the lack of face-to-face interaction (Gibson and Cohen 2003b; Levenson and Cohen 2003; Tyran, et al. 2003; Walther 1993). This is particularly difficult for intercultural communication since:

> "Viewed from the outside, each culture has 'hidden codes' of behavior, which can rarely be understood without a 'code breaker.' Communications experts estimate that 90 percent of more of all communication is conveyed by means other than language, in a culture's *nonverbal* messages. These messages are taken for granted and transmitted more or less unconsciously (Hall and Hall 1990:xiv)."

Applied to the context of virtual work, Hall's remarks suggest that the absense of nonverbal communication omits a sizeble portion of a communicated message. GVTs

lack the face-to-face opportunity to send and receive nonverbal communications, such as nodding a head left to right or up and down, a frown or rolling eyes, that can indicate a great deal about team members' emotions, work relationships or one's cultural view in a given moment. Furthermore, regular work activities, such as virtual meetings with lots of participants that are unable to see each other (i.e. audio conference instead of video conference), can be challenging to follow unless participants clearly identify themselves each time they speak (an uncommon practice in GVT group discussion). Like with virtual group interaction, one-on-one interaction in GVTs is impacted by the lack of nonverbal cues. See the interview excerpt from this study below:

> "Interviewer: With respect to the team members that you say know each other very well, you describe the communication as casual. Can you tell me what you mean by casual?
>
> Team Member: Casual in the sense of people in the team, I mean the people with whom I have a casual communication are the people here in India with me. With the eight or nine people that I have with me here, I have a casual communication in the sense people might have clarifications to be made or some help. So then we are very casual in the way we talk. They just go and say, 'Okay, I'll take care of this,' or 'Okay, I'll do that for you. No problem.' That's it. It won't be more formal like. So if it's going to be another person who is not in India, if he's asking the same help, then I should be more formal saying that, "I'm willing to do that," because he's not seeing me and there's a gap there. The distance creates you know a little hindrance on what I'm trying to say. So, the sentence pattern I am using through email or how I speak should give him the confidence that I am going to help them. But here, I have face-to-face interaction, so I can say, "I'll do it, no problem." So, that's a lot less pressure than a more formal discussion."

The engineer's response highlights the extra work involved (being more formal) in non-collocated GVT communication, where formality of speech is used as a strategy for conveying commitment or dedication of task. The difficulty associated with the lack of face-to-face communication in GVT work is a permanent part of the context of IT

offshore outsourcing. This explains why strategies for overcoming the limits of non-collocated work are continually sought after.

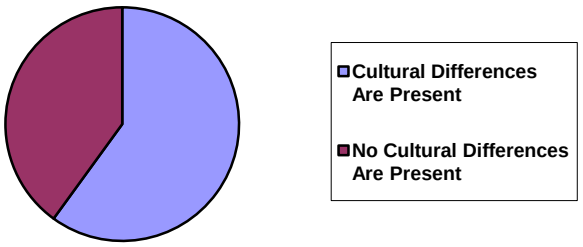
In addition to the lack of face-to-face interaction, cultural differences can work as a challenge for intercultural communication in the IT offshore outsourcing work environment. As mentioned before, there is a large amount of literature available that discusses the role of cultural differences in GVT work. Within this study, interview data validated that cultural differences can have some degree of impact on intercultural communication. Specifically, data showed cultural differences had impact on the following: the speed of speech for real time communication, the ability to understand different ways of speaking English, sense of meeting punctuality, sense of response urgency, transparency of information, preference for concise (curt) versus polite (extended) communication; formality of communication, and level of acceptable personal sharing or small talk in the workplace. Observation data further showed that cultural difference impacted the enactment and response to jokes, expressions of praise, and expressions of criticism.

While analysis from this dissertation shows that cultural difference and conditions of virtual work were at times challenges for intercultural communication in the IT offshore outsourcing work environment, these challenges did not consistently occur and were not widespread. When asked during interviews about cultural differences within the team, the majority of Team S members did not identify cultural differences to exist. See Figure 7: Stated Perception of Cultural Differences below for a graphic representation of Team S[16] members' perception of the existence of cultural differences within the team. Figure

[16]To review, Team S is comprised of one U.S. Team Manager, one Indian Team Lead and eight Indian engineers.

7 is based on interview responses to the question if there are cultural differences between the U.S. and Indian members of the team.

Figure 7: Stated Perception of Cultural Differences



Of those who identified the existence of cultural differences within the team, less than half felt cultural differences had an impact on team performance. Responses to the question if cultural differences have an effect on teamwork were typically like the following:

> "I don't feel culture has an adverse effect on us. I don't feel that. I've been having a very good relationship with most of our team members around the world. I don't feel any adverse effects. Every now and then I get a call from one of the team members saying, 'Hi, how are you doing today?' And they way they speak is very friendly and it goes very well."

Not only were cultural differences not identified, for the most part, as a prominent or negatively impacting issue, but interview data revealed that the most frequently mentioned advantage of working in an offshore team was the opportunity for intercultural communication and global work experience. See the examples below:

> "This seems to be a far more better work environment as we have an opportunity to get in touch with many people across the world, maybe you know what I mean as an anthropologist."

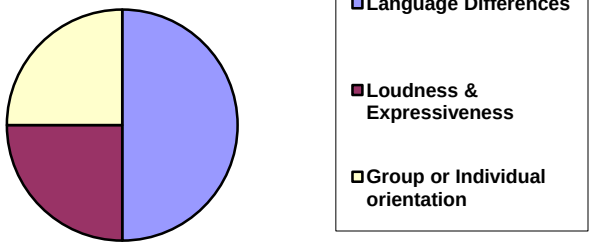
> "Like, I have been working in this field for about three to four years, and I feel it's really great to work offshore because if I worked in a small Indian manufacturing company then there's no chance to interact with customers all over the world through phone and email. You don't get that, but working with PPI, I'm getting the opportunity to talk to and to email and interact with customers or like people all around the world because we are working on a global basis. So, it's like China, Korea, US, UK, anywhere our contacts are, we are understanding the way they talk, the way they communicate, the way they consider business, their level, how they consider their job. And like also in the case of technology it's different for each one. Each country is different how they consider it—if it's very serious or just like that or that. It's amazing. So we are doing work from India and interacting with the whole world from here. I feel it's a great opportunity to work in such a scene, like offshore and outsourcing."

> "I enjoy meeting people from the different cultures and working with them. I think it's very interesting to me to see, you know, not just um…not see most of the time I should say, talk to and listen to people from other parts of the world who are working on similar things and understanding how they problem solve, and also learn you know sort of a little bit about their own lives, how they live, what are their interests, not just inside of work but outside of work as well."

The team members' statements demonstrate how cultural differences within offshore outsourcing work was not significantly associated as a negatively impacting issue, but rather valued as part of the contextual advantages of working in a GVT.

Those from Team S who identified cultural differences within the team shared similar responses in their interviews about their observations. See Figure 8: Identified Cultural Differences Within the Team on the next page for a graphic representation of the three most frequently mentioned examples of cultural differences within the team, of the small portion of the team that identified such differences exist.

Figure 8: Identified Cultural Differences Within the Team



Team members that identified the existence of cultural differences within the team stated that cultural differences had an impact on team performance in that they sometimes led to communication gaps between members. While the work of Edward Hall and other scholars would rightly contend that responses to questions about cultural difference would be inherently influenced by each team member's unique culturally-informed perception about culture, the interview data is valuable for getting a sense of how team members perceived cultural differences and the extent to which they perceived cultural differences as a inhibitor of intercultural communication in the offshore outsourcing environment.

In review of the discussion and data above, the first finding of this chapter is that virtual communication and work in GVTs is not necessarily inhibited by existing cultural differences within a team. While cross-cultural differences can have an effect on communication within a team, these differences did not appear to negatively impact Team S's work in a major way. Furthermore, team members regard the opportunity for global intercultural communication as one of the most desirable aspects of offshore outsourcing work. This finding contradicts the predominant management literature and

case studies in offshore outsourcing which largely state that cross-cultural differences negatively impact on the viability of offshore outsourcing partnerships. This study is also important as an antithesis case to the prevailing view that cultural differences are consistent inhibitors to GVT work. The finding suggests that the results of this research would be of interest not only to the outsourcing industry but other industries as well that deal with multi-national work teams consisting of culturally diverse members.

Defining the Work Context of Successful Intercultural Communication in GVTs—

Realizing that cultural differences and the virtual work environment pose different challenges to intercultural communication in GVT work, it is helpful to refer back to the existing literature for which conditions enable teamwork in such a context. With respect to this study, three specific traits were observed that match with the scholarship on good GVT communication. The first of these traits is the effectiveness of team leadership. Based on their study on the importance of leadership in virtual teams, Tyran, Tyran and Shepherd found that leaders of high-performing virtual teams shared the following characteristics: trustworthiness in the ability to perform tasks effectively, integrity, ability to form friendly relationships and a transformational leadership style—"the ability to motivate and inspire others on the team (Tyran, et al. 2003:192)." Based on her research of GVTs in turbulent environments, Gluesing similarly found that, "Leadership in global teaming requires skills in persuasion (Gluesing 1995:352)." Others add that, "successful virtual team facilitators must be able to manage the whole spectrum of communication strategies via new technologies, as well as human and social processes, and often do it across cultures (Pauleen and Yoong 2001:3)." Together, these descriptions point to the importance of integrative and interpersonal skills in the leadership of GVTs.

For Team S, two different people were responsible for leadership activities — Sam (the U.S.-based PPI team manager) and Prashant (the India-based local ISF team leader). In this study, both observation and interview data support that Sam and Prashant were indispensible in creating a state where there was a lack of adverse events associated with Team S as an intercultural GVT. From the beginning stages of Team S's formation, Sam and Prashant took an active role in leading and supporting the team. Recall from the observation data that Sam and Prashant's were instrumental in helping the morale of the team after the tragic death of two of its members. Sam and Prashant were also effective in their leadership roles that included assigning tasks, clarifying goals, setting standards, maintaining organization of teamwork, resolving problems and motivating team members to work together and share information. This is demonstrated in the statements below:

> "Well if there is a problem, it's like I just go to Prashant and say, "There's a problem or I'm dealing with an IT problem and it's very urgent." So I just go and complain to Prashant and I would expect him to take some sort of decision which he has taken it, he has followed that to Sam. Within 10-15 minutes, everything will be resolved. The issue will be resolved. Since my team leader is sitting next to me, it's really easy to communicate or to tell him what is the problem and face him."

> "When I joined this organization, this field was absolutely new for me. It was like I needed to start from scratch. I had absolutely no idea about what field I was going to work….Above all, it was Sam who was instrumental for each and every individual to perform, to raise our expectation, realize our potential. Sam started motivating us. So this motivating factor increased our expectation."

As these statements indicate, Team S members acknowledged and depended on the leadership functions provided by Sam and Prashant in order to work well. Additionally, the co-located nature of team interaction with Prashant provided valuable face-to-face mentorship and supervision that was unavailable with Sam due to geographic limitations

of GVT work. Data from this study supports the extant literature on offshore outsourcing practice that states leadership can help to facilitate GVT work.

A supportive climate is the second trait found in this study that matches with existing scholarship on good intercultural communication in GVTs. Gibson and Manuel state that, “In a supportive climate, ideas are shared freely, conflict is based on the task, conflict resolution is open and perceived as fair, and problem solutions are well understood and mutually accepted (Gibson and Manuel 2003:72).” In a supportive GVT climate where there is a convergence of cognitive structures, team members share similar learning experiences in a common context, a collaborative work ethic and task interdependence (Baba, et al. 2004). Using these definitions, observation data from this study showed Team S members worked together in a supportive work climate. Team S members regularly sought out one another for help with work problems and interview data uncovered next to zero incidences of serious conflict or instances of frustration with other team members. Team S members displayed a clear sense of team cohesiveness and loyalty to one another, as shown in the following remark, “We have to be supportive supposing if some colleagues of the team is not well or has problems coming back into work afterwards, you’ll make sure you take that that sort of responsibilities on you and as a team you work. So whatever good name that we get, it goes for the team. It’s not for an individual.” Regarding Team S members collocated in India, observation data showed they had strong personal associations with one another in conjunction with professional ones. Many of them ate all meals together during a shift, socialized together, took vacations and trips together, and several of the team members lived together in the same flat. In this way, the professional and personal collaborative environment of Team S work practice validated the point within existing scholarship that

a supportive climate is an enabler of successful intercultural GVTs, such as teams in offshore outsourcing partnerships.

The final trait found in this study that matches with the present literature on intercultural GVT communication is that virtual teams heavily depend on a reliable technological context. A reliable technological context refers to the, "local physical infrastructure, that is, the basic utilities like power, telephone, and cable that make possible the communication technologies on which global virtual teams rely (Riopelle, et al. 2003:144)." In the case of the outsourcing services industry in India in particular, communications networks problems are common dialogue for foreign companies offshoring business functions to India (Sarkar and Reddy 2006). Like Sam said:

> "The telephone it is a bit of an issue simply because of the telephone quality that you have between the U.S. and Asia. An example would be a conference call that I had with my team and another group this morning. It was kind of an impromptu call where I don't know what was going on with the phone line in India but they tried calling in a few different times, using different phones, etcetera, and it just sounded like there was something technically wrong with the line because their voices were gargled, they were just trying to speak and the words were being drug out and delayed. You could tell it was a technical problem. It made this very technical conversation we were trying to have very difficult though. I would have to say that distance just as far as, when everything's working from a technological standpoint, it's fine, there really isn't an issue, but when it's not working it's extremely noticeable."

As Sam's statement illustrates, poor technological and telecommunications reliability can result in clear impediments to technical discussions in the virtual work environment. Such disruptions not only interfere with work processes but also challenge what anthropologist Jeanette Blomberg calls, "the realization of value in the service exchange (Blomberg 2009:123)," which she notes is dependent on successful and regular interactions between clients and service providers. An unreliable technological context

in offshore outsourcing also exacerbates the pressure of timely and rapid response to customer requests. As one engineer explained:

> "Like this just happened, phone calls getting disconnected or the lines getting disconnected. I was not able to call for some time. I don't know why our telephone connection is like that in our country. I don't know. If you have an urgent call and something like this happens, it's really bad because we are working from offshore. Our customers are depending on us to give them quality work on time. Then we should be having like, we should give them the work or what they are expecting from us. So, we need good kinds of communication things, like email. It should work well. Phones, they should work well and everything. And just like it happened now, the call got disconnected. These are the problems I feel yeah. These are the situations when distance affects our work."

As the examples show, in a business context where nearly all work activities are processed through the internet and phone, establishing a reliable technological context is essential for GVT work, especially when meeting the beliefs of a services industry culture that places quality and frequent provider-recipient interactions as a primary value of partnership.

Thus far, this chapter has discussed both barriers to and facilitators of intercultural communication in the practice of offshore outsourcing with respect to some of the extant literature on GVTs. The remainder of this chapter will discuss two additional findings from this study that provide new insight about additional factors and strategies for intercultural communication in IT offshore outsourcing.

A Cultural Analysis of Current Information and Communication Technology—

Several recent articles on global virtual teamwork have discussed the role of information and communication technology (ICT) in dealing with cultural difference in global virtual teams (Pauleen and Yoong 2001; Shachaf 2008; Zakaria, et al. 2004). This is not surprising since technology-driven businesses and scholarship tend to imbue technology with incredible technical and social capabilities (Batteau 2010). One recent

definition of ICT is that, “ICT is a tool that facilitates the process of boundary-crossing to overcome the challenges presented by remote and culturally diverse team members (Shachaf 2008:139).” A similar assessment of ICT states that:

> “The use of electronic communication technology has the capacity to reduce or overcome certain cultural challenges within global teams as information and communication technologies facilitate intra-team interaction by introducing a shared framework and virtual work setting. In that light, the role of information and communication technologies is regarded as a functional tool that facilitates the cross-cultural collaboration and communication. Information and communication technologies can provide a common medium for work and shared meaning (Zakaria, et al. 2004:20).”

Zakaria et al’s remarks suggest that current ICT offers the possibility for minimizing the potential difficulties of intercultural communication in the global virtual context. Exploring where truth meets the socio-cultural promises of ICT use in the professional work of IT offshore outsourcing, represents exactly the type of research that the field of anthropology is capable of and should pursue. Like anthropologists Samuel Wilson and Leighton Peterson remark in their discussion of online communities, “Information and communication technologies based on the Internet have enabled the emergence of new sorts of communities and communicative practices—phenomena worthy of the attention of anthropological researchers (Wilson and Peterson 2002:449).” Wilson and Peterson furthermore assert that ethnographies of such research, “might help our understanding of the ways in which speakers incorporate new technologies of communication from existing communicative repertoires, and these technologies influence new and emerging cultural practices (Wilson and Peterson 2002:459).” An anthropological approach is fitting for the study of ICT use in GVT work because it understands that as tools, ICTs are, themselves, cultural products of the environment in which they are created.

As recently as ten years ago, GVTs typically communicated with other team members and clients almost exclusively through the use of tools such as email, telephone (audio conferences) and video conferencing. Today, ICT consists of a wide range of additional tools for virtual communication, that include but are not limited to mobile and smartphone devices, instant messenger applications, application sharing and virtual private networks—which allow for secure, encrypted connections from outside corporate firewalls to inside servers and databases (Eaton 2011). Aerts et al reflect that, "The ICT system that supports an enterprise has grown into a complex entity that includes hardware and software for data-storage, computation and communication, as well as data and information models (Aerts, et al. 2004:790)." Recent developments in ICT design have led to new effects on communication practices in global virtual teams.

With respect to mitigating the possible challenges of intercultural communication in GVTs, data from this dissertation supports the finding that current ICTs in offshore outsourcing practice provide users an enhanced level of communication opportunity from what was previously available a decade ago. Apart from mere developments in tool sophistication, this study found that the wider array of ICT selection used today in offshore outsourcing work provides teams with a larger range of modes for communication in their work activities. This is consistent with current research that states, "dispersed and diverse GVTs that operate using mostly mediated communication need to be able to master a wide repertoire of channels and to be able to use them effectively… (Shachaf 2008:140)." Consider also Sassen's point that, "global management technologies are shown to depend on concrete connections and adaptations by local actors (Sassen 2006:307)." Drawn from both observation and interview data, the wide array of ICT in Team S work resulted in overlapping use of the

tools for different communication activities in Team S. For example, instant messenger applications and the telephone were frequently used for rapid clarification purposes, such as if a team member wanted to ask a brief question or to share something with another team member. Similarly, team members used a combination of ICT for their virtual team meetings, which typically included the telephone (for the audio conference capability), email, instant messenger applications and application sharing. Analysis showed that overlapping channels for intercultural communication in Team S resulted in an increased number of opportunities to check for successful message transmission. While it is difficult to ascertain exactly if more communication mediums translated to a decreased risk of cultural difference inhibiting virtual work, the increased number of virtual communication options did provide overlapping means for message clarification. This is an important point given that nearly all the team members in the study equated good communication with the successful sending and receiving of communicated messages in their interviews. This point supports this study's finding that the current ICT in offshore outsourcing practice provides users a greater level of communication opportunity than was previously available.

Application sharing technology represents another major way that ICT has changed the work practice of global virtual teams. Application sharing technology is a data conferencing capability that enables two or more users to interactively work on the same application at the same time without having to be co-located. Once an application is loaded and running in one person's computer, such as an Excel spreadsheet, for example, that person's keystrokes are transmitted to the other participants in the meeting running the same application. In this way, the other participants in the meeting see the changes on their own computer screens, driven by the keystrokes of the original

author. Apart from basic utility, observation data from this study showed that application sharing technology observably enhanced certain Team S activities. At a minimum level it served as a written record of group conversation and work since the software enables users to save their work, whether it as a text file, spreadsheet or database as it was being created. Application sharing technology also enables more complex communication interactions, as the following interview statements demonstrate:

> "Appshare is when we need to go through a common agenda or we need to look at something because we're a system driven team we need to look at something on a system and we all need to be looking at the same thing in order to solve a problem."

> "If I'm trying to communicate something that's technical and involved, my preferred medium is email and appshare because all of those details that maybe you're assuming someone already understands, they can't be left out of a picture because you didn't see what's going on in a picture."

Observation and interview data from this study, including the statements above, showed that application sharing software enabled non-collocated Team S workers to meet with a visual commonality in real time that facilitated effective problem solving and opportunities for instructional learning. In this way, the technology afforded Team S what Baba et al describe as "cognitive convergence", a process of knowledge sharing where, "the cognitive structures of individual group members become more similar (Baba, et al. 2004:548)." This point is important for discussion of the way in which ICT development in recent years has changed virtual communication and interaction. It demonstrates the finding from this study that current ICT provides users an enhanced level of communication opportunity in offshore outsourcing practice that transcends cultural differences.

Email as Symbolism in Work Culture—

The final section of this chapter concerns email. Email is the primary communication method in IT offshore outsourcing work practice and in virtual work, generally. The reasons for this are many and varied. An economic explanation might cite that the reason email prevails in GVTs is because it's the most available and cost effective tool (Gibson and Cohen 2003a). A technical explanation might argue that email is ubiquitous because of its ease of use. An anthropological understanding of email's popularity is what this study provides through the following discussion of the cultural aspects of email in GVT work.

The third finding of this chapter on intercultural communication and virtual work is that email communication is valued as the primary mode of communication in IT offshore outsourcing in part due to its symbolic effects. Within anthropology, the tradition of symbolic anthropology has been to, "study symbolic action within culture (McGee and Warms 2000:467)." One of the most influential figures in symbolic anthropology is Clifford Geertz, who believed that culture was, "…embodied in public symbols, symbols through which the members of a society communicate their worldview, value-orientations, ethos, and all the rest to one another, to future generations…(Ortner 1984:129)." As anthropologist Sherry Ortner further explains, "the focus of Geertzian anthropology has been the question of how symbols shape the ways social actors see, feel, and think about the world, or, in other words, how symbols operate as vehicles of 'culture'(Ortner 1984:129)." In this study, analysis shows that email is an embodiment and professional symbol of IT offshore outsourcing work culture, which places emphasis on quality and frequent service provider-client interactions characteristic of the larger services industry culture (Blomberg 2009) but also maintains the belief that service

providers attempt to communicate using client-based cultural models of behavior. This interpretation of email as reflective of social value and occurring in a socially-situated context of IT offshore outsourcing work, contributes to current anthropological discussions about the social agency of technology (Batteau 2010).

Analysis from this study argues that Team S members email behavior is a symbolic vehicle for reinforcing IT offshore outsourcing work culture. Specifically, team members evaluated email as a communication type to typically use for formal communications. Like anthropologist Ilana Gershon's research of media ideologies among U.S. college students' breakup stories, where she found that beliefs about media, such as formality or informality of communication, shaped media use (Gershon 2008; Gershon 2010), Team S members displayed an observable belief that email was the method to be used for formal communications. See the examples below from interviews with several Team S members:

> "We don't send emails in between our team members in India. If the person is available in the shift, we talk to him in person. And if it's something we have to let the customer know, we send an email then."

> "So when someone does a good thing, if he has a big achievement, then definitely I will send an email and copy it to all the heads, to my manager, and to the team members also. And they will appreciate it."

> "If a work related thing is very serious, yes I send emails. Other than that, it can be done face-to-face."

As these statements demonstrate, email is contrasted to less formal interaction (like face-to-face talk), and as a symbol, embodies formal communicative purposes that include activities such as interaction with clients, expressions of praise and issue resolution. For these activities, data from the study also showed that team members took extra care to craft both inter- and intra-team emails. Team emails shared several common characteristics—formality (no slang, jokes, or personal life details), short,

concise sentence structures, declarative points of action, and the use of polite but brief closing salutations, such as “Best regards” or “Thanks.” See the email transcript below of one Team S member’s note to a parts supplier as an example:

From: Anoop
Subject: RE: Production
To: Gunther

Gunther,

I just have one item to look into: Parts marking issue that I had notified on Monday. But, I think we need Frank to be on the call to help with that.

Otherwise, I do not have much issue to discuss.

So, I think we can cancel the call and can follow-up on next Monday’s meeting along with Sam.

Thanks.

With Warm regards,

Anoop

This style of writing email corroborates anthropological discussions of American English communication practices that value being direct, explicit, and detail oriented about intended work action (Hall and Hall 1990). From these observations, one can argue that the formal nature of team emails symbolized the professional work culture of IT offshore outsourcing which places value on using American-based cultural models of communicative behavior.

Data from this study also shows that the asynchronous quality of email communication assists in the symbolic activity of IT offshore outsourcing professional work culture. Like Walther explains:

> "Asynchronous communication may offer the communicator less stressful conversational demands, allowing increased opportunity and flexibility. In this mode one may plan, contemplate, and edit one's comments more easily than in the more spontaneous, simultaneous mode. As such, asynchronous communication may allow users to be more cognitively mindful and deliberative in their message construction, disclosing aspects of their personalities and adopting communication behaviors which are more stereotypically desirable, and creating more positive impressions (Walther 1993:394)."

Walther's remarks are insightful about the possible advantages of email as an asynchronous strategy for intercultural communication. With respect to cultural difference and communication in GVTs, email provides people for whom English is a second language the opportunity to create messages in a manner that reduces the possibility of miscommunications with native English speakers (Riopelle, et al. 2003; Shachaf 2008). In this way, the asynchronous character of email delivery provides an important advantage for Indian IT service providers who desire to reflect the communicative preferences of their clients, thereby increasing their own linguistic capital and the value of the service exchange.

Another way in which email behavior was found to be a symbol of IT offshore outsourcing work culture in this study was in the way it was used as a record. Observation and interview data showed that Team S members value email as a way to store information about work activities. As one team member explained, "We use Outlook, Microsoft Outlook, to download the emails from our system, and we store it permanently on our system once it's downloaded." One of the stated reasons for this was so that emails could be used as proof of work activities and accomplishments:

> "There should be proof for every work so I will send out an email also."
>
> "Interviewer: In what ways do you express praise someone for work performance?
>
> Team Member: Of course, I think I use email conversation first and email sending. I will send an email to that particular person and to some important management. And I cc my team members as well who he has worked with. That is something like a record. If we send it right along he can show this email to anyone that he knows that his manager has praised him for this work. It is something like a record. A second one is praising someone in a public forum. So yeah, right now I've been doing that. There is not a kind of record I can say because you know people tend to forget maybe after some time they will forget it. Email is something that we can record. So lifelong it will be there."

Thus, as the interview transcript illustrates, email, when used to document success or accomplishment, can function similarly to the value of a certificate or plaque given to an employee for achievement—but in a virtual way. It provides a permanent digital record of success that employees can store, as both a reference and as a keepsake. In addition to documenting successes, Team S members used email as recording mechanism to maintain visibility within pair work groups and facilitate telephone meeting summarization. This supports an earlier point that IT offshore outsourcing professionals use ICTs to manage and organize work that operates in a diffuse time space.

The use of email to create a record of work activity or accomplishment correlates with the advantage drawn from using emails for formal communication, such that email functions to symbolize or transmit the way that team members think about their membership in IT offshore outsourcing professional work culture, where productivity and accomplishment are cultural values. Ortner's discussion of "elaborating symbols" as a type of "key symbol" in anthropological analysis (Ortner 1973) is helpful for understanding how the use of email as a record reflects cultural membership. She defines elaborating symbols as, "symbols valued for their contribution to the ordering or

'sorting out' of experience…for providing cultural 'orientations'(Ortner 1973:1344)." Using Ortner's definition, an argument can be made that the use of email as a record in Team S work activities is an elaborating symbol of IT offshore outsourcing professional work culture. Team members make sense of or sort out their cultural membership in IT offshore outsourcing professional work culture via the written word of email, as email is the most important and formal means of communication. This point provides a symbolic interpretation for why email is the primary mode of communication in global IT offshore outsourcing practice—namely because email is a text-based product and process of reflecting cultural membership.

In summation, this chapter reviewed extant literature and discussed three study findings related to the relationship of intercultural communication and virtual work in global IT offshore outsourcing. The first of the findings was that virtual communication and work in GVTs is not necessarily inhibited by existing cultural differences within a team, a point that contradicts the majority of cultural accounts in IT offshore outsourcing studies. The second finding was that current information and communication technologies in IT offshore outsourcing practice have changed in recent years, providing workers with an enhanced level of communication opportunity through a wide variety of overlapping communication modes and collaborative tools, such as application sharing technology. The third study finding for this chapter discussed the symbolic aspects of email as a cultural explanation for why email is the primary mode of communication in IT offshore outsourcing work. Symbolic anthropology was used to interpret how the use of email for formal communication, the asynchronous quality of email delivery and the use of email as a record are symbolic activities of team members, enabling them to make sense of their cultural membership in IT offshore outsourcing professional work culture.

Together, these findings provide new insight for dialogue on cultural differences in IT offshore outsourcing, as well as strategies for understanding virtual team behavior using an anthropological perspective.

Chapter 9 – Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to attempt to understand what happens when ethnography is used to study global, multi-sited phenomena, such as international business, and in doing so, establish what cultural insights are possible. In order to develop this understanding, it was necessary to conduct ethnographic fieldwork in a research context that was both multi-local and dependent upon virtual communication. To this end, my dissertation studied the transnational and virtual business environment of IT offshore outsourcing. I sought to learn what are the cultural norms, beliefs and values about work among members of an IT offshore outsourcing work team and to explore the relationship between cultural differences and virtual communication in that team. The rationale was that being able to answer my research question would be the test if ethnography is appropriate for studying contemporary, global, multi-sited phenomena. After ten months in the field and nine hundred and ninety-seven field quotations later, the result was conclusively positive. As an exercise in methodological exploration of multi-sited research, I conclude that ethnography is a suitable and recommended method for studying contemporary, global research contexts. Ethnography can be adapted for research in virtual environments and can provide new forms of cultural insight unlike that which the discipline of anthropology has traditionally achieved, such as insight into the cultural forms present in virtual localities.

Answering Part One of the Research Question—

The research question for this study had two parts. The first part was to determine whether using the ethnographic method would enable me to learn what are the cultural norms, beliefs and values about work found among members of IT offshore outsourcing work teams. Essentially this objective was to attempt to understand the

culture of offshore outsourcing work, where offshore outsourcing is analyzed as a process of globalization. Though widely debated and defined in many ways, the theoretical approach to globalization used in the study's analysis was taken from scholars such as Appadurai, Inda, Rosaldo and Lewellen, who theorize globalization as a force that local cultures interpret and appropriate uniquely from the global system (Appadurai 1996; Inda and Rosaldo 2008; Lewellen 2002). This view of globalization perceives globalization's effects on local populations to be in constant flux, where there is an esthetic of mobility in how the local adapts to changing environmental conditions. This interpretation of globalization differs markedly from the traditional view within anthropology that as a capitalist process, the spread of globalization is synonymous with cultural homogenization and the promulgation of American or Western values as the dominant world view (Harvey 2005). This perception of globalization is also known as cultural imperialism or the Americanization argument (Inda and Rosaldo 2008).

While it is not my intent to deny the capitalist effects or spread of Western values associated with globalization today, data analysis from this study shows that capitalist processes, like the work of offshore outsourcing, do not necessarily eradicate cultural variation. For example, although the Indian engineers in this study believed Western communication style to be preferred for global virtual teamwork, this belief did not alter certain Indian behavioral norms such as preference for group orientation and minimalist design and display of cubicle space. Moreover, the internal ISF meetings to review Team S work activities provided a local space for the Indian members of Team to maintain their collocated local and cultural identity as a group. Data analysis also revealed that globalization can translate to an increase of cultural variation. For example, in the IT offshore outsourcing work team observed for this study, the work

culture of the team was comprised of Western communication style, Indian communication style, Indian interpretations of Western communication style and Western adaptation to Indian communication style. In this way, the force of globalization brought about overlapping and related styles of communication within the same team. This realization is important for providing contrary evidence to the argument that globalization's effects lead to mostly, if not completely, cultural homogenization.

Two central aspects of globalization were discussed in this study as germane to understanding the culture of IT offshore outsourcing work. These aspects were the technologically-mediated and interconnected quality between populations affected by globalization (Inda and Rosaldo 2008; Tomlinson 1999) and the related changes in the conceptualization of time in space in postmodern times (Harvey 1989; Hassan and Purser 2007a; Inda and Rosaldo 2008). In a service delivery model that strives to operate in a 24-hour stream of activity, IT service companies in India have flourished in the last twenty years, in large part due to the technological capability that new information and communication technology (ICT) has offered. Motivated by professional interest in intercultural exposure and work experience, today's ICT enables IT service providers the opportunity to cross national boundaries of space and time. Time-space compression (Harvey 1989), or the idea that the temporal and spatial gap between populations is closing in, if it has not already collapsed, has been coterminous with the spread of globalization. As time and space compress, human interaction accelerates, that is—there are both more interactions and faster interactions between people. These aspects of globalization are helpful for understanding the pace of work in IT offshore outsourcing teams that are technologically-dependent and linked in global virtual relationships.

Data analysis from this study produced four key findings about communication and coordination among IT offshore outsourcing work teams as actors in the process of globalization. Analysis revealed first that superior mastery of communication technology relevant to the IT outsourcing industry is a cultural norm for workers in this context. The second finding is that behavioral adaptation to the intercultural work environment of IT offshore outsourcing is also a norm. These adaptations include cultural sharing and blending of communication practices, and refute the argument that globalization is equated with cultural homogenization. The third finding is that professional speaking and writing ability is highly valued in relationships between U.S. clients and Indian IT service providers. These behavioral norms and values about professional ability were defined as 'connecting skills' that include technical skills, communication ability, and behavioral adaptation. The fourth finding of this study, as informed by the theories of globalization, is that issues and concern about time are considered to be a significant challenge in IT offshore outsourcing work. The findings show that non-collocated global work teams have specific contextual rules for communicating and require specific skills (connecting skills) to mediate the time compressed state of the virtual work environment. Together these findings speak to the complexity of cross-border communication and coordination found in the technologically-mediated and interdependent quality of human interaction affected by globalization.

In addition to globalization, the role of location and concept of locality was discussed as significant for understanding the culture of IT offshore outsourcing work. Locality here was defined using Arjun Appadurai's interpretation as a relational and contextual sense of social being facilitated by technologies of interactivity and the relativity of contexts (Appadurai 1996). In a non-collocated work team that interacts with

customers and suppliers from around the world, one's physical location of work origin has discernable cultural meaning. Data analysis from this study produced three findings related to the discussion of location and locality in IT offshore outsourcing. The first of these is that geographic work origin is associated with expectation about the desired language style to be used in work communications among IT offshore outsourcing partnerships consisting of American clients and Indian IT service providers. The second finding is that one's physical work origin has perceptible cultural meaning with respect to beliefs about English speaking ability. Third, this study found that locality in IT offshore outsourcing teams exists at a virtual level and provides behavioral norms and means for coping with difficulties of work task. Finally, the fourth finding related to the discussion of location and locality is that virtual space is a 'local' space for studying cultural interaction among global virtual work groups. This finding adds new perspective for the anthropological dialogue of globalization and challenges the boundaries of what is traditionally seen as a site of cultural inquiry. This discussion is important for the discipline of anthropology, defined by its concept of holism, as it continues to expand its methodological approaches for contemporary transnational research. All together, these findings on location and locality point to the complexity of work space in global virtual partnerships.

The findings from this study concerning the themes of globalization, communication, coordination, location and locality provided cultural information about the norms, beliefs and values of work in the IT offshore outsourcing context, thereby answering the first half of my research question. Analysis showed that some of the cultural norms for members in this work environment include superior competence in using information and communication technology relevant to work task, adaptation to

intercultural differences and that locality in the virtual work environment operates similarly to localities situated in physical ones. The study also identified several common beliefs and values among Team S members. These were that time is a central focus of IT offshore outsourcing work, that one's country of work origin matters in determining what type of speech is used for work communications in partnerships between American clients and Indian IT service providers, and that "professional" speaking ability is highly desired among team members. These findings demonstrate the ability of the ethnographic approach to yield culturally meaningful understanding of global virtual work environments, such as the context of IT offshore outsourcing.

Answering Part Two of the Research Question—

The second component of the research question for this study was to understand what is the relationship between cultural differences and virtual communication in the context of IT offshore outsourcing, purported to be a site of cultural issues (Nicholson and Sahay 2001; Zarrella and Udhas 2007). Particularly, I was interested in what way cultural differences would present in the virtual work environment. A review of the literature on intercultural communication in global virtual teams (GVTs) showed that certain contextual conditions particular to the GVT environment of IT offshore outsourcing, such as the lack of face-to-face interaction, and culture-based behaviors towards work, such as style of speech, are common challenges found in the virtual communication of global teams. Data analysis from the study produced three findings addressing the relationship between cultural differences and virtual communication in IT offshore outsourcing work teams.

The first key finding is that virtual communication and work in IT offshore outsourcing is not necessarily inhibited by existing cultural differences within a team.

This finding is significant as it is contradicts discussions of cultural differences in GVTs found in management literature. While data from this study showed that cultural differences and conditions of virtual work can be at times challenging for intercultural communication, these challenges did not consistently occur nor were widespread in this study. In fact, data showed that exposure and interaction with people from different cultures is valued as an important benefit of working in a GVT. The second finding concerning intercultural communication and virtual work from this study is that current ICT in offshore outsourcing practice provides users with an enhanced level of opportunity for communicating from what was previously available, even as recently as a decade ago. ICT has intensified the degree of interaction possible for its users, including the potential to reduce issues that may arise from culture-based miscommunication. For example, ICT enables activities such as increased chances to check for message transmission with overlapping ICT use and opportunities for real time problem solving or instructional learning through tools such as application sharing software. The third finding is that email communication is valued as the primary mode of communication in IT offshore outsourcing in part due to its symbolic effects. Anthropology's history for studying the role of symbols in transmitting culture is helpful in this discussion for understanding the way that email serves to reflect and reinforce IT offshore outsourcing work culture. Together these three findings about the relationship between cultural differences and virtual communication address the second half of my research question. Furthermore, they suggest the possibility that current ICT selection and use may have a role in potentially reducing instances of culture-based miscommunication.

Limitations of the Study—

Reflecting upon the outcomes of this study, I identify several limitations. The first of these is that the study concentrated on only one IT offshore outsourcing partnership in order to understand phenomena that encompasses a wide range of businesses that contract their IT services. Furthermore, because this study only looked at the relationship between one U.S. client organization and one Indian IT services organization, the results are not generalizable to all IT offshore outsourcing teams comprised of members from different professional and ethnic backgrounds.

The second limitation is that one cannot assume Team S's lack of problems related to cultural difference was the sole determiner of why it was a successful team. Data from this study was collected using solely anthropological methods and only cultural analysis was performed. Other styles of analysis, such as economic analysis, or organizational analysis, were not included in the scope of this study, and as such, they were not explored to explain Team S's ability to persevere and excel as a team despite a number of adversities (i.e. team member fatalities, multiple relocations, shifts in management, etc…). The study acknowledges the significance of this limitation, especially considering the relative infrequency of using anthropological methods and cultural analysis to study macro level or global processes.

A third limitation is the scale and scope of the data collection period. Although fieldwork spanned the period of ten months and the majority of activities observed took place in a virtual work space, the number of face-to-face data collection events was limited. Part of this restriction was related to reconciling a methodological design of long term in-depth data collection, known as ethnography, with the reality and expense of multi-sited research. Study data would have been enhanced were more time spent face-

to-face with all Team S members. This would have provided a more nuanced understanding of the day-to-day activities of team members, including increased opportunity to observe nonverbal communication. Finally, the study began a few months after the Team S was formed, a period of time that may have included more instances of culture-based miscommunication, traditionally associated with GVT formation (Gibson and Cohen 2003b). Given the high turnover rates documented in the literature associated with offshore outsourcing work (Rottman and Lacity 2009; Sarkar and Reddy 2006), it is also possible that the fieldwork period concluded premature to the standard point in the lifecycle of offshore and outsourced teams when members tend to disband for various reasons.

Implications and Guidelines for Studies of Culture in the Virtual Domain—

As stated in Chapter 7, studies of culture in the virtual work domain are lacking within Anthropology. At present, there are no established models or theories to explain how cultural interaction is supported in a virtual work space. As an exercise in multi-sited ethnography of virtual work, this dissertation found some intriguing things regarding the relationship between culture and technology. This study showed that the virtual work environment is a legitimate 'local' space of cultural interaction. This is in large part due to the development and sophistication of current information and communication technology (ICT) that facilitates complex, overlapping modes of interaction. Unlike virtual tools used even a decade ago, current ICT provides people the opportunity to experience types of social interaction that have traditionally only been available face to face. For example, informal and spontaneous communication is now commonplace for virtual space members through tools such as instant messaging. In a professional work environment like IT offshore outsourcing, an instant messenger application allows team

members to ask quick questions or share comments with people halfway across the world. As mentioned in Chapter 8, current ICT, such as automated meeting reminders and shared databases, provide team members methods for organizing and monitoring tasks. In this way, such ICT provides users the ability to have top of mind awareness of upcoming deadlines and each other's workloads or commitments, much like the information spoken and shared between collocated team members. These examples of ICT use demonstrate ways that technology can support global virtual work activities and suggest that further research of the relationship between current technology and new forms of social interaction is warranted.

Human beings operating in a virtual space are just as active and culturally complex as they are in the physical world. Take for instance Wasson's work analyzing the practice of multi-tasking during virtual meetings. Wasson developed the concept of "interactional space" to refer to the "context within which the participants in an interaction are copresent to each other," where, "the participants might be together physically or in virtual space (Wasson 2006:108)." Her findings show that in the "interactional spaces" of virtual meetings, meeting participants engage in multitasking activities such as checking email or surfing the Internet (Wasson 2006). In this way, meeting participants take part in multiple simultaneous actions that they may not otherwise be able to do if collocated physically with other meeting participants. This points to the unique ways that virtual work environments may affect employee behavior and actions compared to work in a traditional office space. Wasson's findings support the argument of this dissertation that more research is required to understand the complexity of interactions involved in virtual communication and work.

In the interest of adding to the dialogue on the steps necessary for the ethnographic study of virtual work environments, the following proposition is submitted:

Cultural interaction in the virtual work context is digitally mediated.

This proposition is based on research from this dissertation which found that human interaction in the virtual work environment is technologically mediated and stored. In most cases of virtual communication, there is an electronic and text-based record of the activity. This is true for email, texting, instant messaging, blogs, application sharing and even audio conferencing, in some cases. The digital quality of virtual interaction is contextually different from traditional face to face cultural interaction. The implication of this is considerable for anthropologists interested in conducting ethnographies of virtual work spaces. It forces the researcher to engage seriously with the role of technology in work activities.

In reference to the above proposition and based on the ethnographic experience of this dissertation, the following list of guidelines is provided for studying culture in virtual work spaces:

1) Learn about the ICT preferences of the research participants.
2) As a researcher, learn and adopt the relevant ICT for the research context.
3) Research the history of the ICT used by research participants in the research context.
4) Study how ICT is used in the research context over a sufficient duration of time, as context and task may change. This includes establishing who the users are and how often, when, and in combination with what other tools the ICT is used.
5) Monitor what happens to research participants when they use ICT, and compare that to how the participants do similar activities without ICT.

6) Research what kinds of things happen that would not happen if participants were not using ICT.
7) Try to determine what kinds of cultural interactions are avoided, circumvented or minimized due to communicating in the virtual context.
8) Try to determine if the virtual context encourages or exacerbates cultural differences or issues related to cultural differences.

These guidelines, focused on the role of ICT in virtual work, are intended as a complement to traditional ethnographic practice that seeks out the language, beliefs, values and behavior of cultural groups. I submit that understanding cultural interaction found in the virtual work domain necessitates analysis of ICT particular to a given research context and given time, as ICT use changes when task or context change. Being that virtual work activity is digital and primarily text-based, I align with Wasson's argument that, "linguistic anthropology has a valuable place in the analysis of technology-mediated communication (Wasson 2006:126)."

Implications for Anthropological Methods—

Beginning as an exercise of exploration into what happens when ethnography is used to study global phenomena, this study concludes by showing that multi-sited, technology-mediated ethnography in contemporary research settings results in unique methodological adaptations and findings. The first of these is that ethnography of virtual workspace calls for a certain higher level of familiarity with communication technology and software than is traditionally employed in anthropological field study. The second methodological finding is that by learning and adopting ICT tools characteristic of populations interconnected by the forces of globalization, relationship building and maintaining good relationships with informants is sustainable through virtual data

collection, despite the absence of the face-to-face interaction that is traditionally found in ethnographic study. Finally, the study also found that digitally-mediated observation through virtual forms, such as application sharing technology, provides a unique opportunity for cultural analysis of data located in virtual space. Together these findings show how adaptation of the ethnographic method can yield culturally meaningful data.

While multi-sited research and high-tech ethnography provide exciting suggestions for how to expand the traditional techniques of fieldwork that primarily rely on long-term face-to-face engagement in the field, anthropology is still far from being a model for methodological innovation in the social sciences. Fish points out, "anthropologists have been slower to respond technologically and methodologically to making sense of a global world and generally do not engage with the same immediacy to current events (Fish 2009:27)." And while there is a growing momentum of anthropologists who are experienced with the latest technology and virtual realms of fieldwork, such as the Internet or blogs, social tools are only recently becoming integrated into the data collection of ethnography (Mack and Mehta 2005). As Freidenberg remarks in her queries on methods for the study of virtual populations, "the extensive use of computers and the Internet have changed the ways we communicate and relate (Freidenberg 2011)," necessitating new discussions about ethnographic practice that accounts for these changes. For example, for the anthropological study of hybrid environments, comprising of a blend of physical and virtual spaces, ethnographers must rethink the idea of fieldsite and adapt their traditional approaches to data collection, analysis and representation of data (Ruhleder 2000). In this way of thinking, ethnography becomes indicative of a process rather than associated with a specific physical location (Freidenberg 2011). To compete and keep abreast with the

technological and methodological innovation in other disciplines' scholarship, better training and further expansion of anthropological field techniques is critical. Field and Fox appropriately decree, "for anthropology to work in the future, anthropologists may need to change their orientations, methodologies, and pedagogy—or, better put, they may need to accept the changes now impinging on them (Field and Fox 2007:2)."

By adapting the ethnographic method to a virtual research context, this anthropological study contributes to the international dialogue of globalization—traditionally a macro-level subject more often pursued by management and economic theorists than anthropologists. Using ethnography in this way supports arguments for how the ethnographic approach can help to "explore how globalization is produced in the everyday actions of workers (Blomberg 2010a:14)." The study also presents new cultural insight for theories of offshore outsourcing which are primarily cost based. Finally, this study offers the discipline of anthropology an example of fieldwork in a multi-sited research context that is comprised of physical and virtual sites of inquiry. For all of the above reasons, I propose that additional anthropological studies in contemporary multi-sited contexts be developed and supported as a focus of the American Anthropological Association to keep anthropology relevant for today's populations and cultural forms. I close with Lewellen's remark below as an urge to fellow anthropologists interested in doing similar research:

> "While globalization thus breaks down even ethnography's most fundamental sureties, it at the same time offers new freedoms to discover localities where we never looked for them before (Lewellen 2002:201)."

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