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Message from the Chair

Sociology and Its Neighbors

By Douglas D. Heckathorn, Cornell University

The miniconference on theory at the Anaheim meetings in 2001, titled, "Sociology and Neighboring Disciplines: Current Developments and Future Prospects," will examine the implications of the evolving relationship between theory in sociology and theory in neighboring disciplines.

Reactions to interdisciplinary work have varied historically. Emile Durkheim's original ideal was for sociology as an intellectually autonomous discipline. On the premise that each discipline needed a unique object to which it could lay claim, he defined sociology as the study of social facts that were not reducible to psychological processes. Thus, interdisciplinary work between sociologists and psychologists would undercut the rationale for sociology as a discipline. Though few today would embrace intellectual autonomy as an ideal for any discipline, the issue remains of whether something of value may be lost as disciplinary boundaries blur.

Interdisciplinary work has also evoked skepticism for quite different reasons. For example, analysts who merely import insights from one discipline to another may be seen as popularizers. Thus, especially in the 1950s and 1960s, interdisciplinary work was sometimes viewed as shallow.

During the last quarter century a new form of interdisciplinary work has emerged, in which the growth of distinct bodies of substantive theory is nourished by the contributions of scholars from multiple disciplines, and the resulting work has no single disciplinary identity. Sociologists along the continuum from formal theory to social (as opposed to social scientific) theory have contributed to these developments. One example illustrating this development is network analysis. Sociologists have been heavy contributors, but its founders included anthropologists and mathematicians; and contributions continue to come from the full array of social science disciplines. An indication of the developing richness of network analysis is that it is becoming an indispensable part of theory in many substantive areas, including organizations, economic sociology, criminology, and stratification. Rational choice is a second example. Though its origins can be traced to Weber's methodological individualism, social psychology, and economics; it has emerged as an integrated body of theory to which sociologists, political scientists, economists, philosophers, and legal scholars are contributing. Though rational choice has evoked fears of economic imperialism,

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almost no sociological applications are based on neoclassical market models, and even studies of markets frequently focus on the normative foundations of market institutions, a point emphasized by Durkheim. Other developments could be viewed as forms of sociological imperialism, including comparative historical analysis, the rapid development of the sociology of emotions into a major area of investigation, and the recent emergence of economic sociology. Feminist scholarship has been interdisciplinary from its inception, drawing from both the social sciences and the humanities. This reflects, in part, the pervasive role of gender relations on fundamental social and interpretive processes. Hermeneutics provides yet another example. From its origins in philosophy and history, including the German historicist movement which also helped to shape the works of Max Weber, analyses of the interpretive process have become important for studies of culture and modernity. Linguistics and cognitive studies provide further examples.

The miniconference on theory at the Anaheim meetings will examine the implications of the evolving relationship between theory in sociology and theory in neighboring disciplines.

The effects of the growth of interdisciplinary work are complex. Though interdisciplinary involvement increases the richness and diversity of the theoretic enterprises to which sociologists contribute, it also risks increasing the cognitive distance separating them. Alternatively, if work in these diverse areas continue to reflect traditional sociological preoccupations, such as a focus on the structural influences on behavior, the role of social norms, social inequality, and social identity, might not new bases for dialogue be created? Such dialogues have become common among formal theorists in the network, rational choice, and cognitive science areas, and further integration appears possible. In contrast, social theory appears more fragmented; for example, dialogues between communitarians and post modernists acknowledge little common ground. Many other forms of dialogue have yet to be explored. Many other questions also arise. What can sociologists learn from theorists in other fields and can this lead to deeper insights into the phenomena of traditional concern to sociologists? What can other disciplines learn from us? Will disciplinary boundaries dissolve, will disciplines drawing from similar bodies of theory merge, or will disciplinary cohesion be preserved? These are but a few of the questions that the miniconference will address.

Perspectives is the newsletter of the Theory Section of the American Sociological Association. It is published quarterly in January, April, July, and October. The deadline for all submissions is the fifth day of the month before publication. We welcome news and commentary as well as announcements about conferences, journal information, calls for papers, position openings, and any other information of interest to section members.

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Books of Interest

Reflexive Sociology: Working Papers in Self-Critical Analysis. Larry T. Reynolds. 1999. Rockport, TX: Magner Publishing. \$24.95. This collection of essays by an early practitioner and still active advocate of the sociology of sociology deals with differences between sociological pronouncements and practices, with the social structuring of sociological theory, with the deconstruction of the race concept, and lastly with the current state of the discipline in North America.

Announcing a new translation of Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, by Stephen Kalberg. Roxbury Press, 3rd edition. Due January 2001. This volume also includes the essays "The Protestant Sects and the Spirit of Capitalism" and the "Author's Introduction to the 'Economic Ethics of the World Religions'."

For those who liked Murray S. Davis' sociological aphorisms that appeared in *Perspectives* a few issues ago, the booklength version is now available on the web at www.superiorbooks.com in either electronic downloadable or soft cover mailorderable editions. His book *APHORISTICS: How "Interesting Ideas" Turn the World Inside Out* describes the structure of interesting ideas, the rules for their construction, the ironic content that makes them provocative, and the aphoristic forms that make them memorable. He develops and illustrates his general thesis through hundreds of original aphorisms on various sociological topics, which collectively compose a new, pointillistic, paradigm for revitalizing social theory.

Critical Realism

By Doug Porpora, Drexel University

Critical realism (CR) is a postpositivist philosophy of science first developed in the 1970s. Although others also contributed to its formulation (e.g., see Archer et al. 1999; Harre and Madden 1975; Manicas 1987), it is most associated with the work of Roy Bhaskar (1975; 1979). CR reflects a Marxian sensibility and in fact is often considered an articulation of the scientific philosophy behind Marx's work. Yet CR has something important to say to sociology as a whole, particularly to those engaged in political economy, culture, ethnography, and historical sociology.

Today, CR has become influential throughout the world across a range of disciplines. It is well-known among British sociologists (Platt and Hopper 1997) with a concentration of CR economists at Cambridge University. The annual meetings of the International Association of Critical Realism draw scholars in international relations, film, and cultural studies. Participants come from as far away as India, Australia, and South Africa. At the last meeting I attended, only a handful came from the US, and, besides me, none of these was a sociologist. I had to report my estimate that I myself am probably ten percent of the critical realists in American sociology. Although in American sociology's central journals, some references to CR are beginning to surface, CR remains largely unknown among us.

This condition is unfortunate. CR resolves a number of the problems that plague us and constitutes a real alternative to both positivism and postmodernism. Perhaps the simplest entree to CR is to consider the concept of causality. It is something of a scandal that at the beginning of the twenty-

first century, we still are left taking sides on the positivist, covering law model of causal explanation. Our methods texts continue to imply that causality involves lawlike relations among events, what CR refers to as event-regularities. On the other side, the determinism implicit in the covering law model is often rejected by those who do ethnographic or historical work or who work on culture and discourse. What is their alternative model of causality? Although some, like Tilly (1999:58), offer something close to a CR understanding, many just reject causal explanation along with the covering law model as if the two were one and the same.

According to CR, the covering law model is a completely mistaken understanding of causality, not just in the social sciences but in the natural sciences as well. For CR, causality is not about relations among events, let alone nomothetic relations. Instead, causality has to do with the powers, capacities, forces, and tendencies generated by an underlying mechanism or structure. It is perfectly consistent with a CR approach, for example, to delineate how rule systems enable or constrain or to show how social structural arrangements concentrate political power in certain social positions. In each case, there is a causal property and a mechanism.

From a CR perspective, the point of scientific research is not to uncover universal event-regularities. It is rather to account for how various causal properties are generated by different causal mechanisms and to show how specific events are caused by the operation of these mechanisms. At most, research should seek not relations among events but relations between events and causal mechanisms.

From a CR perspective, ethnography and historical narrative acquire heightened scientific status. They no longer

are just precursors to rigorous, statistical analysis but are scientifically essential in their own right. On the one hand, ethnographies detail the operation of causal mechanisms and structures. On the other hand, the universal event-regularities positivists seek will only obtain in closed systems where a single mechanism operates alone. In open systems like the social world, multiple mechanisms operate simultaneously, interfering with and even neutralizing their effects. Because open systems reflect contingent, causal conjunctures, what occurs will normally be unrepeatable. For open systems, the paradigm form of causal explanation is an historical narrative, in which events are idiographically explained by unique conjunctures of generally operative causal mechanisms. With the positivist covering law model gone, gone also is the opposition between idiographic and nomothetic explanation.

Although the word mechanism sounds mechanistic or deterministic, it is not intended to be. The word refers just to how things work, and some things — like quantum processes and human thought — do not work deterministically. If human agents work according to reasons, then reasoning is how agentic events are causally generated. As even Peter Winch has recently acknowledged, once the deterministic covering law model is abandoned, there no longer is any call to sustain the post-Wittgensteinian distinction between reasons and causes. Consequently, those who work on discourse, for example, need not see themselves concerned only with interpretation but also with causal effects. Whereas we now counterpose much of what we do to a mistaken, positivist conception of science, CR offers us a way to reintegrate the discipline under a much broader philosophy of science.

CR positions itself midway between positivism and postmodernism. Like

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postmodernism, CR denies methodological foundationalism and shares the view that all knowledge is produced in specific, sociohistorical contexts that render it fallible. Yet in contrast with postmodernism, CR maintains that neither fallibility nor the absence of foundations precludes the ever present possibility of “judgemental rationalism,” the ability to adjudicate among our beliefs on the basis of argument. We may never develop deductive proofs that establish absolute certainty, but we can still establish a preponderance of evidence.

Empirical evidence, of course, is always evaluated differently by different conceptual schemes. For that reason, CR maintains, empirical evidence can never exhaust argumentation. We must go on to debate as well even the criteria by which we judge evidence and argument. That requires inter-paradigm dialogue. The language of interparadigm dialogue is meta-theory — the conceptual and philosophical analysis of rival, metaphysical presuppositions.

Because they share a rejection of metaphysical debate, CR regards both positivism and postmodernism as equally empiricist. For that matter, American sociology also remains empiricist. We certainly have gone beyond the naive idea that the data just speak, but we still presume that all important questions are questions of data. Treating philosophy as a disciplinary “other,” we remain impatient with metatheoretical analyses as if they will detain us from generating yet more data. Perhaps this lingering empiricism is why we converse so little across our paradigms, why we still entertain the covering law model of explanation, and why, too, CR has so little penetrated American sociology.

Readers wishing to know more about CR can check out the Bhaskar discussion list (Bhaskar@lists.village.Virginia.edu) and the CR website:

www.criticalrealism.demon.co.uk. Also, the interdisciplinary *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* often publishes articles reflecting a CR perspective.

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Bianchi Wins Graduate Student Prize

by Jane Sell, Texas A&M University

The Shils-Coleman Committee is charged with awarding the graduate student prize for the Theory Section. The committee members this year were Karen Cook, Michael Lovaglia, Jane Sell, Geoff Tootell and Joseph Whitmeyer. The committee received ten nominations and where there was a conflict of interest, the ranking of the person with the conflict was not used. The committee found many of the papers meritorious.

Susan Chimonas, from the University of Michigan, was awarded Honorable Mention for her paper, “Back to the Drawing Board: Irony, Moral Panic Theory, and the Study of Social Problems.” Ms. Chimonas’ paper rejects what she terms the “artificial dichotomy between ideology and material life.” She draws upon the work of Foucault to formulate a contextual constructionist approach to social problems. To illustrate her arguments, Chimonas analyzes and critiques the issue of moral panics, situations defined by sociologists as public reactions to social problems that are out of proportion to the actual “threat.” The committee commends Chimonas on her clear prose and insightful analysis.

The winner of the Shils-Coleman Memorial Award this year is Alison Bianchi from Stanford University. Ms. Bianchi’s paper, “Sentiment and Status Processes: A Test Between the Constitutive and Mediator Models,” examines the specific mechanism by which sentiment structures affect status structures. Her analysis and empirical test is directed toward determining whether sentiments act like a status element in shaping expectations or whether sentiments intervene between the formation of expectation states and the development of behavior. She conducts a creative study in which negative sentiment is examined in two different contexts—one in which the actor has full responsibility for the team effort, and one in which the actor is only advisory. In concert with the mediator interpretation of sentiment, the negative sentiment affected only the actor in the advisory role, not the decision-maker. Consequently, her formulation demonstrates that sentiment does not, by itself, constitute a status element.

2000 Section Prize Winners Announced

Heimer and Staffen Win Theory Prize

by J. David Knottnerus, Oklahoma State University

The 2000 Theory Prize Committee consisted of J. David Knottnerus (chair), Julia Adams, Noah Friedkin, Edward J. Lawler, and Noah Mark. Nine books were nominated for the prize. Among them, the clear winners were Carol A. Heimer and Lisa R. Staffen for their book, *For the Sake of the Children: The Social Organization of Responsibility in the Hospital and the Home* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

The Theory Prize Committee also awarded an Honorable Mention to David Willer (ed.) for his book, *Network Exchange Theory* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999).

FOR THE SAKE OF THE CHILDREN is a highly original piece of work that carefully interweaves theory with empirical analysis, takes a creative problem (responsibility), and uses theory to generate broad implications. The book focuses on the social organization of responsibility by asking who takes responsibility for critically ill newborns. In addressing this question the study draws on medical records and interviews with parents and medical staff and examines the social dynamics of two neonatal intensive care units. The authors' concern is not to treat responsibility as an ethical issue (i.e., from a normative approach), but rather to show how responsibility is socially created and maintained, especially within a bureaucratic world. The book is innovative in that it suggests an analytical/empirical treatment of responsibility taking. That is, the authors identify responsibility as a theoretical concept, provide a measure of responsibility taking, and assess variation in responsibility taking across individuals. This innovation is productive in multiple ways including the careful identification of several dimensions of responsibility taking and distinguishing the social factors that contribute to high levels of responsibility taking along these dimensions. The book is notable for the way it renders complex ideas and arguments dealing with the social organization of responsibility, linkages between moral and social theory, and policy decisions remarkably accessible to a range of readers.

NETWORK EXCHANGE THEORY describes the development of a successful, sustained, and intensive program of work on theory construction, testing, and refinement concerned with social exchange networks (involving a program of research developed collaboratively by David Willer, Barry Markovsky, John Skvoretz, Michael J. Lovaglia, and their various associates). The work is grounded on formal theory and data from experiments and is cumulative in nature. The theory examines under a variety of conditions the relation of social action to social structure and provides a valuable approach for structural analysis at both micro and macro levels.

NEXT ISSUE

Professor Stephen Kalberg discusses his new translation of Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.

MICHAEL OAKESHOTT ASSOCIATION

<http://www.michael-oakeshott-association.org>

A new philosophy association has been launched in the name of British philosopher Michael Oakeshott (1901-1990). Though Oakeshott is primarily known as a political theorist and as a philosopher of history, he made a distinguished and distinctive contribution to the philosophy of education, the history of political thought, philosophical jurisprudence, the philosophy of social science, aesthetics and religion, all set against an idealist metaphysic.

The Association's multi-disciplinary membership is drawn from over 20 countries. While the Association seeks to promote the work of Oakeshott, open and critical discussion is encouraged from all shades of political opinion and philosophical interest. Commentary on Oakeshott specifically and relevant issues across philosophy are welcome.

The inaugural conference to commemorate the centenary of Oakeshott's birth will be held at the London School of Economics in September 2001. Further details of this, the Association and articles on Oakeshott, are available on the Association's website:

<http://www.michael-oakeshott-association.org>. Please address your enquiries to the Convenor, Leslie Marsh, at michael-oakeshott-association@cwcom.net.

Call for Papers

22nd Volume of *Current Perspectives in Social Theory*

Current Perspectives in Social Theory invites submissions for the year 2002, Volume 22. *Current Perspectives in Social Theory* is an annual journal dedicated to publishing significant articles across the spectrum of perspectives within social theory, conceived of in a broad and interdisciplinary sense. To submit a manuscript, send five copies and a one-page abstract to: Jennifer M. Lehmann, Editor, *Current Perspectives in Social Theory*, Department of Sociology, 737 Oldfather Hall, The University of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE 68588-0324. Deadline for Volume 22 submissions is February 10, 2001.

Volume 20 of *Current Perspectives in Social Theory* included articles in three sections. "The Social Nature of Discourse," section consisted of Ben Agger, "Books Author Authors, But Reading Writes: A Social Theory of the Text," and Orville Lee on "Constitution of Meaning: On the Practical Conditions of Social Understanding." The second section entitled, "The Social Nature of Gender," included Ann Branaman on "The Bonds of Hierarchy: Anglo-American Psychoanalytic-Feminist Theory on Inequality in Intimate Relationships," and "Developing the Gender Relations Perspective: The Emergence of a New Conceptualization of Gender in the 1990's," by Elaine J. Hall. The third section, "Social Structure, Social Change, and Social Theory," included "Two Faces of Collective Action Frames: A Theoretical Consideration," by Rhys Williams and Rob Benford, "Barry Hindness and Paul Hirst: The Origins of Capitalism, and the Origins of Postmarxism," by Richard Duchesne and, "Emmanuel Levinas and the Moral Displacement of Knowledge: Rethinking the Relation between Moral and Social Orders," by Stan Knapp.

Election Results New Section Officers Begin Terms

Gary Alan Fine was elected in this year's elections as chair-elect. He will begin a three-year term with successive one-year terms as chair-elect, chair, and past chair. Robert J. Antonio and Cecilia L. Ridgeway were elected to three-year terms as members of the council.

Gary Alan Fine is Professor of Sociology at Northwestern University, having previously taught at the University of Minnesota and the University of Georgia. He received his Ph.D. degree in 1976 from Harvard University, and his B.A. in 1972 from the University of Pennsylvania. Within the domain of sociological theory, Fine has been most closely affiliated with interactionist approaches, and was a student of Erving Goffman while at Penn. Fine is the author (along with Kent Sandrom) of "Ideology in Action" in *Sociological Theory*, (with Sherryll Kleinman) of "Rethinking Subculture" in *American Journal of Sociology*, and "The Macrofoundations of Microsociology" in *The Sociological Quarterly*. He has also written on the theoretical approaches of Thorstein Veblen, Erving Goffman, and George Herbert Mead. He is currently working on an analysis, along with Michael Flaherty, on Mead's images of time. Fine's plan for the 2002 Theory Miniconference is to focus on "Theory and Empirical Research."

Robert J. Antonio is Professor of Sociology at the University of Kansas. He has done work on the development of modern social theory and post-modern theory. He is interested especially in the rise of social theory as a distinct practice: its historical and philosophical foundations, relations to specialized science and disciplinary theory, connections to social movements, and possible role in discourses about reconstructing the political, economic, organizational, and cultural

bases of democracy. His recent publications include "After Postmodernism: Reactionary Tribalism," in the *American Journal of Sociology*, "Karl Marx," in *Blackwell Companion to the Major Social Theorists*, edited by George Ritzer; "Nietzsche: Social Theory in the Twilight of the Millennium," in *Handbook of Social Theory*, edited by George Ritzer and Barry Smart; and a revised version of "Materialism," in *Encyclopedia of Sociology*, edited by Edgar F. Borgatta.

Cecilia L. Ridgeway is Professor of Sociology at Stanford University. Her research focuses on status and social hierarchies in interaction and on gender inequality. She is particularly interested in the role that social hierarchies in everyday interaction play in the larger processes of stratification and inequality in a society. Her recent research focuses on the development and testing of status construction theory, which is a theory about the power of interactional contexts to create and spread status beliefs about social differences. Examples of this work appear in "The Social Construction of Status Value: Gender and Other Nominal Characteristics," *Social Forces*, 1991; "How Do Status Beliefs Develop: The Role of Resources and Interaction," *American Sociological Review*, 1998, "Creating and Spreading Status Beliefs," *American Journal of Sociology*, forthcoming, and "Inequality, Status, and the Construction of Status Beliefs," in the *Handbook of Sociological Theory*, edited by Jonathan Turner which is forthcoming, from Plenum Publishers. A second strand of Ridgeway's current research addresses the role of interactional processes in preserving gender inequality despite major changes in the socioeconomic organization of society. Examples of this work are "Interaction and the Conservation of Gender Inequality: Considering Employment," *American Sociological Review*, 1997, and "Limiting Gender Inequality Through Interaction: The End(s) of Gender," *Contemporary Sociology*, 2000. She is also the author of *Gender, Interaction, and Inequality* (Springer-Verlag, 1992) and is incoming editor of *Social Psychology Quarterly*.

The following is the first in a series of essays addressing the relationship between theories in sociology and theory/research in other disciplines. Individuals wishing to contribute to this series are encouraged to contact the editors.

Combining Sociology and Economics

by Raymond C. Battalio and Jane Sell, Texas A&M University

We argue that combining theories in sociology and economics can provide significant advancement for both disciplines. In developing our argument, however, we should first share our biases. Ray Battalio is an experimental economist whose work of the last decade has focused upon coordination issues, bargaining issues and public goods. Jane Sell is an experimental sociologist whose work in the last decade has focused upon issues relating to public goods. We have attended each other's classes, shared research designs, and are presently teaching together (with another colleague in psychology, Charles Samuelson). Our long history of interaction and our shared research methodology has helped us understand aspects of each other's discipline. But, it has also fostered a healthy respect for how exceptionally difficult it is to develop truly interdisciplinary theory. The difficulty comes from the time commitment necessary to understand the central definitions, assumptions and methodologies of a particular discipline.

The central point of our optimism about theory development is game theory, in part because it carries a set of definitions and assumptions that can be applied to the particular area in which the "theory" is applied. Of course, one of the problems in discussing game theory is that it

is such a broad area—in fact, it is not a "theory" at all, and it has had a number of reincarnations. Researchers will occasionally say that they are using game theory, but while this provides some information about the formal nature of the argument to be presented, it doesn't provide much information. It is akin to sociologists saying that they will use symbolic interaction in their formulation. The reader would understand some of the basic assumptions that would be employed, but would not understand the specific nature of the argument until more detail was provided.

Game theorists who write about their history seem to agree upon some general conclusions (see for example, Binmore 1992; Rasmussen 1989; Fudenberg and Tirole 1991). Von Neumann and Morgenstern's 1944 publication of *The Theory of Games and Economic Behavior* is credited as beginning the area of game theory. This same book is also credited with the development of expected utility theory which enables researchers to determine equilibria. However, earlier economists and mathematicians actually developed ideas that directly relate to game theory and were later incorporated within that theory. The economists include, for example, Cournot and Edgeworth; the mathematicians include Borel, Zermelo, and Bernouilli. Von Neumann was a mathematician while Morgenstern was an economist and this probably explains why economists have been traditionally the most active in the development of game theory applications.

The Theory of Games and Economic Behavior developed two distinct types of game applications. The first concerned noncooperative games. These types of games addressed how one actor's strategy for an optimal play depended upon what the other actor or actors did. Von Neumann and Morgenstern developed the case of two player games that were zero sum, that is, where one person's gain is another's loss. (Poker, for example, would be such a game.) The second portion of the book

concerned cooperative or coalitional games. In this section they developed rational patterns of coalition formation.

Most of the recent developments of game theory have been in the area of noncooperative game theory and it is these developments that we emphasize in our research. Cooperative game theory deals with binding commitment (often involving an explicit contract) whereas noncooperative game theory deals with situations in which binding commitment is not possible. Noncooperative game theory focuses upon the actor (who can be an individual or a larger entity or collective actor) and the actor's strategies. One important concept for much of game theory is an actor's best response. A best response is an actor's choice that is optimal for his or her interests, given his or her beliefs about the context and the strategies of the other actors.

A Nash equilibrium is a profile of strategies such that each player's strategy is a best response to other players' strategies. It is strict (Harsanyi 1973) if each player has a unique best response to the others' strategies. The idea of best response becomes exceedingly complex as it is defined based upon beliefs, that involve deciding what information others have and how they value this information. (It also involves beliefs about whether actors think others are rational.)

In the simplest cases, assumptions are made concerning information in the form of common knowledge. Common knowledge is the assumption that actors know that the others know the context and that these others know that they know. It is interesting to see how similar this general idea is to some central assumptions in symbolic interaction. Both have a conception of an active actor engaged in relatively constant reflection and estimation. Both have a conception of the actor acting on the basis on his or her estimation of others' reactions. This striking similarity demonstrates one reason why inte-

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gration and combination of sociology (particularly social psychology), economics, and game theory seems not just feasible but exciting and potentially highly productive. Much of social psychology focuses upon how individuals develop beliefs and what factors affect beliefs and actions based on these beliefs. More than anything else, we know that there is certainly not a one-to-one mapping of a definition of the situation from one actor to another. Affect control theory, expectation states theory, and social identity theory, as examples, all provide theories and perspectives that help define the beliefs of actors. So, how beliefs are formed and how they are updated are vibrant areas for research in both economics and in sociology (in particular, social psychology). Both disciplines are interested in solutions to equilibrium selection, that is, given multiple solutions to a particular problem, why might individuals and groups come to one equilibrium versus another.

In our own research, we have confronted these issues by examining such areas as stereotyping group members (Sell 1997), group members' anticipation of interaction (Sell and Wilson 1999), equilibrium selection, coordination failure, and conventions (Battalio, Samuelson, and Van Huyck forthcoming; Rankin, Van Huyck, and Battalio 2000; Van Huyck, Battalio, and Rankin 1997). But it is certainly not only our work which joins economics and sociology through game theory. There is a small, but growing group of researchers involved in such theory development in both disciplines. We are convinced that game theory can be a vehicle uniting sociology, economics, and other disciplines as well, because it provides a formal language to draw attention to fundamental issues involved in interaction.

Our long history of interaction and our shared research methodology has helped us understand aspects of each other's discipline. But, it has also fostered a healthy respect for how exceptionally difficult it is to develop truly interdisciplinary theory.

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The following articles are available at this web address:

http://econlab10.tamu.edu/JVH_gtee/default.htm

- 1) Optimization Incentives and Coordination Failure in Laboratory Stag Hunt Games, Raymond C. Battalio, Larry Samuelson, and John Van Huyck, Forthcoming, *Econometrica*.
- 2) Strategic Similarity and Emergent Conventions: Evidence from Payoff Perturbed Stag Hunt Games, Frederick W. Rankin, John B. Van Huyck, and Raymond C. Battalio, *Games and Economic Behavior*, 32 (2) August 2000, 315-337.
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