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Theory Section Activities at the Atlanta Meetings

Linda D. Molm, University of Arizona

The 2003 Annual Meetings of the American Sociological Association will take place on August 16-19 in Atlanta, Georgia. Monday, August 18 is Theory Section Day. Most Section activities are scheduled on that day, with one session — the open submission paper session — scheduled the following morning. All Section activities will be held at the Atlanta Hilton. Below is the full schedule of sessions and other Section activities. Please plan to attend as many of these events as possible!

Monday, August 18, Theory Section Day:

8:30-10:15 8:30 Theory Section Refereed Roundtables and Council Meeting (1 hr.)
9:30 Theory Section Business Meeting

10:30-12:15 Theory Section Mini-conference. "The Value of Theory: Classical Theory"

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Editorial Change: Neil Gross Will Edit *Perspectives*

J. David Knottnerus & Jean Van Delinder, Oklahoma State University

This summer's publication of *Perspectives* will be the final issue managed by the current editors. We would like to thank the ASA Theory Section for the opportunity to serve in this role for the last three years. Our tenure as editors has been a very rewarding and productive one. The main reason it has been such a positive experience is because of the contributions that you, the members of the theory section, have made to the newsletter. We hope that all of you have also found reading the newsletter to be of value.

We would like to express our deepest appreciation to Deborah Sweet who has handled all of the production of the newsletters for the past three years. Her work on the newsletter greatly contributed to its timely and, we believe, high quality presentation.

And we would like to thank the Department of Sociology at Oklahoma State Uni-
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What is Critical Discourse Analysis?

Sharon Harvey, Auckland University of Technology

The 'cultural turn' in sociology has raised the question of language, text and discourse and their instantiations in society as important foci for sociologists. An important methodological approach for engaging with verbal, written and visual language/texts is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). CDA has developed over the last two decades primarily from within the disciplines of linguistics, applied linguistics, and general language studies. It has spread widely as a research method in the latter half of the nineties to a range of social science and humanities disciplines (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999).

CDA is most commonly associated with the work of Norman Fairclough (see, for example, 1995, 2003) whose conceptualisation of CDA grew out of what he terms Critical Language Awareness (CLA) (Fairclough 1999). The work of CLA was founded around a conviction that with everyday life increasingly mediated and organised through language it was of the utmost importance that people, and especially children, were taught how to engage critically with language in order to become active citizens in a democratic society. Fairclough soon shifted his emphasis to the more encompassing term 'discourse' (although CLA remains in circulation) in recognition of the multi semiotic nature of contemporary society, particularly the increasing prevalence of images (Kress & Van Leeuwen 1996).

Doing Analysis

Hilary Janks, in an article entitled *Critical Discourse Analysis as a Research Tool* (1997), offers an explanation of the way in which CDA works to provide a potentially complex and nuanced analysis. Janks (1997: 329) writes:

Critical Discourse analysis stems from a critical theory of language which sees the use of language as a form of social practice. All social practices are tied to specific historical contexts and are the means by which existing social relations are reproduced or contested and different in-

terests are served. It is the questions pertaining to interests that relate discourse to relations of power. How is the text positioned or positioning? Whose interests are served by this positioning? Whose interests are negated? What are the consequences of this positioning? Where analysis seeks to understand how discourse is implicated in relations of power it is called critical discourse analysis.

Within this understanding, CDA works interactively over three levels of analysis to yield a description, interpretation and explanation of social conditions and practices. Firstly, it works at the level of the text (this may be a verbal/written text, visual text or a mixture of both) where the analytical tools of systemic functional linguistics (SFL) (Halliday 1985) are employed to dissect/deconstruct the text, understand how it hangs together and explore how it might be related to the other two levels of analysis: the processes of production and interpretation (discourse practices) and the sociocultural conditions including the situational, institutional and societal. While there are a number of complicated aspects to SFL, it is possible to perform an insightful and competent analysis working with the following checklist (Janks 1997). The intention here is to give readers a very introductory idea of the kind of insights CDA can provide:

1. Lexicalisation: this refers to the way in which 'content' words and word groups, rather than 'grammar' words such as 'and', 'to', 'is' etc., are patterned throughout the text¹. For example lexical items such as *research, science, innovation, developing commercial products, knowledge* are often chained as interchangeable synonyms in science and tertiary education policy documents. This kind of patterning begins to change understandings and practices around what research is (particularly academic research). Originally conceived as necessary for the development of disciplinary knowledge and as the flip side to teaching, i.e. knowledge is created

and then passed on through teaching, university research now appears to be closely bound up with technological innovation for private and national economic development. The lexicalisation of 'research' in such texts brackets out humanities and social science knowledge, focussing instead on the creation of techno-scientific knowledge (Lyotard 1979).

2. Patterns of transitivity: transitivity patterns explain the 'goings on' of constructions of reality: the doing, saying, sensing, being, behaving and existing or happening. These 'goings on' are expressed through the grammar of the clause and particularly the verb. In her analysis of the transitivity patterns of an advertisement for a retirement plan for domestic workers in post apartheid South Africa, Janks (1997) is able to show the very subtle ways in which the racist and paternalistic discourse of apartheid continues to work through texts which at first glance appear to be socially and racially 'enlightened'. In this particular example, white employers are asked to consider providing their black workers with retirement funds through a plan being offered by the 'Standard Bank'. In order to do this, though, the black domestic worker is constructed through predominantly mental and relational processes while the employer is constructed through mainly material and verbal processes. Thus, the black worker says nothing and appears only to gain agency through her employer, while the employer acts and speaks independently throughout the text. Through transitivity and other devices the worker is discursively constructed as a child who needs to be looked after.

3. The use of active and passive voice: a frequently mentioned example of the effect of 'voice' choices is Tony Trew's (1979, cited in Mills (1997:148)) analysis of the following headline:

Rioting Blacks Shot Dead by Police as ANC Leaders Meet. (*The Times*, 1975, cited in Trew 1979: 94)

Trew (1979) points out that the use of the passive voice in this instance has the effect of

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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.

Technical Advances in General Sociological Theory: The Potential Contribution of Post-Structurationist Sociology

Charles Crothers, Auckland University of Technology

Is there theoretical life in sociology after Bourdieu, Giddens, and Habermas: not to mention Luhmann, Elias and an array of other recent theorists?

A fairly standard imagery of the development of sociological theory holds that much theoretical wisdom was laid down (often only partly explicitly) in the works of the various Founding Fathers. However flawed Parsons's exercise in 'convergence' which endeavored to combine the key insights of the founding fathers, it at least laid a foundation (or rather a springboard) for the more systematic development of sociological theory. However, the structural-functional paradigm within which this theoretical work was embedded, and which characterized the 'golden age' of sociology, broke apart in the 1960s and 1970s into a spectrum of macro- and micro-sociological positions.

In the next stage of the trajectory of development of sociological theory the 'structurationists' developed various attempts to pull sociological theory together and to reintegrate different strands of theorising, but they, in turn, each ran into insurmountable difficulties which have yet to be entirely identified let alone resolved. There is a large secondary literature on Bourdieu, Giddens and other theorists of this generation but rather too much of this is mainly descriptive commentary and exegesis which does not necessarily directly advance general sociological theory. But it is also within this literature that more technical analytical work has been developed, particularly in British sociology, and this has begun to put together a post-structurationist sociology of considerable power. Here I trace through the development of these strands of technical commentary and try to point to ways in which it might be reworked into a more user-friendly theoretical program.

Parker (2000) provides a useful overview. In this paper I will extend his treatment to a wider range of concerns and to at least point to the need to consider, both other structurationist theorists (e.g. Habermas, Elias) and post-structurationist theorists (e.g. Sewell, Alexander).

In addition to their concerns to further develop theoretical positions, the work of Archer (eg 1995, 1998), Mouzelis (1995) and Sewell (1992) has been particularly fueled by their simultaneous interest in the historical analysis of structural changes: Archer in relation to education systems, Mouzelis in relation to the development trajectory of semi-peripheral Greece, and Sewell in relation to the French Revolution. In addition (and I think this is particularly important since few sociological theorists since Weber and Merton have been concerned with this central topic) Mouzelis has written on organizational sociology. (This concern with the meso-level social units and social activities is echoed in the work of Archer and Sewell.)

While the work of the post-structurationists is in part in dialogue with the Founding Fathers, with Parsons, and with those theorists who were active in commenting on Parsons – especially Lockwood's famous distinction between social and systems integration (a later development of his earlier work is Lockwood 1992). But the most immediate concern of the post-structurationists is to rework the flawed efforts of Bourdieu and Giddens and others of that generation.

The key thrust of many theorists of the second 'post-Parsons', structurationist, generation has been to deal more explicitly with the various dichotomous choices which confront sociological theorizing, especially concerning *action v structure* and *micro v macro*. Bourdieu and Giddens are the main theorists of this theory generation. (The key theoretical work of Giddens remains 1984 and for Bourdieu 1998.) Besides these two key theorists there are major refractions of their approach in the work of others such as Habermas and Elias. The 'structurationists' clamped action and structure together in a notion of 'practice' or 'practises'. Practises intertwine these two levels in the continuing reproduction of structure through agency.

However, beyond providing a generalized picture of what is involved with practices neither Giddens nor Bourdieu provide much in the

way of analytical tools to examine the variability of practices.

Structurationist theorists are also concerned with both a 'theory of society', which depicts in particular the key features of modernity, and also with explanations of the unfolding of historical sequences (most notably Elias). However, their history tends to be 'smooth' and surprise-free, unfolding without much in the way of human intervention, let alone social struggle. As for Weber, Giddens' historical sociology and his theory seem almost unrelated. Moreover, structurationists often seem committed to a model of action in which the imperious present so overwhelms the possible rational guidance of their activities that people tend to continually roll-out their standard, habitual behaviour, or perhaps behavior guided by their well-entrenched thought-patterns: habitus, practical reason or the unconscious.

Despite a basic commonality, there are also considerable differences in the emphasis of various structurationists on agency as opposed to structure. For Giddens, each agential moment is fragile and fateful, with the choice of structural reproduction almost always clung to in the face of the desperation invoked by threats to a person's ontological security. On the other hand, Bourdieu tends to see action as almost entirely rolled-out as a result of structural forces, which are then endlessly reproduced. None of the structurationists can provide an analytical account which carefully dissects unfolding situations and depicts the structural and agential features which shape the types of response which are made. By too quickly foreclosing the theoretical issues around the interaction between agency and structure the structurationists fail to provide a useful handling of this antimony: despite their loud protests that they have succeeded.

The post-structurationists are engaged in developing both the form and content of a more adequate sociological theory that can address the important theoretical issues. They share a commitment to the need for understanding social life as relatively open-ended and emer-

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drawing attention away from the police who did the shooting. By describing the Blacks as rioting and placing them in initial position, Trew (1979) argues that a value judgement is made over who is responsible for the trouble. The use of the active voice has a very different effect on the reader: Police Shoot Blacks. In this case the police clearly appear as the guilty party.

4. The use of nominalisation: this refers to the process of 'pushing' potentially lengthy and complex processes into noun phrases in order to communicate meaning as efficiently as possible. Heavy nominalisation is associated with writing rather than speaking and is frequently found in scientific texts but is also characteristic of a wide range of other formal or official texts. Nominalisation is more likely to exclude readers outside the immediate discourse group because it is more difficult to understand. J.R. Martin (1993), for example, contrasts the nominalisation of a discussion topic: *Innovative Fisheries Management* with how it might be expressed using spoken grammar:

...the speakers are going to talk to us about what people are doing in various parts of the country to stop people catching too many fish and to help fish reproduce better so that some day there are lots and we can catch more. (Martin 1993:130)

5. Choices of mood: this refers to the three grammatical moods of English: interrogative, declarative and imperative. Fairclough (2000) has pointed out how systematic preferences can be significant. For example, official documents which are supposed to be consultative can be overwhelmingly declarative in their mood, thus telling rather than asking readers how things are or should be.

6. Choices of modality and polarity: this refers to degrees of certainty and uncertainty in the text. Fairclough (2000) explains that there are two sides to modality: truth and obligation. Commitment to the truth can be unqualified and definite or hedged to various degrees.

In a document arguing for change in the New Zealand tertiary education system (and emphasising the need for high technological capability) the obligation modality is categorical to begin with: "It is *vital* that researchers are able to access the *latest* information and use

modern equipment" (Tertiary Education Advisory Commission [TEAC] 2001: 21). However, this obligation is substantially hedged in the next sentence so that the government is not overwhelmed with demands to fund access to the latest information and modern equipment:

While it *may not be necessary* for them to have access to cutting-edge technology, they must have resources that enable them to undertake investigations at a level *comparable to most* overseas researchers. (TEAC 2001: 21)

7. The thematic structure of the text: in English, the theme is considered to be the most important information and is realised through first position at the level of the clause and at higher levels of text organisation, e.g. often in opening paragraphs, first sentences of paragraphs. What comes after the theme is called the rheme. Theme selection will indicate the structure of a text as well as the subjects considered important by the writer. In the most recent New Zealand Tertiary Education Strategy 2002/2007 (Ministry of Education 2002) the authors constantly thematise economic development, whereas some might argue that the emphasis in an educational policy document should be educational and social.

8. The information focus: this refers to how information is structured within the text to achieve specific goals. For example, Terry Threadgold (in Kamler 1997: 439) describes research by one of her postgraduate students. The research showed that

...in the rape narratives that women tell, they are always the goal, the affected participant, but the minute the narrative is translated into a courtroom setting what happens is that it becomes an ergative story, and the woman is transformed grammatically and rhetorically into the medium, the cause, the source of the violence...

9. Cohesion: textual cohesion refers to links across discourse beyond the level of the sentence and sometimes the text itself. This is realised through a number of different devices, including lexicalisation (the way words relate to each other either through reiteration or metonymy through a text) and theme/rheme relations. Texts also cohere through a number of grammatical features, for example,

pronominalisation, ellipsis and various types of conjunctions.

Janks (1997) suggests working through these points systematically and this is good advice to researchers who are not familiar with the different components of critical discourse analysis. More practised researchers, however, may choose to use the checklist more as a prompt for ideas. Often particularly salient discursive devices will be obvious to the practised researcher.

Linking the levels

A second level of analysis is the context of production and reception of the text: how, where, when, why and by whom was this text generated? What other texts is it related to, what effects did it produce, how did people react to it, what action was taken, what other texts were generated, how and in what way did it change social practices? Threadgold (in Kamler 1997) makes a case for a much more intensive understanding of the situational context through detailed ethnographic analysis.

The third level of analysis is at the socio-political level where salient features of a particular text or texts are linked with large-scale shifts in society. In New Zealand, for example, the development of a new public policy lexicon followed the election of successive neoliberal governments from 1984–1999. Certain words became available to describe activity in the public sector that had not previously been used in that context. 'Contestability' was such a word. Under the influence of Public Choice Theory (see, for example, Olssen 2000) the construction of markets where they had never formerly existed (tertiary education, health, public science) and the concomitant decoupling of policy advice and policy implementation demanded new modes of organisation. Rather than being funded for a particular work programme, institutions were required to competitively bid for funding in contestable 'rounds'. Contestability and its new public policy meanings as well as other related terms such as outputs, transparency, accountability, consumers (previously students and patients) became so prevalent that it was difficult to remember the language and words used prior to 1984. Jane Kelsey (1997) in her book documenting New Zealand's structural readjustments wrote an appendix entitled: 'A Manual for Counter-technopols'. One of the points

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New Science and Old Method: Institutionalizing Theory Development in Sociology

by Henry A. Walker, University of Arizona

"Theories are nets cast to catch what we call 'the world' . . . We endeavor to make the mesh ever finer and finer." (K. Popper, The Logic of Scientific Discovery, 1958[1934])

Theories are the lifeblood of science. They express general understandings of patterned relations and are dynamic. They are revised and refined continuously. Sociology is an exciting and vibrant discipline. Members of our profession collect and analyze mountains of data and produce thousands of article-length manuscripts annually. Despite its productivity, informed observers claim that sociology is not a high-consensus, rapidly-developing science (Collins 1994). A principal criticism is that sociological theory is underdeveloped. As a consequence, our findings do not cohere; sociological knowledge is episodic rather than cumulative (Davis 1994). I will not use this essay to revisit recent debates about the state of theory development.¹ Instead, I focus on the importance of institutionalizing a strategy for theory development.

Science Without Consensus or Cumulation?

Many theorists assume that the complexity of theoretical explanations varies with the complexity of the phenomena they explain. The assumption underlies the claim that social behavior is too complex, mutable, and chaotic to permit explanation by general, ahistorical theories (Cole 1994; Gergen 1973). Stephen Wolfram's (2002) most recent work shows that the claim is false.

Wolfram's *A New Kind of Science* (NKS) is remarkable for several reasons including its length.² Critics have praised and panned NKS but it makes several points that ought to inspire sociologist-theorists and bolster a discipline whose status as a theoretical science is insecure. For example, NKS systematically documents a key insight from studies of chaotic phenomena: Successive application of simple rules can generate chaotic behavior.³ NKS's documentation of the capacity of simple rules to generate complex phenomena contravenes the complex-phenomena-require-complex-explanations hypothesis. The observation ought to make optimists of pessimists who doubt the capacity of sociology to explain complex social phenomena.

Wolfram's claim to have "discovered" a new kind of science rests on an important innovation. NKS uses very simple computer programs rather than more complex mathematical statements to express the rules that generate both patterned and chaotic phenomena. The book is full of compelling examples of simple programs that replace more complex systems of equations. Sociologists should welcome this innovation. It promises to make theoretical work easier for those of us who have difficulty translating complex, natural-language arguments into mathematical equations.⁴

New Science and an Old Method

NKS is not all good news. Wolfram points to two problems associated with very complex and chaotic behavior. First, some patterns are too complex for humans or their measuring instruments to detect. I label this the problem of *perceptual incapacity*. Second, Wolfram speculated that some complex behavior present problems of *computational irreducibility*. Some phenomena are so complex, so chaotic, that any set of arguments (i.e., a theory), that might explain them would be as complex as the phenomena. Consequently, theoretical analysis would prove unfruitful; it would fail to provide computational advantage.

Unobserved patterns and unpatterned phenomena raise a crucial methodological question: What method can theorists use to explain either unpatterned behavior or unobservable behavior patterns? Wolfram's new science fails to discuss methods that might resolve the issue. NKS's omission is as important its principal themes. I claim that Wolfram does not discuss new methods because theory is the method of basic science and the mature sciences have institutionalized a strategy of theory development.

Theories have excess empirical content (Popper 1958). In that sense, they often imply previously unobserved phenomena and can suggest how to observe them.⁵ In that regard, theories cannot solve the problem of perceptual incapacity but they can resolve some questions it raises. Chaotic phenomena present different challenges. How can theorists classify such phenomena? Is the failure to discern a pattern a matter of perceptual incapacity? Is the failure to devise rules that generate chaotic phenomena evidence of computational irreducibility? At what point do theorists declare computational irreducibility? How many unsuccessful "theories" are required before a declaration is made? Standard theoretical methods do not resolve this problem either but they do offer a way around it.

Institutionalizing a Strategy for Theory Development

I have discussed a strategy for theory development elsewhere and will offer only a brief sketch here (Walker 2002). Theorists typically begin theoretical work by analyzing narrowly constrained situations. Theorists "push" their theories by relaxing scope restrictions, employing more precise predicates, and analyzing more complex settings after they develop good understandings of simple situations. As an example, network exchange theorists initially studied exchanges in exclusively-connected triads (Willer 1999). In subsequent studies they looked at networks with more exchange partners, new types of network connections, and combinations of connections.

Theory programs that generate a succession of arguments that apply to situations with increasingly broad scope, greater complexity, and more precise relational operators eventually imply extremely complex, perhaps chaotic, phenomena. That is the experience of research in the physical sciences where, for example, the standard physical model encounters more anomalies as analysis approaches either the "big bang" or the "big crunch." However, in such cases, the conditions under which chaos occurs are known. The phenomena can be reproduced.

My simple description of theoretical method represents a very different strategy than observing complex or apparently chaotic behavior and trying to devise rules to explain it. Sociology cannot implement a progressive theory-

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gent. The task of theory, accordingly, is one of providing a variety of conceptual tools – indeed a tool-kit- which can be combined in various (structured as opposed to eclectic) ways in order to generate adequate analyses of particular social situations.

But they differ in the specificities of how they go about advancing theory.

Mouzelis abjures sociological theory from becoming further entangled in the thickets of philosophical issues: what the nature of social reality is should concern sociologists less than the variations in its character. His approach is to take a series of theoretical issues (arising in the work of an array of predecessors including Marx, Parsons, Giddens and Bourdieu), and for each, after delineating the opposing viewpoints, to nicely articulate a mediated version which begins to sort out some of the conceptual confusion. Archer more bravely engages with broader philosophical writings and attempts to delineate more acute ontological distinctions within the array of social reality. Her approach is highly deductive, working her way (rather laboriously it must be admitted) through a cascade of distinctions.

For Mouzelis, any sociological analysis must separately, but simultaneously, deal with several levels of social activity (briefly the macro, meso and micro). At each level there are various actors who engage with each other (in the general manner indicated by Bourdieu) in social games (played out over real-time, shaped in large part by part events, and with emergent effects) which revolve around the production and distribution of various forms of capital. Different fields are autonomous and operate differently although they can be analyzed in similar ways. At all levels, actors can operate within the framing pre-provided by the existing system, or can operate reflexively, outside of the immediate shaping of the rules.

Archer's schema are far more abstract and complex. Her main thrust is to analytically separate social activities into endless temporal cycles in which structure predisposes action, but in which action then either reproduces or elaborates either social or cultural structure or both. She provides a careful analysis of the characteristics of persons and also of structures (which are essentially anything which exists before action, has the potential to shape ac-

tion and which can be altered by action). Her main concern is to indicate how institutional structures (such as educational systems) emerge as the result of long chains of socially shaped individual choices which get built into institutional frames, which in turn shape those choices which result in further institutional evolution.

Sewell's contribution is briefer and more programmatic, seeking to breathe more analytical strength into Giddens's schema. He suggests in particular that conceptual structures (culture) and resources are (almost always) inter-locked and that collective actors must be invoked to animate any sociological understanding.

A further, but less direct, link lies with the neo-functionalist thinking of Alexander et al, which has also attempted to show various of the ways in which culture and social structure inter-relate and the ways in which social actors and groupings shape institutional development and are in turn shaped by these developments.

The work of the post-structurationists has been useful in reinforcing that there is still work to do in general sociological theory and that sustained and detailed attention can yield technical advances in better solving some of the central issues which continue to plague theoretical discussions in sociology. However, this literature is widely scattered and needs to be

reformulated to become less concerned with exegesis and more with providing useful advice to theorists and theoretically-sophisticated analysts.

My concern with these comments has been to use very broad brush-strokes to draw the attention of a (mainly American) audience to a stream of technical advancement in social theory (mainly from British theory commentators). Clearly, the host of necessary qualifications would have bogged me down, but just as importantly these need to be added into the discussion. I do hope, though, that others will see the potential in this line of work.

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Organizers: Ira J. Cohen and Linda D. Molm

Panelists: Margaret Somers, Charles Tilly, Bryan Turner, Eviatar Zerubavel

Commentators: Cecilia L. Ridgeway and Charles Lemert

2:30-4:30 Theory Section Mini-conference. "The Value of Theory: Formal Theory"

Organizers: Cecilia L. Ridgeway and Linda D. Molm

Panelists: Lynn Smith-Lovin, Michael Hechter, Michael Macy, Joseph Berger

Commentators: Dorothy Smith and Ira J. Cohen

4:30-6:15 Theory Section Mini-conference. "The Value of Theory: Critical Theory"

Organizers: Charles Lemert and Dorothy Smith

Panelists: Charles Lemert, Audrey Sprenger, Shana Cohen, Douglas Sadao Aoki, Jonathan Cutler, Sharon Rosenberg

Commentators: Ira J. Cohen and Cecilia L. Ridgeway

6:30 p.m. Theory Section Reception (joint with the Sociology of Culture Section)

Tuesday, August 19:

8:30 a.m. Theory Section Paper Session: "Recent Advances in Theory"

Organizer: Jane Sell

Presenters: Blane DaSilva, David Willer, Guillermina Jasso, Carl W. Roberts, Yong Wang, Anne W. Esacove, Aaron M. Beim

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referred to this increasing colonisation of the language. Her advice was:

Resist market-speak – maintain control of the language, challenge its capture, and refuse to convert your discourse to theirs.... (Kelsey 1997 p. 396)

Theoretical Underpinnings

Theoretically, CDA is most closely associated with the work of Michel Foucault. Sara Mills (1997: 150) writes:

Fairclough argues that Foucault's work on discourse can be usefully drawn on by linguists for two main insights: '1. the constitutive nature of discourse – discourse constitutes the social, including 'objects' and social subjects; 2. the primacy of interdiscursivity and intertextuality – any discursive practice is defined by its relations with others, and draws upon others in complex ways.

In a more recent publication: *Discourse in Late Modernity: Rethinking Critical Discourse Analysis* (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999), CDA is attributed a wide range of theoretical influences. The authors advocate a transdisciplinary research agenda where these different theoretical approaches remain in dialogue without one dominating over the other. For example, a Bourdieuan 'constructivist structuralism' approach to understanding social life is favoured as:

...a way of seeing and researching social life as both constrained by social structures, and an active process of production which transforms social structures. (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999:1)

This is set against the work of Giddens (1994) and others theorising globalisation and social change in late modernity. Bell's (1978) work on postindustrialism is significant as is Lash and Urry (1994), Bernstein (1990, 1996), Lyotard (1979), and centrally, the SFL work of Michael Halliday (1985).

Fairclough's CDA has been labelled by some as postmodern (Threadgold in Kamler 1997) and many of his theoretical references suggest this orientation. Alistair Pennycook (2001) has observed, however, that the work of Fairclough and other CDA researchers is fundamentally modernist in its approach. That is, it

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building strategy instantly but it can achieve the ideal by following a series of steps. First, sociologists must decide that "theory" cannot be whatever we choose it to be. Classical writings can include theoretical statements but not all classical writing is theoretical. The same is true of other "approaches" to theory and we must not hesitate to say so. Second, more sociologists must learn to create theoretical explanations and we must routinize the "method" employed in more successful sciences. We must test and revise or replace inadequate formulations. Third, we must understand why earlier attempts at theory building have been unsuccessful. We cannot begin with theories of chaotic behavior. We have tried to create general theories of the buzzing, blooming confusion of social life from whole cloth. Our critics point correctly to those failures. The first theory nets are, of necessity, coarsely woven and limited in scope. Finally, we must institutionalize the strategy employed by mature sciences and reward those who use it. We institutionalize the strategy by showing how theory does more than create knowledge. We can show how developments in basic science can inform work in related applied and engineering fields.⁶

Institutionalizing the idea that *theory* is the method of science and making theory development common practice has benefits beyond scientific understanding. It will relieve sociologists of a duty that our comrades in the physical sciences have escaped. We will no longer take or teach theory courses or write essays on theoretical methods.

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Endnotes

1. See recent exchanges in Hage (1994), a special issue of *Sociological Forum* (June 1994) and the Zhao-Willer exchange (Willer 1996; Zhao 1996).
2. The book runs more than twelve hundred pages of text, illustrations, notes and references.
3. Space limitations lead me to make a gross oversimplification: Chaotic behavior is characterized by its apparent randomness and seeming unpredictability.
4. Wolfram used a finely-tuned publicity campaign to promote his (self-published) book and the proposals it contains. Most assuredly some criticism of his work is tied to his self promotion. His immodesty aside, the proposal to replace mathematical statements with computer programs *is* revolutionary and revolutions are rarely led by modest individuals. Widespread adoption of his proposal might turn out to be as important to scientific practice as the earlier shift from natural language to mathematical statements.
5. Consider relativity theory's prediction of shifts in the perihelion of Mercury.
6. The legitimacy of practices and procedures is enhanced by demonstrations of their efficiency and effectiveness (Zelditch and Walker forthcoming).

CDA from page 7

claims a scientific objectivity for its analyses which precludes its claims to postmodernity. For example, Ruth Wodak (1996:20, cited in Pennycook 2001:36) writes that CDA is: “a socially committed scientific paradigm. CDA is not less ‘scientific’ than other linguistic approaches.” CDA claims that it can prove, through analysis, what the text is ‘really doing’, whose dominant ideology is being brought to bear and in what way. Moreover, the CDA theorists consistently infer the existence of an ideal space outside ideology; that “...power distorts real communication” (Pennycook 2001:87). Pennycook (2001) takes a postmodern position that there is no innocent space for discourse outside questions of power. In his view, critical discourse analysis needs rather to be seen as a situated political practice which generates complex and subtle interpretations and readings, none of which are ‘true’ but which may nonetheless prove useful and compelling in their own right.

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Footnotes

- ¹ Some words fall between these two extremes and perform both functions. Michael McCarthy (1991) describes discourse organising or signalling words which perform both grammar and content functions e.g. in a problem-solution text words such as *problem, responses, crisis, dilemma* and *solution* may give indications of larger text patterns.

ASA ELECTION RESULTS

Chair-Elect: Murray Webster

Council Members: J. David Knottnerus, Uta Gerhardt

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versity and its Head, Charles Edgley, for their support of *Perspectives*. Without the department’s help, especially that of Chuck Edgley’s, editing the newsletter would have been a much more difficult and time-consuming task.

Finally, the Publications Committee of the ASA Theory Section has selected Neil Gross, University of Southern California, as incoming editor of the section newsletter. We congratulate Neil and wish him the best of luck. We are certain that he will do an excellent job in his tenure as editor and urge all of you to contact him with your contributions, announcements, suggestions, etc.

We close with a brief biographical statement and contact information for Neil.

Neil Gross (Ph.D. University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2002) is an assistant professor of sociology at the University of Southern California. He is currently writing a book about love and intimacy in late modernity. He is co-editor and co-translator (with Robert Alun Jones) of an English translation of Emile Durkheim’s recently discovered 1883-4 lycee lecture course on philosophy, to be published in 2004 by Cambridge University Press. Recent publications include: “Richard Rorty’s Pragmatism: A Case Study in the Sociology of Ideas” (*Theory & Society* 2003 32:93-148); “Becoming a Pragmatist Philosopher: Status, Self-Concept, and Intellectual Choice” (*American Sociological Review* 2002 67:52-76); “Intimacy as a Double-Edged Phenomenon? An Empirical Test of Giddens” (*Social Forces* 2002 81:531-555, with Solon Simmons); “The New Sociology of Ideas” (pp. 236-249 in the *Blackwell Companion to Sociology* 2001, J. Blau, editor, with Charles Camic); and “Contemporary Developments in Sociological Theory: Current Projects and Conditions of Possibility” (*Annual Review of Sociology* 1998 24:453-476, with Charles Camic).

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