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Critical Theory, Poststructrualism, Postmodernism: Their Sociological Relevance

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KEY WORDS: Frankfurt School, deconstruction, literary theory

ABSTRACT: This article examines the main theoretical contributions of critical theory, poststructuralism and postmodernism. It is argued that these three theories offer related perspectives on the shortcomings of positivism as well as new ways to theorize and study contemporary societies. Empirical and conceptual applications of these perspectives in sociological research are discussed. Some of these applications include work in the sociology of deviance, gender, media and culture. Finally, implications of these three theoretical perspectives for the ways sociologists think about the boundaries and territoriality of their discipline are discussed.

SOCIOLOGY MEETS GERMAN CRITICAL THEORY AND NEW FRENCH THEORY

Critical theory, poststructuralism, and postmodernism are intellectual traditions most familiar to people who work in philosophy, aesthetic theory, literary criticism, and women's studies. Yet a number of American sociologists are beginning to show productive familiarity with the three theoretical schools discussed in this paper (e.g. Lemert 1980, Lemert & Gillan 1982, Gottdiener 1985, Gottdiener & Lagopoulos 1986, Denzin 1986, 1989, 1990, 1991, Brown 1987, Richardson 1988, 1990a,b,c, 1991, Agger 1989a,b,c, 1990, l991a,b, 1992, Hazelrigg 1989, Antonio & Kellner 1991). Outside of sociology, the interpretive literature on critical theory, poststructuralism, and postmodernism is huge and growing (e.g. Jay 1973, 1984a,b, Eagleton 1976, 1983, 1985, Held 1980, Schoolman 1980, Culler 1982, Weedon 1987, Aronowitz 1988, 1990, Harvey 1989, Luke 1989, 1990, Best & Kellner 1990). Any humanities-oriented bookstore is bursting with exegetical volumes on Derrida's deconstruction, the Frankfurt School, poststructuralfeminist film criticism, French feminism, and cultural studies. Derrida has become virtually a discipline in his own right, not least because he writes so densely and allusively (also because of his enormous intellectual charisma: Lamont (1987) has addressed the phenomenon of Derridean deconstruction sociologically).

Although the three theories discussed in this paper are inherently and sometimes vigorously political, they are often ignored by empiricists not because they are leftist (after all, a good deal of the mainstream stratification and gender work published in _American Sociological Review_ is vaguely leftish) but because they are incredibly, extravagantly convoluted--to the point of disastrous absurdity one would think, if reading Derrida's (1987) _Glas_ or Lyotard's (1989) _The Differend_ (no

typographical error that!). One cannot help but wonder why these theorists do not write more clearly and in ways that show the empirical (political, cultural, existential) relevance of their work more directly. l intend this paper largely as translation, explication, and application. As I argue below, the three theories are most relevant *for the methodological and empirical work they can do*, even if this is buried deep beneath the surface of these writings.

I begin by developing the main ideas of each of the three theories. I then summarize the relevance of these ideas for methodology, research, and concept formation in mainstream sociology. Above all, critical theory, poststructuralism, and postmodernism are effective as *critiques of positivism* (Stockman 1984), interrogating taken- for-granted assumptions about the ways in which people write and read science. They also make potentially useful substantive contributions. Although most American sociologists are not wedded to positivist doctrine, the research and writing they do tend to embody the central positivist tenet that it is possible to reflect the world without presuppositions, without intruding philosophical and theoretical assumptions into one's work. All three theoretical perspectives discussed here reject presuppositionless representation, arguing explicitly that such representation is both politically undesirable and philosophically impossible.

Although all three theories mount an exhaustive frontal attack on positivism, they hold open the possibility of an empirical social science, albeit one that operates with decidedly nonpositivist assumptions (see Diesing 1991). Neither poststructuralism nor postmodernism has produced a concrete version of this social science. However, during the exodus of the Frankfurt School to the United States during and just after World War II the German critical theorists (see Adorno 1969, Arato & Gebhardt 1978) did important empirical studies that adapted critical theory to the project of empirical social science, including but not limited to Adorno et al's (1950) study of the authoritarian personality (also see Adorno 1945, 1954, 1974). This work anticipates subsequent applications and adaptations of these three theories to mainstream sociology.

CRITICAL THEORY: MAIN IDEAS

Critical theory is associated with the Institute for Social Research, established in Germany in 1923 and staffed by Theodor W. Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse, Friedrich Pollock, Leo Lowenthal, and Walter Benjamin (see Jay 1973, Hughes 1975, Kellner 1989b). The most important recent representative of critical theory is Jurgen Habermas, a student of Adorno and Horkheimer who departed significantly from certain positions of the founders (see Habermas 1970, 1971, 1975, 1979, 1981 a, b, 1984, 1987a, b). For representative studies of the origins and meaning of critical theory, see Jay 1973, Agger 1979, Connerton 1980, Kellner 1989b. Also see Slater 1977, who offers an orthodox- Marxist appraisal of the Frankfurt School.

Critical theory as developed by the original Frankfurt School attempted to explain why the socialist revolution prophesied by Marx in the mid-nineteenth century did not occur as expected. Marcuse, Adorno, and Horkheimer thought that they had to reconstruct the logic and method of Marxism in order to develop a Marxism relevant to emerging twentieth- century capitalism. They did not believe that they were recanting Marx's basic understanding of capitalism as a self- contradictory social system--e.g. see Horkheimer's 1937 (1972) essay on this issue, "Traditional and Critical Theory," in which he spelled out the basic parameters of critical theory. In particular, the Frankfurt School theorists, following the Hungarian Marxist Georg Lukacs (1971), attempted to link economic with cultural and ideological analysis in explaining why the revolution expected by Marx did not occur. Like Lukacs (who used the term *reification* to refer to deepened alienation in an emerging "late" capitalism), the Frankfurt theorists believed that Marx underestimated the extent to which workers' (and others') false consciousness could be exploited to keep the social and economic system running smoothly. Lukacs and the Frankfurt thinkers agreed with Marx that capitalism over time tends to develop internal economic irrationalities (e.g. the concentration and centralization of productive wealth at the expense of workers who are thrown out of work as a result and thus cannot consume the commodities that their labor produces). The Frankfurt School thought that capitalism in the twentieth century was beginning to develop effective coping mechanisms which allowed it to forestall the cataclysmic eruption of these periodic crises into a wholesale socialist revolution.

In particular, capitalism deepens false consciousness, suggesting to people that the existing social system is both inevitable and rational. Marx (nd:76 88) already provided for the possibility of false consciousness in his famous analysis of commodity fetishism in Volume One of _Capital_. According to him, commodity fetishism (typically misunderstood to mean people's obsession with commodity consumption--consumerism) refers to the way in which the labor process is mystified, appearing not to be a purposeful construction of willful human beings. The particular character of false consciousness in a society founded on commodity fetishism--capitalism--is the inability to experience and recognize social relations as historical accomplishments that can be transformed. Instead, people "falsely" experience their lives as products of a certain unchangeable social nature.

The deepening of commodity fetishism leads to what Lukacs called *reification* and the Frankfurt theorists *domination*. Domination in Frankfurt terminology is a combination of external exploitation (e.g. the extraction of workers' surplus value--explored exhaustively in Capital) and internal selfdisciplining that allows external exploitation to go unchecked. In sociological terms, people internalize certain values and norms that induce them to participate effectively in the division of productive and reproductive labor. Classical non-Marxist social theory (Comte, Durkheim, Weber, Parsons and now the neo-Parsonians) explores what Parsons (1937; see O'Neill 1972a) called the Hobbesian problem of order: Why do people obey in organized industrial societies? The Durkheimian- Weberian-Parsonian answer is that people obey because they share certain common values and beliefs (e.g.

Durkheim's *collective consciousness*) that explain the world to them in a rational way. In particular, people believe that they can achieve modest personal betterment by complying with social norms but that large- scale social changes beyond this are impossible.

The Frankfurt thinkers argued that these common values inculcating obedience and discipline contradict people's objective interest in liberation. These values function ideologically to foreshorten people's imagining of what is really possible in an advanced technological society. Marcuse (1955) argues that domination must be redoubled in late capitalism in order to divert people from the increasingly realistic prospect of an end to scarcity and hence toil. What he (Marcuse 1955:32-34) calls *surplus repression* imposes discipline from the inside, inducing people to keep their noses to the grindstone, have families, and engage in busy consumerism. People are taught to furfill their needs through *repressive desublimation*, exchanging substantive sociopolitical and economic liberties for the "freedoms" of consumer choice so abundant today (see Marcuse 1964:4 6).

The Frankfurt thinkers explained the surprising survival of capitalism in terms of deepened ideologies--domination, in Frankfurt terms. In particular, they target positivism as the most effective new form of capitalist ideology. In the 1940s Horkheimer & Adorno (1972) in _Dialectic of Enlightenment_ trace this new ideology all the way back to the Enlightenment. Although they support the Enlightenment's effort to demystify religion and mythology, the particular model of enlightenment grounded in positive science was insufficient to banish mythology once and for all. They argue instead that the positivist theory of science has become a new mythology and ideology in the sense that it fails to understand its own investment in the status quo. They do more, however, than contest positivism as a theory of scientific investigation: They argue that positivism has become the most dominant form of ideology in late capitalism in the sense that people everywhere are taught to accept the world "as it is," thus unthinkingly perpetuating it.

Horkheimer and Adorno, like Marcuse (1964), reject positivism as a worldview of adjustment. Positivism suggests that one can perceive the world without making assumptions about the nature of the phenomena under investigation. Its notion that knowledge can simply reflect the world leads to the uncritical identification of reality and rationality: One experiences the world as rational and necessary, thus deflating attempts to change it. Instead, the critical theorists attempt to develop a mode of consciousness and cognition that breaks the identity of reality and rationality, viewing social facts not as inevitable constraints on human freedom (as they were for Durkheim (1950:1- 13)--social facts) but as pieces of history that can be changed. Dialectical imagination (Jay 1973) is the ability to view the world in terms of its potential for being changed in the future, a hard-won ability in a world that promotes positivist habits of mind acquiescing to the status quo.

Positivism functions ideologically where it promotes passivity and fatalism. Critical theory targets positivism both on the level of everyday life and in social theories that

reduce the social world to patterns of cause and effect. In this sense, a good deal of bourgeois social science comes under sharp attack by the Frankfurt School (e.g. Institute for Social Research 1972) for lacking the sort of dialectical imagination that enables social scientists to look beyond the appearance of given social facts toward (and as a way of achieving) new social facts--the end of class society, patriarchy, racism, and the domination of nature. Even Marxism has become too positivist, according to the Frankfurt School, where it has portrayed the downfall of capitalism as inevitable according to what Marx called economic "laws of motion." Whether Marx himself was a positivist is difficult to determine, given the range of his expressions on epistemology (e.g. Marx 1961). What is certain is that Marx was very much a child of the Enlightenment, who believed that science could conquer uncertainty and thus bring about a better world. What is also certain is that Marxists after Marx (especially those who dominated the Second and Third, or Communist, Internationals) reconstructed Marx's more dialectical social theory along the line of positivist materialism (see Lichtheim 1961, Agger 1979). This began with Marx's close collaborator, Friedrich Engels (1935), who inaugurated a tradition that gathered momentum (see Lenin 1952 and Stalin 1940) until the death of Stalin and until Marxists in the west had access to Marx's (1961) early _Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts_ (see Marcuse 1973) in which he articulated a nondeterminist historical materialism.

Frankfurt critical theory positioned itself against positivism of all kinds, notably the Marxist variety. For his part, Habermas (1971), more decisively than his earlier Frankfurt colleagues, found positivism writ large in Marx's own oeuvre. Habermas argued that Marx failed to distinguish carefully enough between knowledge gained from causal analysis and knowledge gained from self-reflection and interaction. As a result, Marxism has not been able to secure an adequate ground in voluntarism, instead falling back on the fatalism of positivist determinism. Habermas disagrees with Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse that Marx was actually an opponent of positivism himself. As a result, he argues, we must work even harder to reconstruct Marx's historical materialism in a way that gives more credence than Marx did to the categorical difference between knowledge gained from selfreflection and knowledge gained from causal analysis and technique. For Habermas, this reconstructed historical materialism has taken the form of his (1984, 1987b) communication theory, in which he attempts to shift critical social theory, like all western philosophy, from what he calls the paradigm of consciousness to the paradigm of communication, thus enabling workable strategies of ideology-critique, community building, and social-movement formation to be developed.

Habermas' reconstruction of critical theory has been especially compelling for critical social theorists because he has mastered and integrated a wide range of theoretical and empirical insights, all the way from traditional Marxism and psychoanalysis to Parsonian functionalism and speech-act theory (see McCarthy 1978). Habermas has helped legitimize German critical theory in the university through his enormous erudition and his willingness to engage with diverse theoretical and political traditions (where his earlier Frankfurt cohorts were much more dismissive of bourgeois

philosophy and social science because of their accommodationism). Some (Agger 1976; but see Wellmer 1976, Benhabib 1987) argue that Habermas has seriously truncated the emancipatory agenda by drawing a heavy line between self reflection/communication and causality/technical rationality. One upshot of Habermas's categorical distinction has been to limit agendas of social change to the realm of self-reflection/communication, in which people rationally discuss alternative social policies and attempt to build consensus about them. His Frankfurt colleagues, like the early Marx, wanted to change not only deliberative policy processes but also the social organization of science and technology. Habermas (1971) rejects Marcuse, Adorno, and Horkheimer's view that we can change not only social policy but our whole technological interaction with nature. Habermas (1971:32-33) calls this view "a heritage of mysticism." His resulting critical communication theory is closer to the parliamentary social democracy of Eduard Bernstein (1961) and, later, the Scandinavians, than it is to traditional Marxist concepts of class struggle.

That is not a sufficient reason in itself to reject Habermas's reconstruction of historical materialism, especially at a time when leftist certainties about the inevitability of socialism's triumph over capitalism are being severely tested. One might reasonably respond that Soviet statism since Lenin (1973, nd) never resembled the mature socialism or communism advocated by Marx. And one might also acknowledge that Habermas's (1981b) "new social movements" theory is a fruitful empirical as well as political contribution to an ossified Marxism that excludes consideration of aspects of domination typically ignored by the white male left, notably domination based on sex and race. This is also a potentially significant substantive contribution to sociology, along with the other Frankfurt contributions in the realms of state theory and cultural analysis.

The most lasting methodological contribution of critical theory to social science is the way it attunes empirical social researchers to the assumptions underlying their own busy empiricism. Sometimes, as Horkheimer & Adorno (1972) indicate in _Dialectic of Enlightenment_, the seeming avoidance of values is the strongest value commitment of all, exempting one's empirical claims from rigorous self-reflection and self-criticism. It is in this sense that the Frankfurt School's analysis of mythology and ideology can be applied to a positivist social science that purports to transcend myth and value but, in its own methodological obsessions, is mythological to the very core.

POSTSTRUCTURALISM: MAIN IDEAS

A brief discussion of the main ideas of poststructuralism assumes that we can cleanly separate poststructuralism from postmodernism. Unfortunately, we cannot. Primers (e.g. Culler 1982, Sarup 1989, Best& Kellner 1990) on the subject(s) cut the theoretical pie in any number of ways: Although most agree that Derrida is a poststructuralist (even though he does not identify himself as such), Foucault, Barthes, and Lyotard can be claimed by either camp and often are. And the French feminists (Kristeva 1980, Irigaray 1985, Cixous 1986) are sometimes viewed as proponents of poststructuralism (e.g. Weedon 1987). The lack of clear definition reflects the

purposeful elusiveness of work that can be variously class)fied as poststructural and/or postmodern: Perhaps the most important hallmark of all this work is its aversion to clean positivist definitions and categories. For Derrida (1976, 1978, 1981, 1987), the leading poststructural writer, every definition "deconstructs" itself--that is, it tends to unravel when one probes deeper into its foundational assumptions and literary gestures (but see Fraser 1984).

There is substantial overlap between poststructuralism and postmodernism. For my purposes here, poststructuralism (Derrida, the French feminists) is a theory of knowledge and language, whereas postmodernism (Foucault, Barthes, Lyotard, Baudrillard) is a theory of society, culture, and history. Derrida's influence in the realms of literary criticism, literary theory, and cultural analysis has been substantial (Berman 1988). Literary critics prise out of Derrida a methodology of textual reading called *deconstruction* (Curler 1982). This deconstructive method has spread like wildfire through American humanities departments, offering a serious challenge to traditional literary and cultural criticism dominated by textual objectivism (e.g. see Ransom 1941 on the New Criticism; also see Fekete 1978 and Lentricchia 1980).

Although Derrida does not elaborate a single deconstructive method, refusing programmatism in favor of his own exemplary literary, cultural, and philosophical readings, it is easy to see that literary deconstruction challenges traditional assumptions about how we read and write (Fischer 1985). Indeed, some of these deconstructive insights have begun to fertilize social-science disciplines (e.g. in anthropology, Marcus & Fischer 1986; in sociology, Lemert 1980, Brown 1987, Agger 1989c), especially with regard to the examination of cultural works and practices. I have argued for a blending of poststructuralism and critical theory that trades heavily on Derrida's model of textual analysis (see Callinicos 1985, Agger 1989a, Poster 1989). Derrida's insights into reading and writing disqualify the positivist model of a researcher who simply reflects the world "out there," suggesting new ways of writing and reading science.

Derrida insists that every text is *undecidable* in the sense that it conceals conflicts within it between different authorial voices--sometimes termed the *text* and *subtext(s)*. Every text is a contested terrain in the sense that what it appears to "say" on the surface cannot be understood without reference to the concealments and contextualizations of meaning going on simultaneously to mark the text's sign)ficance (e.g. the use of specialized jargon). These concealments and contextualizations might be viewed as the assumptions that every text makes in presuming that it will be understood. But these assumptions are suppressed, and thus the reader's attention is diverted from them. A sociological example is pertinent here: Where the status-attainment researchers of the Blau- Duncan (Blau & Duncan 1978) tradition defined mobility with respect to the occupational status of one's father, a deconstructive reading would reveal the profound assumptions about the gendered nature of work as well as about male supremacy that underlie this methodological choice. More recent feminist scholars (e.g. Bose 1985) challenge the operationalization of occupational status in terms of father's occupation because, they argue, this represents a powerfully

ideologizing subtext that (a) leads people to think that only men work, or should work, and (b) misrepresents reality where, in fact, women work outside the home for wages.

Feminist deconstruction of this aspect of status-attainment work shows, in Derrida's terms, that the operationalization of occupational status is "undecidable" in the sense that it engages in certain exclusions that imperil its own claim to fixed and final meaning. There is no univocal or unchallengeable measure of occupational status; there are only competing versions, each of which is incomplete because it engages in certain exclusions. For Derrida, deconstructive reading prises open inevitable, unavoidable gaps of meaning that readers fill with their own interpolative sense. In this way, reading is a strong activity, not merely passive reflection of an objective text with singular meaning. Readers help give writing its sense by filling in these gaps and conflicts of meaning, even becoming writers and hence challenging the hierarchy of writing over reading, cultural production over cultural reception.

Derrida's notion of undecidability rests on his notions of *difference* and *differance*. Essentially, he argues that it is in the nature of language to produce meaning only with reference to other meanings against which it takes on its own sign)ficance. Thus, we can never establish stable meanings by attempting correspondence between language and the world addressed by language. Instead, meaning is a result of the differential significances that we attach to words. Thus, for example, Weber's notion of "status" acquires meaning with reference to his concept of "class," not in terms of a fixed reality that his word "status" supposedly reflects. Derrida plays on the French word *differance* to show that one cannot hope to arrive at a fixed or transparent meaning as long as one uses a necessarily deferring as well as differing language: Every definition and clarification needs to be defined and clarified in turn; meaning always lies elusively in the future.

Word choice cannot do our thinking for us, nor solve major intellectual controversies. One is fated to improve on the undecidability (and sometimes sheer muddleheadedness) of language *through*more language, which creates its own problems of difference/difference and thus occasions its own deconstruction (see Coward & Ellis 1977). Although (Agger 1989c:335 44) the best writing anticipates and acknowledges its own undecidability forthrightly, refusing the positivist pretense of transparency once and for all, Derrida is not particularly concerned to strategize about how to write better (or, in the case of social science, to do better empirical work). He is more concerned to puncture the balloon of those who believe that language is simply a technical device for establishing singular, stable meanings instead of the deeply constitutional act that it is. In itself, this powerfully demystifies positivism by calling attention to positivism's own embeddedness in language (and, in the case of science, method). There is no royal road to meaning except through the meaning-constitutive practices of language that, in turn, provoke new confusions, contradictions, and conflicts. Derrida can be read as a gloomy relativist where he seems to despair of the possibility of enlightenment. He believes that we are destined to remain locked up in the prison house of language, as Nietzsche called it (see

Jameson 1972). But the fact that Derrida bothers to write at all shows his conviction that language can be clarified, even if we do this playfully, allusively and ironically.

Derrida (e.g. 1976) would defend his own density by arguing that difficulty educates. He would also say that simplicity brings false clarity, suppressing the difficulties of making oneself clear that are intrinsic to language's undecidability. In this sense, Derrida joins the Frankfurt School's attack on positivism, albeit from a particularly linguistic and literary direction. Where the Frankfurt School argued that positivism wrongly exempts itself from its own critique of mythology and ideology (value-freedom being a value stance, after all), Derrida shows how this works on the level of rhetoric: One can read his oeuvre as a rhetorical analysis of what he calls the philosophy of presence (another name for positivism) (see Hartman 1981). He shows how the process of differing/deferring works on the page, and underneath it, just as he also suggests his own work as an example of genuinely deconstructive reading that subverts the false simplicity and closure claimed by positivists.

Derrida's relevance to social science is potentially enormous (Agger 1989c). His poststructural notions of literary criticism suggest ways of reading and reformulating the densely technical and methodological discourses of the empirical social sciences. Must methodology mystify way out of proportion to its intellectual accomplishments as well as intrinsic difficulty? A Derridean would not only crack the code of densely technical and figural work characteristic of quantitative social science but would, in this, exemplify a more accessible mode of reading and writing. Methodology can be read as rhetoric, encoding certain assumptions and values about the social world. Deconstruction refuses to view methodology simply as a set of technical procedures with which to manipulate data. Rather, methodology can be opened up to readers intrigued by its deep assumptions and its empirical findings but otherwise daunted by its densely technical and figural nature.

To put this generically, deconstruction can help reveal the values and interests suppressed far beneath the surface of science. This politicizes and democratizes science by opening its text to outsiders, allowing them to engage with science's surface rhetoric more capably as well as to contest science's deep assumptions where necessary (e.g. in the case of my previous example about how to operationalize occupational status). Science written from the perspective of deconstruction avoids overreliance on technical and figural gestures; instead it continually raises its assumptions to full view and thus invites readers to join or challenge them. Of course, a deconstructive science text will never solve all problems of opacity and undecidability; science no more than fiction can attain absolute truth, no matter how reflexive it is about its own values, assumptions, and methodological choices: Every deconstruction can be deconstructed.

Poststructuralism helps science readers and writers recognize their own literary involvements and investments in the text of science. No matter how seemingly insignificant, every rhetorical gesture of the text contributes to its overall meaning. How we arrange our footnotes, title our paper, describe our problem, establish the

legitimacy of our topic through literature reviews, and use the gestures of quantitative method in presenting our results--all contribute to the overall sense of the text. We can learn to read these gestures not simply as embellishing "subtext" but also as a central text in their own right, making an important contribution to the argument of science. We can also rewrite science by *authorizing* these seemingly marginal gestures, turning them into the discursive arguments they really are. Poststructuralism calls into question a variety of literary norms of empirical science, suggesting that we read science not as a mirror of the world but as a strong, imaginative, sometimes duplicitous literary intervention in its own right. Methodology tells a story in spite of itself: It can be read rhetorically and hence rewritten in less technically compulsive ways, both affording greater access and raising its encoded assumptions to view (see Richardson 1990c).

For the most part, poststructuralists have concentrated on literary and cultural texts (although, as I am arguing, there is no necessary reason for doing so, given the susceptibility of science to deconstructive analysis). Derrida is averse to science because science almost always claims an exemption from the rule of undecidability; he equates positivism with all empirical science. A certain prejudice against science exists on the part of deconstructors, who reject all objective analysis, not only the falsely presuppositionless objectivism of positivism. This has made it somewhat difficult (if not impossible) for sociologists to recognize the potential sociological contributions of deconstruction.

POSTMODERNISM: MAIN IDEAS

More than Derrida's poststructuralism, postmodernism, especially in the work of Foucault (1970, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1980), makes evident connections with mainstream social science, particularly in the realms of cultural and discourse analysis, the sociology of social control and the study of sexuality. I discuss these contributions after I clarify some of the general tenets of postmodernism.

Although postmodernism arguably arose as an architectural movement (see Portoghesi 1983, Jencks 1987) the most explicit philosophical postmodernist is Lyotard. His (1984) _The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge_ represents the core of postmodern thinking on central issues of modernity and postmodernity (also see Newman 1985, Huyssen 1986, Hassan 1987, Featherstone 1988, Klinkowitz 1988, Harvey 1989, Sarup 1989, Best & Kellner 1990, Turner 1990). Lyotard rejects totalizing perspectives on history and society, what he calls *grand narratives* like Marxism that attempt to explain the world in terms of patterned interrelationships. His postmodernism is an explicit rejection of the totalizing tendencies as well as political radicalism of Marxism. Like most postmodernists, Lyotard suspects Marxists of selfaggrandizing motives. He maintains that one cannot tell large stories about the world but only small stories from the heterogeneous "subject positions" of individuals and plural social groups. Jameson (1972, 1976 1977, 1981, 1984a; see Dowling 1984), an important literary theorist who examines postmodernism through neo-Marxist lenses, suggests that postmodernism

("the cultural logic of late capitalism") is fundamentally conservative (Jameson 1984b); Habermas (1981a, 1987a) argues that postmodernism is neoconservative (also see Raulet 1984, Wolin 1984). 1 (Agger 1990) have split postmodernism into apologetic and critical versions, extending the angry modernist impulse of a politicized postmodernism (e.g. Huyssen 1986) toward a merger with critical theory. Typifying the majority of American affiliates of postmodernism, Kroker & Cook (1986) attempt to depoliticize postmodernism, viewing it simply as a cultural movement (or "scene") (see Gitlin 1988).

A postmodern social theory (see Benhabib 1984, Kellner 1988) would examine the social world from the multiple perspectives of class, race, gender and other identifying group affiliations. At the same time, this social theory would refuse the totalizing claims of grand narratives like Marxism that attempt to identify axial structural principles explaining all manner of disparate social phenomena (e.g. Marx's theory of the logic of capital). Postmodernism is antireductionist and pluralist, both in its causal priorities and in its politics, which are more liberal than radical (see Arac 1986). Postmodernism mistrusts radicals and radicalism, preferring the decentered knowledges available not only to a central knowledge commissar but also to people who engage with the world from the irreducible perspectives of their own experience.

Foucault (1976, 1980) insists that knowledge must be traced to different *discourse/practices* that frame the knowledge formulated from within them. Sociologists of science will recognize Foucault's view of discourse/practice as a version of Kuhn's (1970) paradigm notion, although Foucault makes more use of everyday experience and ordinary language to define the parameters of these paradigmatic knowledges. Foucault has made direct empirical contributions to social science where he has studied the discourse/practices of prisons (1977) and sexuality (1978), offering rich and varied accounts of how these modes of knowledge and practice were constituted historically by way of the discourses through which they were made problematic. Although clearly influenced by Marxism, Foucault rejects Marxist class analysis for its simple dualities (see Poster 1989; but see Dews 1984, 1987 and Fraser 1989). Instead, he argues that potential power is to be found everywhere, in the lot of the disenfranchised as well as with the wealthy (see O'Neill 1986).

Like poststructuralism, postmodernism is profoundly mistrustful of social sciences that conceal their own investment in a particular view of the world. Like poststructuralism and critical theory, postmodernism rejects the possibility of presuppositionless representation, instead arguing that every knowledge is contextualized by its historical and cultural nature. At some level, a universal social science is judged impossible because people's and groups' different subject positions cannot be measured against each other: For example, there is no way to adjudicate the issue of who is more oppressed--women or people of color. Instead, it is important to recognize how their differential experiences of the world are framed by the discourse/practices constituting the experience of being a woman or a person of color at a given historical moment. Social science becomes an accounting of social

experience from these multiple perspectives of discourse/practice, rather than a larger cumulative enterprise committed to the inference of general principles of social structure and organization.

Thus, like poststructuralism, postmodernism rejects the project of a universal social science, falling back on the particular modes of knowledge defined by the multiplicity of people's subject positions. In many respects, this is highly reminiscent of social phenomenology and ethnomethodology (e.g. Schutz 1967, O'Neill 1974), both of which emphasize the irreducibility of experience and reject social-structural analysis. This should not be surprising because postmodernism, phenomenology, and ethnomethodology emerge from some of the same sources, notably the philosophies of Nietzsche and Heidegger, both of whom rejected the Enlightenment's attempt to create a universal knowledge. Although phenomenology and ethnomethodology are more methodologically inclined than postmodernism, Foucault clearly converges with Garfinkel (1967) and others (e.g. Cicourel 1973, Douglas 1981) in his tradition (see Mehan & Wood 1975). Their main difference is that ethnomethodology, unlike postmodernism, affiliated itself to the disciplinary project of sociology during and after the 1960s. Postmodernism remains a largely French perspective on cultural and historical analysis that bears little explicit relationship to French or American sociology.

But while postmodernists tend to reject the project of science, a postmodern social science is possible, especially if one extrapolates creatively from the work of Barthes (1970, 1974, 1975) who, like Foucault, suggests new ways to view the sociocultural world. For example, he (1975:92) argues that "the city is a discourse," suggesting that by reading the city we can do useful social science, albeit of a type barely recognizable to positivist urban sociologists. Gottdiener (1990) and Gottdiener & Lagopoulos (1986) further develop a postmodern semiotics of urban life, showing the relevance of the postmodern project to empirical social science. (As I will discuss later, Gottdiener's postmodern sociology has drawn fire from establishment sociologists who judge the contribution of French theory to be scanty.)

After Lyotard, Foucault, and Barthes, the fourth major postmodernist thinker is Baudrillard (1975, 1981, 1983), who offers the most sociological version of postmodernism to date (see Kellner 1989a,c). In his early analysis of late capitalism, Baudrillard (1975, 1981) suggests that in a consumer society commodities acquire a certain *sign value* that people covet. Instead of consuming designer-labeled commodities for their use values (Guess jeans functioning as clothes and Honda cars as transportation), people buy them for their sign value, a notion akin to Weber and Veblen's notions of status value, albeit grounded in a dense semiotic theory that builds on the work of Saussure (1960) and Eco (1979). In later work, Baudrillard (e.g. 1983) suggests that reality (he calls it*hyperreality*) is increasingly *simulated* for people, constructed by powerful media and other cultural sources. People lose the ability to distinguish between these simulations and reality, a precondition of all social criticism. This analysis closely resembles the neo-Marxian Frankfurt analyses of false

consciousness and suggests lines of research in the sociology of culture, media, and advertising.

USING CRITICAL THEORY, POSTSTRUCTURALISM, AND POSTMODERNISM: METHODOLOGY, RESEARCH, AND CONCEPT FORMATION

I have already pointed to ways in which critical theory, poststructuralism, and postmodernism are used, and can be used, by empirical sociologists. There are also important ways in which these traditions are inimical to the concept of a social science: They would transform the concept and practice of social science to such an extent that most sociologists would scarcely recognize it. Let me summarize the explicit contributions of these three theoretical perspectives to methodology, empirical research, and concept formation in sociology, before I conclude by offering some cautions about these integrations.

The sociological contributions of critical theory, poststructuralism, and postmodernism fall into two broad categories. They are *methodologically* relevant to the ways in which people write and read sociology (numbers 1-5, below). This mainly involves their critique of positivism. They are also relevant *substantively* in their various contributions to the study of the state, ideology, culture, discourse, social control, and social movements (numbers 6 10, below).

Methodological Implications

1. *Critical theory forces sociological empiricism to interrogate its own taken-for-granted exemption from the sullying interests of perspective, passion, polemic, and politics.* As Horkheimer & Adorno (1972) argue, positive science is no less susceptible to myth)fication and mystification than is theology. The unquestioned belief in value- freedom is no less problematic than the belief in God or spirit. The researcher is perhaps even more vulnerable to self-serving self-deception where research is conducted with an obliviousness to the powerful forces of what Habermas (1971) calls interest as these frame and form the research act as well as the interpretation of findings. This is another way of saying that social science should be reflexive, Gouldner's (1970; also see O'Neill 1972b) term for the studied self-reflection necessary to deflate the hubris of scientists about the unquestioned superiority of their methods over the nonsciences, from literature to philosophy. As Gouldner showed (heavily influenced by the Frankfurt School; see Gouldner 1976), a nonreflexive sociology ignores its own contamination by political interests in preserving the status quo (see Boggs 1983).

2. *Critical theory contributes to the development of a postpositivist philosophy of science.* Although the Vienna Circle's unreconstructed logical positivism has been defunct for decades, many working methodologists in the social sciences, especially sociology, are practicing positivists, even where they have not read systematically in the positivist philosophy of science. Habermas (1971) opposes the positivist

dichotomy of knowledge and interest, arguing that the most valid science recognizes its own grounding in interest, hence controlling for the sullying effect of context on one's scientific text. The Frankfurt theorists argue that positivism is not only a flawed philosophy of science but also a flawed political theory that reproduces the status quo by encouraging conformity with alleged social and economic laws. In this sense, the Frankfurt theorists broaden the critique of positivism from epistemology per se to broader issues of political and social theory, hence overcoming the differentiation of epistemology from substantive social theory. In this sense, they help deconstruct methodology, showing that method, like the philosophy of science, is not simply a technical apparatus but a rhetorical means for concealing metaphysically and politically freighted arguments in the densely technical discourse/practice of quantitative analysis and figural gesture. Horkheimer & Adorno's (1972) argument against unthinking use of quantification and methodology in the social sciences is a contribution to this deconstruction of methodology, although, as I argue below, poststructuralism offers an equally fruitful critique of methodologism by showing how method can be read and hence rewritten as a passionate, perspectival, and political text in its own right.

3. In this sense, *poststructuralism completes the Frankfurt critique of science by showing that we can read all sorts of nondiscursive texts as rhetoric*--arguments for a certain state of social being. By drawing attention to the subtexts of science's literary presentation (e. g. acknowledgments, citation practices, preliminary literature reviews, the use of number and figure, how discussion/conclusion sections of research articles are phrased, endnotes, footnotes, and appendices etc), poststructuralism helps read and hence democratize science. Methodology can be cracked open and laid bare to outsiders. It can also be written differently, less technically, without sacrificing important technical detail. Unfortunately, few poststructuralists have attempted this deconstruction of methodology, preferring to concentrate their critical attention on cultural and literary texts. But this is beginning to change, as the ethnographic sociology of science (Latour & Woolgar 1979, KnorrCetina 1981, Gilbert & Mulkay 1984) is buttressed by this poststructural underpinning in discourse analysis (Agger 1989b, Luke 1991).

4. *Poststructuralism reveals how language itself helps constitute reality*, thus offering new ways to read and write science. Its critique of presuppositionless representation--texts mirroring a world "out there"--suggests nonpositivist literary strategies for writers who deconstruct their own work and thus heighten their reflexivity. This both filters out subjective contaminants, and, where perspective cannot (and should not) be eliminated altogether, it raises an author's deep investments to full view and thus allows readers to enter dialogue with them. Habermas (1984, 1987b) argues for a universal speech situation governed by norms of dialogical equality and reciprocity wherein the goal of consensus formation guides many dehierarchizing social practices. Where writers learn how to bring their own foundational assumptions to the surface, not concealing them underneath the methodological artifice of science (which counsels dispassion as well as technical solutions to substantive problems), they enhance democracy by opening science to public debate.

Blending with critical theory, the poststructural critique of science suggests new sciences (Marcuse 1969) that are formulated in different terms. This is not simply an argument "for" first-person writing, as if that would solve all problems. The occasional intrusion of the author in the text may only disguise a deeper commitment to positivist representation, in which the author's voice is filtered out after initial stage-setting prolegomena. The poststructural critique of science *reauthorizes* the science text where scientists have lost their own voices. In so doing, it challenges the authority of objectivist science, interrogating the most basic assumptions of mainstream sociology, notably the view that substantive analytical problems can be solved methodologically. The poststructural critique of science leads to new writing and reading practices: Writers excavate their own, often unconscious, predilections, and readers learn to do this excavation where writing is couched in hardened objectivist prose.

5. *Postmodernism rejects the view that science can be spoken in a singular universal voice* (e.g. Lyotard's (1984) critique of the grand metanarratives of western reason). Although this risks losing the global perspective of the Enlightenment (including Marxism), it enables readers to deconstruct the universal reason of the Enlightenment as the particularistic posture of Eurocentric rationality, which contains class, race, and gender biases. Postmodernism makes it possible to read universal reason as secret partisanship just as it suggests ways of detotalizing the voices of science more accurately to reflect the variety of so-called subject positions from which ordinary people can speak knowledgeably about the world.

This has the advantage of challenging singular methodologies, whether quantitative or qualitative. It would seem to argue for multiple methodologies as well as multiple class, race, and gender perspectives on problems. This has the additional advantage of empowering a variety of heretofore muted speakers to join discussions about social issues, legitimating their noncredentialed interventions into the scientific field and deprivileging the mainstream positivist voice. Postmodern and poststructural ethnographers (e.g. Marcus & Fischer 1986) are highly self- conscious about the ways in which their own narrative practices impose distorting interpretive frames on people's experience. Although this has been a perennial concern of positivist ethnographers as well, the postmodern and poststructural attention to issues of discursive politics has sign)ficantly advanced the ways in which ethnography is composed (e.g. Richardson 1988, 1990a,b,c, Denzin 1990), especially among those who link discourse theory with larger sociopolitical questions of colonialism and imperialism (e.g. Said 1979).

These five methodological contributions can be summarized by saying that *critical theory, postmodernism, and poststructuralism attune working empiricists to the ways in which their own analytical and literary practices encode and conceal value positions that need to be brought to light.* Although critical theory, stemming from Marxism, is decidedly the most political of these three perspectives, it is possible to forge links among critical theory, poststructuralism, and postmodernism, as a number of scholars have begun to do (e.g. Ryan 1982, 1989, Smart 1983, Agger 1989a,c,

1990, Kellner 1989b, Aronowitz 1990). But even without this leftist political underpinning deriving from one or another version of neo-Marxism, the theoretical critique of the *encoding of value*affects everyone who rejects the positivist posture of value-freedom, whether from the standpoints of liberalism or radicalism.

The primary encoding of value in empiricist social science occurs through an uncritical reliance on methodology as a purely technical device for solving intellectual problems. Ironically, many empirical sociologists either ignore the philosophy of science altogether, as I noted above, or they explicitly reject positivism and claim that they are sensitive to Kuhnian concerns about framework and paradigm. Unfortunately, even a casual reading of mainstream sociology journals suggests that most empiricist sociologists privilege methodology over theory and concept formation, even if they disavow this in their methodology classes, where they expose graduate students to compulsory readings in Kuhn and other postpositivist historians, sociologists, and philosophers of science. Most empirical articles published in _ASR_ and _Social Forces_ rely on the rituals of methodology in order to legitimate a certain form of knowledge. In these formulaic journal articles, methodology is not written or read as the perspectival text it is. Instead, the technical and figural gestures of quantitative method are used to suppress the deconstructive recognition of the undecidability of the arguments/analyses being presented. Whether or not the authors of these articles talk about causality explicitly, using the vernacular of positivism, virtually all of these empirical articles deploy methodological techniques as a rhetorical device to enhance the *science aura* (Agger 1989b:70 72) of the text in question.

The three theoretical perspectives discussed here help strip away the appearance of science's representationality in order to show the creative authorship underlying every gesture of the science text: We learn that science is a literary practice that could be done differently--more democratically and less technically. The real author underneath the leaden objectifying prose attempts to cover his or her own footprints lest the scientificity of the text come into question. Critical theory, poststructuralism, and postmodernism expose science's apparent authorlessness as one possible rhetorical stance among many.

This helps demystify and democratize not only journal science but the whole institution of science, which Foucault (1977) astutely likens to the disciplining discourse/practice of the prison, in which surveillance comes from the inside as well as the outside. It also suggests new ways of writing science, exposing science's authorial art)fice directly in the body of the text and not suppressing it with the apparatus of methodology. This is not an argument against method (see Feyerabend 1975) but an argument for the literary deconstruction and reconstruction of method as a persuasive, public text in its own right. We learn to use the discourse of method where it is really integral to our arguments, which we do not cast in positivist terms of pure representation but which we recognize are undecidably subject to revision and improvement.

Substantive Implications

6. *Critical theory* (e.g. Neumann 1942, 1957, Horkheimer 1973, Habermas 1975) *suggests new ways of theorizing the role of the state and culture in advanced capitalism*. The state today intervenes in protecting capitalism against its own contradictory nature. Capitalism outlives Marx's expectation of its demise because the state massively intervenes to alleviate economic crisis and popular culture forestalls psychic crisis (see Kellner 1984 1985, 1989b). The Frankfurt theorists contributed both theoretical and empirical analyses of state and cultural intervention, culminating in works like Horkheimer & Adorno's (1972) _Dialectic of Enlightenment_, Marcuse's (1964) _One-Dimensional Man_, and Habermas' (1984, 1987b) _The Theory of Communicative Action_, probably the three most systematic statements of critical theory.

The critical theorists do not abandon Marx's analysis of the contradictory nature of the logic of capital. But Marx could not have foreseen the huge growth of the state and mass culture in late capitalism. These studies provoke important theoretical and empirical work on the state (Miliband 1974, Offe 1984, 1985) as well as critical analyses of mass culture (Miller 1988, Luke 1989). In this sense, Frankfurt critical theory joins more traditional Marxian and neo-Marxian economic theory (e.g. O'Connor 1973, Poulantzas 1973) as well as the cultural-studies traditions of the Birmingham School, poststructuralism, postmodernism, and feminist cultural studies (especially cinefeminism) (see Agger 1991a). Although the Frankfurt School's political economy was not as reductionist as that of more economistic neo-Marxists (e.g. Althusser 1969) and although their approach to popular culture was more mandarin than that of other cultural-studies analysts (e.g. Marcuse 1978, Adorno 1984), there are important empirical and theoretical convergences here that are relevant to sociologists of culture who view culture as a structural and hence political factor in late capitalism (see Johnson 1986 -1987).

7. *Foucault's postmodernism offers valuable insights to students of social control.* His _Discipline and Punish_ (1977) revolutionizes the study of crime and punishment, particularly in his argument that criminology is a discourse/ practice that in a sense creates the category of criminality. This category is then imposed punitively on behaviors that formerly were viewed as socially legitimate or simply ignored as bizarre. This analysis converges with labeling theory (e.g. Goffman 1961, 1974, Becker 1966), although it gives labeling theory a firmer historical and political foundation. Foucault helps sociologists view deviance in terms of the experiences and meanings that construct it. But unlike labeling and social-control theories, Foucault's postmodern theory of discipline stresses the inherent resistances that people mount against their labeling and differential treatment. This is a theme that emerges very clearly in his (1978) work on _The History of Sexuality_, where he discusses ways in which women and homosexuals resist their societal disapprobation. Although Foucault is sometimes accused of having a sloppy method, he makes up for this in his extraordinarily imaginative use of historical and cultural data, which he assembles into a theory of social control that neglects neither macrolevel nor microlevel

phenomena. The postmodern study of social control, inspired by Foucault, also has implications for research on organizations, as Cooper & Burrell (1988) have demonstrated.

8. *Derrida's poststructuralism and Baudrillard's postmodernism offer valuable contributions to the sociological study of discourses*, potentially enriching a wide range of sociological subfields including the sociology of mass communication and media, the sociology of knowledge, and the sociology of science. Derrida's deconstructive program contributes substantively to the interpretation of cultural and linguistic forms. Using semiotic theory, Baudrillard decodes cultural images and works for their sociopolitical meanings. His (1981) _For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign_ moves the Marxist theory of culture a sign)ficant step beyond orthodox-Marxist cultural and aesthetic theory, arguing that historical materialists now need to consider the relative autonomy of symbolic and cultural systems without giving up the traditional political-economic focus of Marxism. Baudrillard, like the Frankfurt School (e.g. Horkheimer & Adorno 1972), gives cultural sociology a stronger theoretical foundation as well as critical resources with which to decode cultural simulations as false representations of reality.

Critical theory and poststructuralism both generate deconstructive readings of cultural works and practices like television (Kellner 1981, Best & Kellner 1988a,b,), journalism (Hallin 1985, Rachlin 1988), and advertising (Kline & Leiss 1978, Williamson 1978, Wernick 1983, Ewen 1976, Leiss, Kline & Jhally 1986) as literary works encoding powerful authorial claims about the social world. Denzin (1989) has read films in which alcoholics and alcoholism are depicted. The growing literature on poststructural literary and cultural interpretation (e.g. Mulvey 1989) can illuminate sociological studies of cultural practice and meaning, helping reverse their sociologically reductionist tendencies by showing the interplay between expression and interpretation. In this sense, poststructuralist discourse theory could converge with nonDerridean approaches to discourse (e.g. Wuthnow 1987) in a fruitful way.

9. In particular, *a postmodern and poststructural feminism* (Kristeva 1980, lrigaray 1985, Cixous 1986, Weedon 1987) *suggests concrete empirical studies of the ways in which discourses like film*(Mulvey 1989) *are structured by gendered themes*. In particular, feminist cultural studies focus on the different power positions of women and men as these influence writing and reading. With Lacan and Lyotard, these approaches to feminism reject the notion of a singular (male) vantage point from which knowledge and discourse are developed. They attune us empirically to the ways in which knowledge of the world is structured by discourses (e.g. pornography) that reflect conflict over power; they decode these discourses as politically salient. Richardson (1988, 1990a,b,c) has systematically developed the sociological implications of poststructural and postmodern feminism with respect to the ways social scientists tell their research stories. Fraser (1984, 1989) has blended critical theory, feminist theory, and poststructuralism in her development of a theory of practice relevant to women as well as men.

10. *The "new social movements" theory of Habermas* (1981b; also see Boggs 1986) *offers theoretical insights to scholars of social movements who otherwise lack a larger theoretical perspective that explains where these movements come from and what sort of structural impact they might have*. Finding a course between orthodox-Marxist theories of class struggle and non-Marxist perspectives on social movements, Habermas retains the Marxist vision of transformational sociopolitical action while sign)ficantly altering left-wing orthodoxy with respect to movements deemed irrelevant by traditional Marxists, especially movements of people of color, women, anticolonialists, antinuclearists, environmentalists, etc. Here, as in his (1975) analysis of the state's legitimation crisis, Habermas makes contact with venerable sociological concerns and places them in a larger historicalmaterialist framework, recouping their most radical insights in spite of themselves (e.g. his reading of Parsons in _The Theory of Communicative Action_ (1987b:199-299). Unlike most sociological students of social movements (and like Foucault in this respect), Habermas locates points of resistance against systemic domination that give his overall eritieal social theory a certain praetieal intent (see Kellner 1989b).

WHAT COUNTS AS SOCIOLOGY? A CAUTIONARY NOTE

For mainstream sociology to adopt, and thus adapt to, these three theoretical perspectives would substantially change the nature of the discipline. At some level, the notions of poststruetural and postmodern sociology are oxymorons: Postmodernism and poststrueturalism, like critical theory, resist their integration into a highly differentiated, hierarchized, technical discipline that defines itself largely with reference to the original soeiologies of Comte, Durkheim, and Weber, who established the positivist study of social facts and separated the vocations of seienee and polities. These three theoretical perspectives question the rights of academic disciplines to exist apart, especially within the frame of positivism.

Critical theory, poststructuralism, and postmodernism challenge the territoriality of sociology, including its differentiation from other disciplines in the human sciences as well as its heavy reliance on method with which to solve intellectual problems. All three perspectives oppose the mathematization of the world, even if they logically allow for mathematics as one discourse among many. This is not to privilege qualitative methodology. After all, qualitative methods can be as positivist as the quantitative kind. The poststructural critique of language casts doubt on ethnographies which rely on subjects' accounts of their own experience as if these accounts, like the accounts of experts, are not already encoded with undecidable meaning.

These three theoretical perspectives redefine the human sciences and cultural studies in ways that blur traditional disciplinary boundaries (Brodkey 1987). They are all committed to interdisciplinarity (see Klein 1989), deconstructing disciplinary differentiation as arbitrary. Derrida's strategy of reading emphasizes the *intertextuality* of writings that attempt to seal themselves off from the contaminating influences of other versions, other writers, other disciplines. He argues that all texts are inflected by other texts to the point of genuine interdisciplinarity. In

other words, these three theoretical perspectives open up the question of *what counts as sociology*.

Sociology has progressed far beyond (or regressed far behind, depending on one's perspective!) the sweeping speculation that characterized sociology in the classical tradition. This classical tradition has been enshrined as Grand Theory (see Agger 1989b:181-86) in order to legitimate the subsequent technical discipline; witness the telling publication of an obscure Parsons paper (Parsons 1990) as a lead article in a recent _ASR_, as well as sympathetic commentaries on it by two functionalist luminaries (Alexander 1990, Coleman 1990): The Parsons article is positioned in order to add canonical value to the technical articles following it, enhancing disciplinary territoriality and identity at a time when mainstream sociology risks becoming mathematics.

The theoretical challenge to sociological territoriality posed by critical theory, poststructuralism, and postmodernism is resented in some quarters. Rebutting Gottdiener (1990), Randall Collins (1990:462) dismisses Foucault as a theoretical "amateur." Collins does not recognize that Foucault would have loved to be called an amateur. Foucault implies that the professional/amateur distinction is a peculiar product of the discourse/practice of late capitalism, wherein unofficial knowledges are disqualified as unrigorous, undisciplined, unprofessional. Foucault's amateurism positions itself outside of disciplinary mainstreams so that he can gain a useful vantage on them. Similarly, Habermas' encyclopedic grasp of a huge range of disciplinary literatures, from psychology and political theory to economics and sociology, threatens the narrow professionalism of disciplinary academics.

Critical theorists, poststructuralists, and postmodernists rethink the prevailing definition of what counts as sociology; they would enlarge that definition considerably. ln so doing, they risk losing productive disciplinary identity and a workable professional division of labor, but they stand to gain an enriched perspective on the literary and substantive practices of sociology. Whether or not mainstream sociology will countenance theoretical and political interroga tion of the kinds provided by the three theories discussed here has yet to be determined.

Notes

Originally published: Annual Review of Sociology 17, 1991: 105-31.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The following people have offered very helpful readings of this paper: Norman Denzin, Mark Gottdiener, Lawrence Hazelrigg, Douglas Kellner, Timothy Luke, John O'Neill, Laurel Richardson and Beth Anne Shelton.

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