
Cocta News

The first glossary volume in the INTERCOCTA project sponsored by the International Social Science Council is finished. It was presented by Fred Riggs at a COCTA panel at the IPSA meeting in Paris, July 15–20. Here I will report on an ongoing project by Professor Henry Teune at the Department of Political Science at the University of Pennsylvania, 19104 Philadelphia. For more information about this project, please contact Henry Teune.

Key Logical Concepts in the Social Sciences (Henry Teune)

This is an overview of some major logical concepts. It is an informal presentation preliminary to a more formal one. It does not offer criteria for selecting these concepts or for specifying their level of generality in a logical scheme. Hence the concepts discussed are not inclusive and not ordered in terms of their importance.

The main assumption is that there are two basic kinds of concepts in science. First, there are property concepts that are properties of things, such as red, strong, and happy. Second, there are logical relational concepts that tie things together into bigger things, such as relationships among individuals that together make them groups or relate things overtime, such as event A to event B. The former are structural concepts, such as hierarchy or centralization. The second are dynamic properties used to explain change.

In contrast to property concepts logical concepts are general and can be used in a variety of subject fields, not only in the social sciences but also in other sciences, such as the concept of growth in biology and economics. Some, however, have more relevance for the social sciences than the other sciences, such as centralization. But what is clear is that to the extent that these concepts are understood, their properties explicated, is the extent to which they can be used across subject fields.

Several types of social science concepts will not be discussed. Social science abounds in concepts of particular social relations, such as ethnicity; particular social entities, such as the family; special historical processes, such as industrialization; and psychological characteristics of individuals, such as ethnocentric, and of individual relationships to the system, such as loyalty. Such concepts are relatively unbounded, that is, the phenomena to which they apply is more or less open. They change in meaning depending on changing contexts of application. Also in these areas new concepts, such as cognitive dissonance or different terms for old concepts, such as integration for cohesion, are continually being added and sometimes deleted. This is generally not true for basic logical concepts. They are few in number. Their meaning, including their implications, are elaborated continuously. They rarely die out. Although the languages expressing the meaning of these concepts

differs across subject fields, their basic meaning does not, for example, hierarchy in sociology and centralization in political science.

The concepts selected for brief overview are dynamic and structural concepts. Dynamic concepts must at least imply how change takes place, for example, growth or diffusion, not simply describe a process of change, such as differentiation. Process concepts, such as amalgamation, refers to what is happening not how and why. The structural concepts selected are general relationships among components of systems not particular relationships, such as father-son, leader-followers, elite-mass. Hierarchy is such a general system property as is integration.

In order to base the selection of concepts on some actual usage, sixteen indexes of books printed in the United States on social theory were examined. What was found, of course, was no surprise. Terms in these books that had seven or more entries were: function (12); structure (11); power (8); equilibrium; integration; adaptation; and variable (each with 7). Dialectics were mentioned once and contradiction not at all.

General logical concepts are basic to any science, but especially the social sciences that must define larger entities out of smaller ones (object definers). Their separation from empirical concepts is essential for concept clarification, and if their nature is understood, then perhaps greater theoretical advances are more probable.

One perspective of this discussion is that the social sciences have made significant advances in understanding these logical concepts during the past century or so. Although many of these concepts are old, some thousands of years, most of the advances in their understanding has been made during the 19th and 20th centuries. The degree of success in applying them is a more controversial question as is the issue of whether or not the social sciences are making progress in terms of their expressed aspiration to predict change.

COCTA Panels at the American Political Science Association Meeting in New Orleans, Aug. 28– Sept. 1, 1985.

Panel 1: Theoretical Approaches to Decision-Making: A Comparative Analysis

Chairperson: Betty ZISK (Department of Political Science, 232 Bay State Road, Boston University, Boston, MA 02215).

Papers: "Putting Choice Back Into Decision-Making". Judith A. GILLESPIE (Department of Political Science, 232 Bay State Road, Boston University, Boston, MA 02215).

"How Foreign Is Foreign Decision-Making?"

Martin W. SAMPSON III (Department of Political Science, 1414 Social Science Building, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455).

Discussants: Roberta HERZBERG (Department of Political Science, Woodburn Hall 210, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana 47405).

Charles F. HERMANN (Mershon Center, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio 43210).

Panel 2: Economic Growth and Development of Social Systems

Chairperson: George J. GRAHAM, Jr. (Department of Political Science, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee 37235).

Papers: "The Concept of Growth". Henry TEUNE (Department of Political Science, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19104).

"Growth and Human Values". Mihailo MARKOVIC (Department of Philosophy, University of Belgrade Belgrade, Yugoslavia).

Discussants: Irving HOROWITZ (Department of Political Science, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey 08903).

There will be one additional discussant on this panel.

COCTA Panels (RC 35) at the World Congress of the International Sociological Association in New Delhi, India, Aug. 18-22 1986.

Program Coordinator: Alberto MARRADI, (Viale Duse 32, 50137 Firenze, Italy)

Session 1. Cause, Law and Probability. Theory and Research Discourses

Chair: Steve TURNER (Dept. Sociology, Univ. South Florida, 830 First Street South, At. Petersburg, Fla 33701, USA).

Session 2: Joint session with RC Logic and Methodology in Sociology: The Relationship between Concepts and Theories

Co-Chairs: Alberto MARRADI (see the address above). Ray PAWSON (Sociology, Univ. Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT, United Kingdom).

Session 3: Joint session with RC 33 Logic and Methodology in Sociology: Problems of Validity and Reliability

Chair: Helmut ARTUS (IZ Sozialwissenschaften, Lennéstr. 30, 5300 Bonn, FRG).

Ray PAWSON (Sociology, Univ. Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT, United Kingdom).

Session 4. Proposal for the Establishment of SUBMET (a sub-committee on meta-concepts and meta-terms)

Co-Chairs: Alberto MARRADI (see the address above). Ray PAWSON (see the address above). Fred W. RIGGS (Political Sc. Dept, Univ. of Hawaii, Porteus 640, 2424 Maile Way, Honolulu, Hawaii 96822, USA).

Session 5: On Artefacts in Social Research

Chair: Jürgen KRIZ (Univ. Osnabrück GB 6, Postfach, 4500 Osnabrück, FRG).

Session 6: Epistemology or Sociology of Science?

Chair: Gianni STATERA (Istituto di Sociologia dell'Università di Roma, Via Parigi 11, 00185 Roma, Italy).

Session 7: Business Meeting

Chair: Jan Erik LANE (Dept Political Science, Univ. of Umeå, 90187 Umeå, Sweden).

COCTA Meetings and COCTA Panels at IPSA World Congress, Paris, July 16-20, 1985

A report on these events will appear in the next COCTA News. Here are some details on the ongoings:

The INTERCOCTA Executive Committee (as constituted in Caracas 1983) held its meeting at Unesco on Monday, July 15. The COCTA Board Meeting took place on July 16 in the morning at the same place. A COCTA Panel at the IPSA Congress was devoted to the topic "From Conceptual Analysis to Research Praxis". It took place at Fondation National des Sciences Politiques, on July 17, with Judith GILLESPIE and George J. GRAHAM in the chair (morning and afternoon). On Friday afternoon, July 19, an interdisciplinary joint session of the IPSA Research Committee on Politics and Ethnicity/ISSC and the IPSA Research Committee COCTA was convened to discuss "Concepts of Ethnicity"; chairpersons: F. RIGGS and Dennis THOMPSON, again at the Fondation National des Science Politiques, Paris.

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