
Cocta News

It is time to look a little closer at COCTA sponsored activities in the framework of IPSA and APSA. Since COCTA originated out of a political science context it is quite natural that there is a continuity of interest in the concept formation of political science as displayed in the recent APSA convention in Chicago as well as in the planning for the coming APSA convention in Washington 1984 and the IPSA meeting in Paris in 1985. We report on these present activities by the following overview of the COCTA work within IPSA and APSA contexts.

Current Developments in Conceptual and Terminological Analysis by George J. Graham Jr. (Vanderbilt University)

Efforts to bring intellectual order to the languages of social science must be continuously pursued because concepts and theories are inevitably reconstructed and expanded as the members of the disciplines conduct research. Researchers and theorists individually analyze the concepts and terms they use, of course, but must constantly confront the fact that they often at the same time contribute to conceptual anarchy in political science. Not only must the etymological foundations of a term be assessed, but the multiple usages of a single general concept that have led to applications within different theoretical schemes and in different levels of analysis must be integrated. Historical research into terminology alone cannot resolve the problem of anarchy because the different research and explanatory purposes seem to foster entropy in our linguistic fields. Add to these problems such issues as the development of theory-data linkages that require conceptual resolution and the treatment of normative connotations of political concepts in both theory and practice, and it becomes clear why the Research Committee on Conceptual and Terminological Analysis (COCTA) was originally formed and continues its collective effort to work at the margins of the problems of anarchy in the language of political studies.

It is best to describe COCTA's efforts as working at the margins because the naive belief that any of our work will easily win instant approval among political scientists is eschewed, just as is the arrogant notion that COCTA could – or even should if it could – legislate that terms and concepts be treated as the results of our work prescribe. Not only do our internal disagreements prevent such naiveté and arrogance, but we, as a group, are committed to the belief that successful and only successful concept clarification will be adopted by others; the test of our work is measured by the consent of our colleagues demonstrated by their adoption of the results of our work in their work. Moreover, this commitment means that COCTA's choice of topics must be to a great extent stimulated by current research and theoretical

problems in the field. (*We depend on our colleagues to tell us which problems deserve collective attention in selecting our topics, and hereby request suggestions from all social scientists*). This permits hope for advances in conceptual analysis, albeit at the margins.

In recent years, the research sponsored by COCTA has developed in multiple directions. Our original studies into epistemological criteria and particular political science language difficulties were summarized in *The Tower of Babel: On the Definition and Analysis of Concepts in the Social Sciences* (1975), written by Giovanni Sartori, Fred W. Riggs, and Henry Teune. Although the volume articulated the purposes and some conceptual tools of COCTA, the first consolidated effort of systematic, collective analysis is found in Giovanni Sartori, ed., *Social Science Concepts: A Systematic Analysis*, now in press at Sage Publications. In this newest effort, Sartori carefully sets out "Guidelines for Conceptual Analysis" that were applied to a series of major political science concepts; individual chapters are written on major social science concepts by members of the research committee. The joint volume grew out of papers at several international conferences and special authors' meetings. This volume is an exemplar of efforts to apply *shared* rules to the task of concept clarification. To be sure, the chapters must apply the rules to different concepts that raise diverse problems differentially, but the book is a strong step toward a procedure for concept clarification that can be – and will be – repeated. The volume includes a "Glossary" of terms employed in the analyses. Additional separate analyses may lead to a series of short monographs on specific concepts.

In addition to this continued work on rules for concept clarification and their application, a second direction in our work has been the effort to study a single concept with multiple approaches; in particular, COCTA is studying 'technology' in political studies. This effort, which should lead to a book on *'Technology' in Social Science Analyses*, to be edited by George J. Graham, Jr., and Jan-Erik Lane, has already stimulated a variety of papers at several conferences. Both at American Political Science Association Meetings and at the Rio Congress of IPSA, panels have been held to begin the collection of studies ranging from normative analyses, traditional concept clarifications, historical works, and empirical applications of 'technology' in social and political studies. A future roundtable on the topic is being prepared that will provide the final search for new works as well as the chance to polish older works through mutual criticisms. Because of wide diversity in scope and methods applied in the studies, the volume must pay special attention to the problems of a concept employed within multiple paradigms and of the difficult linkage of macroconcepts and microresearch. COCTA invites interested colleagues to write George J. Graham, Jr., if they wish to take part in this project.

A third direction is long-termed work on the problem of connecting concepts and data. This topic, which will provide the theme for the 1983 and 1984 American Political Science Association Meetings and the 1985

IPSA Congress, is divided into three general themes, the first two being organized by Judith A. Gillespie, Indiana University, the third by Donald Strickland, of Northwestern University. The first theme is a study of the core theoretical issues of the relationship between theory and formalization; the second, the interaction between theory and data; and the third, the relation of theory and practice. (This series is distinct but related to COCTA work through the International Sociological Association on measurement problems.) It is our hope that the studies will revitalize the connections between conceptual analysis and social research.

A final major direction – there are, of course, other research projects being conducted by individual members or in conjunction with ISA – is the *generation* of terms for concepts in various fields of the social sciences. The approach, “Interconcept”, is being directed by Fred Riggs. It is designed to clarify and assign terms to concepts within particular fields. Special studies on fields of terms (such as, for example, ‘ethnicity’) are underway. Reports on the INTERCOCTA project, including his paper given to our 1983 American Political Science Association Meetings, can be received by writing Riggs at the University of Hawaii. A jointly sponsored panel on ‘ethnicity’ is being planned for the 1985 IPSA Congress. An INTERCOCTA Project roundtable in Caracas in June, 1983, was supported by UNESCO.

Overall, the work of COCTA is expanding into those areas wherein a felt need for clarification is matched by participants willing to work with colleagues on a problem. Conceptual analysis research is an endless enterprise, but one in which a decade of experience has illustrated the benefits of collective work by interested scholars. The Research Committee welcomes new members to each enterprise.

Political Science Activities

On the basis of the Graham report it seems adequate to make a full report on the papers presented at the APSA convention in Chicago. The next issue of COCTA News will contain the abstracts of the papers by Kenneth Janda, Don Strickland and Jan-Erik Lane & Hans Stenlund. The program for the APSA convention in Washington 1984 is planned as follows.

COCTA Panels at APSA Washington Meeting, 1984

Panel 1: Problems and Potential of Formalization in Political Analysis

Chair: Cleo CHERRYHOLMES, Department of Political Science, Michigan State University.

Presenters: G. Robert BOYNTON, Department of Political Science, University of Iowa: “Formal Languages and a Science of Politics Without Numbers”. – Robert T. HOLT, Department of Political Science, University of Minnesota; Stuart J. THORSON, Department of Political Science, Ohio State University: “The Logic of Formal Theory in Political Science”.

Discussants: Judith A. GILLESPIE, Department of Political Science, Indiana University; Jan-Erik LANE, Department of Political Science, University of Umeå, Sweden.

Panel 2: Problems and Potential of Testing Political Theories

Chair: Kenneth JANDA, Department of Political Science, Northwestern University (tentative).

Presenters: Rick K. WILSON, Department of Political Science, Rice University: “Models in Search of a Test: Contributions of Experimentation to the Design and Development of Formal Theory”. – Dina A. ZINNES, Department of Political Science, University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana; Robert G. MUNCASTER, Department of Mathematics, University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana: “Fitting versus Testing”.

Discussants: Karen A. FESTE, Graduate School of International Studies, University of Denver; Elinor OSTROM, Department of Political Science, Indiana University.

Prof. Judith A. Gillespie is responsible for the panels. Those interested should turn to her as soon as possible. Address: Department of Political Science, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN 47405, USA.

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