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# Cocta News

At the moment there is intensive planning on the part of some COCTA officials in order to finalize the arrangement of three separate symposia during 1983. At the same time we are still in the process of reporting on the major conferences of last year, the IPSA convention in Rio de Janeiro and the ISA meeting in Mexico City. It must be mentioned that the CONTA volume is now out: *The CONTA Conference Proceedings*, edited by Fred W. Riggs, Indeks Verlag, 1982 (Woogstr. 36a, D-6000 Frankfurt 50, Fed. Rep. of Germany). A discount of 35% of the list price of DM 64,80 is offered to COCTA members.

## The INTERCOCTA plans

There appears to be a serious interest on the part of UNESCO to provide support for the development of an international conceptual encyclopedia for the social sciences — the INTERCOCTA project under the direction of Fred W. Riggs. In response to a request for specific ideas Fred Riggs has submitted some fairly detailed budgetary proposals for possible inclusion in the 1984/85 plan of UNESCO. Meanwhile, there is planning going on for a meeting in Caracas, Venezuela, June 26–30, 83. The official proposal for this Round Table was properly submitted to UNESCO by the ISSC, and it has been strongly supported by the Venezuelan UNESCO Commission, and commissions in several other countries. Progress has been made in the draft pilot project for a COCTA-glossary on 'ethnicity'. It will provide a demonstration of the core module for the conceptual encyclopedia to be discussed at Caracas. Several related projects to prepare ordinary dictionaries, glossaries, and encyclopedias, complementing these efforts will be reported and considered at Caracas also. For further information write to Prof. F.W. Riggs, Political Science Dept., University of Hawaii, Honolulu, HI, 96822, USA.

COCTA has also been invited to present INTERCOCTA ideas and the pilot project on "ethnicity" at a session of the Congress of the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences in Vancouver, Canada, Aug. 20–25, 1983.

## The European Symposium Plan

The aim is bringing together a selected group of scholars active in the fields listed below and interested in a thorough discussion of a reasonably limited number of highly qualified papers in those fields. The topics proposed by the Symposium organizers are:

- A) Concept Formation (at the individual and/or social level);
- B) Relationship between Concepts and Theories;
- C) Choice of Indicators and Problems of Validity;
- D) Choice of Operational Definitions and Problems of Reliability;
- E) Measurement and Other Criteria for Assigning Numerical Values to States.

The above list has been designed in such a way as to favor a crossfertilization of philosophical and technical considerations. For the same reason the organizers have requested the joint sponsorship of COCTA and ISA RC 33.

The symposium has been called 'European' because it will take place in Europe, and is intended mainly to provide European scholars interested in methodology and associated topics with an occasion to get together during the long interval between world congresses. However, the meeting is open to interested scholars from all over the world. The 'Symposium' label is intended to portray the aims and format of the meeting, which are somewhat different from those of, e.g., world congresses (see Sections 3 to 6). 'Concept Formation' and 'Measurement' are but two of the topics to be covered by the Symposium (see list above). They have been chosen for the title because, being located at (what are seen as) the two extremities of the range of topics, they somehow encompass the whole gamut of eligible topics.

Whoever has written or is writing a paper on one of the topics listed and would like to have it discussed at the Symposium, should submit it by sending a copy to each of the organizers:

Dr. Helmut Artus IZ Sozialwissensch. Lennéstr. 30 D-5300 Bonn 1 (Fed. Rep. of Germany)	Prof. Alberto Marradi Ist. Politico-Ammin. Via G. Petroni 33 40126 Bologna (Italy)	Dr. Ray Pawson Dept. of Sociology Univ. of Leeds Leeds LS2 9JT (United Kingdom)
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At this stage, the paper can be un-finished or even drafted; however, it should be considerably more than a sketch. It is irrelevant whether or not it has already been presented at some other meeting. More than one paper, on the same or different topics, can be submitted. Any scholar interested in taking an official part in the meeting can volunteer as a discussant of papers on one or more of the five topics listed. In order to facilitate the committee's work, the candidacy to be a discussant in a topic *may* kindly be accompanied by a (short) list of titles witnessing the candidate's production in the relevant or related fields.

At the present moment it is not definite where and when this symposium will be held, but it seems likely that it will take place in Italy in the fall of 1983 at the earliest. The main person responsible for the planning of this large symposium is Alberto Marradi, whom you may also reach at Viale Duse 32, Florence (50137), Italy.

## The APSA Convention in Chicago

George Graham at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tenn. USA, 37235 has the responsibility for planning the COCTA panels at the political science meeting of APSA in Chicago, September 1–5, 1983. These panels will focus upon *Conceptual Analysis: From Theory to Praxis*. Those interested in participating should contact Professor Graham as soon as possible.

## The papers at Rio and Mexico

Most of the papers presented at COCTA-panels at the World conferences of IPSA and ISA last year were

summarized in the last issue of IC. The abstracts of a few of these papers follow here:

1. *Variables, Indicators, and Data: The Measurement Problem in Macropolitical Research* by David Singer at the Mental Health Research Institute at University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109, USA.

The essential interdependence between data and model – and between generation of the former and construction of the latter – hinges on the conversion of concepts into operational indicators. Construction of such indicators must account for the type of variable described, the level of aggregation, and the observation procedure as well as the validity of the indicators (the extent to which they actually measure what they claim to measure), the reliability of the indicators (the extent to which they are reproducible), and the accuracy of the data sources (sensitivity to systematic distortion, random errors, and incomplete compilations). Within the context of attributes of social entities (physical, structural, and cultural), relationships between and among those entities, and the behaviors that these entities manifest vis-a-vis one another, there presently exists a wide range of data sources and data-making procedures (presented in Mexico City).

2. *The Relevance of the Concept of Structural Variability to the Social Sciences* by Anders Westlund and Jan-Erik Lane at Umeå University in Umeå, Sweden (S-901 87).

The search for structures is a prominent feature in political science and sociology. Quantitative models are specified and estimated in order to find relationships between the properties. The meta-theory of causal inference in the social sciences is based on the concept of structural stability: to maximize the invariant nature of relations between systems properties. In order to broaden the possibilities of causal interpretation we introduce the concept of structural variability. Modelling the relationships between variables may follow from a recognition of the fact that structures may not be invariant but may carry space or time aspect. The article shows how models can be formalized and estimated while at the same time allowing for the possibility of structural variability (presented in Mexico City).

3. *One-Dimensional Theory and Its Discontents* by Jeffrey Alexander at the Department of Sociology at University of California at Los Angeles, USA 90024.

Theoretical development in the history of the social sciences must be seen in something other than a scientific perspective that emphasizes logical development from first principles, or the continuity in more specific conceptual induction from the accumulation of empirical fact. This paper maintains that theo-

retical development can be looked on as the internal elaboration and internal criticism which occurs within the schools established by master thinkers, and of the competition between these schools. I call this process one of theoretical revisionism. Theoretical revision occurs along the fault lines of the master's work. These fault lines are created by systematic ambiguities and contradictions, and flat out weaknesses, in the original work. Faced with these ambiguities, and the need to defend themselves against criticism of the master, and also faced with the need to carve out their own career in specialized domains of sociology, the most distinguished followers of a sociological master seek to revise his work while at the same time maintaining the camouflage of literalistic interpretation and theoretical loyalty. I examined this process in the case of Durkheim and the Durkheimians: Mauss, Bouglé, Halbwachs, Simiand, and others (presented in Mexico City).

Definite plans for the forthcoming conferences will be given in the next issue of IC.

#### Bibliographic Information

We would like to report on papers and publications by COCTA members relevant to conceptual and terminological problems. Please send such notes to the editor – even better, send also a copy or reprint. If you are looking for a place to publish such a paper, please remember that *International Classification* has a special interest in this area – you may send manuscripts for consideration to COCTA chair, Professor Fred W. Riggs, Political Science Department, University of Hawaii, Honolulu, Hawaii 96822, U.S.A.

#### Conferences and Meetings

Please remember that COCTA encourages members to organize sessions on conceptual and terminological problems at any conferences or symposia in which they are active. However, we would like to make information about such meetings known to all COCTA members, so please remember to send a note about planned activities, symposia, meetings, panels, conferences, etc. to the editor of *COCTA News*.

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