Sociological Understandings of Conduct for a Noncanonical Activity Theory: Exploring Intersections and Complementarities

Peter H. Sawchuk

University of Toronto

Anna Stetsenko

City University of New York

Following a discussion of activity theory as an approach to human development originally rooted in transformational change, we review the historical context and diverse conceptualizations of social conduct from the field of sociology. The discussion of social conduct is broken into theories of social action, theories of enactment, and contemporary sociological attempts at critical integration of the two across local and extralocal social processes. We conclude with an assessment of these sociological contributions in relation to what we term the threefold dialectic of material production, local and extralocal dimensions of intersubjective exchanges, and subjectivity that is fundamental to noncanonical understandings of activity theory.

INTRODUCTION

Although sociology and psychology arguably share a common aspiration–to understand how humans and their world develop in conjunction and through reciprocal interaction–the links between the two disciplines remain undeveloped and underutilized. This divide has hindered attempts to develop a comprehensive and complementary account of how people develop in the world and by the world while developing the world itself. The reasons for this gulf between the disciplines are complex and go far back into the history of both disciplines. It is the goal of this article to further a dialogue over the shared aspirations and the glaring gaps between sociology and psychology from the standpoint of a particular, "noncanonical" approach to human activity.

Correspondence should be sent to Peter H. Sawchuk, Sociology & Equity Studies, 12th Floor, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, 252 Bloor Street West, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5S 1V6. E-mail: psawchuk@oise.utoronto.ca

In psychology, from its inception, human development has been theorized as a process confined to a separate, solipsistic "mental realm," purportedly existing strictly "in the head" and withdrawn from the realities of a historicized, sociocultural world. This mentalist and individualist portrayal continues to exert powerful influence and is even in ascendance today. We currently see mainstream psychology succumbing to eliminative neurological reductionism, in part, as a backlash to the flourishing of cultural approaches through the 1970s to the 1990s. The influence of mentalist views of human development has been so strong that even those who have resisted this backlash—such as theories of distributed and situated cognition, participatory learning, and dynamic systems—often undertheorize human agency and subjectivity, thus inevitably and regrettably leaving these processes subject to reductionist tides. Given these recent trends, few mainstream psychologists are interested in sociological theories. Mirroring this, sociologists increasingly find their work alienated from psychological discourse and, by extension, from issues of human development. In many ways, the gap between psychology and sociology has rarely been as wide.

Yet the basic questions of what constitutes human development, subjectivity, and their interrelations with the dynamics of the sociocultural world have not vanished from the broad agenda of social sciences. Often neglected, these questions lurk behind failed attempts to find a meaningful foundation on which to integrate (or at least coordinate) disparate research directions and findings aimed at challenging the divestiture of the social to the biological. These same questions continue to haunt researchers who struggle to make sense of erupting ethnic tensions, mounting polarization, and escalating conflicts in the world.

It is this rupture between the accounts of human development—as being fully situated in the world on one hand and the underdeveloped (and often mentalist) notions of human subjectivity on the other, a rupture that mirrors the relationship between sociology and psychology more generally—that is the focus of this article. Although repairing this rupture is too monumental a task to be achieved here, we hope to make a step in this direction by using a dual strategy for rapprochement. First, we begin and end by drawing attention to cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) as a uniquely broad theoretical foundation (though not without its own gaps) on which human development and subjectivity can be theorized without losing their foundation in the sociocultural world. We maintain that CHAT is uniquely positioned to absorb the many insights offered by sociological work and to reciprocally offer a much needed extension of this work by providing a nonmentalist account of what is traditionally conceived as the "mental" realm. Second, in the major part of the article, we revisit the history of sociology with the goal to retrieve a number of conceptual directions that, if interpreted through the lenses on human development provided by CHAT (especially with its initial emphasis on transformative engagement restored), can produce a more encompassing view of this process.

Because our overall goal is to contribute to an expanded dialogue on the necessity of an interdisciplinary appreciation of human development, a recovery of sociology's intellectual history and its development as a discipline is relevant. However, because we cannot meaningfully wrestle with sociology (or psychology), the broader social scientific question of structure and agency, or theories of historical change as a whole, herein we focus on one particularly salient area of sociological thought: theories of "conduct"—how *people* (not institutions, norms, values, roles, etc.) act, interact, reproduce, and transform the world. We break down the literature on social conduct into two dominant, distinguishable traditions: theories of *social action* (concerned with meaning–understanding or *verstehen*) and theories of *enactment* (concerned with

praxis–the active production of a social order by participants). As we see, there are many internecine relations among approaches, and issues of epistemology and ontology will necessarily emerge at several points. Our overall aim in this brief space is to orient to the historical foundation of sociology moving swiftly through to seminal conceptualizations of conduct. We then bring this critical review of theories of conduct into dialogue with the activity concept to assess the possibilities of mutual enrichment.

However, the term *development* demands more than a snapshot analysis, no matter how well composed. It necessarily demands a theory of change over time and integration of change as central to developmental accounts themselves. Thus, following our discussion of social conduct and activity theory we recover our opening remarks on a noncanonical CHAT tradition to mesh them with conceptualizations of historical change in the context of Marxist sociology and dialectical thought.

We conclude that theories of social conduct offer important contributions to thinking about human development. However, we add that explicit accounts of ontogeny and social transformation that implicate actual human change are unevenly articulated in these sociological theories. This unevenness is particularly evident when we generate dialogue across theories of social conduct *and* our model of the threefold dialectical relations of material production, (local and extralocal) intersubjective exchanges, and subjectivity that define what we refer to as noncanonical activity theory.

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND NONCANONICAL CHAT

As discussed in previous publications (e.g., Stetsenko, 2005), CHAT's founders—Vygotsky, Leontiev, and Luria—laid the groundwork for developing a new dialectical-historical psychology around one unifying theme that, in turn, gave rise to all the specific principles of human development including mediation, social origin of mind, centrality of history and cultural tools, internalization, and so on. This unifying theme was that the collaborative, transformative engagement with the world necessarily mediated by culturally evolved tools—human activity and its generic form represented by productive labor—provides the very foundation for human development. This activity includes dimensions (or facets) of material production, intersubjective exchanges, and subjectivity that exist as a unified three-fold dialectical system, with interplay and contradictions among its major dimensions engendering dynamics and changes at the core of human development. It has also been suggested that Vygotsky and Leontiev focused selectively on various pairs within this threefold system, leaving the task of fully integrating all of this system's dimensions unfinished. Elsewhere (e.g., Sawchuk, 2003, 2007; Sawchuk, Duarte, & Elhammoumi, 2006), we pressed the theme of reproduction and transformation further, starting with a consideration of the work of Leontiev and then offering further analysis of contradictions rooted in the dynamics of capitalist political economy through the integration of the work of Marx, Bourdieu, and Garfinkel.

In what follows, we expand on and advance these previous analyses in two ways. First, in this section, we clarify how the tumultuous and contradiction-laden historical-political context in which CHAT emerged and developed led to changes in its core principles that prevented fruitful interaction with sociological ideas and approaches—notably in the Soviet Union. Second, in the following sections, we employ the threefold conceptualization, while complementing it with Leontiev's hierarchical analytical scheme (differentiating among activity, actions, and operations)

and the notion of mediation, to analyze and evaluate a broad range of sociological conceptions of conduct evaluating their potential for contributing to a dialectical–historical understanding of human development.

The major principles of CHAT have been recently exposed and debated in a number of publications and are by now familiar to the readers of *Mind, Culture, and Activity*. What remains less understood, however, are the internal dynamics of the emergence and development of this approach from its inception in the 1920s to the present, including significant shifts and changes in its main tenets and foundational grounds. Attempts to understand these dynamics are still sparse although historical reconstructions of CHAT have now emerged. These reconstructions range from a highlighting of tensions (and possibly even rupture) between Vygotsky's and his followers' work (especially that of Leontiev, establishing two distinct scientific schools; e.g., most recently, Kaptelinin & Nardi, 2006; Sawchuk et al., 2006) to a focus on continuities between these theoretical strands as representing one school of thought. Within the latter approach, a three-generation division has been suggested, referring to Vygotsky's works as the first generation, works by Leotniev as the second generation, and those by contemporary scholars (e.g., Cole & Engeström, 1997; Engeström, 1987) as the third generation of CHAT. On this account, Leontiev made a significant step in developing CHAT by distinguishing between collective activity and individual action through emphasis on division of labor as a fundamental process behind the evolution of mental functions. In addition, it is underscored that the third-generation activity theory fills the gaps typical of the previous two generations in that it places more emphasis on (a) cultural diversity as a developmental resource and (b) internal contradictions and issues of power when dealing with interacting activity systems as networks (e.g., see Center for Activity Theory and Developmental Work Research, n.d.; Roth & Lee, 2007).

Although it is useful in several ways, this generational division does not fully capture shifts in the deeply seated foundational grounds of CHAT that took place over its history. It is within the nature of this shift that we find a distinction between "canonical" and "noncanonical" traditions. More specifically, it is important to address a shift from the initial CHAT (or its outline) formed in the early years of this school, which was grounded in the notion of transformative change and imbued with a revolutionary spirit, to what we refer to as a canonical form of this theory that gradually emerged in the increasingly stifling atmosphere that unfolded in Russia after the revolution. The contrast between the initial, revolutionary CHAT represented by the early works of Vygotsky, Leontiev, and Luria and CHAT's more contemporary canonical versions needs to be highlighted for a number of reasons. In the context of this article, these reasons include the need to reveal the potentially unique contribution of CHAT to understanding human development and subjectivity as well as the need to expose critical junctures at which CHAT and sociological accounts of human conduct are most compatible. The dynamics of development that we describe in this section pertain to the Russian lineage of the initial CHAT project and correspond to changes *within* the second generation of the broader CHAT project. We argue that understanding the contradictions that emerged within "Russian" CHAT between the 1920 to 1930s and the late 1980s is necessary to fruitfully pursue CHAT's project into the 21st century.

The revolutionary worldview originally implied in CHAT implicitly contained radical reconceptualization of all spheres of human development—including the origins and the very meaning of human nature and development, and, in particular, the role of subjectivity in human development (cf. Stetsenko, in press). At the core of the original CHAT was the notion that human nature, is a sociohistorical project and a collaborative achievement by people acting in

collectivities and, therefore, "human nature" is not preprogrammed nor necessarily constrained by any initial (e.g., inborn), pregiven conditions. First-generation CHAT asserted that human nature should be understood as the continuously evolving, historical "work-in-progress" of people—agents of their own development who collaboratively change their world. Through this dynamic process, people "become human" as they create and come to know themselves. This view of human development expresses the Marxist dictum that humans create history and are created by it—a point we return to later. For now, we emphasize that this theme de facto signified a resolute break with previous psychological conceptions of human development. First-generation CHAT implied the radical idea that there is no knowledge, human nature, or person that can be said to exist prior to and separate from the transformative processes of engagement with the world. In this sense, the process of changing the world—that is, the practical, collaborative endeavor of people who create themselves as they create their world—was understood as the foundational reality for human development and human nature itself.

Unlike the vast majority of social scientific approaches to understanding human development (including most, though not all, of those found in sociology) first-generation CHAT did not exclude the level of what were traditionally termed "mental" phenomena from its overall theorizing. Rather, first-generation CHAT made crucial steps toward unhinging these processes from the mentalist and individualist premises by stating that human subjectivity originates from, exists within, and is made of the same "fabric" as collaborative practices of transforming the world. In other words, human subjectivity was seen as a necessary and inexorable dimension of the overall development of individuals and collectivities (society itself) that coexists and coevolves with other facets of this development. Demystifying human subjectivity by showing how it ensues from practical collaborative activities—in phylogeny, ontogeny, and the history of civilization—instead of it being a mysterious mental realm, is the true staple of CHAT.

From this overall transformative worldview came work that aimed to reconceptualize processes such as self-awareness, experience, perception, thinking, and even emotions as not simply states or internal processes (e.g., in the brain or in some "inner" space of mental representation) that happen to be merely situated in activity (or context) but as *ways of acting* in (both successful and unsuccessful) the pursuit of transformative changes through collaboration with other people. For example, even the most basic and seemingly inert psychological process such as perception should be regarded as a way of acting, very literally and directly—as exploratory actions by individuals who perceive the world in order to change it. That is, perception, as first-generation CHAT viewed it, is an active endeavor. It is not simply the functioning of a visual or other sensorial apparatus taken in isolation, but rather a practice of an agent engaged in an activity of orienting himself or herself in the world to take the next "step." This, in turn, implied that any act of perception was embedded within and expressed a wider, always collaborative, activity. This activity was itself always oriented by some narrow or expansive form of social and transformative activity, that is, making a difference in the world and having practical implications in it.

That the theme of social change and transformation permeated the original CHAT, distinguishing it from other psychological approaches to understanding human development, was by no means accidental. Created during a time of unprecedented social transformation in Russia during the early 20th century and authored by a group of people who passionately participated in this transformation on many levels, this project represented the first attempt to build psychological theory from within a transformative practice and under the aegis of an ideological commitment to forms of social justice (cf. Stetsenko & Arievitch, 2004). All major ideas and principles

developed in this project, including its concept of human subjectivity, were value-laden tools profoundly infused with the theorists' desire to empower subordinate groups—especially through education—across divisions of class, race, ethnicity, gender, and disability. Therefore, as a product and vehicle of its authors' engagement with the world marked by a commitment to social justice, optimism, and a liberating spirit (all the subsequent tragic failings of this social experiment notwithstanding), CHAT offered, well ahead of its time, a uniquely dynamic and dialectic, emancipatory perspective on human development and subjectivity.

The shift toward political repressions in the Soviet Union, however, greatly affected CHAT, turning this project (similarly to many other paradigms) into an arrested social movement (cf. Fuller, 2000). Indeed, many of the progressive ideas proposed by CHAT's founders receded to the background. Most regrettably in our view, the notion of *transformative* collaborative practice ceased to be regarded as a central principle in human development and its implications were factually ignored. Research in the CHAT tradition gradually turned into a contradictory system in which novel ideas coexisted with rigid dogmas, slowing down CHAT's development and ultimately stalling its progress. This process paralleled the broader shift from the initial ideology of emancipation and equality to the overwhelming power and control of bureaucracy in Soviet society. The right to question existing power structures and seek ways to transform them was abandoned under conditions of state coercion. This shift was mirrored in the work of CHAT scholars—conceptualizations now largely relinquished questions of social change and agency and instead focused on narrowly conceived instrumental issues (the effects of this shift still reverberate today). This unfortunate turn especially affected theorizing about the nature of human subjectivity and consciousness. In brief, whereas the original CHAT worldview provided outlines to understanding subjectivity as an agentive process that originates from, exists within, and is composed of practical transformations of the world by people, more contemporary works came to view subjectivity as a passive reflection (copy) of the world albeit somehow "related" to activity and "situated" in context.

In this sociopolitical context, the goal to consistently explore how particular social structures, with their power constellations and systems of privilege, shape development has never been pursued. During Vygotsky's time, the years shortly after the Russian revolution when political equality for oppressed groups was believed to have been achieved, CHAT founders focused on person-centered interventions as means to increase critical consciousness and growth. Vygotsky and his colleagues felt education was a pathway to empowerment and freedom, allowing people to become conscious agents of their own development, as well as their societies' development. Because of this conviction, education became the major field of exploration and research. Considering the historical and social setting, this narrowness in emphasis was understandable and, perhaps, even warranted. Works conducted after Vygotsky within this general orientation produced outstanding results such as successful programs of rehabilitation and accommodation of children who were deaf and blind. However, exploration into the social, political, and economic structures of society and, by extension, critical sociological thought was suppressed, with the discipline of sociology being effectively banned in the Soviet Union.[1] This banning impeded the

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[1]As Shlapentokh (1987) explained, this ban on sociology lasted roughly from the rise of Stalinism in the late 1920s to the early 1960s and included the forced exiling of sociologists such as Pitirim Sorokin, among others. Several of the exiled sociologists eventually flourished in the West. After an all too brief period of re-emergence in the 1960s, Russian sociology just as abruptly retreated once again, seemingly of its own volition, influenced by mainstream Western sociological thought and developing what has been described as a deeply conservative orientation. Since the mid-1990s, however, this trend has seemed to show signs of change (Schwery, 1997).

development of CHAT's original transformative project. The uniquely liberational spirit of social transformation and freedom, with which initial CHAT was imbued, faded within an emerging, more rigid, *canonical* form. Restoring this emphasis and the very worldview entailed by it, we suggest, is a condition sin qua non for CHAT's further development into a broad and encompassing system of views. It is our argument that to achieve this CHAT must invigorate a dialogical engagement with sociology (among many other disciplines) to broaden critical understanding and continue to produce fruitful theories on human development.

UTILITARIAN BEGINNINGS AND THE HERITAGE OF SOCIOLOGY'S "FACTS": AN OUTLINE OF THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THEORIES OF CONDUCT

In our view, the social, historical, and political context of intellectual production is essential to a full understanding of the theory it yields. Thus, to briefly establish a foundation for our discussion we begin by taking seriously the contexts of emergence of conventional sociology as it relates to an assessment of its various approaches to understanding social conduct specifically.

The establishment of sociology was a response to the utilitarian philosophy (Collins, 1994) that emerged across three, related movements of history: (a) *modernism*—with its roots in the bourgeois revolution in France and the birth of the absolutist state, (b) *capitalism*—with its roots in the English Civil War, the transformation of agricultural production, and the development of a centralized market; and (c) *socialism*—with its ideals and methods of popular resistance interwoven into modernism and capitalism (Korsch, 1971; Meiksins Wood, 1999). In the 18th and 19th centuries, the utilitarian tradition of rational self-interest (as seen in the writings of John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham) coupled with an emerging modernist/capitalist conception of "progress" to become intellectually dominant. This utilitarian tradition played a key role in the emergence of the field of political economy, which, in part, gave rise to the critique offered by Marx. However, the 19th century also saw the emergence of liberal social theory from Henri de Saint-Simon (1760–1825) and Auguste Comte (1798–1857), through to De Tocqueville (1805–1859) and Spencer (1820–1903). Thus, by the late 19th century, built on the back of these and other intellectual movements, a recognizable "sociology" came to seriously challenge utilitarian thought.

Beyond Saint-Simon, Comte, Marx, and others, it was Durkheim who offered the most sustained, effective attempt to establish sociology as a discipline. In both *The Division of Labor in Society* (1893/1933) and later *The Rules of Sociological Method* (1895/1982), we see a direct response to the individualized, self-interested, and economic/rational bases of utilitarian thought. Associated with this alternative was an explicit interest by Durkheim to distinguish a new science of social life that was distinct from psychology.[2] Durkheim, as we saw with Vygotsky previously, was deeply influenced by the social/historical context that surrounded him. In his case, this context included the social instabilities associated with the Franco-Prussian War, the Paris Commune, his own Jewish background within a country divided by the Dreyfus Affair, and so on. It is, in part, these conditions that helped shape a concern within the new

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[2]Whereas Durkheim formally and explicitly wished to establish a distinction between psychology and sociology, he also spoke of a "psychology which might form a common ground between individual psychology and sociology" (1895/1982, p. 41). That is, Durkheim's views regarding the sharp distinction between sociology and psychology should be qualified.

discipline of sociology for themes of social integration and consensual regulation against human distress, anomie, and violence. For Durkheim (1895/1982), and so many sociologists who would follow, this concern was expressed in sociology's foundational claims to knowledge:

> A social fact is every way of acting, fixed or not, capable of exercising on the individual an external constraint; or, which is general over the whole of a given society while having an existence of its own, independent of its individual manifestations. (p. 59)

Notwithstanding the recent attempt at Durkheimian revisionism (e.g., Rawls, 2001), these issues, as reflected in his definition of "social facts," were Durkheim's primary concerns. He positioned his approach firmly in the realm of extraindividual social norms, forms of "collective consciousness," and institutional life—"all beliefs and modes of behavior instituted by the collectivity" (Durkheim, 1895/1982, p. 45)—with an emphasis on consensual regulation, assessed through positivist epistemologies and quantitative methodologies.

Sociology is replete with reviews of its own history; however, in Hughes's classic historical review (see also Delanty, 1999) we see that although the 19th century, through Durkheim, saw the basic positivist sociological response to utilitarianism erected, there was also, and almost immediately, a significant "postpositivist" reaction. It is here that an interest in consciousness and subjectivity emerged most clearly within a formally constructed "sociology." Into the 20th century, these postpositivist traditions would be expressed in several of the sociological approaches to theorizing social conduct we selectively review next.

It is against this historical backdrop that sociology emerged as a discipline, introducing novel theories of how people engage with each other and the world vis-à-vis social conduct. Indeed, each of the traditions of social conduct we discuss next—whether they express continuities with the Marxist, Durkheimian, or Weberian traditions or offer contemporary counterpoints to them—have roots, inescapably, in these earlier debates and conditions.

THEORIES OF SOCIAL ACTION VERSUS THEORIES OF ENACTMENT

Theories of Social Action

Durkheim's writings have not generally been associated with theories of social conduct, but his work is nevertheless an important starting point for the discussion next. In reaction to the functionalist/positivist school of sociology as established by Durkheim, Max Weber offered an alternative perspective that explicitly rejected the tenets of utilitarianism and Durkheimian sociology (as well as Marxism). Weber instead fixated on the relationship between meaning and understanding—or *verstehen*—in relation to social and economic structures of society. Although he was steadfastly committed to the personal meaning that arose from an individual actor, the focus of his work was on the analysis of rationality and its casualties in modern industrial life, as exemplified in two key texts, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905/1958) and *Economy and Society* (1921/1968). Across these two seminal texts we see an analysis of the historical emergence of forms of instrumental rationalism that, according to Weber, would eventually, with the expansion of bureaucratic institutions, produce a paradoxical disenchantment and the loss of meaning. Influenced by the writings of contemporaries Wilhelm Dilthey and

Heinrich Rickert, in *Economy and Society* he outlines his approach to meaning and social action explicitly. Thus, in the opening chapter Weber (1921/1968) tells us of the many possibilities for action actor's can undertake based on their own assignment of meaning in relation to the expectations of others—undertaken consensually or conflictually, in terms of discrete individual relationships, relations between an individual and groups, communities, the state or society at large—by drawing on the "ideal type" approach (p. 4).

> Sociology . . . is a science which attempts the interpretivist understanding of social action in order thereby to arrive at a causal explanation of its course and effects. In "action" is included all human behavior when and is so far as the acting individual attaches a subjective meaning to it. Action in this sense may be either overt or purely inward or subjective; it may consist of positive intervention in a situation, or of deliberately refraining from such intervention or passively acquiescing in the situation. Action is social in so far as, by virtue of the subjective meaning attached to it by the acting individual (or individuals), it takes account of the behavior of others and is thereby oriented in its course. (Weber, 1966, p. 88)

Orientation to others, for Weber, included orientations to human rules, norms, and values. In this sense, Weber offered the original formulation of the relation between meaning and social structures despite the fact that this ignored a variety of other important dimensions of behavior (e.g., habit, tacit, and unconscious action[3]).

Extending the Weberian tradition through the 20th century, according to Eliaeson (2002), were two very different interpretations: On one hand there was the sociology of Talcott Parsons, and on the other the social phenomenology of Alfred Schutz and Aron Gurwitsch, which would come to focus on the "mundane inter-subjectivity" that took the experience of meaning, consciousness, memory, and protension as its central themes.[4] However, in terms of the discipline as a whole, in ways that still live on today, Parson's interpretation of Weber came to be particularly influential sociologically. In the context of postwar America and all that this entailed socially, politically, and economically, it was Parsons who drove Weber's interest in the actor's own meaning making into an account of institutions based in the classic sociological "problem of order" to develop an elaborated theory of society and social action. In Parson's (1937/1968) *The Structure of Social Action*, he begins with his notion of the "unit act": the central component of extended, "means–ends" (i.e., goal-oriented) chains of action, oriented and constrained by overarching societal values. The fact that cooperation existed in societies was, for Parsons, the (structural-functionalist) proof that there are sufficiently shared values, which in turn, through chains of unit acts, governed production of social action. "Social action" oriented theories of conduct among Weber, Parsons, and others since are recognizable by their claim that meaning making should be understood in the context of external, macrolevel, social constraint.

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[3]Although this is not to say he made absolutely no mention of semiconscious, unconscious, or otherwise in-deliberate forms of social action (he does) but rather simply that this dimension of social action was undertheorized by both Weber and many working in this tradition since having established the "ideal type" of the rational, meaning-making actor as its starting point.

[4]Whereas still articulate with the Weberian approach, the Schutz/Gurwitsch lineage would prove to offer strong observations cutting across themes of social action and enactment. For example, both had some influence on the work of Harold Garfinkel, who we discuss next. In addition, both Schutz and Gurwitsch also took up the work of G. H. Mead constructively.

Theories of Enactment

In many ways, sociological theories of enactment arose as a response to theories of social action. Perhaps the most important theorist of enactment in this regard is Harold Garfinkel. Garfinkel, who was a student of Parsons, rejected Parson's theories of social action, structuralism and external constraint. Garfinkel (2002) coined the expression "Parsons' Plenum," which showed Garfinkel's distrust of a Parsonian framing of the "problem of order" with its claim that institutional structures provide an external constraint on human action. In 1954, while preparing research on court jury decisions, Garfinkel invented the term *ethnomethodology*: literally, the study of the *methods* of people (i.e., *ethnos*) in the practical enactment or production of the social order. Built meticulously through empirical study and practical application, he rejected the notion that social structures exist external to an individual's, an ensemble's, or a population's production of these structures through situationally concerted activity. This type of analysis paid particular attention to the mundane, "seen but unnoticed," tacitly produced order beyond personal meaning and understanding. What was important was not *individual verstehen* but rather the observable/hearable acts and provisions of accounts that allowed *others* to, in turn, respond, clarify, repair, and so on, in the midst of what Garfinkel referred to as the *haecceities* (i.e., contingencies) of the moment-by-moment production of activity (Garfinkel, 1967, 2002). The offshoot of ethnomethodology known as conversation analysis applies these basic principles to the production of talk. With conversation analysis it becomes particularly clear, echoing the later Wittgenstein, that speech acts are both indexical and situationally oriented, making sense and taking on meaning only in the context of direct use and social exchange. Phrases (or gestures), for example, can have utterly different meanings depending on where they are placed in the emergent order of speech exchange systems. Importantly for us here, Garfinkel's theory of "documentary cognition" is founded on the locally coordinated procedures of accomplishing any particular local situation. That is, in his work, the formation of the mind is suggested to be a product of the locally coordinated procedures of socially accountable practice, not individual meaning making as reflections of externally provided, institutional value systems.

Unrelated to ethnomethodology[5] but similar to it with respect to its general orientation to social enactment is the sociology of Erving Goffman, whose theorization of the "interaction order" (e.g., 1983) focused on the local achievement of situations and the enormous variability possible within the course of these achievements. Goffman's work acknowledged that the "interaction order" is shaped by broader institutional forces but this was not his primary concern. Goffman's (1959) work in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, and more particularly *Frame Analysis* (1974), illuminated the socially contingent, interactive, and highly nuanced ways in which people produce local environments. Expanding on Gregory Bateson's notion of "frame," Goffman's (1974) "frame analysis" was an examination of the organization of experience.

> Framing does not so much introduce restrictions on what can be meaningful as it does open up variability. Differently put, persons seem to have a very fundamental capacity to accept changes in organizational premises which, once made, render a whole strip of activity different from what it is modelled on and yet somehow meaningful, in the sense that these systematic differences can be corrected for and kept from disorganizing perception, while at the same time involvement in the story line is maintained. (p. 238)

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[5]According to Psathas (1996), Goffman felt ethnomethodology to be a "never never land" (p. 388).

Goffman's argument here is a direct refutation of the argument for social order as particularly stable based on external constraint alone as seen in theories of social action.

Unlike Garfinkel, Goffman (1974) admitted that a social/material world is given to a situation externally, yet agentive subjectivity is inherent in the variability provided by framing procedures, as seen in his discussion of different "tracks or channels" of experience:

> During the occurrence of any activity framed in a particular way one is likely to find another flow of other activity that is systematically disattended and treated as out of frame, something not to be given any concern or attention . . . the main track carrying the story line was associated with a disattended track, the two tracks playing simultaneously . . . . In doings involving joint participation, there is to be found a stream of signs which is itself excluded from the content of the activity but which serves as a means of regulating it, bounding, articulating, and qualifying its various components and phases. (p. 210)

From these two seminal examples we can summarize that theories of enactment, as opposed to theories of social action, display a commitment to how the social world is actively produced. Theories of enactment can take a more extreme position concerning the creation of social reality—like that of Garfinkel, who asserted that the social order is the strict result of members' local, interactive productions—or a less strident epistemological stance—like that of Goffman, who saw extralocal, macroeffects as forceful but was also conscious of the variability of socially produced situations (e.g., "front-stage" or "back-stage" in his theory of "dramaturgy") and experiential states. In both cases, there is a rejection of a simple, external structure of constraint, and there is a focus on *socially constructed* meaning against either *individual verstehen* or the presumption of shared orientation to instrumental or value rational action.

Social Action and Enactment: Contemporary Sociological Efforts at Critical Integration

Theories of social action and theories of enactment each provide insights into themes directly relevant to noncanonical CHAT: Together they provide an entry point into the broader questions of structure and agency. However, taken separately neither provides particularly persuasive, sustained accounts of how subjective meaning making, material production, and local as well as extralocal worlds interrelate to produce forms of individual and social change. For these reasons we turn now to a series of attempts that, in different ways, both integrate and expand themes seen in these separate traditions.

Our discussion here, as previously, must necessarily remain selective.[6] However, for our purposes the work of Dorothy E. Smith and Anthony Giddens stand out in contemporary sociology for their detailed appreciation for enactment. Both authors draw on ethnomethodology and a range of other sociologies, combining and extending them into a broader theorization of social life and the production of a broader social order. Specifically, both provide detailed perspectives that overcome the local/extralocal divide that seems to us to play such a major role in the distinction between theories of social action on the one hand and theories of enactment on the other. In addition, connecting to our earlier mention of Alfred Schutz in relation to Weberian

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[6]In our opinion, there is a broader range of authors that could be discussed here, including, minimally, the work of Judith Butler, Pierre Bourdieu, and Georg Simmel. Were our self-selected mandate to be enlarged, work by researchers in the fields of cultural sociology, poststructuralist sociology, symbolic interactionism, and cultural studies would also be discussed.

sociology, we conclude this section with some discussion of Schutz's contribution to theories of conduct in the context of his particularly acute sensitivity to consciousness.

In our view, the unique contribution of Smith's work to understanding social conduct lies in her approach to power and social production with an emphasis on everyday life (e.g., 1987). With a focus on the active accomplishment of order, always rooted in specific socially accomplished standpoints (with particular attention to gender), and extended through textual means, Smith (1993) provides a broader theory of the "relations of ruling." Smith, who was a student of Garfinkel's, roots her work in careful attention to how people are not merely objects of social ordering and external control by "social facts." Instead, they create social facts in the myriad practices of everyday life, which are mediated by the available cultural and material resources. For Smith, texts play a key role in the daily/nightly reproduction of order. Texts have the capacity to travel through space and time to be activated in any local accomplishment of the relations of ruling. Textual-mediation thus plays a vital role in her conceptualization of the linkage between the complex mechanisms of local enactment and extralocal control. In *Writing the Social*, Smith (1999) explicitly provides a Marxist–Feminist argument for breaking from dominant sociological forms provided by Durkheim and others that emphasize classic sociology's inherent, objectifying nature, which for us here is deeply implicated in theories of social action.

Giddens's theory of structuration is distinct from Smith's work but shares with it a core commitment to enactment of social structures vis-à-vis what he refers to as processes of "social integration." His discussion of local enactment draws on ethnomethodology. Giddens (1984) also addresses processes of "system integration," which account for the way that extralocal factors shape practices through "time-space distanciation." Compared to Smith, Giddens is less interested in how particular social standpoints are organized, but Giddens does outline local/extralocal effects of various forms of media from e-mail and telephones to the traditional communicative forms established through transportation systems. Giddens's conceptualization of "procedures" is particularly important to a discussion of social conduct that seeks to integrate theories of social action with theories of enactment. It brings multiple elements together including the complex social machinations of local enactment, as well as the full range of moral, authority-based, and material mediations that, through time-space distanciation, can be distal influences on local enactment. This is what Giddens (1979) refers to as the "duality of structure" (p. 5), a core element of his theory of structuration. Agency, for Giddens, finds expression across a variety of spaces and includes a socially transformational dialectic: individual subjectivity produced by structures but structures that are subject to change based on forms of conduct.

The work of Alfred Schutz, mentioned briefly in our discussion of Weberian sociology, offers additional resources for how theories of social action and enactment can be combined. Schutz was also heavily influenced by the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl, which he built upon to make a contribution to theories of conduct that is distinct and important in its own right. It serves in some ways as one of the most relevant bridges from the Weberian approach to social action and enactment. In *Phenomenology of the Social World*, drawing on Husserl, Schutz (1932/1972) provided a critique of Weber's notion of individual meaning/verstehen offering instead a formulation of an individual's experience of meaning that is also socially produced; that is, it is intersubjective (chap. 3). Although Schutz (1960) proved somewhat rigid in his insistence that the subjective and objective dimensions be considered separately, his thinking

was on full display in his dialogues with Talcott Parsons on social action (1978).[7] Schutz argued that an understanding of conduct, as well as meaning, is rooted in social experience. These relationships are discussed in terms of the "we" and "thou" relationships that characterize forms of face-to-face interaction: the former referring to a *conscious* awareness of the respective meaning that people in interaction share, the latter referring to a lack of shared or "reciprocal" *conscious* awareness amidst social interaction (often resulting in difficulties). Equally important, however, is how these immediate experiences are shaped by what we refer to in this paper as extra-local and historical social relationships. These were discussed by Schutz in terms of what he referred to as the "other" and "they" relationships that are inherent in a more extended dimensions of inter-subjective understanding. For Schutz, traditional sociological notions such as norms, rules, and conventions, or received typifications are inherent in past knowledge or stocks of knowledge at hand, and serve as a resource for action. Likewise he made it clear that "action" always has a temporal or historical dimension as it is always closely related to a series of projected consequences (Schutz, 1972, p. 57)—what elsewhere Schutz calls instances of the "past now," "now," and the "future now" (1966). Both examples—the use of knowledge at hand as resource and the choice among courses of action according to projected consequences—entail a version of agency balanced against structures that in the hands of traditional theories of social action act largely as a constraint.

Having offered reviews of these key concepts, we can now turn toward a broader critique of theories of social conduct leading to our attempt to orient such theories in relation to a noncanonical CHAT approach. We begin, however, with some observations on the role of historical change, and specifically, the role of Marxist dialectical analysis.

HISTORICAL TRANSFORMATION AND SOCIAL CONDUCT: TOWARD A NONCANONICAL THEORY OF ACTIVITY

To this point, we have only briefly referenced Marxist thought and the epistemology and ontology it expresses. However, as we turn toward a theory of human development, we must consider how the brief sketches of social conduct discussed previously do or do not explicitly articulate a theory of historical change, which for us is the entry point to a discussion of Marx. In keeping with our concern for historical contextualization, we note that the development of Marxist thought generally has been the subject of a range of destabilizing forces (Bottomore, 1975; Hughes, 1958/2002) beyond the conditions of Soviet Russia already mentioned. It has undergone "revisionism," "officialism," "sectarianism," as well as "eclecticism" (Ollman, 1991, p. 1), which has produced fragmentation. Much of this is intertwined with concrete political activity. However, it is vital to recall that this integration with political activity is, in part, an expression of its unique dialectical materialist epistemology and ontology.

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[7]This debate (through the written letters these two exchanged over 4 months in 1941) has been variously characterized as "pathbreaking" on one hand and an "intellectual dead-end" in which the combatants were talking about fundamentally different things on the other (Kassab, 1991). Nevertheless, the dialogue shows clearly the distinction between what we understand here as theories of social action and their counterpoint in Schutz's approach, which is rooted in subjective experience. In this regard, Schutz's comments on Parsons' "unit act" (Schutz, 1966, p. 18) may be of particular importance.

Marx never framed his work as a theory of human development in the sense we use the term here, nor did he articulate an explicit "sociology" per se.[8] Marx was, after all, focused on the fields of political economy and philosophy primarily, but as Bottomore (1975) argues, Marx's original, if brief, criticism of Comte,[9] and by association Durkheim and others, does offer some indication of his perspective on sociology. Moreover, though Marx critiqued the received form of positivism in the work of Comte, he *did* conceive of his work as a form of *dialectical* positivism. Drawing on a reformulation of both Kant and Hegel, it was in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* (1844/1964) and *The German Ideology* (1845/1996) that his vision of social science was made particularly clear. According to Bottomore (1975),

> in this framework of ideas the main problem was not that of elaborating a science which would provide a rigorous causal account of social events, but of overcoming the separation between the "is" and "ought", which Kant had established and positivism had reasserted, in order to construct a theory of ethics and politics and thus make possible a practical intervention in the course of social life based upon something more than subjective caprice. (pp. 10–11)[10]

Thus, Marxism is nothing if not a science of social systems in motion (Ollman, 1973). In Marx, if there was something unique about a truly human science it was that people actively created the social world through their own cultural/material activities. His dialectical analysis is central in drawing these conclusions.[11] It is defined by a theory through which mutually constituting and contradictory dimensions of social systems reveal human development and social change. And, of course, in Marx's hands, dialectics begins with material conditions and concrete social practices rather than what people say and think about them (i.e., idealism). This in turn points us to the concept of praxis, which further emphasizes two key interrelated points in this dialectical materialism at the individual and collective level of human conduct: (a) It underscores the mutual, though asymmetrical, constitution of material action and thought, which echoes dialectical analysis in general, and (b) it highlights even more clearly the active social/material construction (and potential reconstruction) of reality that transcends the distinction between "is" and "ought." Besides the capacity to reveal processes of change and potential transformation, it is the material dimension that Marx's work highlights that remains elusive to many, though not all, sociological approaches to conduct (cf. Smith and Giddens).

Mirroring the role of early CHAT in psychology, we therefore argue that a Marxist sociology has a unique and important role to play for understanding the social/historical foundations of human development. In these terms, it inherently questions the "positivist causality" so central to the work of Durkheim, Parsons, and others in their concern for social structures as external constraining features of social conduct, *and* it inherently challenges the strict provenance of

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[8]It is for these reasons, for example, that his work can only appear at the outer edge of our map in Figure 1.

[9]Seen in *Capital* (Volume 1, chapter 13), Marx's notes on the French Civil War; Engels was to get into the act as well in *Dialectics of Nature*; Bottomore himself draws from both Marx's and Engel's personal correspondence.

[10]Bottomore (1975) goes on to discuss the "Austro-Marxists" of the interwar period as perhaps the most dedicated to establishing this form of Marxist epistemology, specifically as a response to attacks by the likes of Rickert and Windelband, key contributors to Max Weber's intellectual development.

[11]Marxist dialectics (according to Ollman, 1991) based on a philosophy of *both* internal *and* external relations, distinct social standpoints, and a recognition of the value of distinct levels of abstraction to reveal gradual quantitative and eventually more easily identifiable qualitative changes.

verstehen, as in Weberian theories of social action that revolve around the dual emphasis on individual meaning-making and external constraint.[12]

This dialectical positivism and materialist, praxiological orientation reveals the misinterpretation by Durkheim, Weber (Hughes, 1958/2002), and many others since of Marx's *Eleventh Thesis on Feurerbach* as mere moral posturing.[13] But more important to us here, returning to where we began in the article, it is from the vantage point of a Marxist science of human development that the work of Vygotsky, Leontiev, and Luria become particularly relevant. The achievement of a dialectical science of human development, although not eschewing issues of meaning-making and consciousness, must have *both* a coherent ontological understanding of "being" in the Marxist sense of "practical-critical activity"[14] *and* it must conceptualize a process of historical change, development, and ontogeny beginning from this foundation. In sum, this describes the unity of intra- and intersubjective dialectical change, what in Stetsenko (2005) is referred to as the attempt to overcome of the classic agency/structure dilemma vis-à-vis a *noncanonical* activity theory–the very question with which classical sociology has traditionally, albeit unevenly, grappled.

In terms of a noncanonical theory of activity specifically, Ilyenkov's (1982) provides perhaps the most developed philosophical expression of the centrality of dialectical relations rooted in materialist appreciations, whereas the empirical work of Leontiev (e.g., 1981) and Luria (e.g., 1976) direct our attention to elaborated forms of situated activity. In illuminating the gap between theories of social conduct and CHAT we turn our attention to Leontiev's three levels of activity: (a) activity (having to do with social structure of practice and its motives), (b) action (having to do with the conscious goals of individuals or groups), and (c) operation (having to do with the immediate conditions of practice). Through a slight reconfiguration (rotation) of the mediational triangle diagram familiar to many within the CHAT tradition, these three dialectically interactive levels are directly registered (with the placement of dashed lines) in Figure 1. This map summarizes our characterization of core preoccupations and areas of analytic strength of each of the researchers reviewed above in relation to the three levels of the activity concept. It embodies our argument of how vastly different theories of social conduct may inform and be informed by a noncanonical approach to CHAT.

This map, however, is not without its limitations: For example, the significant epistemological and ontological differences are muted.[15] Nevertheless, we can see that our assessment is that theories of social action (e.g., Parsons, Durkheim, Weber, Marx) tend to provide stronger explanations of

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[12]Here we could compare Berger and Kellner's (1981, pp. 96–97) discussion of limits of Weberian sociology to address issues of human freedom, which reveals the distinct limits of the Weberian approach for understanding human intervention, development, and social change.

[13]According to Hughes (1958/2002) and others, both Durkheim and Weber saw Marx's moral passion and activism as separate from his theorization, whereas here we argue that they are in keeping with his overall epistemology and ontology. Further clues to this are given in his other theses on Feuerbach: Thesis II "Man must prove the truth," Thesis VIII "All mysteries which lead theory to mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and in the comprehension of this practice."

[14]We reference this notion of "being"–that is, sensual, material practice–as distinct from the more philosophically oriented approach of Western Marxism's *Frankfurt School*, which, on one hand, understood psychological dimensions almost strictly in terms of Freudian concepts, though on the other, to the degree that it developed sociologically, was much more akin to traditions of European phenomenology.

[15]We can not directly discern, for example, whether theorists orient to theories of internal and/or external relations (Ollman, 1991) or whether these relations are understood as either causal or dialectical across the different levels of activity. Nor can we easily assess, in this figure alone, how the various theories of social conduct in relation to the concept of activity produce motion, change, or human development.
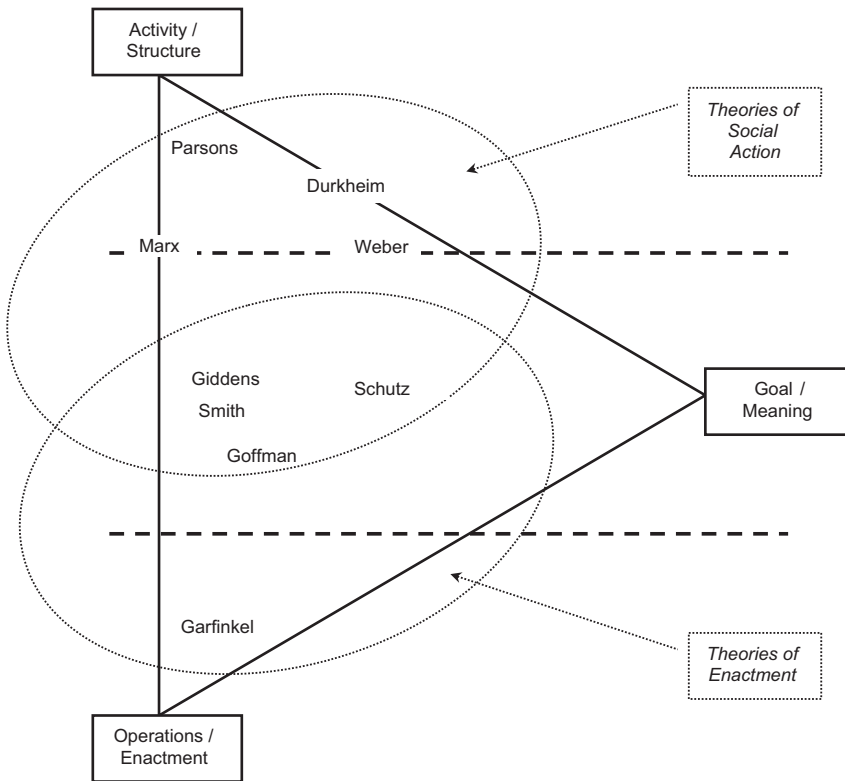
FIGURE 1 Mapping theorists of social conduct in relation to the concept of activity.

the object-motive or structural dimensions of activity generally and are thus clustered in the upper portion of our map. In this context, Max Weber, with his additional interest in individual *verstehen* can be located in relation to *both* object-goal and goal-oriented dimensions of activity, and thus Weber is placed furthest to the right. Parsons, with his strong structural–functionalist orientation to action, is placed uppermost. Although more sensitive to the possibility of (collective) human actors' ability to transform societal structures than Durkheim was, Marx's work is most concerned with offering large-scale, structural accounts of social systems. Unlike Weber, Marx's materialist analysis has tended to offer much less in terms of compelling analysis of the role of meaning making aside from his more programmatic discussions of class consciousness. Alternatively, we see Garfinkel's ethnomethodological approach much more at home in illumi-nating the way people cope with local conditions of interaction, even though for him these analyses express a particular ontological perspective that places this local construction at the centre and marginalizes broader societal structures.

Building from our review we can, however, go on to argue for some further, warrantable distinctions. The middle, overlapping region between theories of action and enactment may be of particular interest to CHAT scholars. This region of the map represents the remaining theorists we discussed who, in distinct ways, produce analyses of the relationship between the

active production of social situations and the relations of these local practices to broader social structures. Here we see, for example, how Goffman is positioned on our map spatially. He is placed closer to a concern for goals/meaning than Smith and Giddens but also slightly lower than the others in the "integrative" cluster to the point of bordering on a theory of "enactment." This is based on his analysis of variability and selection in presentation of self and the framing of procedures, which implicate issues of subjectivity that are both tacitly enacted and occasionally open to conscious intervention and management by the actor. By comparison, Smith and Giddens are positioned on our map in such a way as to represent their greater, shared concern for how social practices are implicated in responding to as well as creating social structures. In both of these approaches to conduct we find the strongest orientations to material conditions as well. Finally, Schutz's intersubjective approach is also clustered in the overlapping area between theories of action and enactment, though given his concern for meaning and intersubjective understanding he is located the closest to a concern for goals and object-related actions.

Even in this focused review in which we have limited ourselves to discussions of different approaches to social conduct, we can see that the potential contributions of various sociological conceptualizations toward the development of a noncanonical activity theory are many, with Figure 1 directing our attention to where and in what way such contributions might possibly be made.

What we see in general terms, of course, is that few of sociological approaches to conduct discussed above adequately satisfy a concern for multiple mediations across all levels of activity as a whole (i.e. activity, actions, operations), though as mentioned, the middle cluster of approaches perhaps come the closest. In addition, in the approaches to conduct reviewed, there is an uneven recognition of material conditions as well as a limited capacity to both explain and contribute to an understanding of human development and social change. However, we still need to assess explicitly how these different approaches to social conduct inform the threefold dialectic of material production, intersubjective exchanges, and subjectivity that, along with a clear conceptualization of social change, define what we call noncanonical activity theory.

In terms of this threefold dialectic, it is important to note a distinction between "micro/local" intersubjectivity and broader "macro/extralocal" intersubjectivity from the beginning. More specifically, theories of social action, linked as they are with elaborated appreciations for macro-structures, appear strongest in informing analyses of extralocal exchanges; these approaches address the role of broader societal values and regulation (e.g., Durkhiem, Weber, and Parsons), though they have unevenly addressed the role of material production. None of these offer an understanding of local intersubjective exchanges beyond the narrow confines of conscious, rational action oriented to others. Theories of enactment, on the other hand, offer distinct contributions to a noncanonical theory of activity and human development but again their contributions are uneven. Garfinkel's notion of "documentary cognition" and its role in the minutiae of interactive achievement of the social order speaks to material and local intersubjectivity but virtually excludes broader extralocal effects. So we return to the cluster of Giddens, Smith, Goffman, and Schutz, who potentially offer the greatest, integrative contribution to a dialectical analysis of local and extralocal intersubjective exchange—whether this is in terms of Giddens's discussion of time-space distanciation, Smith's discussion of textuality, Goffman's acknowledgment of a role for broader institutional forces in local, individualized framing procedures, or Schutz's analysis of "we"/"thou" and "other"/"they" relations—while not sacrificing the principle of local production of the social order. Each example here directly speaks to the processes of enactment and,

with regards to Giddens and Smith, take up the way that enactment actively creates and transforms (not merely allows adaptation to) social structures, expanding the resources for noncanonical activity theory to use to overcome the dualism that is present even in the dialectics of Leontiev and Ilyenkov (Stetsenko, 2005), leading to a better understanding of object-related activity.

With specific attention to issues of subjectivity, those interested in developing a noncanonical perspective on activity will benefit from some aspects of the conceptualizations previously outlined as well. With the exception of Giddens and Smith perhaps, theories of either social action or enactment tend to provide limited accounts of subjectivity in terms of human agency. Theories of *social action*, at least in the case of Weber where he forefronts meaning making, privilege a conscious, rational actor, but this actor operates against a backdrop of external expectations and social constraint. This represents a theoretical logic, when fully expressed, vulnerable to degeneration into a structuralist–functionalist account, as seen with Parsons. Theories of *enactment*, on the other hand, provide the means to assess how social situations are actively constructed. At first blush, this would appear to suggest active human agency. Garfinkel and ethnomethodology are uniquely developed in this regard, but it is difficult to ascribe a sensitivity to individual agency within Garfinkel's work. Goffman is an exception in this regard where individuals, albeit within a pregiven range of possibilities, show a certain level of variability and freedom in how they frame, key, and otherwise manage and choose to present themselves in social situations thereby making, remaking, and possibly changing the already-existing interaction order they encounter. In Smith we see a model of subjectivity built on a careful analysis of social standpoints, which, in turn, opens up important possibilities for understanding differentiated subjectivity in human development. Like Garfinkel, she maintains a commitment to the notion of active social construction, and yet she extends it in terms of issues of power and social differences. In Giddens's theory of structuration we are offered a coherent sense of the individual agent, socially and historically situated in processes of enactment, albeit couched in the last instance in a conservative presumption of the universal human need for routine and security. Finally, in Schutz we find perhaps the most elaborated approach to subjectivity and the life of the mind through his phenomenological appreciation for the social construction of experience. In choosing from among the potential consequences of projected conduct we find in Schutz one of the strongest discussions of socially situated, agentive subjectivity, though as we noted earlier, he explicitly sets objective and material dimensions of this agency to one side.

Our assessment is that the sociological traditions reviewed here generally lack explicit attention to the linkage between social conduct, ontogeny, and historical change, though this does not mean that they do not offer important observations. Although theories of enactment would seem to have a much more richly developed analysis of the ongoing production of situations, ultimately they appear particularly weak in explaining process of human development and change. Indeed, in Garfinkel and Goffman's work notions of broader social transformation are virtually nonexistent. At the same time, theories of historical change endemic to conceptualizations of social action are not, to our minds, particularly persuasive either, though they do present reasoned attempts in these terms: as in Weber's notion of the growing bureaucratization, instrumental rationality, and cultural disenchantment culminating in the "iron cage" metaphor, or Durkheim's discussion of societal transitions from mechanical to organic solidarity in conjunction with changing divisions of labor, forms of regulation, and occasional anomie.

Our discussion of Marxist dialectics in this regard, organized in terms of our interest in noncanonical CHAT, is, to our minds, a key piece to this puzzle despite the fact that Marx

himself offered little by way of a theory of social conduct. A meaningful theory of the relationship between conduct and social change requires, in our view, a theory of human development based in an historical understanding of mediation. People, in this sense, are active, thinking and feeling agents whose practice is mediated by the (conscious and tacit) use of the full range of symbolic, cultural, and material artifacts at their disposal—they show agency but within the historical context of available artifacts including artifacts figured in Schutz's notion of the stock of knowledge at hand. Several of the approaches to conduct, notably Goffman and Giddens, also orient to agency in ways that parallel this formulation. Of importance however—and here is where an appreciation for mediation, whether it emanates from Giddens, Goffman or canonical CHAT, differs from our approach—human practices are a response to the systemic contradictions that only a dialectical analysis tends to consistently illuminate. We note that, in this regard specifically, Schutz is also not particularly helpful. At the same time, we wish to be clear that this relates directly to the threefold dialectic of material production, intersubjective exchanges, and subjectivity that, we claim, explains responses to these contradictions through the use of artifacts. Of course, activity can reproduce existing social forms (reintroducing at the same time alternative forms of contradictions they entail) as well as transform them. This portrayal describes Marx's original *dialectical positivism* where the otherwise *dead* "social facts" of traditional sociology come alive. That is, distinct from Durkheimian, Weberian, or Parsonian sociological theories of conduct, historical agency; the potential to remake broader social conditions is not simply a casual addition to a social theory of human development but is fundamental to it.

CONCLUSION

We began the article with a discussion of the need to overcome gaps between psychological and sociological traditions in the context of a transformational theory of human development, providing an outline of a canonical and a noncanonical CHAT alternative. We then provided a discussion of social conduct, a backdrop against which critical, noncanonical theories of activity established a foundation over which to merge some important insights from sociology to overcome a range of absences. As shown, there were several paradoxical gaps in terms of (a) articulating a full sense of human subjectivity, (b) providing a comprehensive picture of how different dimensions of human development are dialectically related, and (c) how the dialectical interrelations produce historical or transformational change. The goal was to make a contribution to the working out of a dialectical view of human development—including its ontology and epistemology—in which an equally dialectical notion of human subjectivity as a process of historical transformation is not just possible but is essential. Attention to different levels of activity, we argued, was useful as a starting point. What was most crucial, however, was a careful evaluation of contributions to understanding what we have called the *threefold schema of analysis*. Our map (Figure 1) served as both an invitation and a possible guide for those working in the stream of noncanonical CHAT to consider the resources offered by sociological theories of conduct. We maintain that noncanonical CHAT offers the most relevant framework currently available for integrating such resources. This approach attempts to describe and evaluate the human developmental dimension at the root of forms of transformational change. But, equally, we maintained that sociological resources such as those reviewed offer a response to some of the gaps in noncanonical CHAT.

We asked how, drawing on the work of Weber, might Parsons's discussion of the connections between an existing institutional order and complex chains of individual "unit acts" shed light on how noncanonical CHAT may better understand the relationship between overlapping systems of activity (particularly those defined by major societal institutions) and their mediation of "chains" of goal-directed action? To our minds, it may further illuminate relations between extralocal intersubjective exchange and at least some elements of subjectivity that, to date, elude CHAT's appreciation for broader social structure and its reproductive nature. Likewise, what is offered to noncanonical CHAT by the works of Garfinkel and Goffman? Although distinct from each other, they both provide a basis for better understanding the complex forms of accomplishment that are the substance of local intersubjective exchange. We argued that authors reviewed in our subsection on "integrative attempts" demonstrated a deep appreciation for the interrelations across the threefold dialectic that informs a noncanonical approach to activity. Both Smith and Giddens conceptualized intersubjective relations interactively at both the local and extralocal levels, both demonstrated how social practices are material as well as symbolic in nature, and both included observations on the role of subjectivity and agency. As we saw, it is in terms of this latter point that the work of Schutz may be seen to deepen our understanding of the many dimensions of subjective experience and their relationship to broader historical meanings. Drawing on many of these examples, we argued that noncanonical CHAT may benefit from the additional depth of analysis.

What we noted, however, was that across them all, only the likes of Smith and Giddens offer an articulated appreciation for interrelations across all three dimensions of the "threefold dialectic" and that none of the individual works reviewed include a comprehensive notion of transformation as it implicates the human developmental processes. That is, we suggest that the ideological dimensions that undergird the meta-level worldview assumptions of the concepts previously reviewed, and indeed the bulk of research offered by mainstream psychology and sociology, must be tested against a dialectical view of subjectivity that is only possible within an orientation toward empowerment and societal change.

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