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Navigating an Interdisciplinary Horizon: Shaping the Future of Social Sciences

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This package or platform is most useful for generating novel theory from research data about a vast range of areas of social life -industrial and professional management', the 'adoption of disabled children' (2018, chapters 6 and 7), through to popular culture, body image and the use of gyms (2013), serial murder (2023a), the exploration of mental health issues such as depression and anxiety, and even the study of the relevance of creativity in social research.

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Navigating an Interdisciplinary Horizon: Shaping the Future of Social Sciences

Dr. Derek Layder

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The article unpacks and underlines the significance of adopting such a novel platform of 'entangled domains theory', integrated with 'adaptive method' in addressing the challenges faced by the social sciences and promoting a multidimensional view of social reality.

Keywords: humanism: determinism: the language of science: pragmatism; search for truth: research methods: entangled social domains; social ontology: models of social reality: adaptive theory: creativity and research.

I. Introduction

Social sciences should prepare themselves for an interdisciplinary future required by a need to expand its knowledge base, and the introduction of more inclusive types of knowledge drawn from interdisciplinary sources. These exigencies will require a general platform from which social science disciplines may draw their inspiration in ways that are generally acceptable to them as a collective group. The platform discussed here is the 'entangled social domains model' of social reality. The discussion unpacks this model and associated arguments that underlie and support it. These include a humanistic philosophical background, in conjunction with a limited determinism of social constraint. Such a framework demands a revised model of 'science' and its relevance for the social sciences, along with a reworking and re-imagining of causality, supplemented by search the for conditional 'truth' (as opposed to relativist constructivism) as an integral part of research methods. These considerations support the notion of a multidimensional model of social reality, reflected in the 'theory of entangled social domains' along with a methods basis of 'adaptive theory'.

Until recently the social sciences seem to have regarded themselves as a loose amalgam of individual academic disciplines held together by the common link of undertaking research to reveal the nature of various aspects of human social activity. They employ research methods which differentiate them from the 'natural' sciences, which study physical aspects of the material world. Leaving aside divisions within the natural sciences, the social sciences such as sociology, psychology, economics, criminology, to some extent, compete amongst themselves. For example, many sociologists believe that the scientific status of sociology depends on successful defence of appropriate areas and methods of study, from other social scientific disciplines such as psychology. Conversely, many psychologists defend the discipline of psychology by claiming that science can only be defined in terms of a natural science model and refusing to countenance any other definition.

Such divisions and disunities within the social sciences have outlived their purpose while their continuance only serves to block or inhibit the qualitative enhancement of social scientific knowledge. The only viable way forward is to adopt interdisciplinary strategies aimed at co-opting the best segments of as many disciplines as possible, and to integrate and combine them in a careful manner. This could produce beneficial results in terms of the expansion, depth and quality of the explanatory power of knowledge that social sciences can produce. This article debates the most viable means of achieving these objectives, because they cannot be achieved by approaching them in a scatter-gun manner. They can only be attained through careful and deliberate consideration -as preconditions which enable inter-disciplinary integration and unification -or at least, open-up their possibility.

a) Promoting Dialogue: A Humanistic Backdrop

A primary pre-condition for dialogue in social science is a philosophical backdrop of humanism which spotlights the human subject. This demands a rejection of all forms of structural determinism (or social determinism of any kind), which decentres the individual actor to the point of liquidating all autonomy or

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independence. This, of course, has the effect of devaluing social research underpinned by the effects of human creativity. The elimination of the human subject via sociological functionalism (Parsons 1961) or Marxian structuralism (Althusser 1969) has produced a 'wrong turn' in many strands of social science.

Of course, we do not want to replace one reductionist tendency by reinstating the human subject as a pivotal premise of social scientific research. We must not embrace human activity as totally free of social constraints. Rather, empirical research should acknowledge the influence of social constraints in tandem with the relative freedoms tacitly implied in the creativity of human action, especially its propensity to produce the 'facts' that are eventually collected as evidence of empirical data and facts. There must be a judicious blend of emphases here. A rejection of dogmatic determinism -either of a hierarchical kind such as social class, or ethnicity, or of a more general kind, in which individuality is dissolved into diffuse social influences - as reflected in 'interactionism' or 'phenomenology'.

The idea of placing the human actor at the forefront of an integrated, unified social sciences, allows us to re-affirm the emotions as part of our research agenda (Layder 1997 chapter 2, 2013) -and has been largely missing from social scientific purview. For example, economics attests to this, with its rather dated adherence to a model of the human individual as a wholly 'rational' consumer/actor. Especially given the fact that it has always been regarded as an extremely important social scientific discipline. The emotions must become an integral part of methods and replace the defunct idea of the primarily rational actor if the social sciences are to step up to an interdisciplinary future.

An entangled domains model of social reality with its domain of 'psychobiography' provides a route into human subjectivity that enables their inclusion in social research, and methods. The idea would promote social science which adopts a humanistic (intrinsically 'emotional') model, of the individual and abandon overly rational models reflecting the undue influence of behaviourism and the natural sciences.

b) The Language of Scientific Analysis

On the one hand, social science should be unequivocally identified with the idea of 'science' as an appropriate mode of analysis. On the other, we should be careful both to upgrade our notion of science whilst drawing out parallels between it and arts and emotions discourses and appropriate research practices. We should make it clear that what we have expunged all vestiges of any positivist, scientific views, and laws, it may have inherited from the natural science model. Residual positivist influences are an unnecessary block to innovation in social scientific knowledge and methodology. However, we should welcome discussions of ontological matters, particularly the construction of 'models of social reality', and the epistemological assumptions that underlie and support them.

Harder scientific language should be imported in the analysis of qualitative data, particularly the reintroduction of the notion of causality and the role of theory, since both are central to scientific analysis. In fact, 'causality' draws a sharp distinction between it and the descriptive evocations of phenomenology. While scientific analysis does not exclude descriptions, it is not confined to them. Essentially science goes beyond descriptions, providing causal explanations which ask, and attempt to answer why, and how questions. It does not content itself with descriptions or evocations supported by empirical evidence. Similarly, 'theory' is also crucial to explanations by further departing from, and enhancing basic descriptions by using abstractive relations between data and explanatory concepts drawn from theoretical frameworks (Layder 2023b).

c) Re-imagining Causality

A re-emphasis on the language of causality, with its explanatory capacity may be appropriate. I encountered this while researching serial murder (Layder 2023a) which involved the reinterpretation of secondary data with the intention of generating new ideas about serial murder. I concluded that explanations of serial murder should take 'concurrent' forms, whereby single cause explanations should be supplanted by explanations involving a close webbing of subtly interwoven motivations which overlie and support each other. To demonstrate this, I explored multiple influences as against, single-factor or single-cause theories like, hatred of certain social groups such as economic classes, women, or gays, -or, motives such as 'revenge', 'humiliation' or 'the monster within'. I suggested that a web of concurrent factors like, psychological deficiencies in benign control and efficacy, along with a 'displaced' experience of self-identity, combine to form a background against which more immediately 'precipitative' factors such as sexual lust, or, the compensatory rewards of 'celebrity' for the felt lack of felt attention -shaped and formed an addiction to serial murder.

Developing the idea of a set of 'behind the scenes', interwoven, predisposing (motivational) factors, gave rise to a form of causality whose dynamic had a 'quieter', more positive valency not present in the more traditional (cause and effect) model of causality. This idea of a 'recessive' causality, implies that the whole category of causality should be broader and more general. Such a view has implications for empirical research reliant on 'variables' -as in some strands of economics, psychology, and sociology, in which variables are defined as precisely measurable, and definable. This severely restricts the range of causal

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behaviour it evokes, as well as well as the type of mechanisms which qualify as causal. By freeing notions of causality from limited modes of expression, loosens-up the ways in which they can be imagined. It enables understanding causal processes as untameable, and/or inherently unmeasurable forces, thereby achieving greater explanatory power.

d) Objectives of Social Science Research: What are we Researching and Why?

What are the answers to these questions? We might proffer that we are trying to uncover the facts of the matter, of a particular topic or problem or that we simply trying to find out what is the case. In the past, we may have relied on the notion of 'truth' as a scientific rationale. However, recently strands of pragmatist philosophy (Rorty 1979) have begun to eat away at the idea, and started to regard the notion of truth as no longer tenable. I believe that this is an alarming mistake, and that we should re-instate the notion for empirical social research.

This pragmatist claim should be considered alongside other 'in vogue' ideas about methods such as Feyerabend's (1979) injunction to 'abandon method' and adhere to an 'anything goes' philosophy of 'methodological anarchism'. In my view, these constitute immature responses to problems of complexity and difficulty which resort to somewhat 'magical thinking', for example, that refusal to countenance such problems will somehow make them 'disappear'. The abandonment of method and truth are naïve and speak to an unjustified and unjustifiable intellectual agnosticism.

My own 'adaptive theory' (Layder 1998, 2013, 2018) represents an alternative to such fear-based retreats from social reality. It is founded on the view that social research attempts to discover the strongest and latest version of evidence-based truth. To insist that truth is not relative, is not the same as claiming that we have untrammelled access to 'eternal' or 'universal' truths. What we count as 'truth' is always open to revision in the light of new evidence unearthed by systematic research. The point is that the 'anything goes' or 'abandonment of method' ideas reflect intellectual laziness in the face of the intrinsic complexity of social reality and the difficulties it presents us with, as researchers. Adaptive theory, attempts to deal with these problems in a constructive manner. It rejects postmodern nihilism, and negativity and instead, opts for the best approximation to the truth, available at specific times and places. Adaptive theory attempts to create a positive future for the social sciences and to promote the kind of cumulative knowledge that may emerge from interdisciplinary co-operation.

e) Constructing Models of Social Reality

Social science can only thrive if it is able to assess and evaluate the nature of the social reality, which confront us as research topics and problems. We also need to decide which are the most useful 'models' of social reality to buttress social scientific research. Social reality is transparently constituted by an integration of subjective, intersubjective, and objective factors, (reflected in the entangled social domains model). Social sciences must acknowledge that only some kind of multi-dimensional model can provide a satisfactory ground for social research methods. Complex, variegated models of social reality should be elaborated and developed, not retreated from, or obscured by the agnostic assumptions of relativism. Neither should social reality be over-simplified through the reduction of complex social processes to 'synthetic' discourses such as, 'intersubjectivity', 'phenomenology':(Garfinkel 1967), or ('interactionism': Mead and Blumer 1969), 'the duality of structure': (Giddens 1976, 1984), 'social networks': or 'relational interdependencies': (Elias 1979). Such procedures dismantle essential features of social reality, and reinstate them via a kind of mystical re-creation through synthesis.

The theory of entangled social domains represents a general platform of core elements of social reality across different disciplines of social scientific research. As such, they identify common properties and attributes of social processes across all sectors of everyday life. For example, the domain of 'psychobiography' spotlights individual 'life careers' as well as subjective experiences like human emotions (Layder 1997, chapter 2, Layder 2004, 2006 chapter 12). Thus, we may conduct social research from the subjective 'inside' as well as from 'objective', (external) vantage points -indeed, from 360 degrees all around- not from one fixed, partial vantage point. Incidentally, this argument concurs with Schopenhauer's ideas about accessing a comprehensive viewpoint on the correct human experience of reality (see Magee 1997, chapter 21).

The domain of 'situated activity' requires the communication of feelings, intentions, and purposes in our everyday dealings with others during face-to-face encounters as well as those mediated by mobiles, emails, texts, and other digital sources. In this sense, situated activity, surely accounts for the greatest bulk of daily human encounters on the planet - with an inestimable diversity of meanings and outcomes. In this sense, it covers the 'intersubjective' moment of social reality, and has been extensively focused on by 'ethnomethodology' Garfinkel 1967, 'phenomenology', and 'symbolic interactionism', Blumer 1969).

'Reproduced social settings' is the domain in which raw human experience makes first contact with 'system' elements and indicates a move away from what Habermas (1986) refers to as, the 'lifeworld'. Reproduced settings like hospitals, banks, schools, universities, are founded upon the regularised repetition of rules, and adherence to, social organisation.

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'Contextual resources' point to collective values, power and control in society and various unequal social groupings such as, social/ economic classes, gender, and ethnicity.

Each domain is characterised by distinctive forms of power and temporality. While each is relatively independent, it is also 'entangled' with the others, through knock-on, emergent, effects. Social domains cross national boundaries, making them 'universal' which helps social researchers grasp the wide spread of the dynamics of human behaviour. This 'platform' throws light on social causality in everyday behaviour, in all substantive areas of social life. It traces how human behaviour varies throughout its psycho-biographies, situated activities, 'reproduced social settings' and 'contextual resources'.

Such behavioural influences, take place in the context of differing forms of power -individual or 'subjective', 'situational', 'positional authority', and 'structural'. Similarly, different lived temporalities, influence the form and direction of this behaviour - for instance, time as experienced subjectively, as compared with its unfolding during specific situations, or as in the temporal rhythms kept or observed in organizational settings (e.g. schools, hospitals) and finally, as it elapses over large historical tracts. As such, entangled domains theory fits neatly alongside, 'adaptive theory', which generates explanatory theory from empirical data on specific research problems.

f) The Place of Theory in Research

In social research 'theory' plays a crucial role in explanations of human behaviour, parallel to theory in the natural sciences. However, social theory comes in many guises, some of which do not meet the standards required for interdisciplinary cooperation. Social science requires the kind of theory whose validity is backed by empirical data or evidence. In this respect specific forms of social social theory are not appropriate. These are 'master theory', empiricist theory, postmodern theory and in substantial part, grounded theory.

g) The Emptiness of Master Theory

'Master theory' is a species of theorising which is empirically informed and widely practised in the social sciences. However, adaptive theory objects to the claim that master theory genuinely informs empirical research -or informs it in a veracious manner, and as such can contributes to cumulative social scientific knowledge. Adaptive theory opposes the idea that theory or concepts are only produced by great thinkers such as Marx, Parsons, Foucault, Elias, Giddens (and many other authors) which render the empirical world accessible to social observers and researchers to wish to make research data manageable and understandable. In this sense, theory comes in the form of a general framework of concepts for understanding data, facts information and evidence. By this means, a great deal of research simply consists in selecting data that already fits in with the preestablished concepts of the master framework.

The very application of such 'theoretical frameworks' (of Marx, or Elias, or Foucault, for example), it is thereby, wrongly assumed that the veracity of its concepts is validated and hence, re-established. Instead, however, such unreflective use of master frameworks effectively means that facts, data, and evidence are merely *transposed and redescribed* in the exact same terms as the established concepts of the master theory in question. The issue of how empirical data informs these concepts is completely side-stepped, while the validity of the theory is emptily asserted, on the fallacious basis that the master framework bestows and imparts the meanings of empirical data and evidence. Unfortunately, this means no such thing, especially when its empirical meaning is simply implied or asserted, rather than demonstrated, and hence its validity lacks any firm basis. In the long run, the use of this kind of theory in social science makes it impossible to advance knowledge via empirical research. To an unreasonable extent, debates between social researchers are reduced to 'phoney wars' between competing frameworks, or those who believe in the theories of Marx, versus the theories of Parsons, or Elias, or Foucault, and so on. Such a state-of-affairs, nullifies the idea that social research is the most important means of securing the validity or veracity of knowledge. A great deal of theoretical debate in the social sciences is still conducted in this unconvincing manner. Also, as a result, attention is diverted from potentially useful concepts derived from such frameworks. By contrast, adaptive theory suggests that concepts (or clusters of them), may be 'borrowed' from such frameworks, if they are congruent with current concepts and where they demonstrate a strong and direct relation to the empirical world.

In conclusion, the use of master theory is the unreflective use of the theory of a great thinker such as, Parsons, Marx, or Elias, to give shape to emergent research data is a kind of 'deterministic and ultimately -dead- process. Theorising in social science should be much more, creative, and productive. It should convey the excitement of the live dialogue between, conceptual creation and the matching of such concepts with emergent empirical data from an ongoing research project, which, are intrinsic features of adaptive theory.

Merton's 'middle-range' theory, is a great advance on master theory in so far as he advocates the testing-out of limited sets of theoretical propositions by means of systematic research. Importantly, this cements a close link between theory and research data, evidence. Unfortunately, the weakness of Merton's view is that it envisages the processes of theorising on the one hand, and data collection on the other, as separate, and independent, rather than a close organic dialogue

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between abstract conceptualisation and the collection of empirical data. Adaptive theory points out that the strongest links can only be established in the context of an ongoing research project which guarantees a live dialogue between conceptualisation and data gathering.

h) The Inadequacy of Empiricism

Adaptive theory is also against the idea that is no need for any special activity called 'theorising' in social research. For example, certain qualitative researchers wrongly assume that so-called facts naturally 'speak for themselves', which leads to the error of empiricism. This can equally apply to quantitative research, when the researcher regards theory as an unnecessary intrusion into data collection and the presentation of findings. In this sense, what passes for 'explanations' are emanations via the very presentation of facts, information, or data. Such erroneous thinking rests on an elision, or confusion between description and explanation. Of course, to some extent the presentation of research findings, relies on descriptions of local phenomena -numbers of people, who they are, and their social activities. However, in the absence of an abstractive process of analysis, such evidential identifications are necessarily limited by local descriptors. Without a cognitive shift away from local (specific) descriptions, towards a registration of global (general) properties, it is impossible to generate explanations of why things are the way they are, or how they came to be this way. But for genuine explanation it is essential to go beyond descriptions of data, facts, information, and evidence, because it is erroneous to assume that 'explanations' are somehow implicitly contained in descriptions.

Adaptive theory is clearly of the view that there is a need for a judicious marriage between theoretical conceptualisation and the factual incorporation of empirical data Layder, 2013). Adaptive theory provides routine research practices that produce securely based theoretical explanations of (empirical) research findings. It offers a truly organic model of theory-generation based on a live connection between abstract conceptualisation on the one hand, and data collection and analysis on the other. It offers a unique context in which data are drawn from an ongoing research project, and analysed in terms of newly abstracted conceptual tools as well as elements grafted from extant resources (2013).

i) The Insufficiencies of Postmodern 'Theory'

Postmodern theorists (such as Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Jean Baudrillard, Judith Butler, Jean Francios Lyotard, Michel Foucault, Jaques Derrida) inflate their self-importance, charisma and 'mystique', by writing in a difficult, often unreadable manner, thereby disguising the vacuity of their ideas. In fact, many postmodern theorists mistake incomprehensibility, ambiguity, and obscurity with complexity. At best, they indulge in idiosyncratic, sometimes poetic, representations, in an explicit challenge to any 'requirement that concepts should be validated or falsified through comparison against empirical evidence. Adaptive theory completely rejects such a notion of theory (despite my personal admiration for genuinely artistic creativity) and instead replaces it with the requirement of causal, explanatory theory. In this sense, adaptive theory is not self-referential, and underlines the idea of empirical validation in which concepts are partly independent of the empirical world, but also simultaneously and fundamentally anchored by it, and in, it.

Explanation, as well as theory and theorising must entail an internal-external dialogue, and must not simply be an idiosyncratic reflection of the mind of an author. It must be a proposed explanation of an event, or phenomenon in the real, empirical world which demonstrates how the event or phenomenon, came into being, continues to operate, and how it causally interacts with other phenomena. It must be accessible, falsifiable, and rationally understandable. Its meaning and truth value resides in the clarity and comprehensibility of its proof claims to everyone, and which are not restricted to a select group of 'insiders' or 'cognoscenti', and, furthermore, in the final analysis, must be supported by empirical evidence. In this manner, an explanation is not open-ended and wholly abstract, it must have a point and purpose -it must not be a merely subjective interpretation of the world. An explanation may contain elements of 'speculation', but only in so far as they are open and amenable to falsification or validation -by evidence.

In addition, adaptive theorising requires the input of the creative imagination of the researcher which draws from both artistic and scientific sources, bringing them together for purely scientific purposes. In this sense, adaptive explanation is constrained by evidential proof and differs completely from those so-called postmodern theories which are neither theories nor explanations, but instead, they are, a species of fictive description. Postmodern theory relies on free 'poetic' conceptual invention (see Baudrillard). Adaptive theory encourages a creativity ultimately disciplined by the demands of explanatory form and presentation as well as evidential proof. This kind of creativity depends on the imaginative ability to invent concepts and theories via intuition and inspiration, but which are ultimately constrained by the necessity to fit-in with empirical reality (Layder 2013). This requires an attempt to fashion a kind of isomorphic relation with the empirical phenomena they are meant to point to, indicate, stand for, or represent.

Postmodern creativity is sourced from, and consistent with, artistic creativity, but its objects are not artistic objects -as they are in painting, sculpture, dance, music, singing, and poetry. In this sense, such creativity

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is incongruent and inconsistent with its objects. Thus, attempting to account for social phenomena in terms of such principles can only produce distorted results and invalid claims. For instance, poetic expressions of social phenomena are a form of science fiction, not science fact, or 'truth', they are inconsistent and incongruent with both art and science (including the social sciences Layder, 2023b). Postmodernism produces neither theories nor explanations, but rather, indeterminate fictions. Adaptive theorising rests on a rejection of such inconsistency between creativity and its objects (2023b). Instead, is based on disciplined conceptual invention in line with the rigours of scientific discourse.

j) The Weaknesses of Grounded Theory

The central purpose of adaptive theorising is to generate theory from empirical research data while simultaneously avoiding the pitfalls and weaknesses of 'grounded theory' (Glaser and Strauss 1967). A central weakness of GT, is its exclusion of whole chunks of social reality from research consideration. Potential data from three integral and principal domains of 'entangled domains theory', which are automatically included in adaptive theory, are precluded and proscribed by GT. These are first, an individual's subjective experience over their lifetime (psychobiography); second, 'system' elements represented by the domain of reproduced settings; and third, the most encompassing domain of 'contextual resources' which includes 'system' phenomena like values, ideology, culture, inequalities of power, economic status and so on.

Such domains are excluded from research consideration because the research purview of GT is filtered exclusively through an inter-subjectivist perspective (the domain of 'situated activity'). This effectively compresses social reality into a single dimension. In Glaser's actual words, researchers should confine themselves to what he calls 'participants concerns and how they resolve them'. Such a limited focus omits a massive core of social reality, which remains unresearched and yet would seem an essential precondition of a comprehensive grasp of society and/ or social life. Because the adaptive approach treats these dimensions as an intrinsic part of its purview, it offers a much richer fund of data resources making it possible to, generate more robust and penetrative theory. By allowing researchers to draw from extant theories also permits a wider fund of conceptual resources, which may potentially aid the generation of new theory and concepts. This is prohibited by GT, because only theory evolved by GT rules and methods, is allowable. Adaptive theory takes the view that much valuable and useful theory already exists, and is wasted, if it is arbitrarily excluded (by GT).

Adaptive theory has the additional benefit of working in close conjunction with the entangled social domains model of social reality, which includes a perspective on global properties of social reality as they interlink with local properties of research data. As such, global properties of social domains provide a fund of general conceptual and theoretical resources which work in direct conjunction with the emerging data of the research project itself Layder 1997, 1998). Concepts relating to global properties of domains, linked with concepts that emerge from data analysis, contribute to a fully operational adaptive theory which sews together these parallel sources of concepts in rich dialogue, during data sampling, coding, data collection, and data analysis. In the end, this produces theory (explanation) that interweaves local and global properties of social reality implicit in the problem-focus of the research. Such shortcomings of theory generation for the GT approach -including its inability to deal with power and domination- are carefully detailed in Layder 2018).

Despite appearances, I am not inherently against GT. In fact, in Layder (2018), I suggest ways that adaptive theory and GT may, be used in conjunction with each other. I am, however, definitely not keen on those variants of GT which insist on a dogged closed-mindedness to a variety of 'external' influences other than those strictly defined by GT.

k) The Link Between Truth and Creativity in the Social Sciences

The role of creativity in social research is crucial, but is rarely mentioned in debates or textbook discussions. Why is it that artistic creativity seems not to be worth consideration by research methods writers? I believe that it is consistently overlooked, and thus, its relevance and application should be seriously re-emphasised. The main reason for its exclusion is that arts and sciences are thought to be incompatible with each other, and destined never to be reconciled, or regarded as mutually supportive. A moment's reflection will reveal the flaws in such a view. Nevertheless, barriers still stand in the way of the encouragement of the potential synergies of the creative matrix to which art and science might contribute via the social sciences (Layder 2023b).

Unfortunately, much social scientific research rests on an uncontested model of social reality as simple, undifferentiated, and homogeneous, with the additional implication that research into it, is unproblematic and straightforward. But this is clearly not the case, when closer scrutiny reveals the multidimensional character of society. This, of course, requires a corresponding extra sophistication of research design, strategies of data collection and data analysis. In this sense, adaptive theory is an approach to research specifically geared to a multidimensional model of social reality, and the truths revealed by social complexity.

In my view, adaptive theory is closely bound up with creativity in both art and science. It requires

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researchers to draw upon their imaginative impulses and resources (albeit in very disciplined ways) while imaginatively fashioning concepts and categories and making them cohere with associated concepts and emergent data. With reference to art, I have in mind here what is referred to as 'artistic licence', viewed as an as an important facet of the researcher's mind-set. Adaptive research involves artistic interventions such as partial withdrawal from the research project for variable periods of time, to allow for the injection of creative energy and then returning to add 'conceptual brushstrokes' or what is usually technically referred to as, data interpretation and/or the reformulation of research findings.

Philosophical notions of truth are closely associated with artistic creativity, not simply as an unfettered interpretive impulse, but as closely involved with the pursuit of empirical and conceptual truth in social scientific inquiry. Here notions of science need to be reworked in relation to art, creativity, and the research process.

I would say that a good example of the importance that creativity may have on the development of social science, is myself, and my own personal experience, in developing the 'theory of entangled social domains', and its closely associated method, 'adaptive theory'. I tried to combine my interest in, and intuition for poetry and various forms of art (painting and sculpture) with an equivalent passion for scientific creativity (in the form of constructing theory and creating appropriate empirical research strategies for delivering and analysing appropriate data (Layder 2023b). In this present article, I have blended an interest in the skills involved in artistic and scientific creativity, as the basis for my critique of postmodern theorising.

l) Producing Genuinely Cumulative Knowledge

I have been at pains to point out that 'the theory of entangled domains', and its counterpart, 'adaptive theory', may be regarded as a platform with which to facilitate cooperation and communication in the social sciences. The intention would be to make research cooperation easier, by delivering a common language of communication. The language of entangled domains engages the social reality object/focus part, while adaptive theory lays out a complementary language of research methods. By this, I do not mean to imply that these two could, or should, be the only ones to provide this communicative language, and/or perform this 'platform' function. However, I am saying that the production of genuinely cumulative knowledge would require such a platform to produce interdisciplinary cooperation.

Genuinely cumulative knowledge differs from what frequently passes for it. In fact, it can often be described as the rather superficial stock-piling of facts and information grouped around similar, or identical 'topics' and substantive areas (see my distinctions between 'research topics', 'research areas' and 'research problems' and between local and global properties of social reality 2021). Frequently 'cumulative knowledge' merely signals empirical information which has accumulated over the years without any real reflection what such knowledge represents. It could take a much more sophisticated form because it is surely important to grasp that that real developments in knowledge should depend on something more than the stock-piling of information. Therefore, genuinely cumulative knowledge should reflect its 'integration' at a much deeper level than mere 'similarity' of data, or topic. It should reflect a coming together of knowledge at both epistemological and ontological levels. Speaking generally, the social sciences must take advantage of the challenges posed by an interdisciplinary future. In this regard, the social sciences must agree on a common analytic platform, which allows not only a reliable and consistent means communication, but a comprehensive (360 degree) vantage on social reality, and a complementary methodological framework for research.

m) Bridging the False Gap between Theory and Method

In a recent article I pointed to a persistent false gap between theory and method in social science research (Layder 2021), which continues to provide a major barrier to the development of genuinely cumulative (integrated) knowledge. I do not claim that adaptive theory fully bridges this gap, nor provides a complete answer to this critical question. However, I do think that it makes some successful strides towards this objective, whilst continuing to treat it as an open, and ongoing question, that plagues social science research. Thus, I think a few words are apposite, regarding how adaptive theory might provide a bridge between theory and method. First, the adaptive approach should be viewed neither as purely theoretical, or purely methodological. Theory nor methods specialists do not seem able to relinquish their inherent biases, while many fail altogether, to recognise the existence of the problem in the first place. Theory specialists tend to condense and reduce this problem (and hence, its potential solutions) to entirely theoretical terms. On the other hand, methods specialists seem to characterise the problem (and its proposed solutions) as exclusively technical in nature -thus eliminating many wider dimensions.

Without doubt the division will remain for some time to come - at least until problems of bias and imbalance are identified and acknowledged, by both theory and methods specialists. I must say, however, that there does appear to be a seemingly wilful inability to perceive this as a problem which poses serious challenges for the social sciences. Of course, this is reinforced by an endemic academic division of labour -a

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negative consequence of academic specialisation within universities. In my personal experience, I observed that theory specialists took very little interest in, and made little effort to connect with, social research methods and real-world research issues. Conversely, I noticed that methods specialist colleagues frequently knew little, and cared little about, important issues in philosophy and theory. Such gaps often occurred largely because an academic's career success depended on the continuation and expansion of their reputations and publications in specialist textbooks and journal articles. Certainly, my own specialist induced, disciplinary 'schizophrenia' in this regard contributed to my enduring blindness to important implications of this problem. However, eventually, dissatisfaction with perceived attitudes amongst colleagues, led me to the realisation that the effects of academic specialisation were storing up problems for social science research.

The parallel realisation that social research methods specialists seemed to lack any appreciation of the importance of the philosophical study of social reality (ontology) seemed to jump out at me, quite alarmingly. What are the things that are being researched? What methods and strategies should we use to research them? How does the nature of social reality influence the kind of information, facts, findings, and data that we collect? I realised that most research approaches lacked any analytic appreciation of the nature of the social reality that was their principal research subject matter. Personally, this led me to develop a model of entangled social domains, which, to my immense surprise, I quickly began to regard as an integral component of research practice.

In conclusion, let me briefly say why I believe that adaptive theory is advantageously positioned compared with many other research approaches in the social sciences. First, because it is associated with 'entangled domains theory' it is better equipped for dealing with multidimensional models of social reality. Such a complex vision of social reality requires both an ability to deal with local concrete facts, data, and evidence, but also, integrally and importantly, with their interconnections with global properties, which both transcend and include local information and circumstantial factors. Thus, the adaptive approach ventures beyond local (often descriptive) research findings, and is capable of constructing general, conceptual, and explanatory accounts, inspired by global properties of social reality.

Most research approaches ignore the influence of social reality for social research -they 'take it for-granted'. In addition, they often wrongly assume that social reality is uniform and one-dimensional. While such approaches are quite capable of producing useful, factual, information and evidence, they are nonetheless, often substantially restricted by, and to, local properties and circumstances. They are frequently confined to local (often descriptive) accounts of people, times and places required by the topics and problems of their research. Such confinement to local facts, information, and data, means that they are unable to offer global explanatory accounts of these local properties in their research. Clearly, such limitations help maintain the false division between theory and method, instead of breaking it down. I have argued that with certain amendments many other approaches may often be used alongside adaptive theory (Layder 2018). In this respect the adaptive approach pushes towards inter-disciplinary integration across the social sciences.

Research approaches employing 'variable analysis' (and probability sampling') such as surveys and theory-testing research, regard themselves as the true inheritors of scientific method, but wrongly assume that the social sciences should model themselves directly on (mimic) the natural sciences. The influence of social reality on research findings as well as the methods, techniques and strategies of social research is taken-for-granted, and rests on the premise that the social reality is entirely uniform and reducible to precisely measurable variables (such as income, educational attainment, health status, and so forth). Such approaches fail to acknowledge their biggest weakness -the problem of the missing 'existential core' of social reality -in other words, the fact that social activities, social relations, and processes play a massive role in social life and cannot be properly captured in, or represented by, a uniform/homogenous reality or precise (quantitatively measured), 'variable' analysis. Without doubt, because of its variegated nature, social reality is far more elusive, and complex. Lacking any recognition of the influence of multiple domains within social reality means that such approaches cannot dismantle or dissolve the division between theory and method.

I am not against the use of the case study approach in social research, as long as it is consistent, and carefully integrated with adaptive theory (Layder 2018). But so often the use of case study research means defining social reality as circumscribed by those local properties pertinent to the focal case in question, thus omitting wider aspects of social reality (such as those entailed in 'entangled domains'). In this sense, there is no appreciation of the global properties or domains of social reality, only a registration of its local properties and manifestations -that is, those issues, facts, and evidence, enclosed and contained by the specific case study that is the focus of the research. Thus, there is no possibility of tackling the theory-methods division, nor any problems posed by the existence of a complex multi-dimensional social reality such as the interlinking of global and local properties of reality.

I have described elsewhere (Layder 2013) how quantitative and qualitative data may be integrated in

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specific research projects. However, in what are now called, 'mixed-methods' approaches to research (Bergman 2008, Cresswell 2009), the nature of social reality and its implications for social research, remain unaddressed. The core task and central preoccupation of mixed-methods is the technical problem of integrating quantitative and qualitative data within specific studies. There is no concern with wider research issues, particularly with the global properties of social reality as influencers of explanations, conceptual and methodological problems. Nor indeed, is there any sensitivity to research problems more generally. In contrast, such concerns and issues are built-in, operational features of the adaptive approach.

For instance, in the adaptive approach, 'concurrent' research designs are preferred over 'sequential' designs (Layder 2018), because they more readily accommodate multidimensional models such as entangled social domains, which also highlights (Habermas's 1986) distinction between lifeworld' and system'. In this sense, concurrent designs facilitate the interlinking of local and global properties while registering them as social research findings. Mixed-methods approaches confine the range of strategic decision-making in research to strictly technical issues, particularly focussing on the integration of quantitative and qualitative data. The same is true for 'triangulation' as a validity check in social research (Layder 2013). The entangled domains model offers additional criteria by which triangulation (cross-checking of results) may be assessed from multiple domain vantage points. As far as theory issues are concerned, the adaptive approach encourages theory-generation and conceptual exploration. In this manner, theory and method are included as intrinsic aspects of the general approach. Mixed-methods tend to separate theory and method by defining them in exclusively technical terms, and thus reinforcing, rather than dismantling or breaking-down the false division between theory and method.

II. Concluding Comments

The different analytic standpoints, angles, and perspectives, entailed in the 'entangled social domains', and 'adaptive' approaches, demands an open-mindedness in our choices about theory and methods influences. However, I have also pointed to the kind of 'analytic rigour' and 'disciplined selectiveness' that is also required. I strongly believe that that these two approaches combined, can go some good way to achieving the aims and objectives I have described. In the process, they can also make an essential, and closer, move towards genuinely cumulative knowledge for the social sciences.

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