14

Social Theory for the 21st Century

Chapter Outline

Queer Theory
Actor-Network Theory, Posthumanism, and Postsociality
Affect Theory
Prosumption Theory

Our goal in this final chapter is to bring theory as up-to-date as possible by describing a number of theories that have become important to social theory in the last 20 years. The first of these is called queer theory, which concerns itself with the study of sexuality, in particular the creation of sexual identifications. As with some of the feminist theories discussed in Chapter 8, queer theory argues that gender, sex, and sexuality are social constructions. It draws on postmodern and poststructuralist approaches (Chapter 13) to show that gender, sex, and sexuality are not set-in-stone identities, but rather fluid and changing performances. Queer theory is noteworthy not only for its ideas about gender and sexuality, but because it offers a distinct theory of society that rivals many of those presented in this book.

Another major area of inquiry in contemporary theory is the impact of science and technology on contemporary societies. Where previous social theories treated science as one of many social institutions, contemporary theories of science and technology treat science as a force central to the constitution of contemporary societies. As a representative of this area of development, we describe a*ctor-network theory* and related theories of *posthumanism* and *postsociality*. As we will see, these theoretical perspectives also address questions of identity. In the contemporary moment, the construction of identity is shaped by scientific ideas and practices. This is particularly the case with the next area of theoretical inquiry introduced here: affect theory. *Affect theory* is one of the most recent developments in social theory. It draws on many postmodernist and poststructuralist ideas and is heavily influenced by work in the area of cultural studies. Briefly, affect theory studies the way in which social orders and identities are produced through affective, or emotive, processes. Part of the argument made by affect theorists is that we have entered an era in which social life is primarily governed through affect.

Finally, in the last section of this chapter we introduce *prosumption theory*. Prosumption theory grows out of the theories of consumption developed in the 1980s and 1990s. It proposes to replace terms like *production* and *consumption*, which have dominated sociological thought since its beginnings, with the concept of prosumption. Prosumption is economic activity in which people produce and consume at the same time. Prosumption theory proposes that we have now entered the era of prosumer capitalism. Like the other theories discussed in this section, this theory touches on questions of identity (many people define themselves through their roles as prosumers). It also shares with these previous approaches an interest in the role that digital and information technologies play in structuring and organizing contemporary life.

Queer Theory[1]

While queer theory has been associated with the study of gay and lesbian identity[2], its approach is much broader. It aims to describe the construction and performance of sexuality in general. For queer theorists, identity, especially sexual identity, is not fixed and stable and does not determine who we are. Rather, like postmodern perspectives (see Chapter 13) Queer theory holds that identity is fluid. In particular, sexuality is not an in-born, or essential, quality of people. Rather, sexuality is a social construction that is potentially always open to transformation.

The term *queer* has a number of different meanings. To some people, it is a derogatory term for individuals with a same-sex desire. To others, *queer* has become an all-inclusive umbrella term for, among others, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, transsexual, curious, intersexed, questioning, and allied identities. To still others, including many queer theorists, it refers to such a broad multiplicity of identities that it implies a sort of anti-identity or even a nonidentity. Piontek (2006:2) has suggested using the term *queer* "to refer not to an identity but to a questioning stance, a cluster of methodologies that lets us explore the taken for granted and the familiar from new vantage points." *Queer* also can be used as a noun to describe such an identity or a nonidentity; as an adjective to modify a particular noun such as *theory;* or as a verb, turning something into that which is not normal. In the context of queer theory, the word has come to be used in all three ways as part of a broad intellectual and political project.

It is impossible to develop a comprehensive list of the identifying characteristics of queer theory, but Arlene Stein and Ken Plummer (1994) have noted four prominent "hallmarks":

1. "A conceptualization of sexuality which sees sexual power embodied in different levels of social life, expressed discursively and enforced through boundaries and binary divides" (Stein and Plummer 1994:181–182). Any understanding of sexuality relies on relations of sexual power that are found in multiple forms of social life, even those forms not traditionally thought of as immediately sexual, such as popular culture, politics, education, and economics. This power is maintained by a constant reenactment, reproduction, and policing of the boundaries between sexual categories.

2. "Problematization of sexual and gender categories, and of identities in general. Identities are always on uncertain ground, entailing displacement of identification and knowing" (Stein and Plummer 1994:182). The very boundaries that are used to construct and maintain sexual power as a basis of conceptualized sexuality are put into question. Sexual categories such as *homosexual* and *heterosexual* have been shifted from starting points as units of analysis and have become discursively produced subjects for research. They are viewed as ways of "doing" rather than as ways of "being." Behaviors, knowledge, and confessions are all examples of phenomena that are used to challenge dominant categorizations of sex, gender, and sexuality. Identity is viewed not as a stable, knowable category but rather as one that rests on ever-shifting and unknowable grounds.

3. "Rejection of civil rights strategies in favor of a politics of carnival, transgression, and parody which leads to deconstruction, decentering, revisionist readings, and an anti-assimilationist politics" (Stein and Plummer 1994:182). Political claims based on identity, such as the claims made by the gay and lesbian rights movement, are shunned in favor of a more ironic, transgressive, and playful approach. Here, queer theory, quite controversially, challenges the *identity politics* that drove political activism from the 1960s through to the 1990s. Identity politics refers to a particular kind of political activism in which marginalized groups seek recognition for their distinct identities. In their challenge to identity politics, queer theorists argue that advocating for rights based on a minority identity only legitimates the very power structure against which one is fighting. To resist is to legitimate the position of one's oppressor. The alternative approach, advocated by queer theorists, is to demonstrate the contingency and constructed nature of identity and thereby open up spaces for new kinds of political formations and alliances.

4. "A willingness to interrogate areas which normally would not be seen as the terrain of sexuality, and to conduct queer 'readings' of ostensibly heterosexual or nonsexualized texts" (Stein and Plummer 1994:182). Areas of social life such as the media (Walters 2001), music festivals (B. Morris 2003), popular culture (Sullivan 2003), education (Kosciw 2004), American literature (Lindemann 2000), social movements (Gamson 1995), and even archaeology (Dowson 2002) are all investigated as sites where sexuality is an active player. No area of social life is seen as immune from the influence of sexuality, and even the most seemingly innocuous of texts are open to an interpretation through the lens of sexuality. This speaks to a larger point. Queer theory is not primarily a theory of gay and lesbian identity or even of sexuality more generally. *Like all major social theories, queer theory is a theory of social life*. The main claim of argument of queer theory, then, is that social life is organized around desire (and in particular, sexual desire) and that to understand the social world we must understand the processes that activate and govern desire.

With these general points in mind, we turn to a few of the key theoretical concepts developed by queer theorists.

The Heterosexual/Homosexual Binary

Queer theory draws heavily on poststructuralist philosophy. Important here is that according to poststructuralists, language is a system of power that constructs and orders social reality. In the modern West, reality has been constructed through linguistic binaries: male versus female, white versus black, inside versus outside, and in the case of modern sexuality, heterosexual versus homosexual. These categories define what people can be and do in a given time and place. Through the technique of deconstruction, poststructuralists show that even though these binaries appear to be natural realities, they are in fact linguistic creations.

For example, Michel Foucault, whom we have already discussed at length in Chapter 13, is often viewed as a major influence on queer theory. In the first volume of his *History of Sexuality* (1978), Foucault traces the construction of sexuality, homosexuality, and heterosexuality in the 19th century. Prior to this historical period, there was no such thing as a sexual identity, at least in the sense understood today. People engaged in sexual acts such as same-sex sodomy, but it was not believed that these acts expressed something fundamental about the person who engaged in them. The development of the sciences of sex, such as psychoanalysis and sexology, alongside transformations in industrial and domestic life, led to the identification of particular sex acts with character types. The 20th-century conceptualization of homosexuality emerges, then, when the act of sodomy is associated with the identity of homosexuality. Furthermore, the identity of homosexuality is defined in contrast to the identity of heterosexuality, itself a newly invented concept. Following poststructuralist logic, a central claim of queer theory is that, as binaries, heterosexuality and homosexuality define each other and hence depend for their meaning on each other. This binary has structured modern forms of sexual desire and social life more generally.

Beyond the idea that identities are constructed through binaries, another central poststructuralist idea is that one element in the binary structure is always viewed as inferior to the other. For example, as constructed in patriarchal societies, masculinity is superior to femininity, or as constructed in early-20th-century racialized America (and even into the present, as was already discussed), white is superior to black. So, too, queer theorists demonstrate that homosexual identity has been constructed as inferior to heterosexuality. In fact, modern Western social life has been organized around the presumed naturalness and primacy of heterosexuality. In other words, modern social life is governed by what Judith Butler (1990) calls a *heterosexual matrix*. The heterosexual matrix is the cultural framework that makes it appear as if heterosexuality is the natural form of sexuality. Further, the heterosexual matrix imposes *compulsory heterosexuality* (Rich 1980). This refers to a social system in which the only viable, intelligible, and respectable form of sexuality is heterosexuality accompanied by the related accoutrements of middle-class suburban life. Any alternative expression of desire is treated as unnatural and unintelligible. It is frequently disparaged and sometimes met with violence.

Queer theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1985, 1990) further describes the logic of contemporary sexual culture through her concept of the *epistemology of the closet*. Epistemology is the field of philosophy that studies the various ways in which humans know and can know the world. The closet refers to the now-popular idea that an identity can be closeted—that is kept secret, hidden from view, maintained in a private and safe place. Sedgwick analyzes the concept of the closet as a means of understanding how the relationship between heterosexuality and homosexuality has shaped modern ways of knowing and relating to sexuality. It is not only that homosexuality is treated as inferior to heterosexuality, but that this relationship of dependency is hidden from view, unspoken, or closeted. This has given rise to central components of identity formation in our times. For one, in contrast to the open public image of heterosexuality, homosexuality and other queer sexualities have largely been developed in hidden spaces. This has resulted in feelings of shame being associated with queer identities. And as we will see in the section on affect theory, when it goes unspoken and unaddressed shame can make people vulnerable to social control (see also Scheff's work as described in Chapter 5). Further, as a result of its identification with the closet, the act of "coming out" of the closet has, for good or bad, been a defining feature of queer experience in the last 30 years.

Finally, because homosexuality has been closeted, people who identify themselves as heterosexual are unable to understand the relationship between their sexuality and queer sexuality. As already described, queer theorists argue that there is a mutually constitutive relationship between homosexuality and heterosexuality. Moreover, drawing on psychoanalytic theory, queer theorists argue that sexuality, in general, is never classifiable or set in stone. Instead, sexual desire is fluid and open to transformation. Desire is locked into strict categories only through historical and social processes. Following this, queer theorists make a very subversive point: Heterosexual persons contain within themselves the potentials of queer sexuality. When social institutions repress or deny queer sexuality, they do not eliminate it but only hide it from view. This can be dangerous. For example, Sedgwick (1990) argues that *homosexual panic*—the fearful and violent reactions that homosexuality arouses in heterosexual society (often described as homophobia)—is a product of the closeting of queer desire. Because it has so insistently denied the homosexuality within itself, the heterosexual culture strikes back against public manifestations of queer sexuality. Making a related point, Judith Butler (1990) argues that modern Western persons suffer *homosexual melancholy*. Homosexual melancholy is the persistent sadness that emerges when heterosexual culture denies its own homosexuality. In both of these examples, even though it is denied, homosexual desire, the queer side of the modern subject, continues to haunt heterosexuality, and vice versa. The task of queer theory, then, is to show the ways that queer desire is and always has been a central component of sociocultural life.

Performing Sex

Judith Butler (1990, 1993, 2004a) is one of the most important queer theorists. Butler is famous for her claim that gender and sex are created through social performances. In feminist theories, gender refers to the social roles played by men and women. These roles are generally regarded as social constructions. Sex refers to the biological makeup of males and females. Butler agrees with other feminists that gender roles are social constructions, but she takes the argument a step further and says that sex is also a social construction. Even though Western society believes that there are only two sexes—male and female—Butler insists that our perception of this difference is a cultural and historical achievement. The distinction overlooks the many intersex bodies that do not clearly fit into the category of male or female (see also Fausto-Sterling 2000). It also overlooks the many identities constituted through the combination and recombination of conventional sex and gender categories, as well as the desires they enact. For example, Judith Halberstam (1998) analyzes performances of *female masculinity,* and Riki Ann Wilchins (1997) analyzes the challenge posed by transgender people to gender and identity norms.

With these ideas in hand, we can turn to the concept of performance. From Butler's perspective, sex, gender, and desire are not automatic possessions of a body, but rather they are brought into existence in performance. The successful achievement of sex identity (to see oneself as a "real man") and accompanying ideas about sex attraction depend upon the successful performance of a gender role. This is similar to Goffman's idea that the self is not an inborn entity but rather an effect of social performances (see Chapter 5). In the same way, then, that a person builds a self over time in social performances, so, too ,sex, gender, and sexual desire are produced through performance. For example, male heteronormative gender performances link together male bodies with male gender performances and male expressions of desire for females. These connections between bodies, desires, and social roles are not automatically given, but rather are cultural and personal achievements.

To demonstrate the performed and constructed nature of sexuality and gender, Butler (1990) famously uses the example of the drag performer. The drag queen is a man who performs as a woman. A successful performance reveals that gender is a performance and so, too, is the desire generated by the drag performer in the audience. Butler also provides an analysis of "butch" identity. In queer culture, the butch is a lesbian who adopts the posture of masculinity. The Hollywood star James Dean is an iconic figure whom some butch lesbians try to imitate in their everyday identifications (Halberstam 1998). Butler says that the butch is not simply a woman who adopts a male role. Rather, in juxtaposing sex and gender in new ways, the butch generates new forms of sexuality and desire. These examples don't make sex and sexual desire any less concrete or real. Instead, they show that very real feelings and identities originate in sociocultural play.

In connection with this, Butler (1993) also argues that certain culturally sanctioned performances produce "bodies that matter." Butler plays on the double meaning of the word *matter*. On the one hand, "matter" describes the way that identities become embodied. Distinctions made in language are built into the body through its performances so that they are felt and lived as real and uncontestable. At the same time, "matter" describes a political process. Sexuality is constructed and then materialized within social structures that privilege some forms of sexuality and desire over others. There are bodies that matter, and there are bodies that don't matter. The bodies that don't matter are marginalized and submitted to social and political violence. Indeed, this focus on the construction of bodies that matter has led Butler into more general theoretical questions about hate speech (1997a), interpersonal ethics (2005), war, violence, and mourning (2004b). Here, echoing themes examined by Giorgio Agamben (see Chapter 13), Butler has consistently been concerned with the question of the "livable life." Whose life is deemed worthwhile, whose life is considered expendable, and what kinds of social worlds do these distinctions allow (Lloyd 2011)?

The concept of performance, then, is crucial for queer theory. If sex and gender are performed, then the viability of dominant sexualities depends upon their continued performance. Through the concept of performance, Butler denaturalizes heterosexuality in a very concrete way. She doesn't merely reveal it to be a social construction but also shows that it is a performance that has to be chosen to be sustained. To be a woman, you need to walk and talk and act like a woman. This does not automatically happen but must be practiced. In addition, the concept of performance grounds Butler's challenge to the heterosexual matrix. Contrary to gay rights activists, Butler does not call for the creation of a space for gays and lesbians within heterosexual culture. Nor does she call for the replacement of heterosexual social organization with a presumably more open and liberating homosexual social organization. Each of those moves would merely reinstantiate a normative social order and in particular reaffirm heterosexuality as the binary opposite of homosexuality. Queer theory tries to move beyond utopias, essentialisms, and binaries and instead sees sexuality as a constant and ongoing set of activities through which sexuality and desire are created.

Critiques

Queer theory has faced criticism. Many argue that its amorphous politics of inclusion and rejection of single characteristics of identity such as race, class, or sex undermine the potential for real political action (e.g., T. Edwards 1998; Kirsch 2000). This rejection, in turn, ignores the everyday lived materiality of experience (Stein and Plummer 1994) and the role of the social in constructing the sexual (A. Green 2002). If identity is not a motivation for action, then how do groups dealing with the manifest means of oppression organize and fight for justice? There is also an argument that the more queer theory is accepted into academic discourse, the farther removed it is from its revolutionary potential. Halperin (1995:113) has noted that "the more it verges on becoming a normative academic discipline, the less queer 'queer theory' can plausibly claim to be." By being enshrined in academia, it is losing its power to transform; by being normalized, it loses its ability to queer.

In light of these critiques, some have tried to find ways to modify queer theory in such a way as to make it more socially sensitive to the position and lived experiences of actors and the more politically astute. Max Kirsch (2000) has offered a potential solution by arguing that we need to differentiate between identifying *with* and identifying *as,* with a preference for the latter, in order to maintain a basis of identification while still distancing ourselves from the problems of identity. Thus, identity is used as "a mode of affiliation rather than strictly as a category of personal definition" (Kirsch 2000:7). This approach is thereby able to maintain the critical stance of queer theory toward the dangers of essentializing or concretizing identity, while at the same time still allowing for identity by association to remain a powerful tool for collective social action.

Adam Isaiah Green (2002) has identified at least two strains of queer theory. The first, *radical deconstructionism,* "superimposes a postmodern self-concept onto the homosexual subject, thereby glossing over the enduring institutional organization of sexuality" (Green 2002:523). The second, *radical subversion,* "superimposes a politically marginal self-concept onto the homosexual subject, thereby grossly oversimplifying complex developmental processes attendant to sexual identification" (523). At base, each strand is seen as not giving sufficient priority to the materially lived and institutionally dependent situation of actors. Green, therefore, calls for a postqueer study of sexuality, one that "brings to bear the categorical scrutiny of queer theory on concrete, empirical case studies" (537).

These critiques, however, do not detract from the important impact that queer theory has had on contemporary social theory. Queer theory illuminates the sphere of sexuality, especially queer sexuality, but it speaks to social theory more generally. For one, it demonstrates that sexuality and desire are central features of social life and have been for some time. This means that any serious social theory must incorporate the study of sex, gender, and sexuality into its analysis. In addition, queer theory provides tools to help understand how various sexualities have been and continue to be constructed and performed. Finally, queer theory shows that as a society we are not locked into preset social and bodily roles. Rather, in the spirit of all social theories that have sought social change, queer theory argues that by playing with new combinations of bodies and roles we can create more equitable and satisfying social relationships and social institutions.

Actor-Network Theory, Posthumanism, and Postsociality

Actor-network theory (ANT) is an influential perspective that grows out of the more general area of science and technology studies. The study of science and technology has a long history in sociology and even social theory. For example, in the 1970s Robert Merton (see Chapter 3) used his functionalist approach to study science. He treated science as a middle-range social institution that was governed by norms. Other theorists have drawn on ethnographic and ethnomethodological techniques (see Chapter 6) to study laboratory practices. For example, Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar (1986) developed some of the basic terms of ANT analysis in their study of a laboratory at the Salk Institute in California. Others have studied science from the perspectives of cultural studies, feminism, and race theory, among others (see Hess 1997). In contrast to Merton, these later positions do not see science as simply one of many independent social institutions available for sociological analysis. Rather, science is seen as a form of knowledge and practice that, increasingly, organizes society and constitutes identities. In fact, in grappling with the interrelationship of science, technology, and society, science and technology scholars have had to develop new theoretical languages. Society is thus rethought through the lens of science.

ANT is one of the best examples of the way that the social study of science has led to a rethinking of social theory. While in this section we review a number of ANT concepts, the most significant idea is that society is not made up of human actors alone (Latour [1993] says it never has been). Rather, society is an accomplishment that draws together both human and nonhuman actors (e.g., animals, electrons, computers, and so on) into a "collective" (Latour 2007:14; for more on nonhumans, see Donna Haraway 1991, 2008). Latour replaces the term *society* with the term *collective* because "society," at least as it is conventionally understood, implies the existence of some transcendent entity that directs human action from outside. Here, he is particularly critical of Durkheim's concept of the *social fact* upon which, he argues, much contemporary sociology and social theory is grounded.[3] The practice of science and technology, or *technoscience*, is crucial to the formation of these networked collectives as it allows practitioners to hook together actors in previously unconceivable assemblages. For example, using a high-powered microscope the biologist can "discover" and thereby "recruit" a new biological agent into the collective. This focus on the networking of human and nonhuman agents is also reflected in posthumanist and postsocial theories, which we address toward the end of this section.

"Actor-network theory," in the words of John Law, "is a ruthless application of *semiotics*. It tells us that entities take their form and acquire their attributes as a result of their relations with other entities. In this scheme of things entities have no inherent qualities" (Law 1999:3). The idea of the relativity of *subjects* is shared by a number of theoretical perspectives. What is new here is that *material objects* as well are seen as being created and acquiring meaning in a *network* of relationship to other objects. Thus,

> action-network theory may be understood as a *semiotics of materiality*. It takes the semiotic insight, that of the relativity of entities, the notion that they are produced in relations, and applies this ruthlessly to all materials—and not simply those that are linguistic. (Law 1999:4).

That perspective is drawn more from structuralism, but other basic ANT perspectives are drawn from poststructuralism. Implied above is the idea of *antiessentialism*. That is, entities are lacking in inherent qualities; what they are is a result of their relationship to other entities. In other words, there is *no* essence to any entity or material object, including people. In addition, ANT is *opposed* to the very modern idea of the *search for origins,* either in history or contemporaneously in the idea that human agents are at the root of everything. Like poststructuralism (and postmodernism), ANT is also *antifoundational*—that is, it is opposed to the idea that underlying everything is a basic structure, and it is the task of the analyst to uncover that structure.

However, the poststructural concept that goes to the essence of ANT is *decentering*. Generally, this means shifting focus from the center (or essence, or origin, and so on) to the periphery. More specifically, it means in ANT the shift from a focus on the agent taking some action to that which exists, especially networks and nonhuman objects. The actor becomes part of the network; we can think in terms of the "'networkization' of the 'actor'" (Gomart and Hennion 1999:223). Actors are subordinated to networks and, in a way, are creatures of networks: "Actors are network effects, they take the attributes of the entities which they include" (Law 1999:5). The focus shifts from the modern concern with the agent to the network and to objects, nonmaterial entities. This, as we will see, is one of the most distinctive contributions of ANT: it "opened the social sciences to nonhumans" (Callon 1999:182). (By the way, nonhumans and the relationship of humans to them is a significant aspect of what Knorr-Cetina [2001] calls *postsocial relations*.) We will have more to say about this later in the chapter, but although it is important to focus on the nonhuman, we must remember that "objects are *inferior* partners" to the human (Gomart and Hennion 1999:223).

ANT leads to a rejection of both micro–macro and agency–structure theory (see Chapter 9). For one thing, those two continua are seen as examples of the kind of modern dualities that are rejected by poststructuralists and postmodernists. (According to Law [1999:3], "All of these divides have been rubbished.") In addition, the problem with both continua is that a shift to one pole of the continuum inevitably leads to dissatisfaction with what is learned about the other pole. More important, the continua are focusing on the wrong things. The central topic is *not* agency/micro or structure/macro, but rather social processes as circulating entities. In other words, the real focus should be on the network, another key topic discussed in what follows. As Latour (1999:22) puts it, ANT is a theory not of the social but rather "of the space of fluids circulating in a nonmodern situation."

That observation leads us to a very useful definition of ANT:[4]

> We may conceive of only basic formal units of substance (actants) which enter into relationships (networks) by way of encounters (trials of force) wherein questions regarding the powers and identities of these selfsame units come to be temporarily settled by reference to the overall compound nexus of relationships within which they are now embedded. (Brown and Capdevila 1999:34)

The term *actant* (borrowed from semiotics [Fuller 2007c]) is worth clarifying. It is meant to imply that it is not just humans that act. Nonhuman entities can act—can be actants! As a result, the same explanatory frame should be used for actants of both types.

As Crawford (2005:2) puts it, "Investigators should never shift registers to examine individuals and organizations, bugs and collectors, or computers and their programmers." Furthermore, in discussing the actant, the focus once again shifts from the actor to the network. As Latour puts it,

> Actantability is not what an actor does . . . but what *provides* actants with their actions, with their subjectivity, with their intentionality, with their morality. When you hook up with this circulating entity, then you are partially provided with consciousness, subjectivity, actoriality, etc. . . . To become an actor is . . . a local achievement. (1999:18)

Even something as seemingly human and individual as intentionality is defined in network terms as a "circulating capacity . . . partially gained or lost by hooking up to certain bodies of practice" (Latour 1999:23).

Basically, actors (or actants) cannot be understood apart from the networks in which they exist and of which they are part. In fact, actor and network are "two faces of the same phenomenon" (Latour 1999:19). Thus, actor-network theorists seek to bypass the micro–macro and agency–structure dichotomies that have characterized much of social theory (see Chapter 9).

The idea of networks is hard to get at, but Crawford (2005:1) does a good job of defining them and relating them to actants: "Networks are processual, built activities, performed by actants out of which they are composed." Most generally it implies a series of transformations and translations. A more specific sense arises in Latour's (1999:17) argument that a network is not society or an anonymous field of forces but is "the *summing up* of interactions through various kinds of devices, inscriptions, forms and formulae, into a very local, very practical, very tiny locus." Thus, a focus on networks leads one closer to, rather than farther away from, the local. This idea is closely linked to the roots of ANT in science studies, especially the detailed and local study of, for example, the operations of scientific laboratories. However, ANT rejects the micro–macro distinction. Thus, in discussing the local or the network and even the actant, there is a sense that the micro–macro, as well as the local–general, cannot be distinguished from one another. More specifically, the macro should be viewed not as "big," "but [as] connected . . . local, mediated, related" (18).

Related to the idea of network is *performativity*. This means that entities do not exist in any essentialist sense but rather are performed in, by, and through relations, or networks (Law 1999:4). It is easy to think of human actors as engaging in such performativity, but ANT goes beyond this to see material entities as being characterized by performativity. If people and objects are performed, then "everything is uncertain and reversible" (4). There are times when durability and fixity result, but the focus is on how those things are performed so that such durability is achieved. In other words, durable networks, to take one example, are performed, and this means that no matter how seemingly durable they are, they can fall apart. Just as networks can be performed into durability, they can be performed into disintegration and even disappearance. However, even ANT theorists recognize some measure of durability, as best exemplified in Latour's concept of "immutable mobiles," which can be defined as "a network of elements that holds its shape as it moves" through space and time (Law and Hetherington 2002:395–396). Thus, there is a durable network here, but it is one that is in constant movement (and there is the ever-present possibility that it can fall apart).

What is perhaps most distinctive about ANT is its concern with material entities or artifacts: "Material artifacts may exercise something which resembles agency. But this proves to be a peculiar form of *agency,* one entirely *devoid of intentionality*" (Brown and Capdevila 1999:40). This is one of the reasons, as mentioned earlier, that material artifacts are "inferior" objects. The key to these artifacts is their lack of meaning; it is this that gives them a "will to connect" with other elements of a network. It is this very blankness that leads the network and its elements to seek to connect with the artifact. To put it another way, by inciting connections, an artifact "drives networks to incorporate and fold around actants" (41). Humans can be seen in much the same way: "They perform their own functional blankness . . . incite and form relations on the basis of what they do not present, do not say . . . [they provoke] the will-to-connect to ever greater excesses" (40).

Relatedly, there is a concern in ANT with "practical materiality" (Dugdale 1999). Material artifacts play a key role in constituting networks and subjects. Thus, artifacts are not simply acted upon (e.g., connected with by the network), they also act. Material artifacts, like human agents, are actants. For example, Law and Hetherington (2002:394) discuss how things like carpeting and decor are performative: They act; they "participate in the generation of information, of power relations, of subjectivities and objectivities." Thus, nonhumans are active participants in networks, in social relationships. Of course, material artifacts lack what defines human actors—intentionality! Verran offers a good summary of all of this:

> [T]his interpretive frame avoids any separation of the material and the symbolic in proposing worlds as outcomes of mutually resisting/accommodating participants, where participation goes far beyond the human to encompass the non-living as active in routine (and novel) actions, which constitute the world. (1999:143)

The focus on relations, circulations, and networks obviously has a spatial implication, but ANT has a unique view on spatiality: "Different and nonconformable spatialities (e.g., regions and networks) are formed" (Law 1999:11). Thus, ANT seeks to distance itself from a simple Euclidean view of space. In one of its most distinctive views on space, ANT makes much of the issue of a "fold" in space formed "like a blunt scissors edge across paper, such that what were distant points suddenly become neighbors. Things . . . get crumpled together" (Brown and Capdevila 1999:29). Also of interest is the fact that Latour (1999:19) argues that the "empty spaces 'in between' the networks, those *terra incognita,* are the most exciting aspects of ANT because they show the extent of our ignorance and the immense reserve that is open to change."

Given its roots in science studies, ANT is oriented to micromethods (although the term *micro* is anathema to this perspective): "Actor-network studies attempt to become part of the networks of which they speak. To be able to trace a network means becoming interior to its activities" (Brown and Capdevila 1999:43). Or as Latour humbly puts it,

> [F]or us, ANT was simply another way of being faithful to the insights of ethnomethodology: actors[5] know what they do and we have to learn from them not only what they do, but how and why they do it. . . . [It is] a very crude method to learn from the actors without imposing on them an *a priori* definition of their world-building capacities. (1999:19–20)

In fact, as is the case with ethnomethodology, some supporters describe ANT as a method and *not* a theory (Callon 1999:194).

In terms of the discussion of modernity in Chapter 10 and the treatment of postmodernity in Chapter 13, it is interesting to reflect, in closing, on Bruno Latour's (1993:39) contention that "the modern world never happened." This notion is based, in part, on the fact that we continue to have much in common with premoderns. In addition, it is premised on the idea that it is impossible to identify points of origin or to clearly identify a point at which one epoch ends and another begins. Because we have never been modern (or premodern, for that matter), it follows that we cannot now be postmodern. Thus, ANT rejects the entire distinction between premodernity, modernity, and postmodernity.

Finally, it should be noted that some adherents of ANT are not happy with the directions taken recently by other thinkers associated with the approach, as well as with efforts (like this one) to clearly define and delimit it. For example, Law (1999:9) is concerned about naming, simplifying, and losing complexity—"the theory has been reduced to a few aphorisms that can be quickly passed on." Even more strongly, the leading figure associated with ANT says, "There are four things that do not work with actor-network theory: The word *actor,* the word *network,* the word *theory* and the hyphen. Four nails in the coffin!" (Latour 1999:15). Key contributors to ANT are thus intent on maintaining the complexity of a theory that seeks to reflect, at least to some degree, the complexity of the social (and material) world. ANT has generated a great deal of research into such diverse issues as pest management (Moore 2008), sleeping persons (Lee 2008), methadone maintenance (Valentine 2007), and tourism (van Der Duim and Caalders 2008).

Related to the development of actor-network theory are the ideas of posthumanism and the postsocial. *Posthumanism* is defined "by its opposition to humanism, as well as moving beyond it. It rejects the notion of the separability of humanity from the non-human world . . . and the division of knowledge into separate domains" (Franklin 2007:3548). Because humanism lies at the base of much of sociology, especially microsociologies, posthumanism constitutes a profound challenge to the field. However, it can be seen as an opportunity to extend sociology beyond human actors to a wide range of other phenomena and to encompass them all within a single framework.

The idea of the *postsocial* constitutes a parallel challenge to traditional ideas of sociality. Sociality may continue, but it is declining in importance (social forms are being emptied of social relationships) and taking on new forms. Among the new forms are the relationships emerging with the enormous expansion of objects in the contemporary world such as technologies, consumer goods, and objects of knowledge. As Knorr-Cetina puts it,

> Postsocial relations are human ties triangulated with object relations, and forming only with respect to these relations. . . . Postsocial is what one might call a level of intersubjectivity that is no longer based on face-to-face interaction and may in fact not involve interaction at all. . . . Postsocial systems may arise around the sort of relatedness enabled by the Internet. . . . Postsocial forms are not rich in sociality in the old sense . . . but they may be rich in other ways, and the challenge is to analyze and theorize these constellations. (2007:3580)

The emergence of an increasing number of postsocial relationships is related to the development of new types of work and consumption settings. One example of the former is "virtual organizations" that lack a central headquarters where workers can congregate and interact both to handle work-related tasks and to engage in social relationships. In virtual organizations, workers are largely, if not totally, on their own, interacting on a much more limited basis with other workers and with superiors by phone, e-mail, or occasional face-to-face visits.

There are numerous examples of such postsocial relationships in the realm of consumption. For example, instead of interacting with tellers in a bank, we are increasingly likely to interact with ATMs. Other bank-related interactions are now increasingly likely to involve automated telephone contact or online banking. Also, rather than interacting with a salesperson in a bookshop, we are increasingly likely to buy books (and other products) through Amazon.com without ever interacting with a human being. In such instances, technologies and other objects replace humans as relationship partners or serve to mediate the relationships among people. We often cannot get to talk to a real person until we have exhausted all the options offered on the automated telephone message.

Increasingly, in many of the best-known consumption sites (what Ritzer [2010a] has called the "cathedrals of consumption"), we find much the same process. For example, in Las Vegas casinos, as well as casinos in many other places in the United States and elsewhere, an increasingly large proportion of floor space is devoted to slot machines, and gamblers interact almost exclusively with these objects. Other forms of gambling—keno, for example—also involve little or no human interaction and are replacing the historic focus of casinos on games (blackjack, poker, roulette, craps, etc.) that require direct interaction with other humans as either employees or fellow players. Similarly, the modern department store has far fewer employees than in the past, and customers are supposed to interact with the store and its products, make selections, and only then bring goods to a human employee in order to pay for those choices.

Of course, the Internet is the postsocial setting *par excellence.* We interact with keyboards, computer screens, websites, e-mail, chat rooms, massive multiplayer games, and so on. In some cases, Internet relationships may come to involve face-to-face interactions (sometimes with dangerous consequences), but most often, whatever human relationships exist on the Internet are mediated by the wide range of technologies associated with it.

Affect Theory

Affect theory is the most recent extension of poststructural and postmodern theory. In addition, it draws on elements of queer theory and science and technology studies. As we will see, it shares with those perspectives an interest in deconstruction and decentering the subject. However, it significantly departs from those theoretical perspectives because it emphasizes the independent role that biology or "matter" plays in the construction of reality. In particular, affect theorists are interested in the way that bodies can "affect and be affected" by one another (Blackman and Venn 2010:9).

While the concept of affect has clear affinities with the concept of emotion (see Chapter 5), affect theorists clearly distinguish between them. To put it simply, affect refers to a more primal or rawer version of emotion. Affect is an indeterminate biological force that energizes and brings vitality to life. Emotion is what happens to affect once it has it has been submitted to social processes that make it conscious and narratable. In other words, *affect* is the word for nonconscious life energies that make life itself possible. Affect theory not only tries to theorize this unique dimension of the social and natural world but also describes the processes by which affect is put to use and managed in societies.

Before getting into more specific concepts, it is important to draw attention to two major claims of affect theory. First, affect theorists take seriously the findings of the natural sciences and in particular work in the life sciences (e.g., biology, genetics, neuroscience).[6] This is a major difference from earlier postmodern perspectives that, for the most part, rejected research conducted in the natural sciences on the grounds that most science was a social construction that reproduces normative social categories. For example, as we saw in the earlier section on critical theories of race and racism, some scientific theory has constructed categories of racial difference that have been used to justify colonialism and racial domination.

For affect theorists, there is a fine line between legitimating what they consider to be problematic versions of normative science and taking the findings of the natural sciences seriously. In what Gregg and Seigworth (2010) consider a founding essay of affect theory, Sedgwick (whom we also discussed under queer theory) and Frank say,

> We have no interest whatever in minimizing the continuing history of racist, sexist, homophobic, or otherwise abusive biologisms, or the urgency of their exposure, that has made the gravamen of so many contemporary projects of critique. At the same time, we fear—with the installation of an automatic antibiologism as the unshifting central tenet of "theory"—the loss of conceptual access to an entire thought-realm. (1995:15)

In another founding text, *Parables for the Virtual*, Brian Massumi warns that cultural and social theory has been too quick to distance itself from the natural sciences:

> A common thread running through the varieties of social constructivism currently dominant in cultural theory holds that everything, including nature, is constructed in discourse. . . . In the worst-case solipsist scenario, nature appears as immanent to culture (as its construct). . . . The concepts of nature and culture need serious reworking, in a way that expresses the irreducible *alterity* of the nonhuman in and through its active *connection* to the human and vice versa. (2002:38–39)

Like the actor-network theory discussed earlier, affect theory takes seriously the agency of nonhumans and criticizes the idea that these other agents are simply cultural constructions. Rather, nature is an "autonomous" force that enters into relations with culture, language, and so on. The problem is to understand how nature and culture interact without reducing one to the other.

Of course, social theorists have relied upon the findings of the natural sciences for many years. *Sociobiology* is a very influential social-theoretical perspective that incorporates the findings of evolutionary theory into social theory (F. Nielsen 1994). It's important, though, to distinguish affect theory from perspectives such as sociobiology. For one, sociobiology has been associated with the promotion of the normative social ideals criticized by affect theorists. Most notably, sociobiologists have argued that differences in sex and gender behavior have a genetic foundation. This, as we have seen, is a view that is challenged by queer theorists. So too, it is challenged by affect theorists.

Moreover, sociobiology is a reductivist science. It attempts to explain social life through what are considered to be foundational genetic and evolutionary processes. In contrast, affect theory tries to use the findings of the natural sciences in ways that are nonreductivist. It treats the findings seriously—gives biology an autonomous power—but also treats social processes seriously. One level of life is not reducible to the other, but rather they intermingle and mutually influence each other. In this spirit, affect theorists have primarily relied on developments in the life sciences that view biology as processual—biology is an ever-changing and dynamic process rather than a concrete set of established structures and mechanisms (Blackman and Venn 2010; Fraser et al. 2005). This focus on process opens up the findings of science to sociological concepts central to poststructuralist and postmodern thought.[7]

The second important claim forwarded by affect theorists is that we now live in a society that is governed through affective processes. This again can be read against the earlier postmodern claim that social life is governed through linguistic and symbolic processes. Patricia Clough (2003, 2004) argues that even though Foucauldian poststructuralism theorized the body, it treated the body as a product of discursive forces rather than a biological entity that could act and be acted upon independent of language. This is not to say that the concept of affect was not relevant to previous eras. Two of the major philosophical influences on affect theory wrote in different times and places: Baruch Spinoza was a 16th-century Dutch philosopher and Henri Bergson was a 19th-century French philosopher. However, the last 30 years have seen significant social, scientific, and technological changes that make the concept of affect more relevant than ever.

For example, the widespread use of psychotropic medications, such as antidepressants, allows people to directly, as a part of their everyday lives, modify bodily affect. This is in contrast to the talk therapies employed by previous generations to modify mood and feeling. Where antidepressants work directly on the neurochemical systems of the body, talk therapy uses roundabout linguistic techniques to modify mood. Affect theorists also have talked about the relation between affect and contemporary consumer culture (Featherstone 2010) and the way that new media and digital technologies act upon affective systems in unprecedented ways (Hansen 2004). Affect theory is particularly relevant to a world that operates through the global flows identified by Zygmunt Bauman and Arjun Appadurai (see Chapter 10 and Chapter 12). Affect is transmitted faster and with more force than cognition or words. We feel before we see or hear. Indeed, where language tends to fix or hold still, affect tends to flow (though as we will see it can also be held still and controlled). The problem in understanding the management of contemporary populations, then, is understanding the ways that affect is both "captured" and liberated through various social processes and practices (Clough 2008:3; Massumi 2002:35).

Basic Concepts

Affect theory is not a microsocial theory *per se*, but in order to get a handle on its basic concepts, it is helpful to start at the level of selves/subjects and the relations that they have to their bodies and surrounding environment. Brian Massumi (2002) describes a threefold process out of which mind and consciousness emerge.

1. Referring to ideas developed by philosophers Spinoza and Bergson, Massumi says that the "subject" exists in an open, decentered field. The word *subject* is in quotation marks in the previous sentence because there is no subject to speak of at this moment. The field (or more simply, environment) is composed of all the forces and energies bombarding, or impinging upon, the subject. This is the environment as it is experienced before it is perceived and categorized by the subject. This body does not have a point of view. Rather, in the tradition of poststructuralist thought, it is decentered: "being in a state of passional suspension in which it exists more outside of itself, more in the abstracted action of the impinging thing and the abstracted context of the action, than within itself" (2002:31). The term *passional* suggests that this state of being, though inaccessible to consciousness, is an affective or emotional limit point—that point at which one is fully immersed in the surrounding environment.

   Even though Massumi does not spend a great deal of time discussing this aspect of experience, it is important because it provides the basic idea that humans are not self-enclosed atoms, fundamentally separate from their world. Rather, at some primal level, humans are deeply interconnected with other bodies and other people. It is a fact of human existence to be caught up in the forces and energies that populate their environments.

2. Even though the body is decentered, at the same time it positions itself in this environment. That is, it finds ways to distinguish itself, as an autonomous being,

from all of these impinging energies and forces. What is particularly important is that this positioning is spontaneously undertaken by the body outside of consciousness. Massumi says, "This is a first order idea produced spontaneously by the body" (2002:32). The biological body has its own self-organizing, or autopoietic principles (see discussion of autopoiesis under systems theory in Chapter 3). The body, in other words, has its own way of "thinking" or processing its relationship to its world. Relying on the ideas of philosopher Gilles Deleuze, Massumi refers to this as an *infolding* of the environment, or the creation of an *intensity*. When affect theorists talk about affect they are generally talking about the bodily experience of this infolding. That is, there is a particular feel to the way that a body moves through its environment, nonconsciously experiencing and folding into itself this multitude of forces and energies.

It's important to note that infolding does not result in the separation of the self from the environment and other people. It is rather a state between the full immersion of body in environment under Point 1 and the achievement of self-actualized consciousness described in the next section. In this state, the body recognizes all of the potentials offered to it by its environment without yet acting on any of them. It is a body in tension—ready to act in many ways, to feel many different things, but not yet acting and feeling.

3. Finally, Massumi defines the mind as conscious reflection upon this infolded sensation: "The autonomic tendency received secondhand from the body is raised to a higher power to become an activity of the mind" (32). Another way of saying this is that even though the body possesses vast potentials for action and feeling, it actualizes only a few of these potentials. These actualized potentialities of the affected body are what the mind recognizes as conscious experience. As we will see, precisely what gets actualized is heavily influenced by social and cultural processes.

It's also important to point out that even though we've been talking about these states as if they were separate from one another, Massumi is clear that they exist alongside one another, informing one another. Humans, then, exist in a state of tension between the vast possibilities experienced as nonconscious affect and the small set of actions, feelings, and emotions consciously actualized. Historically, sociology has focused only on the latter. For example, symbolic interactionists such as George Herbert Mead tend to focus on the conscious linguistic practices that lead to self-formation. In contrast, Massumi, and other affect theorists argue that nonconscious affect is an equally, if not more important phenomenon for analysis.

These three points aside, for social theory the important focus is the relationship between consciousness and affect. Social theory has a long history of discussing unconscious and nonconscious processes. Critical theory (see Chapter 4) draws on Freudian ideas to discuss the ways that unconscious desires and needs impact human action. Through the concept of practice, Giddens and others introduce the possibility of nonconscious embodied action. This is also captured with the concept of habit and in particular Bourdieu's *habitus*.

But affect theory offers a unique theorization of the nonconscious. For one, it is steeped in scientific ideas not just about the acting body, but about molecular biological processes. Importantly, these biological processes generate their own kind of feeling—affect. Affect is always present, a kind of backdrop energy—buzzing and humming—out of which action emerges, but it is inaccessible to direct experience or even conscious control and management. This is why affect is said to be autonomous. This concept of affect allows social theorists to explain a variety of generally perplexing social and psychological phenomena. These are phenomena that exceed the conceptual grasp of contemporary social science.

For example, Massumi (2002) reviews a number of psychological experiments that show that decisions are made by the body 0.5 seconds before they become conscious. In social theory and the social sciences, we usually think of the body as something that is governed by the mind: First we think, and then our bodies carry out our actions. But here, Massumi uses this psychological evidence to argue that the body "thinks" through a problem in advance and the mind registers this decision after the fact. This points to another key characteristic of affect: Affect is faster than thought. On this view, a great deal of human action and interaction occurs in this spontaneous, fast, self-organizing affective realm, and cognitive rationality is better viewed as an afterthought than the driver of action.

The Affective Field

Affect theory is a *relational* theory of human subjectivity and society. This is one of the things that makes affect theory different from theories that assume methodological individualism, such as rational choice and exchange theories (see Chapter 7). Even though the biological body is taken as a reference point, this body, at least in its first instance, is not thought of as a self-enclosed entity that begins and ends with its skin. We've already seen this idea anticipated under one Point 1—the subject is immersed across a field of sensations and impingements. It is only through the act of infolding that a body, distinct from its environment, begins to emerge. And even in the moment of infolding, bodies are still affectively connected to other bodies. In this respect, affect is described as prepersonal and presocial, or as Gregg and Seigworth (2010:3) put it, "subpersonal" and "subsocial." Anderson says that "affects are understood as impersonal intensities that do not belong to a subject or an object, nor do they reside in the mediating space between a subject and an object" (161).

Even though analysis of the affective field is central to contemporary affect theory, the concept also can be found at the origins of sociology. For example, Emile Durkheim's (1912/1965) concept of *collective effervescence* describes a presocial collective energy. The social, and in particular, the idea of the social—the collective representation—emerges out of frenzied group dances in which participants give up their individuality and participate in shared energy.

Even though affect theorists have not, as yet, incorporated Durkheim's ideas, they have made use of the ideas of his contemporary Gustav Le Bon, whose theories of crowd behavior were very influential in the late 19th century (Borch 2012). According to Teresa Brennan's (2004) interpretation of Le Bon, "Groups have heightened affectivity and a lower level of intellectual functioning" (53). They have an "unconscious irrational component," which can be studied as a social form in itself (53). Specifically, crowds operate via *social contagion* in which affect can directly travel from body to body. The crowd is not simply a collection of individuals but "was capable, ethically, of far more than an individual. An individual would put his own interest first. A crowd need not" (54).

Affect is relational in the sense that it connects and influences people in ways that exceed our usual theories of the self-enclosed body. Brennan puts it like this:

> The transmission of energy and affects is the norm rather than an aberration at the beginning of psychical life. The Western psyche is structured in such a way as to give a person the sense that their affects and feeling are their own, and that they are energetically and emotionally contained in the most literal sense. In other words, people experience themselves as containing their own emotions. (2004:24–25)

The early sociology of crowds offers one example of this transpersonal affective field. Brennan also finds examples in the more intimate spheres described by psychoanalysts. She presents the psychoanalytic relationship as a space in which both analyst (the doctor) and analysand (the client) transfer feelings into each other. More specifically, Brennan extends the psychoanalytic concepts of *projection* and *projective identification* to social interaction more generally. In brief, these terms refer to processes when, in a self-protective move, one individual "dumps" her feelings into another.

> A projection is what I disown in myself and see in you; a projective identification is what I succeed in having you experience in yourself, although it comes from me in the first place. For example, with my projection, I may see you as unimaginative, to avoid feeling that way myself, although somewhere I probably do. With my projective identification, you actually feel unimaginative, while I do not. (2004:29–30)

In the regular course of social life, people not only impose their own desires and feelings on others but can actually make others feel particular feelings.

Brennan imagines, then, a space in which affect is not self-contained but rather moves back and forth between people. This happens unconsciously and automatically. It constitutes the basis of relationship and forms an affective field. The space of shared affectivity is not simply incidental to relationships—an unusual and troubling occurrence—but rather forms the grounds out of which social life proceeds. First, we find ourselves in relational, affective fields, and then, we carve ourselves out of those fields.

This focus on the prepersonal and presocial affective field has also led affect theorists to theorize phenomena that historically have been considered unusual, odd, and unworthy of scientific study. Some, for example, have written about voice-hearing (Blackman 2001), telepathy (Blackman 2010), and mesmerism (Sloterdijk 1998/2011). All of these are phenomena in which the taken-for-granted distinction between self and other is blurred.

In another line of inquiry, numerous affect theorists invoke the phenomenon of "felt atmosphere." Brennan asks, "Is there anyone who has not, at least once, walked into a room and 'felt the atmosphere'?" (2004:1; see also Berlant 2010:102; Massumi 2010:62). Different groups of people, different settings, possess unique atmospheres. Each has its own feel, tone, and smell. The atmosphere is objective and real but can't be described by focusing on individuals and their interactions alone: "The affect in the room is a profoundly social thing. How exactly does it get there?" (Brennan 2004:68).

To explain how atmosphere "gets there" Brennan turns to research in the field of psychoneuroendocrinology. Atmosphere involves *chemical communication* and *chemical entrainment*. In fact, Brennan argues that chemical entrainment is the mechanism by which affect is transmitted between persons and affective fields are created. As defined by neurologists, entrainment "is a process whereby one person's or one group's nervous and hormonal systems are brought into alignment with another's" (Brennan 2004:9). Entrainment draws people into one another's spheres, producing an interpersonal connection.

Chemical communication can produce a presocial bond, but it can also produce conflict and domination. It is possible, for example, for one person to be overwhelmed by the pheromones produced by another. This is one form of nonconscious, affective domination—the grounds out of which psychic and social domination can grow. Returning to the idea of atmosphere, Brennan argues that chemical communication can create unique group atmospheres characterized by a particular feel and smell. It is precisely because these atmospheres are a constant, conditioning companion of group life that their importance remains unnoticed.

What is important to emphasize in these numerous examples is that the affective field cannot be reduced to the individual participants in the field. The affective field, in other words, is not simply a product of interpersonal exchanges, but rather is a sphere of its own kind (see also Sloterdijk 1998/2011). It operates, as we have noted earlier, according to its own affective logic and is characterized by an indeterminate excess of feeling. Indeed, in order to challenge social and political domination, affect theorists draw attention to and even try to activate the potentials of what they call "indeterminate zones" (Massumi 2010:66). The indeterminate zone is an affective, shared space that is full of unrealized potential. It is present in every relationship and social formation, but more often than not, the potential is restricted though political control and domination. That is, while affect promises multiple lines of action and relationship, in the contemporary moment affect has been captured in political economic formations that allow the continued reproduction of capitalist society.

The Ethics and Politics of Affect

So far, we have described some of the basic conceptual innovations introduced through affect theory. But the ideas discussed are really only a starting point in affect analysis. Most affect theorists have produced politically charged analyses in the spirit of Marxist theory, critical theory, and queer theory. Here, affect is treated as a site of potential liberation and freedom. Because it is a site of unrealized potential, the activation of affect can break old, constraining, harmful attachments and allow for the creation of new forms of action, feeling, and interaction.

Like poststructuralist, postmodern, and queer theories, the affect theorist celebrates the free flow of desire (affective energies) and wants to clear spaces in which the unpredictable potentials of affect can emerge in various combinations and forms.[8] In this context, many affect theorists promote a *relational ethic* that welcomes the unpredictable forms of affect produced when people from different cultures and backgrounds interact with one another. For these reasons, affect theory is frequently accompanied by expressions of hope for political and economic change (Grossberg 2010). Indeed, precisely because affect is always unpredictable, slippery, and indeterminate, the world can always potentially be other than it is.

At the same time, affect theorists have offered numerous analyses of how contemporary social powers have tried to seize the potential of affect for the purpose of political economic gain and social control. In affect theory, social control and social domination are usually described with terms borrowed from the postmodern thinkers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1972/1983, 1980/1987). So, for example, affects are created and controlled through the construction of "machinic assemblages." *Machinic assemblage* is a term that describes the ways that bodies, ideas, and technologies are hooked up in relationship to one another (like the construction of networks in actor-network theory). Particular assemblages produce affects unique to time and place. When effective, these machinic assemblages create populations and citizens that support the contemporary political and economic status quo (which for most affect theorists is a problem). In the current moment, affects are produced through assemblages that hook together capitalist markets, mass media imagery, and biotechnologies, among others. When machinic assemblages take over geographical, cultural, and psychical regions, this is referred to as *territorialization*. Territorialization is never full or complete and is often met with *deterritorialization* efforts.

Patricia Clough (2008) analyzes the relationship between affect and capitalism through the concept of *biomedia*. Bodies are organized differently in different historical periods. She distinguishes between the *body-as-organism* of the 19th century and the *biomediated* body of the present moment. The body-as-organism was a self-enclosed body that was created and reproduced through labor and consumption practices like those described by Marx. The biomediated body, on the other hand, is opened up to the flows and movements that characterize contemporary capitalism. Biomedia are the new technologies that allow historically unique engagements with the biological body. Here, affect is "captured" in at least two ways.

First, new media technologies generate and circulate affect in unprecedented ways. This is an era in which populations are not exclusively governed through ideology (i.e., narratives constructed by politicians to secure their power) but also through aesthetic and affective techniques. Media, mass entertainment, and political display work by stimulating and circulating affective energies:

> Capital extracts value from affect—around consumer confidence, political fears and so forth, such that the difference between commodification and labor, production and reproduction are collapsed in the modulation of the capacity to circulate affect. (Clough 2008:16)

On a similar note, Anderson (2010) describes how politicians generate "morale" among populations so as to support their "world-making" and "world-destroying" activities (see also Orr 2006). Morale holds the public body together in times of fear and panic, especially in the midst of war.

The second way that affect is captured is through biomedicine. Biomedicine is the growing sector concerned with the treatment and management of biological health and wellness. It is a high-tech industry connected to the machinations of capitalism. Biomedicine generates *biocapital*. Biocapital is the value—economic wealth—produced through knowledge about bodies and their affective capacities. On the one hand, the biomedical industry profits from the sale of biomedical technologies—for example, drugs. Referring to the writings of Eugene Thacker (2005:85), Clough describes another way that biomedicine produces value:

> On the other hand, what is more lucrative than the sale of drugs is the "booming industry of diagnostic tests" and the production of databases. There is the economic gain sought in maintaining "the recirculation of products (pills, testing

> technologies) back into information (databases, test results, marketing and media campaign." (2008:10)

Like affect theorists, the biomedical industry recognizes that the biological body possesses vast potentials. Biomedicine tries to find ways to manage, control, and capture these otherwise indeterminate and never fully knowable affective forces. These are captured in knowledge databases that describe that various capacities of different kinds of bodies. The question for contemporary biomedicine is: What can particular bodies do, and even, what can particular bodies "be made to do" (Clough 2008:5)? The biomedical industry assumes that different bodies possess different kinds of genetic makeup and consequently possess unique potentials. For example, some bodies are seen as possessing genetic secrets that could help in the cure of disease (and in gaining the profits that would come from the cure of disease). The challenge for biomedicine is to map and then find ways to capture these potentials.

Here, affect theory overlaps with the concerns of critical theories of race and racism outlined in Chapter 11. Clough describes, for example, how the biomedical industry revives the scientific racism perpetuated in the 19th century. It assumes, for example, that the bodies of different "races" can do different things, each of which can be of unique value:

> What makes the biopolitics of the biomediated body a political economy, then, is the break into biology or "life itself" by carving out various populations in order to estimate the value of their capacities for life, or more precisely, their capacities to provide life for capital, a deployment of what Foucault described as racism. (Clough 2008:18)

Even though affect is never fully captured, biomedicine nevertheless creates a political and economic structure that organizes bodies through assessments of affective worth and value.

Finally, affect theorists have considered the ways that affect is managed in everyday life. Insofar as consumer and popular culture operate in the service of politics and capital, affective capture and control can be found here as well. This is a world in which regulation of populations is achieved not only through the direct manipulation of the biological body (a la Clough) but also through the creation of widespread cultural moods. Common here is the idea that contemporary populations are caught up in shame, humiliation, and other self-degrading (and therefore politically defeating) emotions. Lawrence Grossberg, a cultural theorist recognized for his work on popular culture, writes,

> I want to suggest, for example, that the media today are producing what for the moment I would call a structure of feeling or a mood (I am not sure which, but I do not think it is an emotion) of humiliation and this is a key to understanding much about the articulation of the popular and the political. (2010:330)

Lauren Berlant describes a similar sentiment when she says that contemporary American culture is characterized by "cruel optimism." Optimism is a kind of affect, a feeling, in which one places trust in the promises/potentials "contained in the present moment" (2010:93). In an ideal world, the promises of the moment—in other words, the multiple potentials of affect—would find opportunities for actualization.

Cruel optimism, on the other hand, is the attachment to a set of ideas or objects whose potential cannot be realized. It is "an enabling object that is also disabling" (Berlant 2010:95). It is a promise that can never be realized. Contemporary America is a place where one lives, paradoxically, in a state of optimism that can never be actualized. The classic example is the myth of the American dream. Although many Americans believe that through hard work and determination they can become wealthy and happy, in fact the capitalist economy requires continuing inequality. Through cruel optimism, then, people are caught up in dreams that can never be realized. The point is that the popular culture and media, in support of the capitalist economy, sets up an appealing, though self-destructive, affective condition. Like most affect theorists, Berlant expects that by naming cruel optimism for what it is, we can better free otherwise trapped affective potentials.

Prosumption Theory

For much of its history, sociological theory has had a productivist bias (Ritzer and Slater 2001). This means that, especially when it came to economic analysis, sociologists focused their attention on the central role that the production of commodities played in the organization modern life. Though much theory continues to suffer from this productivist bias, the last 50 years has nevertheless seen the development of theories of consumption. Some of these theories even have roots in the classical period. For example, Georg Simmel (1904/1971) discussed the role that fashion played in the creation of modern identities. More recently, Gilles Lipovetsky (1987/1994; see Chapter 13) has argued that fashion is important to the development of modern individualism and democracy. Also, writing at the turn of the 20th century, Thorstein Veblen (1899/1994) introduced the terms *conspicuous leisure* and *conspicuous consumption*. Pierre Bourdieu (1984a) developed similar concepts in his work on *Distinction*, in which he described how taste and cultural capital create and reproduce stratified social orders (see Chapter 9). Consumer theorists have also described the role that space plays in organizing consumer society. Walter Benjamin (1982/1999), for example, provided a Marxian inspired analysis of the Parisian arcades, an early version of the shopping mall. The arcades were the first in a series of developments that shifted the locus of the modern economy from the sites of production (factories) to the sites of consumption (shopping malls). These arcades also brought into existence of new kind of person, the flaneur, or in more modern terms, the window shopper. Other analyses of these sites of consumption include Ritzer's work on McDonald's (2014; also see Chapter 12) and the "cathedrals of consumption" (2010a). Finally, postmodern theorist Jean Baudrillard (1970/1998; see Chapter 13) began his academic career with an incisive analysis of the "consumer society." Though the analysis begins with an account of the role played by the department store (in France, the "drugstore"), in contemporary society Baudrillard is also interested in the role that signs and sign systems (e.g., advertising) play in creating a culture saturated by consumer objects and meanings (for a complete review of theories of consumption, see Ritzer, Goodman, Wiedenhoft 2001).

The most recent development of this line of inquiry are *theories of prosumption*. The concept of prosumption was first introduced by futurist Alvin Toffler (1980). Since then, it has been developed for use in sociological analysis by Ritzer and his colleagues (Ritzer 2014, 2015b, 2015c, 2015d; Ritzer, Dean, and Jurgenson 2012; Ritzer and Jurgenson 2010). Prosumption theory attempts to overcome the theoretical bias embedded in both productivist and consumptivist theories. Those approaches, though important to the history of sociological thought, overemphasized either production or consumption. Prosumption theory aims to overcome that binary and to show that prosumption is in fact a primary process that undergirds both "production" and "consumption." As Ritzer (2014:11) puts it, production and consumption are "sub-types" of prosumption.

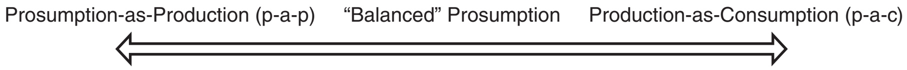
Prosumption, of course, combines the words *pro*duction and con*sumption* to describe "the interrelated process of production and consumption" (Ritzer 2014:3). It refers to economic activity in which people both consume and produce at the same time. An example of this is the prosumption of IKEA furniture. On the one hand, in purchasing the IKEA product, people consume the furniture. On the other hand, in an act of production, before using the furniture people must assemble at least some of the furniture. Another example is Facebook. Paid employees of Facebook provide a basic architecture for the site. However, it is the unpaid Facebook prosumers who provide the content that makes Facebook an attractive site for other prosumers. The act of building and sharing a profile is at the same time a productive and consumptive activity that also benefits Facebook.

There are different kinds of prosumption. Ritzer conceptualizes these in terms of the relative balance of productive and consumptive elements in a particular kind of activity. For example, some kinds of prosumption are more heavily weighted toward production, and some kinds of prosumption are more heavily weighted toward consumption. To conceptualize the various forms of prosumption, Ritzer provides a diagram of a prosumption continuum (see Figure 14.1). At one end of the continuum is prosumption-as-production (p-a-p). This form of prosumption is what sociologists have typically called production: "P-a-p involves those (typically workers) who consume what is needed in order to be able to produce things (goods, services, etc.) with what they have consumed" (Ritzer 2015d:409). Every act of production necessarily includes some consumption. For example, the person who puts a hubcap on a car (production) in an automobile factory must first go and get the hubcap (consumption). Though in this example consumption is relatively minimal, it is nevertheless a part of the production process.

At the other end of the continuum is prosumption-as-consumption (p-a-c), or what sociologists have typically called consumption. Here, too, though most of the activity is focused not on making but on consuming, some form of productive activity is involved. For example, people who eat at McDonald's restaurants are expected to bus their own tables and to clean up after themselves.

Ritzer argues that in between these two extreme forms of prosumption is *balanced prosumption*. Here, the acts of production and consumption are more or less evenly weighted. An example of this is the use of an ATM machine. The "work" of operating the ATM (e.g., entering the password) is about as time-consuming and difficult as taking ("consuming") the cash. The analytic distinction between p-a-p, p-a-c, and balanced prosumption also allows for a historical distinction. We will return to the historical aspect near the end of this section. For the moment, suffice it to say that balanced prosumption is more common in contemporary societies than in previous societies. This brings us to the new means of prosumption.

FIGURE 14.1 ● The Prosumption Continuum


Prosumption-as-Production (p-a-p)
"Balanced" Prosumption
Production-as-Consumption (p-a-c)

The New Means of Prosumption

In explaining why balanced prosumption has become more common in the present moment, Ritzer, Dean, and Jurgenson (2012) describe a number of historical factors that have contributed to its growth. For example, the rise of the service industry and the emergence of postmodern theory have led to the blurring of distinctions between binaries such as production and consumption. Most important among these historical factors is the development of technologies, such as computers and the Internet, that give rise to the *new means of prosumption*.

Marx distinguished between the *new means of production* and the *new means of consumption*, though given his productivist bias, the former concept was far more important to him. For Marx, the setting of production (p-a-p, in the terms of this discussion) is the factory, and the means of production are the technologies (sewing machines) that make possible capitalist production. Ritzer elaborated the concept of means of consumption through his discussion of settings such as McDonald's restaurants (2015a) and shopping malls (cathedrals of consumption, 2010a) that at once stimulate and control consumption (p-a-c). As an extension of these earlier ideas, the new means of prosumption are defined as "those recently developed prosumption sites that make it possible for people to prosume goods and services" (2015b:6). Examples of material technologies that facilitate the new means of prosumption are 3-D printers, self-scanner machines, ATMs, and medical technologies that allow people to measure their own vitals at home. These examples aside, the new means of prosumption are most heavily dependent on digital technologies. Much more so than material sites, these allow extensive and involved prosumption. Examples include Internet sites such as ebay, Travelocity, Facebook, Foursquare, YouTube, and Etsy. This said, in actual practice most of the new means of prosumption combine material and digital elements. They operate in an "augmented reality" where the material and digital interpenetrate (Jurgenson 2012). At least in North America, increasing realms of economic activity are mediated through new means of prosumption that not only encourage but in some cases require prosumption.

In one further step, Ritzer (2015d:418) suggests that human prosumption soon may be overtaken by "smart prosuming machines." Technologies are now being developed that both produce and consume at the same time, without the direct involvement of the human prosumer. An example of this is wearable technologies (such as the Fitbit and the smartphone) that "read" people's bodies and follow their movements (an act of consumption) only to send this information to other technologies (an act of production) for further compilation and analysis. Ritzer (2015d:417) writes, "One's smartphone is, unbeknown to most, collecting (consuming) data on one's location and transmitting (producing) those data, at least anonymously, to computers that collect it all as part of 'big data.'" Here, Ritzer envisions a dystopian future in which human lives are organized through an Internet of Things: prosuming smart machines in contact with one another, making decisions for human users, without their conscious input. This emphasis on the prosuming machine connects prosumption theory to some of the cutting-edge ideas discussed in earlier sections of this chapter. Like actor-network theories and post-social theories, prosumption theory recognizes the growing role that nonhuman agents play in the organization of social life.

Prosumer Capitalism

Ritzer's (2015c) work on prosumption leads him to propose a new grand narrative for sociology. He suggests that we can understand the history of modern (and increasingly global) society as having moved from an age of producer capitalism to consumer capitalism to prosumer capitalism. Of course, consistent with what we have said before, Ritzer is clear that economic activity in each of these periods combines elements of production, consumption, and prosumption. However, each of these forms of capitalism structures prosumption—and hence large areas of social life—in unique ways. In the age of prosumer capitalism, prosumption leaned toward the p-a-p end of the prosumption continuum and gave rise to theories almost exclusively concerned with production. In the age of consumer capitalism, prosumption leaned toward the p-a-c end of the prosumption continuum and gave rise to theories of consumption.

The focus on prosumption also requires that we rethink familiar sociological concepts such as alienation, exploitation and the nature of work. For example, Ritzer spends a great deal of time discussing how capitalist exploitation has worked in each of these periods. The best-known account of exploitation was provided by Marx in his analysis of producer capitalism. In effect, Marx says that capitalists make money by paying workers less than the full worth of the commodities that they produce. In more technical terms, Marx says that "[t]he rate of surplus-value is therefore an exact expression for the degree of exploitation of labor-power by capital, or of the laborer by the capitalist" (Marx cited in Ritzer 2015c:423). In consumer capitalism, consumers are exploited in two ways. First, in some instances they are forced to pay more for products than their actual worth. Capitalists play a role in this exploitation by manipulating cycles of supply and demand. Second, the consumer society encourages hyperconsumption. It compels the excessive consumption of goods for which the consumer has no actual use or need (Baudrillard 1970/1998; Ritzer 2012).

These kinds of exploitation continue to exist in the contemporary moment. However, they are joined, and potentially overtaken, by prosumer capitalism. Ritzer and Jurgenson (2010:14) say that prosumer capitalism is characterized by three unique features. First, there is a trend toward unpaid rather than paid labor. Second, prosumer capitalism offers many products at no cost (e.g., access to Facebook). Third, "the system is marked by a new abundance where scarcity once predominated" (14).

On the first point, prosumers do work for free that once would have been done by paid employees. This is part of a more general trend in which businesses have found ways to put consumers to work (see also Dujarier 2015). Early examples of this kind of prosumption included getting customers to pump their own gas and having people use self-checkout machines at grocery stores. The shift to unpaid prosumption leads to numerous savings for business. For one, businesses no longer need to pay employees for work that is done for free by prosumers. Further, because there is no formal relationship between businesses and prosumers, there is no long-term obligation to pay them for their work or to pay for benefits such as health care insurance.

Second, in prosumer capitalism, products are offered for free because profit lies elsewhere. Most importantly, prosumption is connected to an information economy in which data on people's behaviors and attributes can be sold for profit. This data is more important to prosumer capitalism that the commodities that are, at least on the surface, exchanged through prosumption. Certainly, websites such as YouTube depend upon the work done by prosumers to create and upload videos. This attracts other prosumers and advertisers to the sites. However, equally important is the fact that when prosumers use sites such as YouTube, ebay, and Facebook they are generating data that these sites can sell for profit. Ritzer writes,

> However, the ultimate source of great future profits, and in many ways the ultimate commodity in prosumer capitalism, is the information about prosumers that is provided by them free of charge and is being accumulated in the form of "big data" on such sites. . . . This information has great value to capitalist firms in terms of knowledge about the tastes . . . and interests of potential future prosumers. This is clearly the case with an Internet site such as Facebook which is not overtly selling anything, but is already earning some money (and will earn much more money in the future) from information provided free of charge by the prosumers. (2015b:11)

Indeed, turning to the third point, the growth of prosumer capitalism is part of a more general shift away from economies of scarcity to economies of abundance. The information society (Castells 1998; also see Chapter 10) introduces technologies that allow the previously unimaginable creation and dissemination of information. This focus on information is not restricted to the Internet economy but is found in many areas of contemporary economic life. For example, earlier in this chapter we discussed affect theory. Affect theorists (Clough 2008) point out that one of the major potential sources of profit for the biomedical industry is the collection and control of information about the biological and genetic capacities of people and populations. In prosumer capitalism, then, the problem is no longer producing specific commodities in more efficient ways. Rather, the problem is finding effective ways of generating, capturing, and managing vast amounts of information in ways that are profitable. The prosumer, Ritzer argues, plays a key role in both supplying and managing such information.

In this context, Ritzer (2015d) suggests that prosumer capitalism creates a new kind of exploitation. Producer capitalism is *singly exploitative*. It creates value by exploiting the worker. Consumer capitalism is *doubly exploitative*. It creates value by exploiting both worker and the consumer. Prosumer capitalism is *synergistically doubly exploitative*. By this, Ritzer means that because prosumers are engaged in productive and consumptive activities at one and the same time, they are exploited as both producer and consumer at one and the same time. Ritzer describes the differences in this way:

> P-a-ps were exploited mainly in factories and offices, while p-a-cs were exploited primarily in shopping venues. In addition, the exploitation of p-a-cs and p-a-ps occurred at different times. P-a-ps were exploited primarily during the work day, while p-a-cs were exploited largely after work and on weekends. Now, the exploitation of the prosumer (both as p-a-p and p-a-c) is increasingly likely to take place in the same setting (including online [and] at home amidst the family . . .) and often at about the same time. That is, the exploitation of p-a-p and p-a-c interpenetrates, creating a synergy that results in a new form, and an unprecedented level, of exploitation. (2015d:426)

This, it should be underlined, is a particularly pessimistic theory of prosumption. Ultimately, prosumer capitalism uses the labor of prosumers to increase the wealth of a relatively small corporate elite, often without the knowledge of prosumers.

Yet, the very idea of prosumption opens up potential for revolutionary changes in the economy and social life. This is because, at least initially, prosumption was grounded in a "cyber-libertarian" or "hacker" ethic that prizes democracy and individualism (Ritzer and Jurgenson 2010:22). In fact, many prosumer sites such as Wikipedia, Linux, and

Mozilla are opposed to capitalism. They take seriously the idea that prosumption can help to overcome the inequalities that, as Marx argued, are fundamental to capitalist civilization. Indeed, the emergence of countercultural, counterconsumer movements, such as the Maker movement and the Burning Man festival, all speak to a growing interest in forms of prosumerism that operate outside of—even in opposition to—capitalism (Chen 2015). The question, then, is whether these movements have the momentum and ability to initiate a revolutionary shift in the social order. Ritzer is doubtful. The activities involved (e.g., do-it-yourself at the ATM or in the fast-food restaurant and, more importantly, on online sites such as Facebook) are highly seductive to prosumers, *and* capitalists love the gift of free labor from prosumers. In the future, Ritzer expects that capitalists will find increasingly inventive ways to extract and exploit this free labor and generate even more value out of prosumption.

Summary

In this chapter, we examine four theories that have proven to be of particular significance in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. While each offers a unique set of conceptual tools, they also address overlapping themes such as identity formation, the impact of science and technology in the formation of society, and the role that information and information technology play in the organization of contemporary social life.

Queer theory is a perspective that addresses the construction of sex and sexuality. Unlike gay and lesbian studies, it is not an identity theory; that is, it does not believe that people possess a real or true sexual identity. Rather, sexuality is social and discursively produced, a product of a performance, rather than an inherent feature of persons. The 19th and 20th centuries have seen the development of the categories of *heterosexuality* and *homosexuality*. This dichotomy has organized social life into the present moment. Queer theorists seek to deconstruct these taken-for-granted categories so as to allow for the playful reorganization of sexuality, identity, and social life more generally.

Actor-network theory is a perspective that grows out of the larger field of science and technology studies. ANT is most notable for according nonhuman actors their deserved significance in social theory. Affect theory also draws on work in science and technology studies but combines these with work in queer theory and poststructuralism. Affect theory claims to take the findings of the life sciences seriously, but it does this in different ways than perspectives such as sociobiology. In particular, it treats nature and biology as a field of forces and energies. Affect theorists study the ways that these affective energies impact subject formation and the way that they have been submitted to processes of social control and manipulation. Like queer theorists, affect theorists seek a form of social and political organization in which affect (life energy, desire) can flow freely.

Finally, prosumption theory is a perspective that attempts to overcome the common sociological distinction between production and consumption. It argues that this is a false binary, and in fact, all economic activity involves some combination of production and consumption. Prosumption theorist George Ritzer has proposed a continuum to describe the different kinds of prosumption: prosumption-as-production (p-a-p), prosumption-as-consumption (p-a-c), and balanced prosumption. While people have always been prosumers, the emergence of new means of prosumption has led to increased levels of balanced prosumption. The idea of prosumption also gives rise to a new grand theory of modernity. We have passed from an age of producer capitalism to consumer capitalism to an emerging age of prosumer capitalism. While prosumerism provides the potential for radically new forms of social and economic life, it is more likely that in the future prosumerism will be colonized, for profit, by capitalism.

The newer theories like those discussed in this chapter continually refresh and challenge sociological theory by adding new themes of study and new ways of thinking not only about them but about many other subjects in the field. It is safe to predict that more new theories will emerge in the coming years, and that they, too, will enrich the field in similar ways.

Notes

1. This is a modified version of a piece originally written by Michael J. Ryan.
2. Here, we should distinguish between queer theory and the area of sociological inquiry called gay and lesbian studies (for more on this, see Giffney 2004). Gay and lesbian studies takes seriously the concept of identity. It studies and theorizes the lives and experiences of gay and lesbian persons. This is an important task because historically these experiences have been marginalized and silenced. Even though, as we will see, queer theory is also concerned with the political problem of marginalization, it is nevertheless wary of identity thinking.
3. See Restivo (2011) for more detail on Latour's refusal of Durkheimian sociology, as well as the problems and misconceptions that have accompanied that refusal.
4. Actually, this is offered as a definition of the "sociology of translation" seen as the generic form of ANT (Brown and Capdevila 1999).
5. This word seems to be at odds with the earlier point about the broad concern with actants and seems to imply a focus on human actors. This also tends to support Callon's (1999:182) critique of ANT for offering "an anonymous, ill-defined and indiscernible" perspective on the actor.
6. Not all affect theories directly engage scientific ideas. Gregg and Seigworth (2010) identify at least eight different intellectual influences on affect theory, not all of which are connected to the life sciences.
7. This said, scholars in the humanities and social sciences have been criticized for what some view as their misunderstanding and misuse of scientific concepts. In the 1990s, physicist Alan Sokol accused scholars in the humanities of using scientific concepts for ideological purposes. His critique was part of an academic debate referred to as the "science wars." More recently, Papoulias and Callard have directly addressed affect theory to consider the "strange and partial (mis)translation of complex scientific models into the epistemologically distinct space of the humanities and social sciences" (2010:31).
8. Not all affect theorists are committed to this view of political change (see Grossberg 2010).