

Sociology 915, October 5, 2004
Agenda, session 6: mechanisms

I adopted a different strategy for this week's agenda since there seemed to be so much overlap among the interrogations. I have just listed a number of questions/issues from the interrogations and readings without attributing any of them to specific people. I think this will work for this session.

- 1. Mechanisms vs Black Boxes and Mechanisms vs Laws**
- 2. What precisely does Boudon mean when he talked about a "final explanation"? Does this provide a useful way of telling us when there is no need to worry about "opening a black box"?**
- 3. Can there be supra-individual mechanisms (meso-mechanisms, macro-mechanisms, etc.), and are they ever "final explanations"?**
- 4. Mechanisms vs "variable analysis": Sorenson's argument – what is at stake here?**
- 5. Critique of "Grand Theory": Is there an inherent tension between the kinds of Grand Theory van den Berg attacks and the search for explanatory mechanisms?**
- 6. What is the relationship between the following antinomies:**
 - macro- vs. micro-level causal claims
 - long causal chains vs. short causal chains
 - broad-range theories vs. middle-range theories