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Contested Inheritance:
The Emergence of Social Science Research in New Zealand

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements
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Abstract

The substantive task of the thesis is to explore a dimension of social change – the emergence of social science research within New Zealand by 1984. The thesis begins by asking questions about the status of any account – as description, understanding, or explanation. In the first instance, these questions are discussed within positivist and anti-positivist traditions. Following on from these, the work examines a series of post-positivist approaches that focus on method, general theory, and metatheorising.

Many accounts of social science development emphasise the role of a rational social science idea, others stress contextual considerations. In finding these wanting, the thesis argues for the incorporation of culture, structure and agency, and discusses attempts at resolving these within the work of Anthony Giddens and Andrew Abbott.

The final part of the theoretical discussion explores the potential of Critical Realism for causal analysis. Within this tradition, Margaret Archer's work is particularly useful with its commitment to robust notions of agency, culture and structure, and emphasising their interplay through time. With some modest revision to attune her position to the demands of practice, the thesis suggests 'Retrospective Narrative Realism' that incorporates ontological insights and the two practical moves of analysis and narrative. The thesis argues that these moves must be explicit, using the analytic to create hypothesis that are then tested via narratives that link emerging structural and cultural forms.

The thesis uses this approach for the substantive task of writing a theoretically informed account of social science research. It works within the spheres of State, University and broader social spaces, centring interests and the role of conditioned interaction. The account is presented within four phases: *the inheritance* – research by the State for the purposes of the State; *in search of independent means* – research by the State of broader social forms; *alternative benefactors* – research of social issues by broader social and University interests; *on the brink of bankruptcy* – a questioning of the State and social forms by social and University interests. Over these four periods it is possible to trace the emergence of social research, then social science, and then specific disciplines.

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