The publication of *The Handbook of Public Sociology* is timely and important. While it reveals the tensions and disputes about public sociology within the discipline of sociology, it also makes clear its potential to educate the public on many crucial social problems and issues confronting our society. This volume is a must-read for those who believe that sociology’s findings, theories, and ideas should be more widely disseminated.” — William Julius Wilson, Lewis P. and Linda L. Geyser University Professor, Harvard University

Public sociology—an approach to sociology that aims to communicate with and actively engage wider audiences—has been one of the most widely discussed topics in the discipline in recent years. The *Handbook of Public Sociology* presents a comprehensive look at every facet of public sociology in theory and practice. It pays particular attention to how public sociology can complement more traditional types of sociological practice to advance both the analytical power of the discipline and its ability to benefit society. The volume features contributions from a stellar list of authors, including several past presidents of the American Sociological Association such as Michael Burawoy, a leading proponent of public sociology.

The first two sections of the *Handbook of Public Sociology* look at public sociology in relation to the other three types of practice—professional, policy, and critical—with an emphasis on integrating the four types into a holistic model of theory and practice. Subsequent sections focus on issues such as teaching public sociology at various levels, case studies in the application of public sociology, and the role of public sociology in special fields in the discipline, while continuing to emphasize interdependence of the four types of sociology. The concluding chapter by Michael Burawoy addresses current debates surrounding public sociology and presents a constructive vision for the future that embraces and improves upon all four types of sociology.

The *Handbook of Public Sociology* transcends differences in the field and will appeal to a wide range of academics, students, and practitioners.

Vincent Jeffries is professor of sociology at California State University, Northridge.

Handbook of Public Sociology
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In his 2004 presidential address to the American Sociological Association, Michael Burawoy (2005a) issued a call to sociologists for commitment to a common ethos, reciprocity among forms of practice, and greater societal engagement. Unique to this message is a model of the discipline that has the potential to change sociology in a manner that will greatly increase both its fund of knowledge and understanding and its contribution to society. In this call for greater accomplishment Burawoy “has actually proposed a new vision for our discipline” and thus “has made an attempt to imagine the future” (Abbott 2007:208).

The major theme of this Handbook of Public Sociology is the nature and importance of Burawoy’s holistic model of sociological practice: professional, the theoretical traditions and research programs; critical, the interrogation of the good and of disciplinary moral visions; policy, the evaluation of means to reach a designated end; and public, a dialogue between sociologists and publics regarding sociological knowledge and understandings (Burawoy 2005a).

The foundation of the model’s potential is the assumption of the interdependence of these forms of sociology. This is a fundamental focus of this handbook and is concisely and powerfully expressed by Burawoy (2005a:15) in his presidential address: “Indeed, my normative vision of the discipline of sociology is of reciprocal interdependence among our four types—an organic solidarity in which each type of sociology derives energy, meaning, and imagination from its connection to the others.”

Emphasis can be placed on the four sociologies model, rather than just on the idea of public sociology. The most fundamental contribution to the discipline is the model. The idea of an interdependence of the forms of
practice in which each one can add to the excellence of the others is foundational in transforming the discipline. Focus is thereby placed on the idea that each form of practice is enhanced by giving attention to the essential concerns and agenda of the others. Likewise, if the forms become detached from each other, they move toward diminished performance and possibly pathology. If public sociology is detached from the other forms of practice, it too will diminish in validity and effectiveness. If this disciplinary model is fully integrated into every form of practice, it can lift the science of sociology to a higher level of performance in all its aspects.

In this holistic model, a discipline that can come closer to realizing its most comprehensive potential can be created. For example, how professional and policy perspectives can mutually enhance each other is illustrated in a recent issue of a research journal. At the editor’s request, each author included in their article a brief consideration of how their research contributed to “the application of relationship theory and findings to problems of the real world” (Boon 2008:iii). Positive results of this consideration included a variety of potentially useful practical implications of research findings, and an awareness of the need for greater attention to adequately communicating and disseminating the results of research. Such broadening of perspective and contribution would become routine with the implementation of the holistic model in practice. Various modifications of this nature that connect different forms of practice have great potential for transforming the discipline in a positive direction.

The four sociologies model provides the basis for the emergence of a community of scholars focused on the discernment of the truth in all its relevant aspects and applications, and the appropriate dissemination of that truth to various audiences. This community potentially embraces all sociologists, both those in academic positions and those in non-academic positions of various types. The effective path to this positive transformation of the discipline is the full development and implementation of the model of four sociologies.

This volume is intended to provide a description and analysis of the holistic sociology model from a variety of perspectives and in a number of different contexts. In part I through part VI of this volume, attention is focused on the nature of the model itself, how it can be established and perfected within the discipline, the application of the model in teaching, case studies of organic public sociology, the use of the model in special fields of sociology, and future directions.

This introductory chapter has two major objectives. The first is to provide a brief overview of each chapter, emphasizing the context of the four sociologies model. The second is to present the basic themes that link the chapters into a unified vision of the discipline and its potential future directions. This extensive demonstration and explication of the holistic so-
sociology perspective provides a basis for each person to make an informed judgment regarding its nature, application, and potential.

OVERVIEW OF THE VOLUME

Part I: Exploring and Elaborating the Holistic Model

The characteristics of Burawoy’s four forms model of public sociology are the foundation of its potential impact upon the discipline. The nature of each form of sociology, its possible contributions to the system, and the relationships that exist among the four modes of practice, are major aspects of the model that are considered and evaluated in part I. Two of the chapters apply the model to a system of thought, while two suggest modifications to the model. Another chapter identifies and elaborates issues suggested by the model.

Chapter 2, by Lawrence T. Nichols, describes and explicates Burawoy’s theoretical model by comparing it with the system of sociology developed by Pitirim A. Sorokin. Nichols begins by observing that both these scholars were presidents of the American Sociological Association, were controversial, “expressed profound optimism” in the science of sociology, and “invite their audience to imagine an alternative future for the field.” In the first part of the chapter Nichols describes Sorokin’s scholarly career in terms of Burawoy’s model, showing that his legacy includes major publications in all four forms of practice. This legacy culminated in Sorokin’s system of integralism, which is described by Nichols in terms of seven major characteristics. This account of Sorokin’s system of sociology provides the foundation for an imagined debate between Sorokin and Burawoy regarding the strong and weak points of their respective sociologies. This imaginary exchange yields the conclusion that both scholars “would have regarded one another as kindred spirits seeking to reinvigorate their discipline within a context of perceived professional decline and historical crisis.”

Chapter 3, by Raymond A. Morrow, is intended to “offer some constructive suggestions for revising and reframing the original model.” A review and evaluation of the debate regarding Burawoy’s four form model provides the basis for five steps proposed to reconstruct the model. The first step involves eliminating the instrumental-reflexive distinction. The second step is to replace critical sociology with a broader and more inclusive category of social theory. The third reconstructive step is to reformulate the idea of professional sociology to emphasize a variety of explanatory strategies. The fourth step is to recognize basic divisions within policy sociology between a pragmatic orientation directed toward particular ends and a broader orientation directed toward more radical and visionary changes. Finally, the fifth
step is to recognize that social theory, professional sociology, and policy and public sociologies are the conditions for institutionalizing sociology as a field of knowledge that can inform a “process of humanization and democratization.”

Chapter 4, by Joe Feagin, Sean Elias, and Jennifer Mueller, offers “several criticisms and modifications” of the four form model. Most fundamentally, a basic model that combines professional and policy sociology into “mainstream sociology” and combines critical and public into “critical public sociology” is presented. An opposition between these two forms, both historically and in terms of their adherents and purposes, is posited. Critical public sociology is viewed as a “countersystem” that has existed since the start of the discipline. This countersystem tradition identifies social injustices, documents them empirically, and describes their basic sociological nature and relation to the general society and culture. This “morally guided” tradition is oriented to visions of a future society characterized by “egalitarian resource access, democratic pluralism, and social justice.” Sociology is seen as a vehicle for more fully realizing these alternatives to the current state of society.

In chapter 5 Wendell Bell addresses “two missing links” in the discussion of public sociology and the other forms of practice. These essential and inherent issues are how “sociologists as social scientists enter into public dialogues” regarding “what the future outcomes of actions, events, and processes could or will be” and “what defines a good society and what values ought to be served.” The future perspective inevitably involves choices among alternatives, and various sociological methods can be adapted to study both possibilities and consequences. This future perspective also involves judgments regarding the good. Various sources indicate considerable agreement on universal values. The method of epistemic implication constitutes an objective method for examining these value assertions. By contributing more complex and rigorous thinking to public debates about the future and about the good, public sociologists can help create a situation in which “people could imagine a better world that was truly possible and design the actions that would create it.”

Vincent Jeffries describes the social thought of Pitirim A. Sorokin in chapter 6. His writings span the four forms of practice and are “the ideal exemplar for illustrating the validity and analytical power” of the four form model of public sociology. Sorokin’s professional sociology is innovative, comprehensive, and supported by historical and comparative research. It includes the idea of an integral ontology and epistemology that incorporates philosophical and religious ideas within the sociological frame of reference. Sorokin’s critical sociology derives from this professional base, and is directed toward both sociology and the general society. It includes a critique of existing conditions in both spheres and the formulation of posi-
tive alternatives. Sorokin’s policy sociology is directed toward realizing the positive vision of an integral order in which altruistic love and solidarity are increased in society. These three sociologies provide the basis for a public sociology that “provides a compelling and relevant message admirably suited to dialogue with the public about a better world and how it can be achieved.”

**Part II: Establishing and Perfecting the Model**

The chapters in part II consider various measures that will contribute to the establishment of public sociology and the development of its potential. Topics are diverse, including necessary changes in the discipline itself, standards to evaluate public sociology, writing for the public, and recapturing the perspective of the sociological imagination. The common theme that unites the chapters is the conditions necessary for the development of public sociology, both within the discipline and in terms of its effectiveness in society.

Chapter 7, by Herbert J. Gans, focuses on changes that need to be made in the discipline of sociology for public sociology to flourish. These changes are “urgent” because “the active development of public sociology is essential to the healthy future of the discipline.” Public sociology is sociological writing that is intended for an audience in the general public. Its primary purpose is to assist its readers in understanding the society they live in. Sociology needs to produce “eye-opening” studies that are “original, insightful and attention-attracting empirical and theoretical research on topics useful and relevant to all parts of the general public.” Such “topic-driven” studies will foster the growth of public sociology. Another needed disciplinary change is the creation of a varied incentive structure to encourage the practice and publication of public sociology. In graduate education needed changes include partial curriculum tracks for public sociology, and collaboration with disciplines such as journalism and the humanities.

The goal of Norval D. Glenn in chapter 8 is “to formulate a set of suggested standards for distinguishing between good and bad public sociology.” These are stated in terms of what the individual sociologist “can do to foster good public sociology.” Ultimate values are ends that do not depend on beliefs about empirical reality, while relative values do. Science cannot assess ultimate values, but sociologists are involved in the assessment of derivative values in terms of their relation to ultimate values. Thus, two basic standards are that the public sociologist can devise and assess means, or derivative values, in terms of their effectiveness in realizing ultimate values. In doing so, however, only tentative commitments should be made to derivative values. Other standards include avoiding taking positions to please others, opposing unwarranted claims, communicating both the potential
contributions of sociology and the limits of its knowledge, being motivated by the attempt to make the world better, engaging in effective communication, and protecting the credibility and respectability of sociology.

Chapter 9, by Damon Mayrl and Laurel Westbrook, confronts the practical issue of how to do public sociology by “introducing a series of concrete proposals about how to write public sociology.” The foundation of successful public sociology is accountability. This orientation involves being responsible to publics and “is achieved by making a good-faith effort to engage with chosen publics in an attitude of mutual respect.” Accountability has three components: dialogue, relevance, and accessibility. Dialogue involves incorporating non-academic opinions in shaping context, approaching a topic with terms that are part of the public debate, and presenting data in a manner publics can independently evaluate. Relevance involves both demonstrating the utility of sociology in increasing understanding, and making abstract concepts concrete and meaningful. Accessibility means writing in a form the public is familiar with. Each of these components are illustrated by excerpts from exemplars of public sociology. For public sociology to succeed, graduate education needs to give more attention to writing.

In chapter 10 Frank Furedi suggests that public sociology can contribute greatly to the content of discourse in the public sphere. To realize this potential “one of the main purposes of public sociology has to be its commitment to rising to the challenge of recapturing the sociological imagination.” Certain problematic viewpoints must be recognized. First, the disparaging, patronizing, and elitist attitudes toward the general public often held by academic intellectuals must be resisted. Rather, there should be an effort to present a sociological view of the world to wide and diverse audiences. Second, there is a prevailing cultural belief that individual distress is best understood in emotional and therapeutic terms, and as a product of the choices and internal life of the individual. This must be replaced with a sociological perspective that enables individuals to view their experiences in a historical and social context that gives them meaning. This creates a worldview that “can encourage purposeful public activity and the exercise of agency.”

Part III: Teaching and Public Sociology

Students are the most numerous public that sociologists regularly communicate with regarding sociological knowledge and understandings. In part III the chapters consider the relation between teaching and public sociology at the high school and university levels, respectively. The chapters identify and analyze both separate and combined influences of the four sociological perspectives on teaching. At both levels of teaching, the holistic nature of the public sociology model is illustrated.
In chapter 11 Michael DeCesare examines the relation between the four forms of practice in the context of high school sociology. One-third of a million high school students take a course in sociology in any given year. He develops the central thesis that “without the strong presence of professional sociology, the other three types cannot and will not be developed in high school sociology courses.” The foundational content of professional sociology is viewed as theory, methods, and the history of the discipline. Evidence is presented that indicates that levels of training and of knowledge and the understanding of professional sociology are low among teachers of sociology in high schools. Actions that could be undertaken by the American Sociological Association to begin to correct this situation are described. A dramatic example of “what could be” is provided by a study conducted by students of attitudes toward bullying. Findings were presented to a panel and the assembled student body with the purpose of stimulating discussion and formulating effective policies to reduce bullying and violence.

The relation between the four sociological perspectives and university teaching is the focus of chapter 12, by Caroline Hodges Persell. The chapter elaborates in various ways the idea that the “articulation of four types of sociology raises a series of questions and issues for the teaching of sociology.” Persell first draws upon various sources, including a study of peer designated leaders within the discipline, to describe how sociologists teach from each perspective in the typology. Both what sociologists include in their teaching, and how they involve students, are described for each type separately. The possible contributions and pathologies of each type as they may occur in teaching are analyzed. The second part of the chapter focuses on the systemic and interdependent nature of Burawoy’s disciplinary model as it is applied to teaching. The different possible relationships among the four forms of practice are carefully analyzed in terms of both tensions and synergies. Finally, the implications of the model for developing teaching resources and curriculum are considered.

Part IV: The Practice of Organic Public Sociology

The case studies in organic public sociology presented in the chapters of part IV contribute to a common theme of the dynamic interdependence of the four forms of practice. Various specific examples are presented of how a particular form initiates or shapes the content and emphasis of another form. The idea of sociology as a holistic system that lifts the discipline to a higher level of practice through the vehicle of the four forms is aptly illustrated in the contexts of different projects in chapters 13 through 17 (and in chapter 19 in part VI). The last chapter in part IV focuses on an account of some of the problems that can intervene in the transition from professional to public sociology.
In chapter 13 Elizabeth Dermody Leonard describes a project that “began in the world of professional sociology, evolved into organic public sociology as well as into a form of policy sociology, while critical sociology informed its evolution.” The research base is data gathered from women sentenced to prison for killing their abusive husbands. The study yielded certain “categories of experience” pertaining to both the women’s self-perceptions, and their contacts with the police and courts. A critical perspective of realizing justice emerged from the research as it “became infused with the moral sense that this knowledge could and should be used for public education as well as for convicted survivors and others like them.” The power of the narrative accounts led to the production of a play, set in a parole hearing, in which quotes from inmates were integrated into the script to tell the women’s stories. The play became public sociology in performances for the prison population. Research findings influenced policy makers to propose legal changes in cases of spousal abuse, and form the basis of policy recommendations.

In chapter 14 Lina Hu gives an account of a “project that not only neatly fits in the four categories of sociology, but also promotes the integration of the four sociologies.” The “Baigou Project” began as an investigation of the genesis and nature of the bag industry in northern China. Results indicated that five basic features of factory organization combined to produce substandard and dangerous working conditions for the migrant workers in the industry. On this basis the project was changed into an initiative in policy sociology to better the conditions of the workers by informing them of provisions of the labor law. Limited results showed the need for a more extensive project in organic public sociology. A night school with a library and courses in English, computer skills, and the labor law was established to raise the class consciousness and self-confidence of the workers. Critical sociology played a major role throughout the project. It “reinforced the moral stances” of the researchers, provided guiding principles and standards of evaluation, and inspired the evolvement of the project from professional to policy to public sociology.

In chapter 15 Stephen Cornell examines the evolving interdependence of the forms of sociology in continuing research studies of Indigenous Nations that began in 1986. The first study compared American Indian Nations in terms of their economic development. Results show that success in economic activity is influenced by sovereignty, capable internal governance, and a cultural “match” of formal governance and informal understandings. A public dialogue regarding the results with Native leaders and communities led to new research directions. The continuing “two-way educational process” of organic public sociology became a “joint intellectual effort in which we and they together engaged in figuring things out.” A reciprocal policy sociology developed in which “each party draws on the
other's expertise to produce policy insights and solutions.” In early stages of the project critical sociology prompted questioning of the norms that social science should be detached, and that the only role of Indian publics should be passive. The critical perspective later emphasized legitimacy and Indigenous culture in a manner that challenged aspects of federal policy and its assumptions regarding Indigenous peoples.

In chapter 16 Pamela E. Oliver describes a project of organic public sociology that involves engaging diverse groups in dialogues regarding racial disparities in imprisonment. The centerpiece of the project is the presentation of statistical data that demonstrates this disparity. The findings “told people things they did not know and forced people to confront the problem.” The interdependence of the forms of sociological practice is shown in the history of the project that began in 2000. A critical sensibility that “high Black imprisonment rates are bad and cause problems” gave impetus to applying professional skills of assembling and analyzing data to understand why. Presenting statistical data to publics of diverse concerns and backgrounds requires particular modes of presentation. Interpretations of racial disparities that are clearly supported by the evidence provide for authoritative presentations. In the case of ambiguities or contested issues, audiences can be told that “everyone needs to take responsibility for his or her part” in the problem. Formulating policies to alleviate the problem depends on information, is difficult, and requires working with and listening to others in various publics.

Chapter 17, by Ruth Horowitz, is an ethnographic account of the author’s experiences as a public member of state medical licensing and disciplinary boards, and her related research. Service on such boards is organic public sociology and can readily be combined with professional sociology by engaging in ethnographic research of the public situation. A major focus is describing how “professional sociology contributes to public sociology and vica versa.” Thus, working as an organic public sociologist in the position of board member provides insights for professional sociology, ethnographic research skills provide facility for understanding the social situation of the board activity, doing organic public sociology provides research opportunities not otherwise available, and research improves awareness of needed changes. The general mission of public members of medical boards is to protect the public. This role is approached from “a critical stance as a pragmatist” to work for changes that are possible, even if limited. Data based analysis can contribute to recommendations regarding board policy. The chapter shows how “an ethnographic project provides one methodology for the four sociologies to exist within one project.”

In chapter 18 Bill McCarthy and John Hagan “explore some of the difficulties sociologists encounter in doing public sociology.” Reactions to research by Hagan and colleagues on deaths in Darfur provide an illustrative
case study. These authors combined data from two earlier studies to produce a more accurate estimate of mortality. In a follow-up study, additional data were added to obtain a still better estimate. Reactions to these, and other, estimates of mortality provide the basis for identifying four problems that limit the effectiveness of public sociology. These are the lack of consensus on moral issues among multiple publics, the failure of scholars to agree on the interpretation of research findings, the power of governments to reject views not in accord with goals of the state, and the inconsistency of the media in reporting and evaluation. The effectiveness of public sociology can best be enhanced by "sociologists' efforts to strengthen the discipline and to increase public awareness of our increasing sophistication."

Part V: Special Fields and Public Sociology

Sociology has traditionally been divided into general and special sociologies. The first studies the structures and processes that are common to all sociocultural phenomena, the second the characteristics of a special class of sociocultural phenomena. In part V public sociology and the holistic four form model are examined in relation to six special fields of sociology: social movements, human rights, forgiveness, globalization, altruism, and futures studies. The chapter on social movements is also an additional case study in organic public sociology.

Chapter 19, by Robert Kleidman, explores the question of how "social movement scholarship and activism inform and improve each other." Pertinent literature is supplemented by the authors' experiences working with community organizations. Engaged social movement scholarship is organic or "grassroots" public sociology and involves "creating dialogues between scholars and activists around vision and values, analysis and strategy." In this process of interaction synergies are evident among the four sociologies. Both professional and policy sociologies are improved when scholars "partner" with activists to develop understanding and formulate strategy. Public sociology can contribute to a critical perspective by encouraging the community to "develop more explicit visions of the future, a deeper, more sociological analysis of the present, and more long-term strategies." Policy and public sociology each benefit when scholars relate to organizers' concerns, and thereby establish the trust necessary for dialogues regarding assumptions. Engaged organic sociology improves professional practice "in terms of data, methods, and theory" and informs critical sociology. Three areas of tension among the forms of practice are also considered.

In chapter 20 Rhoda E. Howard-Hassmann describes the field of human rights within the framework provided by the four sociologies model. Human rights are "rights that all human beings are entitled to, merely by virtue of being human." Their most prominent enumeration is in the United Na-
tions International Bill of Rights. Human rights are typically a dependent variable in professional sociology. The circumstances of how they are realized or violated is a basic explanatory focus. Sociological concerns such as culture, class, status, and power are important in understanding these outcomes regarding human rights. In critical sociology, “the international law of human rights provides a common standard of achievement” that can be applied to all types of societies. The field of human rights provides policy sociology with “many debates about human rights to which sociologists can contribute, by using their professional standards to research policy questions.” In the dialogues of public sociology “universal principles of human dignity and human rights” are likely to have resonance. Increasing the knowledge of human rights and international law among diverse groups can be an important contribution of public sociology.

Chapter 21, by Samuel P. Oliner, gives an overview of the study of forgiveness as a special field of sociology. Forgiveness is typically preceded by apology and ideally leads to the goal of reconciliation. Altruism appears to be a primary independent variable in the process moving from apology to forgiveness to reconciliation. The forgiveness process can take place at both interpersonal and intergroup levels. Considerable scientific knowledge exists regarding interpersonal forgiveness and its many benefits. The study of intergroup forgiveness is relatively new, but case studies illustrate its different forms and positive outcomes. The four types of sociology “are the foundational basis for the sociological study of apology and forgiveness and could lead to a more caring society.” Professional sociology provides valid evidence about the forgiveness process. Policy sociology can incorporate these findings in pro-social training programs in public and private organizations. Critical sociology provides the “moral vision” that explains the importance of forgiveness “on a grand scale.” The task of public sociology is “to publicize the important findings and relevance from which society can benefit.”

Chapter 22, by Saskia Sassen, examines the sociology of globalization and the potential contributions of public sociology to that field of study. The project of public sociology is to confront some of the dominant public viewpoints regarding globalization and to produce “an alternative narrative” that is enabling to those who are defined as powerless. In so doing public sociology can “open a window to the possibility of novel types of public imaginaries and new possibilities for the making of the political.” For example, internationalism can be refocused by the narrative of public sociology on “such causes as human rights, the environment, and a more socially just economic development.” The structural context of this opportunity for public sociology to critically remap interpretations is that some components of the national and the global coincide. As a result, globalization is significantly shaped within nations. Four types of these dualistic
assemblages that can potentially give the powerless and national actors greater influence on global processes and institutions are identified.

In chapter 23 Edward A. Tiryakian considers the importance of global altruism, “a cognitive and normative orientation that gives primacy to improving the conditions of the most unfortunate members of the global community.” There are many of these: about two-fifths of the world’s population lives in conditions of extreme poverty and powerlessness. This problem can be “transformed by the voluntaristic actions of forms of altruism.” These forms of global altruism involve agents at the micro, meso, and macro levels. At the micro level three individuals are discussed, all of whom are associated with a movement of altruism directed toward the global community. At the meso level of international non-governmental organizations, the activities of two organizations, focusing on human rights and medical assistance, respectively, are considered. The macro level agents are countries, and their contributions to aid for poorer countries are assessed. From an existential perspective, public sociology can respond to the need to increase awareness “that global altruism is not only the activity of globalization but also that the ‘other’ is an integral part of the global community, that our being-in-the-world is contingent on the other’s well-being in the world with us.”

Chapter 24, by Barbara Adam, examines the field of future studies. The lack of a future perspective in sociological analysis has created a deficiency of knowledge that “permeates the four modes of sociological inquiry in different ways.” Auguste Comte and Karl Marx had an “explicitly activist, future oriented approach to social analysis” but later theories lacked these interests. In the 1960s a new futures approach developed. It included ideas of influencing social processes, and visions of responsibility and of values that defined preferable futures. It did not gain prominence, however. Thus critical sociology has “the urgent task to scrutinize our disciplinary assumptions, approaches, and knowledge practices for their appropriateness to the contemporary context in which futures are produced for millennia hence.” A public sociology focused on future-making will identify opportunities for social change, explore the connections of knowledge, action, and ethics, and participate in dialogue regarding what is right and just. The four form model allows public sociologists to engage these issues “in the secure knowledge that others will guard the professional standard, serve the policy field, and act as the conscience of the discipline.”

Part VI: Future Directions

In chapter 25 Michael Burawoy interprets the reactions to public sociology. There have been diverse and often surprisingly hostile responses to “the seemingly innocent proposal to take sociology’s findings, its ideas, its theo-
ries beyond the academy, that is to carry on what is effectively its mission of public education.” These different reactions to public sociology and the four sociologies scheme are positional perspectives, not random in nature. Rather, they reflect both location within the division of sociological labor and position within a hierarchical disciplinary field. Although antagonistic aspects of the relations between the four forms of sociology exist, they also augment and benefit each other. The chapters in this volume show that the four sociologies do indeed make contributions to each other that need to be recognized. An additional bond of unity is evident in a shared commitment to sociology. When this is manifested in the “common project” of studying “problems of public concern,” it transcends differences between forms of practice. In an era characterized by increasing dangers and opportunities, sociologists have a clear choice: “we can assert our presence in society, joining the switch men and women of history, or possibly for the last time, be condemned to irrelevance.”

SYNTHEIS AND INNOVATIVE PERSPECTIVES: CHOICES TO BE CONSIDERED

The Holistic Four Sociologies Model

The previous summaries and the chapters themselves indicate a general consensus regarding the importance of public sociology and the holistic four sociologies model. To be sure, modifications to the model and problematics in the relationship among the forms of practice are also noted. However, many examples are provided of Burawoy’s (2005a:15) description of a holistic model of public sociology in which each form of practice ideally makes a particular contribution to the whole.

This foundational idea of the model is illustrated at the general theoretical level in the chapters by Nichols and Jeffries. Both use the thought of Pitirim A. Sorokin to illustrate the positive interdependence entailed in the four sociologies model. The systemic nature of the four forms of practice in a dynamic model of process is evident in the case studies of organic public sociology, by Leonard, Hu, Cornell, Oliver, Horowitz, McCarthy and Hagan, and by Kleidman in his analysis of organic social movement scholarship. These chapters provide numerous examples of how the four sociologies interact to produce a greater excellence. The ability of the model to describe and analyze a sociological field is illustrated in some detail in the chapters by Kleidman, Howard-Hassmann, Oliner, Sassen, and Adam. Finally, the chapters on teaching by DeCesare and Persell both examine the interplay of the four forms of practice, the latter from a variety of perspectives.
Modifications to the model itself are proposed in the chapter by Morrow, and to a lesser degree the chapter by Feagin, Elias, and Mueller. Possible tensions between the forms of practice are considered by Persell in a context of teaching and by Kleidman in studying social movements in the context of organic public sociology. Factors impeding an effective relationship between professional and public sociology are aptly described by McCarthy and Hagan.

However, the preponderent content of the information and analysis in the chapters in this volume strongly supports the assertion that the four sociologies model applied to practice shows numerous instances of positive interdependence. Theory, research, and the scope of analysis are enhanced by the application of the four forms model of the discipline to a study topic. It is reasonable to maintain that the model is both justified and elaborated.

Critical Sociology

Critical sociology has traditionally been associated with the identification of the problematic, negative, or pathological. Within this focus a frequent topic has been the means of ameliorating these conditions (Ritzer 2008:144–148). This perspective can be contrasted with one that would also provide a constructive vision of preferable alternatives (Abbott 2006). In this regard, Abbott (2007:207) notes: “The deepest moral obligation of the sociological imagination is not critique, but vision.”

The chapters in this volume provide a basis for combining these two perspectives into a more comprehensive formulation of the nature of critical sociology. The basis for a critical perspective involving this dual emphasis within the four form model is evident in Burawoy’s (2005a:10,16) description of critical sociology as the “conscience” of sociology on the one hand, and a source of “moral vision” on the other. It is also expressed in Abbott’s (2007:203) call to understand both “immoral and evil things that are nonetheless products of the social process” so that they can be “eradicated,” and also to imagine what a “truly humane” social process or society would “look like” (Abbott 2007:207). Such a comprehensive critical sociology that would encompass both the negative and the positive would be enlightening and energizing to the other forms of practice.

An example of this positive orientation is illustrated by efforts to develop “real utopias” as a focus of theory and research. For example, alternative states such as equality, democracy, communities of caring, freedom, and individual self-realization can become the basis of scientific research programs (Burawoy and Wright 2001:477–484; Burawoy 2005b:320–322). Basic theoretical and empirical questions include the origins of such alternative states, the conditions of their existence and reproduction, and
their internal and external contradictions and long-term course of change (Burawoy 2005b:322).

Central to this formulation of the nature of critical sociology is a moral vision of the good. It transcends any particular theoretical orientation, such as Marxism. Rather, like the four sociologies model, it can be integrated with all theoretical approaches and methodological practices. It also provides the possibility of transcending left-right and political distinctions, as advocated by Abbott (2007). In the broadest sense, this critical sociology of the good proposes a state considered preferable to that which exists.

The good in this sense means something that has the desired or right qualities. It represents the greater perfection or excellence of a given phenomenon. Given the nature of the subject matter of sociology, this vision of the good is necessarily located at single or multiple points within the domain of culture, society, and personality. For example, in advocating a positive critical social theory that is directed toward the realization of social and economic justice Collins (1998:xiv–xv) locates justice in the relationship between groups.

Several examples of a critical sociology with this focus are in chapters in this volume. Such visions of the good are most comprehensively integrated into a system of sociology that articulates the four forms model in the writings of Sorokin, as described in the chapters by Nichols and Jeffries. In Sorokin’s system individual altruism, a universalistic social solidarity, and an integral culture that emphasizes norms and values of mutual aid and cooperation provides a positive critical perspective. It is an alternative to the contemporary era dominated by a problematic sensate culture, the misuse of power, and intergroup antagonisms. Feagin, Elias, and Mueller advocate a moral vision of democracy, pluralism, equal access to resources, and social justice as an alternative to the prevailing system of social relations.

The chapter by Bell emphasizes the existence of universal values as a basis for a sociology of the good. Examples include the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Global Ethic formulated by the Parliament of World’s Religions. Bell also draws examples of universal values from social science research, including the World Order Models Project that uses more than 100 indicators to measure the five preferred values of peace, economic well-being, ecological balance, social justice, and political participation. In the chapter on human rights Howard-Hassmann notes that the international law of human rights provides a comprehensive enumeration of economic, social, and cultural rights that can be used as a critical standard for sociological analysis.

In his chapter Glenn provides an analytical structure for the incorporation of such value premises in the practice of professional sociology. These ultimate values are based on religion, humanistic traditions, or philosophy. Empirically, their validity cannot be assessed. They represent the value judgments
of the individual sociologist. Scientific procedures can, however, be used to assess the merits of various means to reach these ultimate values. Sociologists are frequently involved in the empirical analysis of various sociocultural factors for this purpose.

Developing a focus on the good and explicitly and deliberately incorporating it within the practice of science can be observed in recent developments in psychology. After World War II psychology became a discipline focused on a disease model in which emphasis was placed on pathology and its amelioration. In the late 1990s the positive psychology movement, dedicated instead to studying human excellence and strengths, began to take form and develop (Seligman 2005). In a foundational work Peterson and Seligman (2004) systematically surveyed the ideas of moral philosophers and thinkers representing all of the major world religions throughout history to determine their views regarding the nature of human goodness. They conclude there are six broad categories of virtue that can be regarded as universal notions of human excellence and goodness on the level of personality: wisdom and knowledge, courage, humanity, justice, temperance and transcendence.

To study the good there must be some idea of what it is. Critical sociology performs this function through the medium of reflexive discourse and knowledge (Burawoy 2005a:10–11). The full development of this form of practice entails a continuing debate within the discipline regarding ontology and epistemology, basic assumptions, value judgments, and the nature of both the problematic and of the good.

This debate has direct bearing on the content and direction of professional sociology. The selection of topics for theoretical development and research programs is a crucial one for the accumulation of knowledge and understanding. It is also crucial for maximizing the contribution of sociology to the general welfare. This decision can be made on the basis of scientific importance, so that what is studied involves fundamental questions about basic sociocultural structures and processes. This decision can also be made in accordance with some conception of the good that relates to the betterment of the sociocultural. Ideally, these two criteria are both present in basic decisions regarding the practice of sociology. The discerning application of both criteria are the best guarantee of the “recapturing” of the sociological imagination called for by Furedi, and the “eye-opening” studies advocated by Gans, in their respective chapters.

It is crucial to the progress of the discipline to revitalize and redirect critical sociology in this manner. A comprehensive critical perspective that transcends particular theoretical or research traditions but that can inform the application of all is needed. If such a universalized critical perspective is integrated into disciplinary practice it could significantly affect what is studied, how results are presented, and what conclusions are emphasized.
Basic theoretical contribution, topical importance, and potential benefit to society would become the prime criteria for publication in major professional journals, thereby moving the profession toward greater creativity and influence.

Critical sociology can thus play a vital role in influencing the content of professional, policy, and public sociology (Burawoy 2005b:317, 322). An extensively debated conception of multiple goods can concentrate and coordinate the practice of professional and policy sociologies. This then facilitates providing the foundation of relevance called for by public sociology.

New Fields and Perspectives

The volume gives prominence to several perspectives and fields of investigation that are either relatively new or are generally neglected in the sociology of today. All of these perspectives can be viewed as implicated in some manner with a critical sociology that seeks to define the preferable and the good. In this sense these perspectives are components of a sociology that complements the study of the negative and the problematic with a systematic analysis of a greater goodness and the means to achieve it in the future.

Despite many positive and unique features of Sorokin’s thought, his ideas are generally not considered by contemporary sociology (Ritzer 2008:70). At the level of general theory Sorokin’s integral system of sociology engages directly with the nature of the good. In this context a basic feature of Sorokin’s integralism is an ontology and epistemology that incorporates ideas from the major world religions within the practice of sociology. Diverse systems of thought such as Confucianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity are all identified by Sorokin as integral in nature. Their distinguishing feature is the incorporation of ideas regarding the spiritual and transcendental in a system of thought that also gives full account to empirical and rational criteria (Sorokin 1937a:18–150, 1937b:3–180, 1963:372–382, 1964:69–77, 1998 [1943]). Because of this comprehensive nature, integralism has a potentially wide appeal (Nichols 2006).

An attempt to extend the boundaries of the behavioral sciences in a comparable manner was made by Parsons. In a major work in metatheory, he develops the concept of the telic system to refer to that part of the human condition that pertains to the transcendent and to ultimate meanings (Tiryakian 2005). The telic system is described as a residual and non-empirical category that is relevant to human action orientation (Parsons 1978:352–433). Building on Weber, Parsons notes that the fundamental meanings in the telic or “transempirical” system derive from religious orientations.

Practically speaking with respect to the four sociologies model, Sorokin’s integralism suggests the possibility of incorporating such orientations from
Chapter 1

religious traditions within the frame of reference of sociology. For example, ideas such as justice, love, and the Golden Rule can be used in critical sociology as value premises, and in professional sociology as concepts and variables. Collins (1998:243–251) notes the combination of spirituality and ideas such as these has great potential to enable social theory to “engage deep feelings” in the realization of what is considered right. This can impact both motivation in the practice of sociology and relevance in the dialogue of public sociology.

A recently emerging synthesis in the study of social movements is described and analyzed in the chapter by Kleidman. Engaged social movement scholarship represents the merging of previous work by activists working with social movements and traditional scholarship. It presents a model of organic public sociology in the ongoing process of movement activism. This model can be applied in fields such as human rights and intergroup forgiveness, as described in the chapters by Howard-Hassmann and Oliner, respectively. The model is also relevant to the efforts to move the process of globalization toward environmentalism and social justice that are analyzed in the chapter by Sassen. It likewise has application in the agency involved in manifesting the global altruism described by Tiryakian.

The study of human rights is now beginning to develop as a field within sociology. Consensual human rights are directly relevant to the creation of alternative conditions that more fully realize values that can be considered universal. The existing formal normative framework described in the chapter by Howard-Hassmann provides the content of a positive critical sociology of human rights. This in turn provides a promising theoretical and research agenda for both professional and policy sociologies, and relevance for public sociology.

The systematic study of altruistic love has been given little attention in sociology, despite areas of investigation that are clearly sociological (Jeffries, Johnston, Nichols, Oliner, Tiryakian, and Weinstein 2006). Several selections in this volume give prominence to this field of study. The chapters by Nichols and Jeffries place the study of altruism in the broader context of Sorokin’s system of thought and in so doing link it with social solidarity and his vision of a different society and culture. In his chapter Tiryakian examines altruism and agency in its behalf on the micro, meso, and macro levels.

Altruism is also an important factor in forgiveness, a topic considerably researched in psychology, but rarely studied in sociology. The chapter by Oliner presents a distinctly sociological perspective on the study of intergroup forgiveness and reconciliation that ranges the micro-macro continuum from the dyad to nations. The chapter invites sociologists to develop a theoretical and research agenda to better understand how long-standing animosities between groups can be put aside to permit solidary relations to develop.
The more comprehensive incorporation of a future perspective in sociological theory and research is suggested in the chapters by Bell and by Adam. Future studies are directly relevant to the visionary aspect of critical sociology. When a potential state of goodness is defined by the critical perspective, it becomes a possibility to be considered for the future. As noted by both Bell and by Adam in this volume, public dialogues about future possibilities also involve considerations of the good and the most effective options and policies to realize it. From a futures perspective such dialogues also involve ideas of individual agency, choice, ethics, and a vision of the good society. Sociologists can contribute to this public debate by providing valid knowledge and understanding of what futures are possible, what futures are probable under a variety of specified conditions, what futures are preferable, and how they can be created.

In summary, the perspectives and fields considered in this analysis have the common theme of exploring and developing the study of some component of the good. In this sense they move sociology from the study of pathology to the study of alternative and more positive conditions. In this way they all contribute to a sociology that is visionary but that is also firmly grounded in actual social life, whether of the past or of the possible future.

**Disciplinary Changes**

Establishing the four sociologies model in the ongoing practice of sociology requires disciplinary changes of a varied nature. One area where this is the case is graduate education.

The interdependence of the four sociologies and their positive effects on theory, research, and teaching indicated in the chapters in this volume suggest courses in all four forms would be beneficial. Unlike the other forms, courses in theory and methods are generally required in graduate departments. In her chapter on university teaching Persell suggests collecting teaching materials for courses in critical, policy, and public sociology and having them published by the Teaching Resources Center of the American Sociological Association as a first step in considering curricular changes. The full implementation of the model in high school sociology courses suggested by DeCesare would ideally require some course work or training in each of the forms of practice.

Several changes in graduate education are mentioned in the Gans chapter. The most general is the development of partial tracks for professional and public sociology. The emphasis in public sociology would be on topic-driven research, qualitative methods, writing for the public, and workshops in the sociology of American society. In their chapter on writing public sociology Mayrl and Westbrook also suggest that graduate education in sociology needs to begin to devote appropriate attention to writing, including how to communicate with diverse audiences.
Disciplinary changes are also recommended by Gans. Chief among these include greater acceptance within the profession of public sociology and more equal access to various rewards such as publication opportunities, academic advancement, and funding for topic-driven studies.

**CONCLUSION**

The model of holistic sociology redefines the nature of the discipline in terms of categories of practice (Burawoy 2005a:11). This model provides a new perspective that has the potential to energize and unify the discipline. Organizing disciplinary practice around the realization of the four forms model maximizes the scientific and social potential of sociological knowledge and understanding. It represents a call to seek the perfection of each form of practice, recognizing that this can be realized for each form only through taking account of the central orientations of the other three. This systemic interdependence insulates against the pathologies of the forms that can occur when they are detached from each other: self-referentiality, servility, dogmatism, and faddishness (Burawoy 2005a:16–17).

The four sociologies model places the choices individuals make in sociological projects in a disciplinary matrix. Wallerstein (2007) cogently observes that the scientist/scholar inevitably takes a position on three functions regarding his or her work and its relation to the public realm. First is the intellectual function of presenting the most valid explanation. Second is the moral function of evaluating the moral implications of the work. Third is the political function of assessing the most effective means to realize the good contained in the moral implications. Each function is inherently embedded in practice, so whether on an explicit or implicit level, these choices cannot be avoided.

These individual choices have clear parallels with different modes of sociological practice. The inevitability of these choices directs attention to the importance of the model as the sociocultural context of their potential expression. When these individual choices are placed within the context of the four sociologies it can affect practice in two ways. First, the model heightens awareness of how individual decisions made in the process of practice should be modified or redirected by the central concerns of other modes of practice. For example, critical sociology raises the question of whether a given study is really worth undertaking in terms of its potential contribution to understanding and the advance of the good. Or again, policy sociology asks how theory and research could be modified or shaped to give the possibility of a consideration of means. Second, the four form model also allows individual sociologists to specialize in the form or forms of practice most suited to their inclinations and talents with the possibility
that others may be complementing their work within the holistic model. If
the model has been given due consideration in formulating a project, then
it should be suited for others to elaborate its contributions to other forms.

The four forms model is a call for solidarity among sociologists (Burawoy
2005a:15). It calls upon all to see the discipline of sociology as a holistic
system and to place its perfection and contributions to society ahead of
more circumscribed concerns. In sociology, necessary differences of viewpoint and practice too often become divisions that separate and isolate practitioners from each other and close potential avenues of enlighten-
ment. Particularly pertinent concerns at this time are differences regarding
the preeminence of professional sociology on the one hand, or of a
sociology oriented primarily to political action on the other. In both cases,
a particular form of practice is identified by some as the essence of the sociological project, with other forms being given little or no legitimacy. This
denial of legitimacy and rejection of alternative viewpoints impedes the
advancement of the science of sociology in all its aspects.

The holistic sociology model calls for a more inclusive and compre-
hensive view. The maximum potential of each form and of the discipline itself depends on the vitality and creativity of each of the others. The full implementation of the model in disciplinary practice thus requires a “com-
mon ethos that recognizes the validity of all four types of sociology—a
commitment based on the urgency of the problems we study” (Burawoy
2005a:17).

The first potential point of unity in this disciplinary ethos is the search
for the truth. This is most directly related to professional sociology and the
extension of this knowledge and understanding base to policy sociology.
Here the practice of sociology involves the ongoing efforts to move the sum
total of disciplinary ideas closer to a comprehensive knowledge and under-
standing of what is real, thus true, in the subject matter encompassed by
the disciplinary frame of reference of culture, society, and personality. The
second point of unity is the search for the good. This is most directly related
to critical sociology and to the dialogue of public sociology. A continuing
debate regarding the nature of the preferable, desirable, and the good is
central to these two forms of practice.

The separation of knowledge of the truth from knowledge of the good
has been a predominant characteristic of the search for knowledge in the
modern Western world (Lee and Wallerstein 2004:227–229). In contrast,
the four sociologies model embodies a systematic unity of the search for
truth and goodness in one model of the nature and practice of sociology. In
so doing, it provides the basis for a common ethos and purpose all sociolo-
gists can adhere to. The universalism of these two inseparable values makes
possible a basic unity of purpose within which the necessary debate and
conflict of ideas essential to creativity can assume its most powerful form.
This ethos of truth and goodness transcends different viewpoints regarding matters such as forms of practice, theoretical traditions, and methodological preferences.

Collins (1998:243) notes that “moral authority must lie at the heart of meaningful social theory.” The ultimate values of truth and goodness possess this authority. The search for the realization of these values gives moral purpose to the practice of sociology. The holistic four forms model provides the mechanism through which this search can be fully embedded in sociological practice. It unites the efforts to know and understand the truth, to identify both the undesirable and the good, to devise means to realize the good, and to communicate and dialogue with publics regarding sociological ideas relevant to human welfare. This is a comprehensive and powerful model of the science of sociology. Chosen as a disciplinary norm it has the potential to maximize a variety of significant and lasting contributions.

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REFERENCES


I

EXPLORING AND ELABORATING THE HOLISTIC MODEL
TWO REFORMERS

It might seem strange, at a glance, to link the figures of Michael Burawoy and Pitirim A. Sorokin, and to suggest that their theoretical paradigms can profitably be considered together. A closer examination, however, reveals many interesting similarities, even parallels. Both served as presidents of the American Sociological Association, Sorokin in 1964–1965, and Burawoy in 2003–2004. Both used the occasion of their presidential address to invite their audience to imagine an alternative future for the field. Both projected a distinctive charisma and demonstrated the ability to inspire other sociologists. Both were controversial, focusing much of their work on conflict and historical change, and choosing to engage critics who propounded competing perspectives. Both displayed the courage of their convictions and, despite quarrels with their own field, expressed profound optimism in the sociological enterprise.

For present purposes, what is most significant is that both Sorokin and Burawoy have championed a holistic approach that challenges scholars in the field to reexamine the very nature of the sociological project. The following discussion will compare the two models, and will speculate as to how Sorokin—a leading figure in the development of sociology both in Russia and the United States—might respond to the Burawoy paradigm. Burawoy’s own possible rejoinder will also be considered. This virtual dialogue may elucidate some of the strengths and limitations of both approaches, and perhaps even point toward a possible larger synthesis.
BURAWOY’S HOLISTIC PARADIGM

Despite the tendency among sociologists to identify Burawoy with “public sociology,” it is important to bear in mind at all times that public sociology is only one component of his “vision of the sociological tradition” (Levine 1994). As articulated in his ASA presidential address, as well as related articles and book chapters (Burawoy 2004, 2005a, 2005b), Burawoy’s approach embraces four distinctive, though closely related, types of work in an organic division of labor. Professional sociology provides the foundation and the “home base” of the entire enterprise. In Burawoy’s conception (2005a:10), this activity

consists first and foremost of multiple intersecting research programs, each with their assumptions, exemplars, defining questions, conceptual apparatuses, and evolving theories. . . . such as organization theory, stratification, political sociology, . . . etc. . . . Within each research program, exemplary studies solve one set of puzzles and at the same time create new ones.

In short, professional sociology proceeds via discursive practices among experts trained in its distinctive frame of reference. It asserts legitimate knowledge claims and seeks a place of equality with cognate fields of learning.

A second type of sociological labor, called critical sociology, provides an ongoing critique of contemporary understandings of professional sociology. It responds to professional knowledge claims with questions, especially two perpetual inquiries: (1) knowledge for whom? and (2) knowledge for what? In Burawoy’s formulation (2005a:10), its role is

to examine the foundations—both the explicit and the implicit, both normative and descriptive—of the research programs of professional sociology. We think here of the work of Robert Lynd . . . [of] C. Wright Mills . . . [of] Alvin Gouldner. . . . Feminism, queer theory and critical race theory have hauled professional sociology over the coals. . . . In each case critical sociology attempts to make professional sociology aware of its biases, silences, promoting new research programs built on alternate foundations.

Acting as “the conscience of professional sociology” (Burawoy 2004), critical sociological work engages its counterpart in a never-ending dialogue.

A third form is policy sociology, which Burawoy understands as logically analogous to professional sociology, but with an outward rather than an inward orientation. Policy sociology is sociology in the service of a goal defined by a client.

Policy sociology’s raison d’être is to provide solutions to problems that are presented to us, or to legitimate solutions that have already been reached.
Some clients specify the task of the sociologist with a narrow contract whereas other clients are more like patrons defining broad policy agendas. (Burawoy 2005a:9)

Solutions, by definition, must draw upon the knowledge affirmations of professional sociology, rather than the questions of critical sociology. Burawoy describes policy sociology as “instrumental,” as applying shared knowledge in order to make a difference in the world.

The fourth type of sociological labor is public sociology. In Burawoy’s conceptualization, this activity is logically analogous to critical sociology because it is likewise concerned with questions of value. In contrast to its critical counterpart, however, public sociology has an outward orientation toward a broad range of groups that constitute contemporary civil societies. Drawing upon Habermas’s (1984) notion of “communicative action,” Burawoy (2005a:7) characterizes public sociology dialogically, as “a conversation with publics, understood as people who are themselves involved in conversation.”

He differentiates this activity into two contrasting forms: traditional and organic. The traditional type is more impersonal and detached, in the sense that “the publics being addressed are generally invisible . . . thin . . . passive . . . and they are usually mainstream” (Burawoy 2005a:7). Acting at a distance, the traditional public sociologist “instigates debates within or between publics, although he or she might not actually participate in them.” This suggests that the “conversation” involved in traditional public sociology is rather artificial and constrained, tending toward monologue on the part of the sociological experts.

Burawoy is far more interested in the second, “organic” variety that is characterized by a deep and sustained engagement, and by an identification of sociologists with the values and goals of selected publics. According to his formulation (2005a:7–8), in organic public sociology

the sociologist works in close connection with a visible, thick, active, local and often counter-public. The bulk of public sociology is indeed of an organic kind—sociologists working with a labor movement, neighborhood associations, communities of faith, immigrant rights groups, human rights organizations. Between the organic public sociologist and a public is a dialogue, a process of mutual education.

In contrast to the economic relationships of policy sociology, political relationships are typical of public sociology. If policy sociology faces the danger of commercialization, public sociology runs the risk of partisanship determining knowledge outcomes.

In advocating for public sociology, Burawoy portrays sociologists as a force for positive change, a liberal conscience for contemporary society that provides needed moral leadership.
In 1968, the world seemed ripe for change for the better. The civil rights movement, the women's movement, student movements around the world, antiwar marches and sit-ins captured the imagination of a new generation of sociologists who saw conventional sociology as lagging behind the most progressive movements; whereas today the world is lagging behind sociology, unapologetic about its drift into political and economic fundamentalism. . . . The political context and the sociological conscience have moved in opposite directions, so that the world we inhabit is increasingly in conflict with the ethos and principles that animate sociology—an ethos opposed to inequality, to the erosion of civil liberties, to the destruction of public life, and to discrimination and exclusion. (Burawoy 2004:2)

From this perspective, sociology—and especially public sociology—is a socio-political “civil rights” movement (Burawoy 2005a:25) with an ethos of egalitarianism and progressivism.

In sum, Burawoy envisions sociology as a fourfold matrix of specialized, complementary activities. One pair (professional and critical) is more “inwardly” oriented toward practitioners, while the second (policy and public) is more “outwardly” oriented toward diverse consumers. Within each pairing, there is a dialectic of continual affirmation and questioning, reaffirmation and renewed questioning, that maintains the vitality of the sociological project as a whole.

**HOW MIGHT SOROKIN RESPOND?**

Before entering into a discussion of specific points of agreement and disagreement between Burawoy and Sorokin, it will be helpful to sketch out Sorokin’s major publications. These will be organized in terms of Burawoy’s proposed division of labor in sociology—always with the caveat that many of them relate to more than one of Burawoy’s four types.

As table 2.1 indicates, Sorokin made significant contributions to all four types of sociology. As the discussion below will show in detail, Sorokin lived through the tensions among the styles of sociological work examined by Burawoy. His experience, like his thinking, was dialectical.

**Sorokin’s Earlier Perspective**

The question of how Sorokin might respond to Burawoy’s proposed organization of sociological labor is complicated by the fact that Sorokin’s views on science and sociology evolved over the course of several decades. His earlier period (from about 1914 through 1936) included some work that is clearly public sociology. Most significantly Sorokin wrote a column, entitled “Notes of a Sociologist” that examined unfolding events during the revolu-
Burawoy’s Holistic Sociology and Sorokin’s “Integralism”

Table 2.1. Sorokin’s Works (Selected) and Burawoy’s Typology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional Sociology</th>
<th>Policy Sociology</th>
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<tr>
<td><em>A System of Sociology</em> (1920)</td>
<td>“The New Soviet Codes and Soviet Justice” (1924)</td>
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Sorokin’s earlier views were deeply influenced by the revolutionary period extending from the uprisings of 1905, through the two revolutions of 1917, to the civil war and massive famine of the early 1920s. It is important to emphasize that Sorokin was among the most politically engaged sociologists of the era. As a young man, he was an agitator on the political left,
for which he was jailed three times by the tsarist regime (Sorokin 1924a, 1963a). Within the Social Revolutionary Party, a socialist organization, moreover, Sorokin was a prominent figure, as exemplified by his membership on the editorial staff of *Volja Naroda* (*The People’s Will*), the party newspaper for which he wrote his “Notes of a Sociologist.” He also served on the executive committee of the All Russian Peasant Soviet, and the Council of the Russian Republic, and was an elected representative in the Russian Constitutional Assembly.

Following the uprising of February 1917 that led to the abdication of the final tsar, Nicholas II, Sorokin served as secretary to Prime Minister Alexander Kerensky in the short-lived democratic regime (the Provisional Government). After the October Revolution swept the Bolsheviks into power, Sorokin became an active member of the opposition. In 1918, he was condemned to death by local authorities in the northern part of the country, for “counter-revolutionary activities.” He was spared, however, when Lenin himself issued a reprieve, following appeals from some of Sorokin’s former students (1924a).

The political violence disillusioned Sorokin, who sought a creative alternative in science. Henceforth, he would devote his life to seeking truth, based on sound methodology (not political expediency) and rational analysis (not political passion). This he promised Lenin in a letter that the Communist leader discussed in an article, “Valuable Admissions by Pitirim Sorokin.”

“The past year of the Revolution,” Pitirim Sorokin writes, “has taught me one truth: politicians may make mistakes, politics may be socially useful, but may also be socially harmful, whereas work in the field of science and public education is always useful and is always needed by the people.” (Lenin 1945:305)

The gradual accumulation of scientific knowledge, freed from partisan ideologies, would benefit all, even if its immediate applications were not clear.

Sorokin, however, did not entirely fulfill his pledge to stay out of politics. In 1922, amid widespread starvation, he conducted research on the disaster. The resulting monograph, *Hunger as a Factor in Human Affairs*, includes explicit criticisms of the Soviet system.

Many people promote the ideal of “the socialist society,” which in reality usually turns out to be nothing more than statism. . . . The experiences of Russia and other countries studied in this volume indicate . . . [that] nationalization, communization, and the development of statism lead to poverty, not to prosperity, and by no means do they improve the social conditions of the masses. (Sorokin 1975 [1922]:319)
The authorities responded by seizing and destroying the printing plates of the book (which was finally published more than fifty years later, based on a copy smuggled out of the country).

Facing the danger of imprisonment or execution, Sorokin took advantage of an offer by the Bolshevik regime to leave the country in “voluntary banishment.” After two years in Czechoslovakia, he emigrated to the United States and found a position in sociology at the University of Minnesota. There, for six years, he poured out a massive stream of sociological writings within the framework of pure, hard science. These included the five large-scale works noted in table 2.1, as well as numerous journal articles on a variety of empirical topics.

Evidence that Sorokin’s approach to sociology during this period generally falls within Burawoy’s categories of Professional and Critical appears in *Contemporary Sociological Theories* (1928:761), an encyclopedic survey of ideas in the field for the preceding fifty years:

>Sociology is, has been, and either will be a science of the general characteristics of all classes of social phenomena, with the relationships and correlations between them; or there will be no sociology.

Partisan epistemologies, political manifestos, and utopian blueprints had no place in this paradigm. As Sorokin (1928:xxiii) informed his readers:

>... are omitted. The reason is that as far as such theories are busy not with what was, and will be, but with what ought to be, or ought not to be, they are out of science.

This stance, coincidentally, fit well with the post–World War I movement toward a severely objective “scientific sociology” that was championed by such figures as William Graham Sumner and A. G. Keller at Yale; Robert Park, Ernest Burgess, and William F. Ogburn at the University of Chicago; Franklin Giddings at Columbia; Edward A. Ross at Wisconsin; and F. Stuart Chapin at Minnesota. (Other efforts, by Jane Addams and her circle, “settlement house sociologists” and “the women founders,” as well as by practitioners of “social ethics,” tended to be defined as reformism, political activism, or “social work.” [See Deegan 1986, 1999; Lengermann 1998; Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley 1996.]) This “hard science” type of “professional sociology” represented an effort to adapt to a hostile academic environment. Indeed, in the context of a powerful conservative trend that included “Red scares,” anti-immigration movements, and the Sacco-Vanzetti trial, sociologists found themselves on the defensive, amid charges that their field was little more than an academic version of socialism.
Chapter 2

The struggle for acceptance virtually mandated that sociology’s advocates build upon taken-for-granted Enlightenment assumptions about science, in particular the notion that social science had to follow the “natural science” paradigm. It was necessary, for example, to overcome the prejudices of such powerful actors as Harvard President James B. Conant, a chemist who tended to regard the social sciences as “the equivalent of astrology” (Hershberg 1993:94).

Sorokin, as chair of Harvard’s newly established (1931) Department of Sociology, continued to defend this “pure science” approach into the mid-1930s. His views are reflected in an exchange of letters with an idealistic young man, Philip H. Schuster (1934), who wrote from Germany, raising issues related to “professional” and “public” sociology.

What international organizations exist for the spread of peace propaganda, socialism in its various forms, anti-nationalistic education, and economic cooperation. Is anything being done in America or Europe towards the creation of public sentiment in favour of more intelligent control of industry, commerce, and natural resources? . . . And, above all, does there seem to be any possibility of far-sighted men getting control of press or radio in any country?

In response, Sorokin (1934) reaffirmed his general disillusionment with reformism and political partisanship, and his faith in scientific sociology.

My dear Mr. Schuster,

Of course there are plenty of organizations . . . that are busy distributing propaganda of various kinds. . . . So far as this Department and myself personally are concerned, we consider that the world has no lack of reformers and reconstructors, most of whom, however they regard themselves, are actually weak and blind. But the world does have a scarcity of real knowledge of social phenomena in general and of knowledge of the best ways of improving them.

In view of this, we are interested in the study of the social world as it is, thinking that if we make real progress in this study the beneficial practical effects of the increase of real knowledge will come about by themselves, as has happened in the case of the natural sciences.

Sorokin’s belief about “the scarcity of real knowledge of social phenomena” also led him to be quite skeptical about “policy sociology,” especially with regard to large-scale programs for the transformation of societies. Thus, in his article “Is Accurate Social Planning Possible?” Sorokin (1936:23–24) points to recent failed Soviet efforts, due to unforeseen factors.

For example: neither the five-year plan nor the ten-year plan reckoned with the depreciation of Soviet money. . . . The plans did not take into account the decided impoverishment of the masses which resulted, impoverishment to the point of mass-starvation. . . . The plans did not anticipate that for the collec-
tivization of farms it would be necessary to shoot and banish from two to four millions of the most industrious peasant families. . . . One of the results of the planning now, after seven years, is that even the purely economic standard of living of the masses is still lower by roughly one-half than it was before the Communist revolution.

On the basis of his analysis, Sorokin advised planners to proceed with caution: “try your plan experimentally, on a small scale, before recklessly starting it on a large scale” (Sorokin 1936:25).

**SOROKIN’S LATER PERSPECTIVE**

Despite his reservations, by the late 1930s Sorokin’s view of sociology was shifting toward a framework that incorporated both “public” and “policy” types. Always concerned about human suffering and deeply committed to non-violence, he worried about possible global disaster. Countless millions were experiencing the Great Depression, following the collapse of the capitalist market system. Hitler had rapidly remilitarized Germany and was imposing a totalitarian fascism. In the Soviet Union, Stalin was conducting show trials, executing enemies, and condemning thousands to the Gulag. In Asia, the Japanese Empire was expanding aggressively, and had invaded China. Meanwhile, the United States witnessed a dramatic increase in violent organized crime, as well as racial rioting, and was preparing to confine its Japanese population in relocation camps. Sorokin concluded that a historical crisis of epic proportions was unfolding, and that sociology needed to address it.

His own response began within professional sociology, where he set out to analyze the phenomenon of social change. At Harvard, he introduced an undergraduate course on “social dynamics,” and departed from contemporary practice by focusing on cultural integration. This became the basis for his most ambitious research project: the study of fluctuations in Western culture over a period of twenty-five centuries. The product, in 1937, was the first three volumes of *Social and Cultural Dynamics*, in which Sorokin attempted to demonstrate the historical, dialectical alternation of two distinct and opposed “culture mentalities”: the ideational (or spiritual) and the sensate (or secular), as well as a synthetic blend called idealistic. *Dynamics* generated tremendous controversy within sociology, particularly in response to Sorokin’s claims that contemporary sensate, Western culture had entered a phase of decline and crisis, and would eventually be supplanted by a very different culture, either ideational or idealistic.

Though *Dynamics* began as professional sociology, it moved Sorokin decisively toward public and policy sociology. This resulted in part from the exceptionally broad coverage that *Dynamics* attracted in popular media,
including newspapers and “high brow” magazines like the Saturday Review of Literature. In the most visible instance, the New York Times featured a full-page, cover photo of Sorokin on its Review of Books. Such reporting was also driven by Sorokin’s highly public polemics, as he debated critics, including Harvard historian Crane Brinton and Columbia anthropologist Alexander Goldenweiser. Sorokin thus departed more and more from “pure sociology” and returned to the style of public debate he had engaged in via his 1917 column “Notes of a Sociologist” in The People’s Will (Nichols 1999).

Sorokin also stepped into the explicit role of public sociologist as he converted his research on social dynamics into a series of lectures sponsored by the Lowell Institute, an organization founded to provide instruction to industrial workers and the general population. After delivering eight talks to large audiences, Sorokin brought them out in book form as The Crisis of Our Age (1941a). In this way, he moved away from “priestly” sociology toward a “prophetic” sociology (see Johnston 1995) that condemned established assumptions and practices. In response, sociologists and other social scientists began to view Sorokin primarily as an adversary, or a philosopher of history, or perhaps an ideological fanatic (Nichols 1989).

Meanwhile, World War II had erupted, an event that Sorokin felt confirmed his diagnosis of historical crisis, as well as his assertion that periods of transition between cultural systems were marked by exceptionally high levels of violence. He published Man and Society in Calamity (1943a), which was intended for both academic and lay audiences, and also produced a volume of critical sociology, Sociocultural Causality, Space, Time (1943b), based on the sociology of knowledge in Dynamics. In 1944 he took another major step in the direction of public sociology by bringing out Russia and the United States, a volume intended for popular audiences that argued for amicable relations between the United States and its Soviet ally, based on the assertion that the cultures and social institutions of the two nations were “converging.”

In 1947, Sorokin published a major work in professional sociology, Society, Culture and Personality, an encyclopedic text that presented a mature version of the two-volume System of Sociology that had appeared in 1920, during his Russian period. This work also offered critical sociology, in discussions of the nature of the sociological enterprise. Throughout the work (which had been presented, as it developed, to generations of Harvard undergraduates), Sorokin provided a review of the professional literature on a scale that had never been approached.

A year later, burning his remaining bridges, Sorokin embarked on a decade-long project that would lead to his virtual excommunication by professional peers (made easier by Sorokin’s own increasing withdrawal). With financial support from the Eli Lilly Foundation to seek remedies for “the crisis of our age,” Sorokin published The Reconstruction of Humanity (1948), a work that combined a harsh critique of current reform proposals (e.g., the
United Nations) with the outline of a program for change. Henceforth—very much in accordance with Burawoy’s public sociology—Sorokin’s writings would assume the perspective of humanity as a whole. Reconstruction hearkens back to reformist works from Sorokin’s earlier Russian context, perhaps especially Leo Tolstoy’s radical Christian treatise, *The Kingdom of God Is within You* (1984). The work clearly fits within Burawoy’s “traditional public sociology,” and it may also claim to be policy sociology, in the sense that it exemplifies “a form of policy sociology that is initiated by the sociologist” (Jeffries 2005:80).

Though he was now approaching the mandatory retirement age of 65, Sorokin introduced a final new undergraduate course at Harvard, on social solidarity. Meanwhile, drawing upon the Lilly funding, and with the blessing of his university, Sorokin established the Harvard Research Center for the Study of Creative Altruism. This organization sought to attract other scholars to the field Sorokin (1951a) called “amitology,” by sponsoring conferences and two symposium volumes that included contributions from biologist Ashley Montagu, philosopher F. S. C. Northrop, and social psychologist Gordon Allport (Sorokin 1950b, 1954a). He also produced the series of works on altruism noted in table 2.1. The majority of these were aimed at the general public, an approach that further tarnished Sorokin’s reputation among academic sociologists—all the more so as the books included discussions of Eastern philosophies (e.g., “the principal yogas,” “ecstasy techniques in Islam,” and “Buddhist yoga and Tibetan tantric techniques”).

The altruism writings are best summarized by the 1954 volume, *The Ways and Power of Love*, which deserves to be recognized as one of Sorokin’s major works, on a par with his earlier, better-known efforts. Sorokin was extremely serious about studying love energy, as well as its social organization, scientifically and insisted that this was every bit as valid as studying crime and deviance. In *Ways and Power*, Sorokin again dissented from the dominant paradigm in social science, by asserting that—as a matter of scientific fact—human personality includes a superconscious dimension. From the perspective of critics, this amounted to a shocking claim that social science needed to embrace the ancient concept of a human soul, and it seemed to many an inexcusable excursion into theology or metaphysics.

Meanwhile, amid his researches on altruism, Sorokin returned to critical sociology with *Fads and Foibles in Modern Sociology and Related Sciences* (1956). Employing polemic, and even satire, against widely accepted ideas and practices, he lambasted members of the profession as “new Columbuses” ignorant of earlier discoveries, attacked popular “small group” research, and condemned quantitative methodologies for their “quantophrenia” and “testomania.” Throughout, Sorokin claimed that American sociology was moving toward a dead end of negativism and trivial empiricism, and needed to
undergo a fundamental transformation along the lines of his own Integralist paradigm. In response, one reviewer (Horton 1956) condemned *Fads* as “a disservice to our profession.”

In his final years, Sorokin produced both public and professional sociology. In 1964 he published *The Basic Trends of Our Times*, a short volume for general readers that again outlined processes analyzed in *Dynamics*, while predicting a creative renaissance in Asia and an East-West convergence. Sorokin also reappeared at Harvard, as a speaker in a “teach-in” against the escalating Vietnam War. Meanwhile, there had been a reconciliation between Sorokin and the sociological profession (reflected in two Festschrift volumes honoring Sorokin, and his lengthy “response to critics” in one of them [Sorokin 1963b]). In 1965, having improbably been elected president of the American Sociological Association as a write-in candidate, he delivered an address on “The Sociology of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow” that predicted a period of creative theoretical syntheses. His final work, *Sociological Theories of Today* (1966), critically examined sociological theories from the preceding half-century.

### THE VOICE OF INTEGRALISM

An appreciation of how the mature Sorokin might have responded to Burawoy’s proposed holistic sociology requires a brief summation of his system of Integralism. As table 2.2 indicates, there are at least seven distinctive but related features of this perspective (see also Sorokin 1957b; Johnston 1998; Jeffries 1999, 2005; Nichols 1999, 2005, 2006).

On the basis of this summation, I shall now articulate a “virtual response” from Sorokin to Burawoy, which offers a “voice of Integralism,” in the contemporary conversation.

1. Burawoy’s vision of a dialectical matrix of sociological work is generally sound, but it requires further clarification. To begin with, his notion of a “public” remains only vaguely defined. In its present form, this concept seems to have problems similar to those involved with the idea of “community,” which does not refer to any actually existing, organized social group. The various types of publics cited by Burawoy as illustrations of his central concept are not well organized into a typology with a clear and logical foundation. Furthermore, some of the relationships among the types identified by Burawoy are questionable. In particular, it is not clear that the relationship between public and policy sociology is truly analogous to that between critical and professional sociology. Burawoy himself seems to recognize this difficulty.

2. Burawoy is correct in calling for the reform of sociology, and correct also in asserting the existence of a historical crisis, but he is wrong about the
nature of the crisis. The contemporary crisis is not primarily economic in nature, nor is it even economic and political. Rather, it is an extraordinary crisis of the type that occurs only once in many centuries, and it involves every fundamental compartment of the dominant sensate culture: its art, literature, law, system of truth and ethics, economics, politics, science, religion, and system of social relationships (contractual and compulsory). To diagnose the crisis as primarily economic, or as economic and political, is to mistake the part for the whole, the symptom for the disease.

3. None of the types of sociological work identified by Burawoy can be completely successful if they remain grounded in the obsolescent assumptions of a dying sensate culture. The premises of the sensate mentality are partly true, but they are incomplete, and, the more they are treated as the total truth, the more they mislead humanity. Sociologists must begin by realizing that, in addition to the sensory and rational aspects of the total reality, there is also a super-sensory and super-rational dimension that has been recognized for countless centuries in the philosophies and religions of diverse civilizations.

### Table 2.2. Dimensions of Sorokin’s “Integralism”

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<tr>
<th>1. Ontology</th>
<th>Reality is an infinite manifold exhibiting three recognizable dimensions: physical, mental, and transcendental.</th>
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<td>2. Philosophy of</td>
<td>Human beings are a synthesis of several dimensions: biological, psychological, sociocultural, and spiritual. Human life is characterized by freedom and creativity.</td>
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<td>Human Life</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Epistemology</td>
<td>Human beings possess three means of knowing that correspond to the three fundamental dimensions of reality: sensory knowledge, rational cognition, and super-sensory super-rational intuition.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. General Sociology</td>
<td>Sociology focuses on the superorganic realm of meaningful human interaction. Its knowledge is generated through a plurality of distinctive, yet complementary perspectives.</td>
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<td>5. Sociological Method</td>
<td>Sociology uses a holistic blend of approaches, each of which illumines some aspect of its complex object of study: observation, interviewing, historical study, statistical analysis, etc. These are grounded in a “logico-meaningful” perspective that is primarily qualitative and phenomenological.</td>
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<td>6. Historical Sociology</td>
<td>The historical record reveals a dialectical fluctuation of the dominance of three basic culture mentalities: Ideational (spiritual), Idealistic (blended), and Sensate (secular). Over long periods of time, these complement and correct one another.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Ethics</td>
<td>Combines the absolute ethics of unlimited love (based on intuition and revelation) with the principle of human freedom and the right to happiness. Seeks the unity of “the true, the beautiful, and the good” as its ideal.</td>
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Without this understanding, it is not possible for sociologists to develop an adequate view of human personality, which must include a super-sensory, super-rational dimension. The assumption of this aspect of human reality is also necessary for a new ethics of absolute values, grounded in love and asserting the spiritual unity of all human persons and the sacred value of all human life. Such an ethos is the key to conflict resolution, and especially to the prevention of global warfare that might destroy life on earth.

4. Burawoy’s emphasis on the values of freedom and liberation must be counter-balanced by an emphasis on self-control and responsibility. Although compulsory relationships (domination, oppression, etc.) are an extremely important problem, the value of freedom is not, by itself, a complete or adequate solution. Examination of the historical record shows clearly that, during periods of warfare and revolution, there is often an excessive freedom that ignores the restraints of law and morality and leads to indescribable atrocities. Even in peacetime, excessive freedom is often destructive, when it takes the form of extreme hedonism and licentiousness that undermine social relationships, beginning with those in the family. Therefore, the quest for freedom and liberation must be matched by a search for responsibility and self-restraint.

5. Burawoy’s approach tends to regard justice as the ultimate value to be served by sociology; but there are still higher values that sociology must also serve. The historical record shows conclusively that the value of justice, by itself, can be associated with intense and often violent social conflicts, as each side struggles to acquire what it believes is its due, using whatever means are necessary. This is easily seen, if we keep in mind that justice—especially in a legalistic sense—involves mainly “contractual” relationships, with some elements also of “compulsory” social relationships (e.g., coercion by the state). In other words, the parties in a relationship of justice do not completely identify with one another; significant differences remain.

In order to attain social harmony and lasting intergroup peace, other and higher values must be pursued, especially compassion, non-violence, mutual aid, and unlimited love. Indeed, the very “hunger and thirst for justice” implies that these other values, or virtues (see Jeffries 1998, 2002), are already at work, especially when there is a manifest desire for justice for other groups. These values are inherent in “familistic” relationships, which involve the greatest unity of social persons and groups, and are the basis of the greatest ethical systems, all of which preach some version of “the human family.” Sociologists therefore should look beyond the objective of legalistic justice, and pursue familistic ethics as their ideal.

If sociology does move in this direction, a new type of work may emerge, one that is positive, hopeful, and even joyful. It is doubtless true, as Burawoy contends, that many well-intentioned reformers have been attracted to sociology in recent decades. But these have also often been
angry people, driven by resentment (see Abbott 2006), for whom sociology is a weapon in the service of political causes. As many political and revolutionary movements of the twentieth century demonstrated, anger tends toward self-righteousness, hatred, and violence. Sociologists must learn to transcend this negativism, which is now widely institutionalized in professional associations, and look to models such as Gandhi, who worked for change within an ethos of love of adversaries. They may find a helpful model in the recent movement for a “positive psychology” (Seligman 2002; Peterson and Seligman 2004; see also Nichols 2005).

6. To the extent that he believes sociology’s value depends upon an attitude of political and social liberalism among sociologists, Burawoy is wrong. No science should be defined in terms of the socio-political attitudes of its current practitioners, and phrases such as “liberal chemistry,” “conservative biology,” and “middle-of-the-road physics” illustrate how foolish this approach would seem to scholars in other fields. If sociology is to be defined in terms of these attitudes, then it will be a will-o’-the-wisp, blown about by prevailing winds.

The tendency to glorify liberal and radical-left political attitudes also fails to recognize the importance of conserving traditional values necessary to the sociological enterprise. Among the obvious examples of customary virtues are: intellectual honesty and integrity, academic freedom, respect for the work of others, the sharing of scientific results, and the service of students and society. Meanwhile, efforts to promote sociology as a science “for liberals only”—however well intentioned—directly contradict the official rhetoric of the American Sociological Association and similar groups that call for “diversity” among their members. Ideological homogeneity, by definition, drives out diversity of thought and opinion.

7. Insofar as sociologists cling to an obsolescent sensate ethics, they cannot be the moral vanguard of humanity, as Burawoy seems to believe. The ethos of modern Western humanism, which has produced ethics of extreme relativism and self-centeredness, must be transformed and made more adequate through interaction with other great systems of ethics, including Confucianism, Hinduism and Buddhism, and Islam, as well as revived Judeo-Christian values.

Burawoy’s Rebuttal

If such a critique were indeed put forward by Sorokin, Burawoy would very likely read it and articulate a response, as he has frequently done with other critics. The voice of his rebuttal might sound something like this.

1. Sorokin’s interpretation of historical change is not the only possible reading of events. Our two readings should be seen as complementary, rather than mutually exclusive possibilities—all the more so as both employ dialectical method.
According to Sorokin’s own conceptual framework, moreover, economic and material factors occupy especially prominent places in sensate cultures. If this is so, then they must also be central in explanations of change involving sensate systems. The case would be similar if a sociologist were looking at change in the European Middle Ages. There, great emphasis would have to be placed on the role of the Church. In short, explanations of change in different eras must focus on the dominant institutions in those eras. This rationale fully justifies emphasizing economic and political factors in change in contemporary Europe and America.

2. Some of the differences and difficulties Sorokin cites in his critique are not as great as they may appear. First of all, even if Sorokin is correct in his claim that the notion of “public” is not precise, it may be the best one can do. The term might be understood as what Herbert Blumer called a “sensitizing concept,” rather than a strict definition. Or it might be viewed as what Talcott Parsons called a “residual category.”

Furthermore, as regards a classification of publics, a more complete and satisfactory approach might well emerge from the contemporary conversation about public sociology, which is being carried on among scholars internationally. With patience, the problem may resolve itself. In the same way, logical relationships among the four types of sociological work may become clearer via sustained dialogue. The fourfold typology was intended as a heuristic device that would initiate discussion, and not as the last word on the subject. The initial propositions about internal relationships will be modified, and thereby improved.

3. With regard to creating a public sociology, there is a need to be pragmatic. Perhaps the ultimate ethos is indeed one of unlimited love. In the meantime, however, the pursuit of justice will move sociology partway along this road.

It is also necessary to keep the relevant contexts clearly in view. Sorokin’s approach was largely grounded in the Russian historical experience, which gave birth to a literature about public sociology, which is being carried on among scholars internationally. With patience, the problem may resolve itself. In the same way, logical relationships among the four types of sociological work may become clearer via sustained dialogue. The fourfold typology was intended as a heuristic device that would initiate discussion, and not as the last word on the subject. The initial propositions about internal relationships will be modified, and thereby improved.

Furthermore, by Sorokin’s own theory the American context is marked by a dominance of “contractual” relations, which foster an emphasis on justice and fairness, rather than unlimited love. The long-standing American concern with the issues of inequality and human rights has in turn drawn many people to sociology. Indeed, within the American Sociological Association the Section on Race, Class, and Gender is now one of the largest of
several dozen sections. Therefore, simply as a practical matter the struggle for equality and justice is the best starting point from which to build a public sociology.

As regards contractual and compulsory relationships, Sorokin should bear in mind that large, complex societies such as the United States do not conform to a “gemeinschaft” or “primary group” model. They are, rather, “gesellschaften” or “secondary groups.” Therefore, at least in the short run, the best we can hope for is a more humane civil society, perhaps along the lines of the ideal that Talcott Parsons (1977) called “societal community.”

CONCLUSION

This chapter has imagined how Pitirim A. Sorokin might respond to Michael Burawoy’s proposal for a fourfold matrix of sociological work, with particular emphasis on the category of “public sociology,” and has also considered the rebuttal that Burawoy might formulate in a virtual conversation. The discussion strongly suggests that Sorokin and Burawoy would have regarded one another as kindred spirits seeking to reinvigorate their discipline within a context of perceived professional decline and historical crisis. Both Sorokin and Burawoy speak from a macro-level perspective that locates sociology within a larger sociocultural constellation, and both adopt a long-term outlook that anticipates important shifts in what shall constitute “normal science” for sociologists. Burawoy, more than Sorokin, has “struck a chord” among contemporaries, who are now engaged in an intensive conversation on an international scale (e.g., Blau and Smith 2006; Clawson et al. 2007; Nichols 2007). But this chord also harmonizes with that sounded by Sorokin from the late 1930s to the late 1960s in the composition of his system of Integralism. Perhaps, in the decades ahead, both will continue to reverberate together.

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Rethinking Burawoy’s Public Sociology: A Post-Empiricist Reconstruction

Raymond A. Morrow

Following Michael Burawoy’s ASA presidential address in August 2004, “For Public Sociology,” an unprecedented international debate has emerged on the current state and future of sociology (Burawoy 2005a). The goal here will be to provide a stock-taking of the resulting commentary that will offer some constructive suggestions for revising and reframing the original model. The central theme of discussion will be that while Burawoy’s manifesto is primarily concerned with a plea for the institutionalization of public sociology, it is embedded in a very ambitious social theoretical framework whose full implications have not been worked out in sufficient detail (Burawoy 2005a). The primary objective of this essay will be to highlight such problems in the spirit of what Saskia Sassen calls “digging” to “detect the lumpiness of what seems an almost seamless map” (Sassen 2005:401) and to provide suggestions for constructive alternatives.

Burawoy’s proposal has enjoyed considerable “political” success: “Burawoy’s public address is, quite clearly, a politician’s speech—designed to build consensus and avoid ruffling too many feathers” (Hays 2007:80). As Patricia Hill Collins puts it, the eyes of many students “light up” when the schema is presented: “There’s the aha factor at work. . . . They resonate with the name public sociology. . . . Wishing to belong to something bigger than themselves” (Collins 2007:110–111). While many might be skeptical about the “we” of the resulting activism (Nielsen 2004), there was after all no overt threat to individual “professional” autonomy. By giving “professional sociology” sanctity, it was possible to avoid the charges of simplistic anti-positivism. Instead, Burawoy falls back on the comforting language of a Durkheimian pluralism that offers hope of reconciliation based on a complementary division of labor between four
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types of sociology: professional and policy sociology oriented toward “in-
strumental knowledge,” as opposed to critical and public sociology con-
cerned with “reflexive knowledge” (understood primarily in normative
terms). The problem is that despite the provocative pedagogical intuition
that underlies and justifies the model’s use as a heuristic device, upon
closer examination it cannot be adequately defended in its current form as
a theoretical framework for understanding the discipline of sociology.

This essay is written from the semi-peripheral perspective of a standpoint
influenced by the international context of European social theory, Canadian
and Latin American social research, and my own earlier defenses of a “critical
theory of methodology” and a “postfoundationalist critical theory” (Morrow
1994; Morrow and Torres 2002). So it was with some discomfort that despite
my initial sympathy for Burawoy’s intervention, further reflection—prompted
by the invitation to contribute to this book—forced me to the following re-
considerations.

Assessing Burawoy’s manifesto for a “public sociology” will require a
quick review of previous commentaries as a point of departure for develop-
ing some proposed revisions that will focus on issues related to the theo-
retical status of the model. The unifying argument will be that Burawoy’s
model—based on a polarization between instrumental and reflexive knowl-
edge—overgeneralizes a particular historical configuration of tendencies es-
specially evident in the United States. The model must therefore be situated
within a more generalized metatheoretical framework that (1) is not based
on a polarization of instrumental and reflexive knowledge; (2) expands
the quadrant now labeled “critical sociology” to encompass “social theory”
generally in order to extend its meaning to include the multiple forms of
reflexivity necessary for social inquiry; (3) takes into account that profes-
sional sociology as empirical knowledge takes a multiplicity of explanatory
and methodological forms that cannot be reduced to the concept of “instru-
mental knowledge”; and (4) recognizes that policy sociology needs to be
differentiated by recognizing its “technocratic” and “liberal enlightenment”
forms, a distinction that suggests greater continuity between some forms of
policy and public sociology. Finally (5), such modifications will provide a
basis for clarification of the logical status and rationale of a fourfold model
of the division of sociological labor.

THE DEBATE THUS FAR:
AN OVERVIEW AND ASSESSMENT

While many of the commentaries are generally supportive testimonials
(e.g., Blau and Smith 2006; Piven 2007), other discussions have made ex-


plcit criticisms of Burawoy’s theoretical scheme and its implications (Claw-
Rethinking Burawoy’s Public Sociology

At least four key themes—often overlapping—can be identified: (1) the tension between interdisciplinarity and sociological myopia; (2) reservations about the specific tasks and future of public sociology in different national contexts; (3) questions about scientific credibility; and (4) fundamental theoretical problems of the original model.

Those who point to the dangers of sociological myopia note the tension between a globalizing ambition and a narrow focus on sociology (Chase-Dunn 2005): “sociology cannot handle it alone” (Ehrenreich 2007:236). Burawoy defends his sociological focus in terms of reconstituting the traditional universalizing ambitions, disciplinary divisions, and positivist methodology of social science, a concern that is framed as part of a critique of Wallerstein and the Gulbankian Commission’s utopian vision of a unified social science (Burawoy 2005b). However necessary, such a reconstitution must also take into account that much sociological research and especially sociological theory has depended crucially on theoretical work outside of sociology (Aronowitz 2005; Braithwaite 2005; Holmwood 2007). Yet accepting the need for interdisciplinarity does not require denying that sociology has a distinctive disciplinary perspective but does provide a reminder that other fields have more often paved the way: the call for a public sociology generally seems to ignore that most of the pioneering forms of public social science have been carried outside of sociology, especially professional and interdisciplinary programs and the well-developed tradition of “action research” (Reason and Bradbury 2001).

Regarding the second question, considerable discussion has questioned the future and priorities of public sociology, especially Burawoy’s prophetic stance based on a model of “three waves” of public sociology, culminating in its focus on the defense of civil society from markets and the state (Burawoy 2005c). This issue will be taken up only indirectly here in questioning both the identification of policy sociology with narrow instrumentalism and defining public sociology as primarily a defensive strategy against the state.

The third question of scientific credibility and authority provides the basis for strong “positivist” and empiricist critiques that criticize the model for giving moral questions priority over “the canons of science” (Tittle 2004), rather than following an engineering model of applied science based on the “old school” notion of “the epistemology of science” (Turner 2005:29), a point reinforced by understanding the context of university governance (Brint 2005). Others point to our limited ability to “predict what knowledge will be useful in the long run” (Smith-Lovin 2007:127) and the necessity of defending a “strong” professional sociology as the only way to re-establish the authority of sociology (Boyns and Fletcher 2005). Related forms of criticism proceed from more pluralistic empiricist arguments about the limits of existing forms of knowledge, for example, the risk of being “high in affect,
low in competence” (Stinchcombe 2007:143), and the defense of more “enlightened” policy sociology based on solid research (Massey 2007). As well, there are concerns about a lack of accountability to peer review (Smith-Lovin 2007) and the difficulties of communicating social knowledge—the distortions resulting from the translation of “theory” into “practice” (Beck 2005; Ericson 2005; Stacey 2004; Stinchcombe 2007). Though such cautions cannot be ignored, post-empiricist philosophies of science do not give much support to the dream of a unified sociological discipline whose positive scientific knowledge provides a foundation for authority based on an engineering analogy (Bryant 1995). Moreover, as recent research in citation networks between disciplines suggests, sociology long ago traded centrality for cohesion and cannot realistically aspire to the self-enclosed autonomy of economics, law, and even political science (Moody and Light 2006).

Even if there is little basis for a return to the positivist vision of pure applied knowledge, there is still the fourth question of the adequacy of Burawoy’s alternative. Others, while generally sympathetic to the idea of institutionalizing public sociology, argue that the schema will simply not bear the weight of justifying the worthy cause. As the historical sociologist Orlando Patterson bluntly puts it, the model “illustrates some of the worst habits of contemporary sociological thinking . . . excessive overschematization and overtheorizing of subjects, the construction of falsely crisp categories” (Patterson 2007:176–177). Most of the more critical responses thus start from questioning the division of labor argument, stressing instead the unity of sociological work. At one (admittedly utopian) extreme, Sharon Hays suggests that all sociology should be public to avoid public sociology being “cordoned off as just another form of lowly labor—a mail room job for losers” (Hays 2007:81). A number of others reiterate a unity argument that also calls into question the usefulness of the fourfold schema: for Richard Ericson, “all sociology . . . involves knowledge that is at once professional, critical, policy and public” (Ericson 2005:366); for Immanuel Wallerstein, all sociology is simultaneously intellectual, moral, and political (Wallerstein 2007); and for Andrew Abbott it is always reflexive, instrumental, and value-laden (Abbott 2007).

More helpful for the reconstructive purpose at hand, Craig Calhoun provides a short checklist concerned with repairing the schema. First, what is the analytical status of these quadrants? Second, the tendency to overemphasize the discreteness of the four positions results in the striking anomaly that “critical sociology exists only to criticize other forms of sociology” rather than use empirical analysis to criticize society (Calhoun 2005:357). Third, what problems result from reserving autonomy primarily for professional and critical sociology, thus calling into question its importance for policy and public sociology? Fourth, if sociologists are to take the standpoint of civil society, this raises problems related to standpoint theories generally, as well as the reification of civil society.
Andrew Abbott’s devastating critique of the foundations of Burawoy’s model provides another key entry point for the revisions proposed. Abbott’s objections are based on two fundamental issues. First, the overall structure of the model around a means-ends axis (instrumental versus reflexive knowledge) is rejected as a “disastrous error” because sociology is intrinsically value-laden (Abbott 2007:188). Second, linking critique and reflexivity directly with left politics is also mistaken because it does not take into account the non-political basis for moral perception, which for Abbott is best articulated in humanistic values whose realization is not tied to any particular sociological method.

RETHINKING BURAWOY’S PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY: AN AGENDA

Without necessarily disagreeing with the critiques of the foundations of the model, it can nevertheless be sustained that with appropriate revisions the notion of a sociological division of labor can provide important insights into the different practical configurations around which sociologists necessarily organize their activities. A key aspect of the proposed revisions will be a rejection of the polarization between professional sociology (based on “instrumental knowledge”) and critical sociology (based on “reflexive knowledge”). Rejecting the instrumental versus reflexive knowledge distinction provides the basis for meeting Abbott’s two fundamental objections—that all research is reflexive and value-laden and critique cannot be reduced to a political category.

REWORKING THE FOUR FACE MODEL: FIVE RECONSTRUCTIVE STEPS

The four-way complementarity thesis relating the four sociologies is the linchpin of Burawoy’s whole argument. On the first horizontal axis, professional and policy sociology are linked by shared concern with “instrumental knowledge.” On the other horizontal axis, the harmonizing connection is between the primacy of “reflexive knowledge” (primarily normative) for both critical and public sociology. As we will see, the proposed revision based on eliminating the instrumental versus reflexive knowledge distinction will have the effect of weakening the harmonizing assumptions found on the two horizontal axes—based respectively on shared instrumentality versus shared reflexivity—and reducing the conflicts on the vertical axes—based on the opposition of instrumentality and reflexivity, as well as drawing out more clearly the internal differentiations within all four categories. The two relatively autonomous forms of knowledge—professional sociology and social theory—use cognitive
styles that inevitably conflict with orientations to immediate practice, whether as policy or public sociology. Moreover, the differences between policy and public sociology as practice-oriented sociologies are not necessarily all that strong when a state has high levels of legitimacy and democratic participation. While this shifting of the alignments of tensions and complementarities will not require the model to necessarily implode, it will introduce arguments suggesting somewhat more intense conflicts and contradictions across the autonomous inquiry versus practice divide than the Durkheimian model of complementary differentiation suggests. Above all, these relations can no longer be conceived schematically in terms of a 4x4 matrix, as opposed to more specific sets of relations that respect the distinctive tasks of the systematic reflexivity of social theory. These relations can be introduced in terms of the following diagram:

Figure 3.1. The Division of Sociological Labor
ELIMINATING THE INSTRUMENTAL-REFLEXIVE DISTINCTION

The first step toward developing these arguments will be to reject the instrumental versus reflexive knowledge distinction as a way of contrasting two forms of sociology. As Burawoy notes, “In ways I cannot go into here, this scheme bears a close relation to Habermas’s theory of system and life-world, and a more distant relation to Talcott Parsons’s AGIL system. The distinction between instrumental and reflexive sociology has its roots in Max Weber” (Burawoy 2004:105). The suggestion that the model can be justified by reference to insights derived from Weber (along with Habermas and to a lesser extent Parsons) raises some complex questions that can only be discussed here in a cryptically brief way given space limitations. Though various authors (e.g., Abbott, Ericson, Wallerstein, McClaughlin, et al.) point to the unity of sociological inquiry, they tend to use the argument to reject the model altogether. The present discussion instead proposes a (radical) revisionist strategy.

The first step will be to focus on demonstrating that the instrumental and reflexive sociology distinction cannot be legitimated by the example of Weber. The proposed alternative strategy will be elaborated in four more steps: rethinking the domains of critical and professional sociology (steps two and three), drawing out some of the implications for policy and public sociology (step four), and reconsidering the theoretical status of the model as a whole (step five). As will become apparent, these revisions have the effect of complicating issues in a way that moves away from the elegance and simplicity of the original model, but at the gain—hopefully—of a more convincing account of the field of sociology.

As an initial reference point, consider the key formulation of the instrumental-reflexive distinction:

This is the distinction underlying Max Weber’s discussion of technical and value rationality. Weber, and following him the Frankfurt School, were concerned that technical rationality was supplanting value discussion, what Horkheimer (1974 [1947]) referred to as the eclipse of reason or what he and his collaborator Theodor Adorno (1969 [1944]) called the dialectic of enlightenment. I call the one type of knowledge instrumental knowledge, whether it be the puzzle solving of professional sociology or the problem solving of policy sociology. I call the other reflexive knowledge because it is concerned with a dialogue about ends, whether the dialogue takes place within the academic community about the foundations of its research programs or between academics and various publics about the direction of society. Reflexive knowledge interrogates the value premises of society as well as our profession. (Burawoy 2005a:11)
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Burawoy’s response to one of the critiques of his instrumental-reflexive distinction (directed against McLaughlin et al.) is also revealing:

To eliminate the distinction between instrumental and reflexive knowledge—between the logic of means and the logic of ends, between the logic of efficiency and the logic of reason—just because there is a real tendency toward the stifling of reflexive knowledge, whether critical or public, is to surrender to third-wave marketization. (Burawoy 2005c:165)

The following discussion will not argue for eliminating the distinction in general. The question at hand is rather whether the instrumental-reflexive distinction—grounded in Weber’s distinction between instrumental and substantive rationality—is suitable for grounding two different axes of sociology. Before proceeding, however, it is necessary to note the ambiguity of the use of the term “instrumental” here. One formulation suggests that perhaps Burawoy may have a rather idiosyncratic and limited meaning in mind: “Professional and policy sociologies are instrumental knowledges, linking means to given ends—the one, puzzle solving oriented to fellow sociologists and the other, problem solving, oriented to clients” (Burawoy 2007:6). If puzzle solving is all that is implied by calling professional sociology “instrumental knowledge,” then it is relatively uncontroversial, but at the same time has little to do with Weber’s concept of technical rationality understood as calculation of efficient means. But as Burawoy’s overall discussion suggests, he does indeed have in mind invoking this stronger claim since he wants to pair instrumental rationality with its opposite—substantive (value) rationality.

In order to substantiate these problems in using Weber (and by implication, Frankfurt critical theory), it is necessary to show three things: first, why Weber’s notion of instrumental rationality cannot be used to define professional sociology; second, how the label “instrumental knowledge” conflicts with Weber’s own characterization of sociology as a discipline; and third, the difficulties of directly equating the normative (value-rational) concerns of critical sociology—that is, the social criticism generated by “reflexive knowledge”—with “substantive reason.”

Whereas it may be justifiable to refer to the “problem solving” of policy sociology as instrumental, it is not so clear that “puzzle solving” in research can be usefully characterized as instrumental in Weber’s sense, hence following the “logic of efficiency” when the “ends” are presumably something like “scientific truth.” The term “instrumental rationality” (Zweckrationalität—sometimes translated “purposive rationality”) was introduced by Weber as part of a fourfold differentiation of types of social action. But is it justifiable to call scientific activity as the construction of knowledge a form of “action” in the same sense as instrumental actions of an entrepreneur or even a policy expert? Matters are further confused by jumping from a
typology of rationalities of action to one of forms of knowledge. To say that sociological knowledge is the outcome of the instrumental action of puzzle solving tends—given the larger context referring to Weber—also to imply that the resulting research has instrumental uses, which is why it is paired with policy sociology in the first place. But the fact of puzzle solving actually says nothing about the logical structure or potential uses of the finished puzzles: empirical knowledge can take many different explanatory forms, of which instrumental knowledge in the strict sense of technical control and prediction is only one. In other words, an action typology is surreptitiously converted into what sounds like an epistemological distinction: instrumental versus reflexive knowledge.

What appears to be at work here is a failure to differentiate the multiple ways in which Weber talks about rationality. Though commentators have struggled with Weber’s inconsistent usage, Donald Levine’s classification captures some of the key variants:

- **conceptual**—the “increasing theoretical mastery of reality by means of increasingly precise and abstract concepts”;
- **instrumental**—the “methodical attainment of a particular given practical end through the increasingly precise calculation of adequate means”;
- **substantive**—the organization of effort on behalf of normative ideals; and
- **methodical or formal**—what Weber terms Planmässigkeit, a methodical ordering of activities through the establishment of fixed rules and routines.

(Levine 2005:116–117)

Social scientific activity can thus be more insightfully referred to as conceptual or formal (or perhaps theoretical) rationality, but not instrumental rationality and the use of instrumental knowledge in the sense used, for example, by George Ritzer in his analysis of McDonaldization (Ritzer 1996). Moreover, given that Weber admits that belief in scientific inquiry is itself a value, it would be necessary to acknowledge that in practice conceptual rationality also has an underlying value dimension.

To turn to the second question, beyond failing to correspond to Weber’s theory of rationalization, Burawoy’s argument is not consistent with Weber’s own characterization of sociology. Weber neither identified the conceptual rationality of sociology with its instrumental uses nor accepted—given his Nietzschean tendencies—that value rationality could be a form of “knowledge.” Following later neo-Kantian philosophers such as Dilthey who developed a hermeneutic critique of “historical reason,” Weber’s sociology was grounded—unlike classical hermeneutics—in recognition of non-naturalistic forms of causality (Harrington 2001).

Nevertheless, his anti-positivist stance sharply differentiated the social sciences from the natural sciences because their foundation was interpretations
of meaning, even though some forms of social science were contributing to the rationalization of social action.

Finally, with respect to the third question, Weber cannot be easily used to justify the characterization of critical sociology in terms of its capacity to produce “reflexive knowledge” linked with substantive reason. Substantive reason (a term used in his legal studies as a contrast for formal rationality) and value rationality in general (Wertrationalität) were not for Weber forms of knowing that were subject to rational evaluation because they ultimately had non-rational foundations in a metaphysical “war of the gods.” One could just dismiss Weber here, but that would require justifying how normative reasoning could be considered “knowledge.” The early Frankfurt School attempted to do so with the metaphysical notion of “objective reason” as the foundation of substantive reason—an argument that Habermas has subsequently rejected in turning to a procedural, communicative ethics. And as postmodernists stress, to play the conceptual game of engaging in debates about the value rationality of ends provides no guarantee of producing universally valid norms, even if they were possible. In short, when Burawoy reduces reflexive knowledge to a form of “knowledge” based on a “dialogue about ends,” he simply glosses over the immense practical and philosophical difficulties with respect to what that might mean in the contemporary context. In short, it is necessary to start all over by rethinking the issues involved in defining the categories labeled “critical sociology” and “professional sociology” in their own terms before an effort is made to unjustifiably reduce their relation to a contrast between reflexive and instrumental knowledge.

FROM CRITICAL SOCIOLOGY TO SOCIAL THEORY

A second step of revision would thus be to deal with the immense problems resulting from the characterization of the autonomous quadrant of reflexive knowledge as normative “critical sociology,” an issue that goes beyond the potential historical deficiencies of its reflexivity (McLaughlin, Kowalchuk, and Turcotte 2005). This section will focus on the rationale for replacing “critical sociology”—understood by Burawoy primarily as normative (reflexive) knowledge—with the more inclusive notion of social theory. In Burawoy’s formulation critical sociology appears schizophrenic—it tends to be professional and empirical in its contemporary practice as research, and yet its claim to distinctiveness in informing public sociology is that it is foundational and especially moral: “It is the role of critical sociology, my fourth type of sociology, to examine the foundations—both the explicit and the implicit, both normative and descriptive—of the research programs of professional sociology” (2005a:10). Yet if one looks at a journal like Critical
Sociology or others associated more broadly with critical social theory (e.g., *Theory and Society*), it is hard to distinguish such work from a somewhat marginalized form of professional sociology that just gives more attention to value questions, power, and the historical origins of the definition of research problems. Perhaps the hesitation to make this link with professional sociology explicit stems from the reluctance of associating critical sociology with “instrumental knowledge”—a problem that disappears if this characterization is dropped as argued previously.

To further develop this shift from “critical sociology” to “social theory,” two points need to be recognized. First, the full distinctiveness of this “foundational” quadrant as a form of largely non-empirical theorizing needs to be recognized, especially how it cannot be a form of “sociology” in the same sense as the other three faces of inquiry. Jonathan Turner indirectly identifies the problem with the complaint that Habermas’s otherwise interesting writings are just “philosophy,” not really sociology at all (Turner 2005:35).

Second, it should be recognized that the inevitable oscillation between narrow and conflationary uses of the term “critical sociology” is a source of endless confusion. For example, whereas Alain Touraine equates critical sociology with Marxist forms of social determinism (Touraine 2007), subsequent qualifications open up the term to include Pitirim Sorokin (Jeffries 2005). Why not then even include Parsons, who was after all a normative (liberal) critic of fascism, racism, and excessive inequality? A term that in this context gives rise to such serious ambiguities needs to be replaced.

The face misleadingly labeled “critical sociology” should thus be renamed more generically as “social theory,” or more specifically, “systematic reflexive theorizing,” since all sociologists engage in reflexive theorizing and social theory to some extent. While critical sociologies may be associated with some of the most visible forms of social theory, they do not have a monopoly on this kind of conceptual work. Critical theory in the Frankfurt tradition is thus a form of social theory that draws upon a particular configuration of its multiple forms of reflexive discourse, even if grounded in a normative theory of emancipation. Nor is social theory uniquely sociological because it is part of an interdisciplinary discourse that includes all of the human sciences. Moreover, to “criticize” in the context of social theory should not be read in its purely negative or primarily normative sense, but rather as including the full range of “reflexive procedures” that are the basis of the “non-empirical methods” underlying research practices (Morrow 1994:ch. 9). Systematic reflexive theorizing is thus closely associated with “social theory” as codified in two recent encyclopedias of social theory (Harrington, Marshall, and Müller 2006; Ritzer 2005) that can be contrasted to the narrowly positivist vocabulary of “sociology” in the 1960s (Fairchild 1965). Nevertheless, a distinctive feature of American sociology
has been the systematic neglect of the philosophical training necessary for social theory, even in elite programs. Whereas for Alan Sica this neglect “comes close to pedagogical negligence—not unlike prohibiting students from learning statistics, while insisting that they publish in the better journals” (Sica 1998:9–10), for Ben Agger it has culminated in the “diaspora of American social theory” (Agger 2006).

To speak of social theory as the relatively autonomous complement to professional sociology also helps clarify the range of concerns of systematic reflexive theorizing by posing the question of “what is social theory.” For example, Gouldner’s later work is best analyzed as social theory (Antonio 2005), a concept that is much wider than that of “critical sociology.” Without attempting to provide a formal definition, it is possible to describe four of the key forms of discourse associated with social theory: the non-empirical discourses of normative theory (values) and scientific metatheory (ontology, epistemology) and the quasi-empirical inquiries of historicist and constructionist studies of knowledge and general socio-historical theories.

Beyond normative issues, a second central theme of social theory has been a preoccupation with metatheoretical questions about ontology, epistemology, and methodology that are concerned with the status of social knowledge and social explanations. A good representative here in the American context is Stephen P. Turner, who has moved back and forth between sociology and philosophy (Turner and Roth 2003). A third preoccupation of social theory—the social construction of knowledge—has roots in the sociology of knowledge, but has been extended in somewhat different directions in Bourdieu’s reflexive sociology and poststructuralist approaches (e.g., Foucault). Such work has attempted—at its best—to draw out the implications of the social construction of social knowledge, while attempting to avoid both relativistic reductionism and foundationalist notions of scientific “truth.”

Finally, social theory has also been centrally preoccupied with general theories of modernity and postmodernity (e.g., Lyotard, Habermas, Giddens) that cannot be reduced to the somewhat narrower notions of a sociological theory of social change. And to summarize, Burawoy’s own call for the institutionalization of public sociology is essentially an essay in systematically reflexive social theory that draws on all four of its analytic features: normative theory; the metatheoretical foundations of inquiry (e.g., claims about instrumental knowledge); the historical analysis of the formation of sociology as a disciplinary field and its larger implications; the general historical theorizing implied by a “third-wave” model of the sociological tradition that projects “value science” as the rising tide of the future.

With the preceding suggestions in mind, compare Burawoy’s original formulation with an alternative version based on replacing critical sociology with a comprehensive understanding of the systematic reflexivity of social theory:
However disruptive in the short term, in the long term instrumental knowledge cannot thrive without challenges from reflexive knowledges, that is, from the renewal and redirection of the values that underpin their research, values that are drawn from and recharged by the wider society. (Burawoy 2005a:19)

The revised version:

However disruptive in the short term, in the long term the conceptual rationality of empirical research paradigms cannot thrive without challenges from the systematic reflexive insights of social theory, that is, from reflection about the normative and metatheoretical foundations of inquiry, historicist awareness of the construction of knowledge, and the provocations of general social theories that stimulate thinking outside the confines of narrowly empiricist theory.

RETHINKING PROFESSIONAL SOCIOLOGY

A third step would be to draw out the implication of rejecting the characterization of professional sociology as grounded in “instrumental knowledge” and a “correspondence theory of truth,” thus reinforcing—against Burawoy’s own intentions—the positivist tendencies that have long dominated much American social science (Steinmetz 2005). For example, some readings of Burawoy criticize a concession to positivism that makes it unsuitable as a foundation even for public sociology (Ghamari-Tabrizi 2005:364). Though unified as “instrumental knowledge,” the diversity of professional sociology is recognized by reference to “research programs” in the sense used by Imre Lakatos (Burawoy 2005a:10). This terminology is misleading, however, in that it implies a unity based on “core” assumptions and cumulative findings that are generally lacking in sociology (Holmwood 2007:59). This highly idealized view of cumulative research is strategically important for the model in that it provides a knowledge base for high consensus “instrumental knowledge” that in turn legitimates its application in policy research, even though the concept of cumulation itself is fraught with difficulties (Abbott 2006).

A much more representative example of what goes on in social research specialties is evident in the characterization of social gerontology by Norella Putney and her colleagues—and accepted by Burawoy as resulting in a form of public sociology. The resulting list is a rather messy set of approaches whose explanatory diversity resembles many other fields: life course perspectives (the most widely cited); social exchange theory; age stratification perspectives; social constructionism; and critical perspectives that include the Frankfurt tradition, Foucault, political economy, and feminist theories.
(Putney, Alley, and Bengston 2005:93–95). Given the multiplicity of theoretical perspectives, there is no unified “research program” in Lakatos’s sense beyond a value and topical concern with aging groups.

Burawoy’s informal use of the language of research programs obscures how professional sociology is based on diverse explanatory strategies, some of which are highly conducive to policy sociology (hence potentially instrumental in the strong sense), whereas others have no apparent or immediate instrumental value or have only “weak” instrumental possibilities. For example, as Charles Ragin points out, sociological explanations have multiple goals: “1. identifying general patterns and relationships; 2. testing and refining theories; 3. making predictions; 4. interpreting culturally or historically significant phenomena; 5. exploring diversity; 6. giving voice; 7. advancing new theories” (Ragin 1994:32–33). Subsuming all of these possibilities under the heading of “instrumental knowledge” simply cannot be justified aside from the rather trivial sense in which they share “puzzle solving.”

The theoretical strategies of professional sociology can be broadly differentiated in terms of their location on an agency-structure continuum that can be understood ontologically as part of subject-object opposition or epistemologically in terms of a differentiation of three basic “knowledge interests” (Habermas 1971). At the objectivist (positivist, primarily quantitative) extreme are approaches based on the study of causality using multivariate analysis and other formalist approaches. In opposition, various anti-positivist interpretive (hermeneutic) strategies focus on social action and interaction (e.g., symbolic interactionism, social phenomenology, ethnmethodology). Finally a variety of mediating strategies pursue questions linked with an agency-structure model concerned with the interplay of subjectivity and structural relations of causality understood in historicist terms: functionalism and neofunctionalism; historical sociologies; and critical sociologies that, even though often historical, are linked with research problems with strong, explicitly defined value implications (e.g., critical research on race, class, and gender; world system theory; research associated with various forms of critical social theory).

Among these three basic strategies, only forms of objectivist research concerned with prediction and the identification of strict causal social mechanisms might be viewed as “instrumental knowledge” in the sense of technical control. Furthermore, all draw at some point very selectively upon systematic social theory to construct “applied” strategies to legitimate their research paradigms. This “applied reflexivity” includes normative and metatheoretical (and methodological) assumptions, as well as stances with respect to the implications of the social contexts of research and the form of general theory that should inform inquiry. Functionalism has ontological foundations in biological systems theory just as many forms of critical sociology are grounded in classical historical materialism. But typically such
“reflexive” concerns take the form of “given” presuppositions because of a primary focus on empirical research problems and theoretical revisions and elaborations within a framework of “normal science.” Only as systematic social theory are such questions pursued as a relatively autonomous theoretical activity, most often in response to paradigmatic crisis.

Given this diversity and the very weak links between methods and value outcomes, all forms of professional sociology might potentially provide important insights for public sociology under the right conditions. Critical social science has no monopoly of “emancipatory” potentials, even though the early Habermas tended to draw this conclusion. As Abbott points out, overly generalized critiques of positivism have the bad habit of concluding that a concern with values “obliges us to some particular methodology” (Abbott 2007:203). But as he admits, there do remain major problems relating to the “humane translation” of the implications of different explanatory strategies. For example, some methodologies are more appropriate for addressing some kinds of questions better than others. As well, there are immense difficulties in communicating such issues through the mass media—themes tellingly illustrated in Judith Stacey’s account of her experience as an expert witness on gay families (Stacey 2004). Making sense of these problems, however, would require understanding professional sociology in more explicit post-empiricist (and post-positivist) terms grounded in an understanding of multi-paradigmatic explanatory diversity.

Finally, it becomes possible to summarize the alternative to Burawoy’s original formulation of the instrumental-reflexive distinction. The proposed revision version, however, cannot readily be reduced to such a rhetorically elegant and concise formulation, because the fuzzy reality of contemporary social inquiry requires a somewhat more theoretically elaborate and less schematic set of distinctions.

Autonomous inquiry takes the form of conceptual rationality, whether as professional empirical sociology or social theory. Sociology cannot be defined in terms of a polarization between instrumental and reflexive (normative) knowledge because professional sociology as empirical knowledge is constructed through multiple explanatory and methodological strategies (e.g., objectivist, subjectivist, mediational) with distinct social theoretical presuppositions. Moreover, the potential uses of professional sociology—whether more purely instrumental or as part of more democratic, communicative deliberation—cannot be known in advance. Though critical sociologies can be identified as giving a distinctive emphasis to value questions and social engagement, they necessarily remain within professional sociology and dependent upon its base of empirical knowledge.

Rather than constituting a form of knowledge in the stricter empirical sense, social theory is best understood as a family of rational (interdisciplinary) discourses—whether quasi-empirical or non-empirical—whose
intellectual function as forms of systematic reflexive theorizing is to constantly interrogate the practices of the other three cognitive styles and their relation to the academic knowledge system as a whole. Consequently, there is a complementary relationship between systematic social theory and professional sociology, even though competing research paradigms selectively draw upon social theory for their legitimation. Finally, rejecting the instrumental-reflexive knowledge polarization also suggests that the primary division of cognitive styles is around the competing demands of relatively autonomous theory and competing strategies of practice.

THE DIVISIONS WITHIN POLICY SOCIOLOGY AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY

If the opposition between “instrumental” and “reflexive” knowledge as two separate quadrants is rejected, what then is the alternative for locating differences of cognitive style between policy and public sociology? A fourth step—following from the preceding revisions—would be to recognize the differences within policy sociology and the implications for its relationship to public sociology. To address this topic it is necessary to return to Weber’s discussion of policy analysis based on the distinction between the “ethics of responsibility” and the ethics of “ultimate ends.” This schematic typology contributes to misunderstanding, however, if it is taken to imply that there could be a practical politics of either pure ends or pure means—just as Burawoy’s model suggests a polarization between reflexive ends and instrumental means. In practice, the social liberalism that Weber personally advocated attempted to link liberal values with the kinds of policies that he considered “realistic” with the given stock of empirical knowledge, as against the irresponsibility of revolutionary Marxism. Nevertheless, despite some weaknesses in this regard, critical sociologies have always been centrally concerned with developing “scientific” means for realizing the basic values of the Enlightenment—freedom, equality, solidarity, justice—through institutional reorganization. Most forms of social criticism make some effort to take into account the available means, even if resisting opportunistic capitulation to the oppressiveness of the “real” (i.e., “another world is possible”). The alternatives within sociology today are thus not between purely “instrumental” and purely “value” orientations, but between positions that offer competing strategies for combining means and ends. Critical sociologies ironically also adhere to a variant of an ethics of responsibility, but one that simply gives higher priority to mobilizing new interests and reducing specific value inconsistencies related to social justice. At best, it would be possible to say that critical sociologies give relatively higher priority to ends than means, whereas professional and policy sociol-
ogy reverses the relative priority. The result is the opposition between what might be called a narrowly pragmatic or *conventional ethics of responsibility* and the pluralist critical pragmatism (Bohman 1999) of what might be called a *radical ethics of responsibility*.

Professional sociology as empirical research is not intrinsically committed to either the conventional or radical option because it produces knowledge that might in principle be used to legitimate the “means” aspect of either position. For this reason calling professional sociology “instrumental” exaggerates its affinities with policy sociology and obscures its necessary relation to public sociology as a resource for “alternative” policies. The means-oriented knowledge of those advocating radical change can only come from the same stock of professional empirical knowledge, even if drawing upon different forms. Every invocation of “another world is possible” in public sociology is also necessarily implicitly linked with reference to (alternative) technical means, even if these may be viewed by policy sociology as unreliable, likely to produce excessive social conflict, too costly, and so forth.

It should also be emphasized that such visionary social theoretical questions are not the monopoly of the “left.” The variable affinity between social theory and public sociology becomes clearer if the explicit possibility of “reactionary” public sociology be recognized, for example, sociology in Nazi Germany and now in the cynically marketed “public sociology” of largely right-wing think tanks in the United States. The skewed outcomes of conventional policy pragmatism do not reflect the inherently “conservative” character of empirical knowledge so much as its selective use given the particular way in which policy research has been institutionalized by both the democratic welfare state and the private sector. More visionary ends may arouse sympathy in “enlightened” policy sociology but are ignored in the name of “realism” on the assumption their realization must await the development of appropriate means. But these conventionalized priorities also contribute to the highly selective use of professional knowledge, hence the disvaluing of qualitative and critical sociologies. Nevertheless, the relation of policy and public sociology is not static. The possibility of radical reformist democratic regimes opens up innovative and experimental phases that draw upon more “enlightened” policy sociology that responds to the criticisms of public sociology (Flyvbjerg 1998, 2001). For such reasons it is also problematic to define the state as necessarily the enemy of civil society. When public sociology is weak and cannot make itself heard, policy sociology tends to regress to more purely technocratic tendencies linked with technical rationalization and undemocratic capitulation to dominant interests. In short, in contrast to the original model, the potential complementarity between policy and public sociology is highlighted in this revised interpretation.
The strong polarization between policy and public sociology in Burawoy’s model—linked to the instrumental-reflexive distinction—obsures the important differences within policy sociology and contributes to an exclusive association of public sociology with “civil society” and opposition to the state. Rather than consign policy sociology to its fate as an instrumental perspective bereft of values, it becomes necessary to recognize the fundamental division between orientations toward “technocratic” and more democratic “liberal enlightenment” models of applied knowledge that provide reflection on means-ends questions within the constraints of the given democratic public sphere (Morrow 1994:306–309). As William Julius Wilson reminds us, Morris Janowitz used the term “enlightenment” to describe the potential contribution of professional sociology to policy research (Wilson 2007:117). Similarly, the legacy of “traditional” public sociology—from early pragmatism through Mills, Lynd, and Gouldner—has been centrally concerned with the interplay between the transformation of public (state) policy and the values to be realized within civil society. Consequently, to define public sociology exclusively in terms of audiences in civil society and their mobilization as a task of organic public sociology simply bypasses the continuing strategic importance of state–civil society relations as the reference point for transformative change. As opposed to Burawoy’s stress on the defensive character of public sociology, a radical ethics of responsibility necessarily retains a concern with informing the transformation of public policy. The resulting reformulation of the relation between policy and public sociology can be summarized as follows:

Both policy and public sociology are defined by linking means and ends to facilitate the re-ordering of social life in the name of “reason.” Because policy sociology has a shorter time horizon and deals primarily with state and private clients, it draws selectively upon empirical research to justify a more instrumental approach to problem solving in the name of a narrowly pragmatic or conventional ethics of responsibility that tends to give priority to largely given ends for which there are available relatively reliable means. Nevertheless, beyond this technocratic model, policy sociology in relatively democratic societies must also compete with liberal enlightenment models that give some consideration to questions about defining ends, though such concerns are constrained by the limits of the democratic public sphere and unequal representation of group interests. Public sociology, in contrast, is not constrained by providing immediate policy “solutions” and has a longer time horizon, speaking on behalf of dispersed publics without effective representation, future publics (e.g., generations), and values not adequately taken into account in policy sociology (even in its more enlightened forms). Consequently, public sociology also draws upon professional empirical research to articulate alternative means for realizing neglected values and interests in the name of a critical pragmatism—a radical ethics
of responsibility. Whereas “traditional” public sociology often extends its concerns to questions of transforming state policy, “organic” public sociology tends toward a more defensive mobilization to protect civil society.

THE MODEL’S RATIONALE: THE HISTORICAL CONDITIONS OF POSSIBILITY OF SOCIOLOGY

Though Burawoy toys with the possibility of a link—“an uncanny resemblance” (Burawoy 2005a:11)—between his model and Parson’s AGIL schema, closer examination suggests that such a functionalist grounding is not necessary, is inconsistent with Burawoy’s overall approach, and leads to contradictory interpretations. Not only does the model conflict with the effort of Parsons and Platt to locate the university within knowledge societies (Holmwood 2007:60), it also cannot be reconciled with understanding Parson’s AGIL schema in terms of Weber’s theory of rationalization (Levine 2005:118–119). The point of departure for the fifth step would be to drop any reference to the problematic Parsonian analogy. In this alternative account, professional sociology, social theory, policy sociology, and public sociology become understood as historically constituted conditions of possibility for legitimating the institutionalization of sociological inquiry within European modernity.

The question then becomes understanding how each of the four cognitive styles contributed to this process of academic recognition, without necessarily proclaiming any one as world-historically foundational or mechanically locating them within a formal matrix, as well as recognizing the epistemological and value presuppositions of all perspectives. Even if disciplines were historically given autonomy by the state on the assumption of basic corporate neutrality with respect to more immediate conflicting political ideologies, this relative neutrality could not be legitimately construed as “value-free” in the dogmatic sense. Nor were the potential uses of social inquiry limited to dominant groups because the marginalized and oppressed could also potentially identify with social science given its links with the Enlightenment vision of “emancipation” from oppression in its multiple forms (Morrow 2006). The interpretation of the historical conditions of possibility of sociology can thus be summarized in the following way:

The four faces of sociological inquiry provide the theoretical and practical conditions of possibility for sociology (or any social science) becoming institutionalized in a modern democratic society as a field of autonomous disciplinary knowledge(s) that might inform potential social practice (as both policy and public sociology) in the interest a general post-Enlightenment process of humanization and democratization.
CONCLUSION

Though the implications of such revisions for the institutionalization of public sociology are far-reaching, only two will be mentioned in concluding. First, to reiterate, the revised version points to the potential complementarity of “enlightened” policy sociology and public sociology in the context of radical reformist regimes. The tendency to view the state categorically as the enemy of civil society does not provide the kind of differentiated analysis that is found, for example, in Habermas’s later work on the legal foundations of democracy or even the Foucauldian research on governmentality that questions some classic right-left distinctions (Barry, Osborne, and Rose 1996).

Second, in rejecting the monopoly of moral questions by critical sociology, it becomes necessary to recognize the unresolved problems of the normative foundations and conflicting value priorities of public sociology. Addressing such issues, for example, would require taking up questions posed by “postmodernist” critical theorists such as Ben Agger (Agger 2000) and Steven Seidman (Seidman 1996). Though Burawoy rekindles the flame of the late-1960s slogan that “if you are not a part of the solution you are a part of the problem,” his model does not adequately respond to postmodernist doubts that “if you think you are part of the solution you are part of the problem.” The revisions to his model proposed here seek to pave the way for addressing how a post-foundationalist critical theory might begin to confront these skeptical challenges to public sociology.

REFERENCES


Rethinking Burawoy’s Public Sociology


Unquestionably, social justice appears as a recurring concern around the globe. For that reason alone, we sociologists must vigorously engage issues of social justice or become largely irrelevant to the present and future course of history.

—Joe Feagin, “Social Justice and Sociology”

In this analysis we compare two different approaches to public sociology, that of Michael Burawoy from his 2004 presidential address and subsequent discussions and an earlier call for a critical public sociology, one for social justice, articulated in Joe Feagin’s 2000 presidential address. As is clear in this elaboration of Feagin’s social justice address, we support Burawoy’s call for a public, concerned, and policy-relevant sociology, but have significant questions and criticisms concerning Burawoy’s project. We assess how Burawoy perceives the function and history of public sociology and engage (1) his logic of a fourfold division of labor in sociology—public, critical, professional, and policy sociology, (2) his views concerning the roles of the four sociologies and their interrelations, and (3) his claim that “civil society” should be the touchstone of a public sociology. Building on arguments in Feagin’s presidential address, “Social Justice and Sociology: Agendas for the Twenty-First Century” (2001b), we suggest a portrait and role of public sociology that differs considerably from Burawoy’s view.

Burawoy’s call for public sociology addressing concerns of “multiple publics” and “encroachment of the markets and states” is often vague or confusing and not as fully constructed as Feagin’s public-oriented sociology committed to social justice. Burawoy discusses a “sociology of publics” without clarifying what publics are the focus and which take priority. In
contrast, we view public sociology as inherently critical (not dividing critical and public sociology like Burawoy) and as a particular form of sociology committed to social justice, a sociology that focuses specifically on historically oppressed and exploited publics: women, people of color, the poor, sexual minorities, and other socially oppressed groups.

Social-justice-oriented sociology is concerned not only with political-economic oppression and resulting inequalities created by states and markets, Burawoy’s primary concern, but also with other historical, intentional oppression. Along with state and market (“class”) oppression related to “contemporary capitalism, other forms of social injustice and inequality remain central to the United States and other societies . . . [such as] racial and ethnic oppression, patriarchy, homophobia, bureaucratic authoritarianism, violence against children, and discrimination against the aged and disabled” (Feagin 2001b:4).

A critical public sociology consistently focused on social justice contrasts with Burawoy’s public sociology. Unlike his view of a workable relationship between the critical-public and professional-policy sociological dimensions, we find that sociologies committed to social justice (critical and public sociology) have historically been in significant and ongoing conflict with mainstream sociologies (professional and public sociology). Sociologies committed to social justice are too frequently suppressed or marginalized by mainstreamers, and we disagree with Burawoy’s too-rosy view of symbiotic relationships between the former and the latter. Unlike Burawoy, we do not find the two forms of sociology to be regularly compatible and do not share Burawoy’s “normative vision of the discipline of sociology” as a “reciprocal interdependence among four types [of sociologies]—an organic solidarity in which each type of sociology derives energy, meaning, and imagination from its connection to the others” (Burawoy 2005d:15).

In contrast, we are critical of the history and current state of mainstream sociology—professional/policy sociology—and are skeptical of a healthy reciprocal relationship being forged between mainstream sociology and sociologies oriented to social justice. Mainstream sociology has often failed to promote social justice issues where it could have. We note its past and present racial, class, and gender biases; its lack of racial, class, and gender pluralism in many decision-making positions; its government-oriented and corporate-oriented production (via grants) of sociological knowledge; and its long-term promotion of a supposed value-neutral perspective claiming to be the only “scientific” approach to knowledge generation.

Furthermore, we do not share Burawoy’s belief that “over the last half century the political center of gravity of sociology has moved in a critical direction” and disagree with his assertion that “the radicalism of the 1960s diffused through the profession . . . [and that the] increasing presence and participation of women and racial minorities, the ascent of the 1960s gen-
eration to leadership positions in departments and our association, marked a critical drift that is echoed in the content of sociology”; and we are dissuaded by his optimistic claims that “sociologists have become more sensitive, more focused on the negative” (social justice issues), and that “today sociology has never been in better shape” (2005d:6, 7, 18). Despite challenges to mainstream sociology in the 1960s and the increasing presence of women, people of color, and the less economically privileged in sociology, how widespread, enduring, and effectual have the changes in mainstream sociology actually been?

In response to these questions we expand on key issues raised in Feagin’s presidential address, “Social Justice and Sociology.” We revisit his argument that mainstream U.S. sociology has in significant ways become less critical since its neglected first founders—Jane Addams, W. E. B. Du Bois, and sociologists working with them—and indeed has wandered from the early focus on issues of social justice, with much neglect today of critical needs of women, people of color, the poor, and other marginalized publics. Much mainstream sociology is presently in poor shape and in need of recovery of its social justice past. We accent here Feagin’s argument that sociology’s health relies upon the development of a countersystem alternative to mainstream sociology, one recognizing the centrality of social justice, a human-rights morality, and vital pluralism in the sociological enterprise.

**HISTORICAL ROOTS AND DEVELOPMENTS IN SOCIOLOGY**

In their presidential addresses, Feagin and Burawoy both chart historical phases in the development of sociology. Both observe that the discipline’s noble beginnings, as a critical public sociology concerned with social justice and change, shifted over time to an increasingly professionalized, mainstream discipline characterized by a supposedly detached, value-free perspective. The latter perspective is out of touch with the discipline’s original dedication to critically addressing power imbalances favoring certain social groups (fortunate publics) and socioeconomic injustices targeting other groups (misfortunate publics).

Feagin (2001b:6, 8, 10; see also Feagin and Vera 2001) makes it clear that “it is time for the discipline to fully recover and celebrate its historical roots in a sociology committed to social justice in ideals and practice.” According to Feagin, “from the beginning there has been a robust ‘countersystem’ tradition within U.S. sociology—a tradition whose participants have intentionally undertaken research aimed at significantly reducing or eliminating social injustices.” However, “by the 1920s and 1930s leading white male sociologists were downplaying or ignoring the pioneering sociological work of early countersystem sociologists [like Harriet Martineau and Jane Ad-
dams, two women; W. E. B. Du Bois, an African American; and one might add political-economist, Karl Marx, a Jew). One early and influential white sociologist who neglected prior countersystem concerns was Robert E. Park. The author with Ernest Burgess of the influential textbook *Introduction to the Science of Sociology*, Park was one of the white male sociologists responsible for shaping sociology as an “academic and abstract science” that ignores the research of the early (often non-white or non-male) countersystem and activist sociologists.1 As Feagin documents,

Park and other prominent sociologists were increasingly critical of activist sociology and were moving away from a concern with progressive applications of social research toward a more “detached” sociology. Their work was increasingly linked to the interests of certain corporate-capitalist elites . . . While they frequently researched various types of urban “disorganization,” . . . they rarely analyzed deeply the harsher realities of social oppression—especially gender, class, and racial oppression—in the development of cities. Park and several of his colleagues played a major role in shifting the emphasis from a sociology concerned with studying and eliminating serious social problems to a more detached and academic sociology concerned with “natural” social forces—without the humanitarian attitude or interpretation of what Park sometimes called the “damned do-gooders.” (2001b, 8)

Park, and the University of Chicago “School of Sociology” tradition he helped inaugurate, along with the rise of positivism and quantitative research in other leading U.S. sociology departments (particularly, Columbia University), marked the beginning of a sociological tradition that typically retreats from human rights and social oppression concerns to government- or corporate-defined concerns, supplants qualitative in favor of hyper-quantitative research, and approaches the study of society and human beings through the detached, “objective,” and “rational” lens of an instrumental positivism. Feagin notes that “during the 1920s and 1930s support for a detached and instrumental-positivist sociology increased at major U.S. universities.”2 This sociological approach is well expressed in the views of two prominent sociologists of this period, Franklin Giddings and William Ogburn. Giddings (1909) argued that sociology can be an “exact, quantitative science.” Ogburn, Giddings’s student, argued for “a detached and quantitative research approach . . . a sociology emphasizing statistical methods” in which sociologists “should not be involved . . . in improving society,” but should “instead . . . focus on efficiently discovering knowledge about society” (2001, 8). According to Feagin,

By the 1930s and 1940s the critical, countersystem approaches of sociologists like Addams and Du Bois were losing out to a politically safe, academic, and distancing sociology. Sociology was increasingly becoming a discipline whose college and university departments were dominated by white male sociologists
and often linked to elite interests—including ties such as grants from corporate foundations and government agencies. (2001b:9)

Feagin further explains that after World War II “many mainstream sociologists continued the move toward the pure-science ideal and away from the concerns for social justice and the making of a better society.” He argues that this move away from improving society and promoting social justice concerns is linked to sociology’s increasing cooptation by business and government projects, arguing that “government and corporate underwriting of much mainstream sociological research has fed the emphasis on a quantitatively oriented or instrumentalist-positivist sociology and sociologists as research entrepreneurs,” the latter being sociologists who “have rarely done research that draws on the countersystem tradition [which is] strongly critical of established institutions in the corporate or governmental realms.” Feagin concludes his mini-history and critique by noting that from the 1930s to the present “the accent on academic grant getting, the heavy emphasis on certain types of quantitatively-oriented research, and the movement away from the social justice concerns of earlier sociologists have been associated trends,” and that a “detached-science perspective has been influential in many areas of sociology for some decades now” (2001b:10).

Burawoy echoes Feagin’s concerns, arguing that the shift toward professionalization and value-neutrality represented sociology’s fight “for a place in the academic sun” as “pure science” (2005d:5). He acknowledges that the discipline simultaneously became less concerned with social justice and morality, and less critically and publicly oriented, and aptly observes the corresponding damage this legitimizing interest had on sociology’s academic practitioners:

The original passion for social justice, economic equality, human rights, sustainable environment, political freedom or simply a better world, that drew so many of us to sociology, is [now] channeled into pursuit of academic credentials. . . . Progress becomes a battery of disciplinary techniques—standardized courses, validated reading lists, bureaucratic rankings, intensive examinations, literature reviews, tailored dissertations, refereed publications, the all-mighty CV, the job search, the tenure file, and then the policing one’s colleagues and successors to make sure we all march in step. (Burawoy 2005d:5)

In spite of this agreement on the development of professional sociology and demise of critical public sociologies that address issues of social injustice, Feagin and Burawoy emphasize different problems and concerns associated with the development of professional sociology, and each offers a different interpretation of professional sociology’s present state. We disagree with Burawoy’s claims that (1) “professional sociology has now reached a level of maturity and self-confidence that it can return to its civic roots, and promote
public sociology from a position of strength,” and (2) that “professional sociology of the 20th century” has “created the basis for its own transcendence” into a “21st century public sociology of global dimensions” (2005d:20).

Given Burawoy’s own research, understanding of social sciences as fields of antagonistic power, and acknowledgment that instrumental-positivistic knowledge continues to be privileged over critical-reflective pursuits, we do not understand his assumption that “dominant knowledges” of professional/policy sociology will or do concede “breathing space” for “subaltern knowledges” of critical/public sociology (2005d). There is little evidence to suggest that power concedes space without insistent demands. Perplexing too is his inference that critical/public sociologists should be content with paternalistically “granted” breathing spaces for their subaltern positions. If sociology as a discipline can do no better than elevate from intellectual despotism to an intellectual hegemony of instrumental positivism, as Burawoy suggests, then there is no wonder that the mainstream discipline continues to preserve the world it once hoped to change.

The field of sociology will not transform for the better from the top; sociology’s character will not shift for the good because of internal revolution within mainstream sociology, nor through the ideas and efforts of professional sociology. Instead, as in the past, contemporary sociology’s transformation into a more critical, public, and social-justice-oriented discipline will most likely develop at the hands of countersystem sociologists working with and for socially oppressed groups, those scientists who are often marginalized by professional sociology. We question Burawoy’s depiction of a “third phase of American sociology” or “third-wave sociology” (2006, 2005a, 2005d), in which professional sociology is effectively reconstructed by the critical sociologies of feminism and Marxism (2005d:20) and which is now in the process of “transcendence” (2005a:512). We see no evidence that professional sociology has ever made the major ideas of feminism, Marxism, and critical race theory central to its research concerns. In fact, many professional sociologists have regularly attacked ideas of these marginalized sociological perspectives, and/or those who assert them. We see little evidence that most professional sociology has been transfigured or transcended; today, it is as powerful in U.S. social science as ever.

Rather than waiting for professional sociology to metamorphose into a more pluralist and justice-conscious sociology willing to move away from its corporate- and government-controlled existence and instrumental-positivistic sensibility, we believe a countersystem sociological tradition must be reinvigorated to combat the dominant position of hyper-professional sociology. This countersystem approach, reflected in much critical public sociology, would directly challenge the concepts, methods, and overall framework of mainstream sociology, and would attempt to drastically re-shape or dismantle professional sociology.
THE COUNTERSYSTEM TRADITION IN SOCIOLOGY

In “Social Justice and Sociology,” and in contrast to Burawoy, Feagin identifies the countersystem tradition as a “tradition whose participants have intentionally undertaken research aimed at significantly reducing or eliminating social injustices.” He argues that “contemporary sociologists need to cultivate the long-standing countersystem approach, not only in regard to investigating social inequality and injustice but also in regard to assessing alternative social systems that may be more just.” Developing a countersystem approach requires that we first learn from the ideas and actions of the early sociologists committed to “social-scientific knowledge and to social justice, equality, and democracy.” With the aid of concepts and methods of these early sociologists, the next step for countersystem sociologists involves developing a “new conceptual paradigm for sociology,” one “that would accent the centrality of differences, oppressions, and inequalities—as well as recurring movements for social justice—within societies” (2001b:6, 11).

According to Feagin (2001b:6, 12), the countersystem tradition in U.S. sociology “is one in which social scientists step outside mainstream thought patterns to critique existing society,” or, in other words, “a counter-system approach attempts to assess the status quo from a viewpoint at least somewhat outside the frame of the existing society and/or nation state.” Such a countersystem approach can be developed if we “document empirically, and ever more thoroughly, the character of major social injustices, both nationally and internationally,” and if we generate “more conceptual work that develops and enriches the concepts of social justice and equality.” Feagin further argues that

social injustice can be examined not only in terms of the misdistribution of goods and services, but also in regard to the social relations responsible for that misdistribution. These social relations, which can range from centrally oppressive power relations to less central mechanisms of discrimination, determine whether individuals, families, and other groups are excluded from society’s important resources and decision making processes. They shape the development of group and individual identities and the sense of personal dignity. In the end, social justice entails a restructuring of the larger framework of social relations. (Feagin 2001b:11)

Feagin asserts that, seeking social justice, countersystem sociologists must “document the character and impact of class, racial, and gender subordination,” must hone “countersystem ideas and methods,” must work “interactively with people at the grassroots level seeking assessments of, and alternatives to, an onerous status quo,” must “get out of the ivory tower and . . . build a resource and power base for the disenfranchised in their communities,” and, additionally, must encourage “collaborative research
between sociologists and community groups seeking solutions to serious local problems of housing, work, education, poverty, discrimination, and environmental pollution” (2001b:12).

In Feagin’s view (2001b:12–16), a countersystem sociological approach must be morally guided, critical and self-critical, recognize the importance of teaching, and recommit to studying the big, challenging sociological questions. He claims that “[i]n everyday practice all sociology is a moral activity,” and that “we should seek a sociology that is grounded in empirical and theoretical research and that hones a critical perspective less restricted by established institutions” (2001b:12). More specifically, Feagin (2001b:13) calls for “accelerated self-reflection” in sociology, a heightened reflexive thought that recognizes and acccents pluralism and the necessity of incorporating “critical social perspectives, such as those of feminists, gay/lesbian scholars, critical theorists, anti-racist scholars, and Marxist researchers,” sociologists who take risks to counter oppressive social relations.

Feagin (2001b:14) argues that we should encourage idealism and activism among students of sociology and work to ensure that these future sociologists “think critically about their social lives and about building a better society,” learn how “to engage in debates about important issues, critically assess necessary moral judgments, and explore possible futures for themselves and their societies.” In short, it takes sociology students (future professors, policy makers, activists) trained in countersystem approaches to step outside the “iron cage of professionalism”6 and further countersystem sociological projects. A countersystem approach must move beyond the confines of specializations and engage big, often uncomfortable social questions. To succeed in this, sociologists must not rely solely on establishment grant money, which “distorts too much social science research in the direction of relatively minor social issues,” rather “sociologists need to formulate more original and independent ideas, and to illuminate and directly and critically address recurring national and global crises” (Feagin 2001b:15).

According to Feagin (2001b:15), some of the large, looming questions and concerns confronting sociologists center upon the “huge and ongoing wealth transfers from working classes to the rich, the social impact of environmental crises, the impact of globalizing capitalism on local communities, and the human costs of racism, sexism, and other social oppressions,” as well as on the study of “societal futures, including the alternative social future of just and egalitarian societies.” We strongly suggest that participatory-action sociologists, teachers and researchers, move outside mainstream sociology and develop alternative solutions to societal problems, alternative concepts and methods for better understanding the dysfunctions of society, and alternative models for creating a more just society.
DEVELOPING A COUNTERSYSTEM APPROACH IN CRITICAL PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY

In several ways, Burawoy’s later (2005c) development of the term and concept *critical public sociology* resonates with our accent on a social-justice-oriented, countersystem sociology. In contrast to Burawoy, however, we do not separate critical and public sociology, nor do we separate professional and policy sociology. In our view critical and public sociology have long merged into a single sociological project, into a critical public sociology which stands in relation to (often, in conflict with) mainstream sociology (the mix of policy sociology and professional sociology). In the 1890s, public sociology began as a society-critical countersystem approach to analyzing and improving the social world. From its earliest historical moments, critical public sociology has combined social critique (questioning, examination, and supervision of ideas and the social world) and critical social practice informed by that social critique, intent on improving the human condition. Presently, much “public” sociology has lost its critical dimension, and clearly must work hard to become much more critical, to transmute into an efficacious field of critical public sociology. The latter entails an active, successful field of countersystem activist-scholars and activist-publics committed to (1) challenging past and present social injustices, exploitation, and destruction of human beings, and (2) promoting a future of social justice, equality, and opportunity for human beings. In our view, critical public sociology must be unabashedly proud of moral-intellectual pursuits challenging the hegemonic operation of mainstream sociology, which in many cases perpetuates the agenda of those who pursue unbridled power and excessive profit. The critical public sociology project continues the work of past critical scholars who expose “objectivity” as a positivist illusion that often serves to entrench power, disguises the reality that all research is influenced by personal preferences, and ignores reflexivity as a prerequisite for the best science (see Gould 1996; Harding 1998).

A truly critical public sociology needs to establish a coherent countersystem approach and to accent important counter-narratives and counterframes, which provide the sociological concepts and methods to challenge the dominant narratives and frames drawn on by mainstream sociologists. The latter tend to be uncritical and anti-public and often neglect the societal marginalization, exploitation, and destruction of important publics. In addition to promoting social justice and establishing a counter-frame in sociology, critical public sociology must also work for a much more pluralistic sociological discipline, in membership and perspectives.

With these prerequisites in mind, we can now nuance our critique of the “public sociology” of Burawoy’s presidential address. There his fourfold division of sociology provides a less impressive, less precise model (picture)
of sociology than his two-dimensional model that contrasts a blended critical-public dimension (guided by reflexive knowledge) and a blended professional-policy dimension (guided by instrumental positivism) of contemporary sociology. The fourfold-division model presents an unconvincing argument for current “synergistic” interrelationships among the four distinguished sociologies, a model in which the four sociologies overlap and are said to be positioned in a sometimes healthy/creative, sometimes times pathological tension. Whereas Burawoy’s two-dimensional model reflects a more realistic picture of the enduring conflicts between the critical-public dimension and the public-policy dimension in contemporary sociology, as well as the major need for the former dimension to gain dominance over the second.13

Burawoy’s two-dimensional model points to a primary ongoing tension between the marginalized sociologies (“victims of exclusion and subordination”) of the critical-public dimension and the dominant, mainstream sociology of the professional-policy dimension. As noted previously, this tension can be seen in each position’s divergent perceptions of societal realities and aims for change, and by their valuation or low/high ranking in the field of sociology.14 Despite this conflict, Burawoy appears to believe that the two sides (and four sociologies) are in the future reformable, can interact in a dialogic relationship, and communicate reasonably. This position reflects a certain Enlightenment logic of human relations found in the long-standing U.S. corporate-liberal-reform tradition and in Habermasian communicative-action theory, a perception of human relations that places argument over praxis, non-conflict over engagement, and methodical change over rapid, radical change.15

This version of Enlightenment logic impedes understanding and improving human relations, contradicts actual social history, and tends to maintain power hierarchies. Because of the more than occasional bias and unreliability in human reason and the failure of “objectivity” and “rational discourse” to solve major racial, class, and gender conflicts, Burawoy’s hope for future fruitful relations and synergistic communications among the four defined sociologies seems questionable at best. Instead, the great divide between the professional-policy and critical-public sociological dimensions most likely are to remain in irreconcilable conflict, incapable of truly dialogic relations, especially considering their conflicting deep assumptions and connections to societal hierarchies of oppression.

Unlike Burawoy, we question the current prestige and asserted legitimacy of professional-policy sociology. Do these sociologies really achieve more social good than harm? How do these forms of sociology directly benefit the many (the larger society) and the few (certain groups and individuals in society), the disadvantaged and the advantaged (including most sociologists themselves)? Are professional-policy sociologies so enmeshed in
current political-economic power structures (including those in the academy) that they have mostly been impotent as sources of pluralistic social knowledge and of major societal changes? How self-serving are these two forms of sociology, particularly in maintaining their own existence? To what degree is contemporary mainstream sociology—professional-policy sociology—built on faulty concepts and flawed methods in trying to create a social “science”?\(^\text{16}\)

According to Burawoy’s writings, the main standpoint of sociology is “civil society and the defense of the social,” or in other words, sociology’s character is discovered in its engagement with and relationship to civil society. Sociology’s purpose is “defense of the social” against the market and state, what Burawoy refers to as “public sociology.” He states that “sociology’s affiliation with civil society, that is public sociology, represents the interests of humanity—interests in keeping at bay both state despotism and market tyranny” (Burawoy 2005d:24). Terms like “public sociology” and “civil society,” and phrases like “defense of the social” and “the interests of humanity,” present a picture of a pluralistic sociology and social pluralism. Indeed, in his writings, Burawoy argues not for a public sociology, but for public sociologies (2005d:4); he directs us not to the standpoint of civil society, but to the standpoints of civil society (2005a:156), as objects of sociological study.

Burawoy’s call for a pluralistic public sociology and social world makes sense. At points in his writings, however, it is difficult to determine if Burawoy is calling for a pluralistic sociology or a more Marxist sociology.\(^\text{17}\) He advocates “a broad range of public sociologies,” including feminist public sociologies, “calls for a pluralistic professional sociology with multiple research programs,” and claims not to reduce public sociologies to Marxist versions (2005a:160). He also (2005b) recounts, however, his training in Marxist sociology and suggests that “undoubtedly, if I had a public sociology it would have a Marxist coloring” (2005a:160).

In our view, a public sociology with a strong infusion of Marxist class theory is definitely preferable to the stagnant establishment condition of most mainstream sociology. However, a critical public sociology concerned equally with class, racial, gender, and other major social divisions is yet more necessary. As Burawoy’s idea of public sociology develops further, will it incorporate the ideas of feminists and critical race theorists as well as class-oriented theorists? Joan Acker (2005:328) warns that a public sociology that does not include feminist “insights about the systemic nature of gender subordination will be in danger of giving support to movements that inevitably reproduce [male] domination.” And Rose Brewer (2005) accurately observes that, in Burawoy’s history of “radical sociology,” Marxist thought is prioritized, white feminist thought is acknowledged, but antiracism theory, especially the counter-framing black sociological tradition, is
altogether ignored. Brewer criticizes Burawoy’s glaring omission and de-emphasis of certain social science fields (ethnic studies, black studies, black feminist studies). She recalls that in the past, “Left white academics were caught in a discursive snare that reproduced many of the same assumptions of hegemonic sociological analyses in the field they were attempting to dismantle.” And she argues that, presently, “Sociology is not ahead of the game. It is still too enmeshed in the dominant discourses and policy practices of the day” (2005:354, 358). Brewer identifies what could turn out to be a central problem for Burawoy’s view of public sociology: a public sociology that implicitly reflects some of the same power hierarchies and ingrained social divisions that fractionalize civil society, one that is now and historically “male and white,” and one riven by “segregations, dominations, and exploitations,” as Burawoy sometimes notes (2005d:24–25).

For Burawoy, marketization and the state’s promotion of a market economy are primary concerns for his public sociology. While Marxist sociology’s focus on class domination and exploitation should certainly be a primary concern for a vibrant critical public sociology, racial and gender domination and exploitation are equally important concerns and fields of such critical investigation, issues not fully clarified or emphasized in Burawoy’s work. Once again, we are influenced by Feagin’s earlier view of a critical public sociology, which posits that,

in addition to the economic and environmental inequalities generated or aggravated by contemporary capitalism, other forms of social injustice and inequality remain central to the United States and other societies . . . racial and ethnic oppression, patriarchy, homophobia, bureaucratic authoritarianism, violence against children, and discrimination against the aged and disabled. (Feagin 2001b:4)

A critical public sociology, in our view, should research and work against not only the power abuses of market and state, but also the power abuses of patriarchy and white supremacy, among other macro-scale power abuses. In addition to studying these macro issues, public sociology must also address micro- and meso-level social phenomena in each of these areas as well as other types of imbalanced, unjust power relations. And, when attempting to understand publics and public networks, public sociology must also look beyond the boundaries of nation-states to divisions at the global-systemic level.

In order to salvage his public sociology idea, Burawoy (2005c) subsequently developed a more critical view of public sociology—critical public sociology, a sociology that attempts to contend with this fractionalized “terrain” of civil society and infuse “critical perspectives into public sociology” (2005c:381). Burawoy’s “agenda” for this critical public sociology entails several pursuits: to problematize the parochialism and hegemony of U.S.
sociology; to recognize the sociological importance of racial and gender issues; to consider the relation of sociology to other subaltern publics and disciplines; to challenge, not compromise with, professional sociology; and, to forge better relations between professional sociology and different publics. The development of a more inclusive, pluralistic public sociology by Burawoy is clearly a move in the social-justice direction we have long accentuated. It is apparent that Burawoy listened to his presidential address’s critics and reformulated his understandings and explication of public sociology, in particular, to recognize the sociological importance of issues associated with race and gender, and to consider the relation of sociology to other subaltern publics and disciplines. Yet, in this reformulation, does Burawoy’s new understanding of critical public sociology escape a too-narrow Marxist-framed agenda? While he recognizes the sociological importance of race and gender, does Burawoy value the agendas of antiracism and antisexism sociological projects on the same level that he values class-based sociological projects? It seems that Burawoy still prioritizes a class-based public sociology that he feels “should construct, express, and organize the potential unity within civil society [and sociology], an opposition unified against ever-encroaching state regulation and market tyranny” (2005c:389).

As we see it, to be truly critical, Burawoy’s public sociology must reconsider its apparent hierarchy of oppressions (accenting class) according to historical time and place, and not assume that class is always the most powerful form of oppression, an assumption among many analysts in social science and humanities disciplines. A well-constructed critical sociology will realize the central importance of Addams’s and Du Bois’s savvy sociological projects in relation to Marx’s, and ensure that voices of racial and gender oppression are not buried by the over-amplified discourse of class oppression.18

CONCLUSION

Burawoy’s “common agenda” and Feagin’s “agenda for the 21st century” provide us with workable blueprints for developing a critical public sociology. But will sociologists follow these plans, especially the majority of sociologists committed to or trapped by a conventional professional-policy mainstream approach? Only the future will tell. In the meantime, we list several criticisms and modifications to Burawoy’s model of critical public sociology, criticisms and modifications that might better develop Burawoy’s model into a more promising social justice model of public sociology. First, “civil society” is a problematic, loosely defined concept (see also Boyns and Fletcher 2005). While aspiring for “potential unity within civil society,” Burawoy recognizes that presently civil society “is not some harmonious communalism,” but is “contested terrain.” So, we ask, how is
civil society defined? Secondly, who organizes, maintains, controls, and “unifies” civil society? Lastly, how does civil society counter the seemingly irreversible power of the economy and state after being “colonized and co-opted by markets and states” (Burawoy 2005d:24)?

Burawoy’s humanist, functionalist-organicist example of civil society, mediating and working together with the economy and state, is problematic because it downplays harsher realities of rigidly constructed racial, class, and gender divisions and power hierarchies, associated and enforced segregations and irreconcilable conflicts that impede any foreseeable civil society operation, let alone a civil society thwarting state and market tyranny. Rather than resurrecting the idea of civil society, whose history is marred with segregations, dominations, and exploitations, patriarchy, and white supremacy, we will do better to promote the idea of a society on the terrain of egalitarian resource access, democratic pluralism, and social justice. The standpoint and starting point of a critical public sociology should be the creation of a countersystem framework focused on social justice and democratic group pluralism, not the development of a vague civil society.

Early critical public sociologists, like Harriet Martineau, Jane Addams, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Karl Marx, were guided by ideas of achieving social justice for those unjustly subjugated because of their gender, racial, and/or class status. These countersystem sociologists recognized that society is largely shaped by these and other structured injustices and that sociology should be one vehicle for critically transforming these unjust realities. Martineau (in Britain) and Addams (in the United States) sought to improve the social condition of women and immigrants; Du Bois, the condition of those of African descent; and Marx, the working class across the globe. The projects begun by Martineau, Marx, Du Bois, and Addams should be rejuvenated in contemporary sociology, being that societies continue to be fundamentally defined by injustices structured along class, racial, and gender lines.

“[S]ociologists need to rediscover their roots in a sociology committed to social justice” and recreate the countersystem approach of early sociologists. A critical public sociology committed to social justice works toward “resource equity, fairness, and respect for diversity, as well as the eradication of existing forms of oppression . . . redistribution of resources from those who have unjustly gained them to those who justly deserve them . . . [and] creating and ensuring the processes of a truly democratic participation in decision-making” (Feagin 2001b:5). We must acknowledge and seriously contemplate the past costs and sacrifices, present struggles and pains, and future impediments and dangers associated with construction of a critical public sociology and counter-frameworks that seek social justice and democratic pluralism in society. Critical public sociologists committed to social justice and pluralism face real-life threats from people and institutions with power. A critical public sociologist’s career, reputation, and very existence
are often at risk in an uncompromising battle for social justice and human betterment. One might wonder, how long will mainstream sociology—most sociologists—avoid taking risks, fail to address uncomfortable social realities, and remained uninvolved with problems of social injustices?

NOTES

1. *Introduction to the Science of Sociology* “contains . . . only a few biographical references to the work of Du Bois, but no discussion of his research work, and only one terse sentence on, and two biographical references to, the work of Addams” (Feagin 2001b:8).

2. According to Feagin, “This approach is ‘instrumental’ in that it limits social research mainly to those questions that certain research techniques will allow; it is ‘positivist’ in that it commits sociologists to ‘rigorous’ research approaches thought to be like those used in the physical sciences” (2001b:8; see also Feagin and Vera 2001).

3. Burawoy suggests,

Suffice to say, if our discipline can be held together only under a system of domination, let that system be one of hegemony rather than despotism. That is to say the subaltern knowledges (critical and public) should be allowed breathing space to develop their own capacities and to inject dynamism back into the dominant knowledges. . . . However disruptive in the short term, in the long term instrumental knowledge cannot thrive without challenges from reflexive knowledges. (2005d:18–19)

4. We argue that critical sociology is antithetical to and outside mainstream (professional) sociology, whereas other sociologists, like Craig Calhoun, view critical sociology as an element or characteristic of professional sociology. For example, Calhoun writes: “I worry that assigning concerns over autonomy to ‘professional’ and critical’ sociology implies that they don’t arise for all sociologists and aren’t basic to the field” (2005:356; see also Ericson 2005). Actually, critical sociology “does not arise for all sociologists” and is not “basic to the field.”

5. Patricia Hill Collins questions the belief that the “basic tension that lies at the heart of sociology” should be overcome:

The desire that race, class, and gender scholarship serves the cause of social justice constitutes a noble objective for individual scholars, but this theme of knowledge in service to social justice constitutes a direct challenge to prevailing norms of scientific objectivity that view advocacy as antithetical to science. . . . Contemporary sociologists are not likely to solve this puzzle, nor should they. (2007:604)

6. Concerned about “professionalism” and the “vitality of the field” of comparative politics, Richard Snyder (2007:30) lists goals that sociologists might well consider:

Steps should be taken to ensure that students and professors, too, find ways to enrich their lives by regularly stepping outside the academic framework. Passion about research is in jeopardy because of the widespread tendency for professors and students alike to
regard scholarship as just a 9-to-5 job. To avoid this iron cage of professionalism, enthusiasm for research as a “calling” should be cultivated and rewarded, which requires acknowledging the emotional engagement and normative commitments are compatible with, and even necessary for, excellence in scientific research.


10. Stanley Aronowitz (2005:335) observes that public sociology presents “a serious challenge to the prevailing direction of sociology which . . . [like] economics and political science . . . have ceased to perform critical, let alone public social science, but instead have become servants of power.”

11. Central counter-narratives in sociology are found in feminist, Marxist, and anti-racism theory. Early feminist sociologists, like Jane Addams, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and Harriet Martineau, and more recent feminists like Dorothy Smith, Patricia Hill Collins, and Mary Jo Deegan provide counter-narratives to challenge the patriarchy and male-dominated perspective of mainstream sociology. Karl Marx, the Frankfurt School, C. Wright Mills, Val Burris, and G. William Domhoff are in a line of class-conscious social thinkers who have developed a Marxist counter-narrative opposing economic injustices of capitalistic economies. Another central counter-narrative in sociology is discovered in writings of critical sociologists concerned with racial injustices, like W. E. B. Du Bois, Oliver C. Cox, Joe Feagin, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, Angela Davis, and Alford Young Jr.

12. A good illustration of a counter-frame is the African American counter-frame to the white racial framing of U.S. society. As Feagin (2006) shows in developing the counter-frame concept, black Americans have created a powerful counter-frame to the dominant white frame. Similarly, the black sociological tradition often accents a counter-frame to white-framed sociology. See Blackwell and Janowitz (1974) and Washington and Cunnigen (2002).

13. Tensions exist between policy and professional sociology and between critical and public sociology, but these two sub-tensions are not as consequential as the more profound tensions between professional/policy sociology and critical/public sociology.

14. Some argue that Burawoy elevates critical sociology as a monitor/conscience of professional sociology (Holmwood 2007:60–61), but critical sociology’s “power”
in the discipline is today mostly symbolic, idealistic, and unachieved. Burawoy realizes professional sociology trumps critical-public sociology in everyday practice.

15. In “Is Public Sociology Such a Good Idea?” Jonathan Turner writes in a mainstream conservative tone: “I am now convinced that, as frustrating and unfair as it might seem, sociology and sociologists need to ‘go slowly’ when entering the public sphere and when trying to knock down the doors behind which the powerful make important decisions” (2005:28).

16. Concepts and methods, programs and research identified as “scientific,” “objective,” “logical,” and “rational,” are often adopted by researchers of many kinds in an effort to be viewed as “legitimate” in social science dialogues.

17. David Boyns and Jesse Fletcher also note the “paradox” and “contradictions” represented in Burawoy’s “support of public sociology and sociological Marxism” (2005:10).

18. Equally important, we must keep in mind the intersectionality of oppressions, remembering that the antagonisms of race, gender, and class, among others, “refuse to be neatly aligned; they are not reducible to one another; they refuse to coalesce around a single axis of differentiation” (Hall 1996:473).

19. “Democratic group pluralism” emphasizes the range, the plurality, of different groups that interact in the social world. This broad-based concept of social group divisions and interactions replaces the more restrictive concepts “cultural pluralism” and “multiculturalism,” which refer to group divisions and interactions strictly along cultural and ethno-racial lines.

REFERENCES


As a preface to his appeal for a public sociology, Michael Burawoy (2005:4) quotes a passage by Walter Benjamin that pictures the “angel of history” with his face turned toward the past, where he sees a catastrophe that keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage. Although the angel would like to stay and make whole what has been smashed, he is caught in a violent storm that “irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward.”

In this chapter, I ask you to imagine something different, not an angel but ordinary men and women. They are standing with their faces turned toward the future. They remember history, but they are focusing their thoughts on what is coming. Although they see potential catastrophes, they also see opportunities for a better world in which all people will have a good chance of living long lives of freedom and well-being. Like the angel of history, they, too, are irresistibly propelled into the future, but, using foresight, they navigate through time, avoiding many of the catastrophes and seizing the opportunities.

TWO MISSING LINKS IN PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY

Burawoy discusses the different, yet complementary and overlapping, sociologies—professional, policy, critical, and public—and explains why sociologists should devote some of their time to public sociology, to public dialogue about important issues. He shows how sharing sociological knowledge as it applies to understanding social problems and maintaining civil society in public discourse enhances democratic processes and contributes
toward creating a better world. Moreover, he argues that there is no contradiction between being so publicly engaged and also remaining true to the standards of scientific knowledge. There “can be neither policy nor public sociology without a professional sociology” (Burawoy 2005:10).

Although I support Burawoy’s proposals, I see two features of public sociology—and of critical and policy sociology as well and, to a lesser extent, of professional sociology itself—that invite more explicit treatment and further discussion. Each, in my opinion, is essential to public sociology. The first is making reliable and valid assertions about the future.

Time, of course, is an inescapable dimension of life. We humans and our societies are on a journey through time, constantly moving on a one-way trip from out of the past in an ongoing present toward the future (Adam 1990, 1995). To act intelligently, people need to know, among other things, the alternative possibilities that exist for their future, the future consequences of their own and others’ possible actions, the future probable behaviors of relevant other people and their consequences, and the probable outcomes of events and processes that may affect their future, many of which they cannot control.

Distinctively, public dialogues and decision-making concerning social issues are future-oriented. They have to do with what would, could, or might happen in the future, depending on varying circumstances and actions. Thus, to bring their expertise to bear on public discourse, sociologists face the challenge of contingently translating sociological knowledge into the future (and often conditional and subjunctive) tense in reliable and valid ways.

The second basic feature of public sociology that requires more explicit treatment is making value judgments. Public dialogues are not only about what would, could, or might happen, they are also about what should happen in the future. Thus, although they are about possible and probable futures, such dialogues are also about preferable futures. For example, Burawoy (2005) endorses justice, equality, human rights, sustainability, and political freedom as being worthy goals, as part of a “better world.” Many sociologists may agree with him. But how do we know what is a “better world” in any reliable, valid, and objective way?

Thus, the questions I try to answer here are: (1) how can sociologists as social scientists enter into public dialogues that deal with questions of what the future outcomes of actions, events, and processes could or will be, when the future is as yet nonexistent, thus nonevidential, and seemingly out of reach from methods of empirical social research?

And (2) how can sociologists as social scientists enter into public dialogues that often hinge on questions of what defines a good society and what values ought to be served, when conventional beliefs of social scientists (and many moral philosophers) are that such value judgments are subjective and cannot be objectively (i.e., scientifically) justified?
Fortunately, adequate answers exist to both of these questions. Let’s begin with the future, not only because prediction is inherent in social behavior but also because it is a part of the scientific enterprise and has been long recognized as such by sociologists (Land and Schneider 1987).

**THE SOCIOLOGY OF THE FUTURE**

**Images, Beliefs, and Attitudes**

There are several ways sociologists can—and have—studied the future. One way is to study people’s images, beliefs, and attitudes about alternative futures—what they believe could, will, or ought to happen. For example, we can get clues about the coming future by using standard social research methods to study such things as people’s present images of possible futures; their expectations of the most probable future; their preferences among specified alternative futures and the values on which people base them.

We can also study people’s present or future intentions to act in particular ways, such as how they intend to vote, to invest, or to buy; their continuing obligations and commitments to others (revealing their probable future behavior); their histories, traditions, and past decisions about a given phenomenon (also as indicators of probable future behavior); and, of course, trend analysis of time series data projected into the future using differing assumptions.

And we can study longitudinally how these things change through time and the consequences for people’s actual future as a result of their earlier images of the future, as John A. Clausen (1986) did in his study of two generations of people beginning in their adolescence and continuing throughout their life course.

**Possibilities for the Future**

Also, possibilities for the future are real and they exist in the present. For example, some things really are breakable now in the present, although they may never actually be broken. The range of such possibilities can be grasped by thinking of words ending in “ble,” many of which define possibilities. Such words include drinkable, edible, expandable, fixable, impeachable, postponable, promotable, and soluble, among many others. Some things, of course, may not be possible, and discovering what is or is not possible is an endeavor to which public sociologists can contribute.

Most of the time many people, including leaders, fail to perceive or to investigate the real possibilities that exist for their individual or collective lives. They would benefit from a jolt of futures thinking that encourages them to view present realities as a world filled with possibilities for the future and that
motivates them to constantly search for new and different ways of seeing and doing. Thus, they would make visible what otherwise goes unseen, expanding choices and opening paths to new futures quite different from the past and present. For example, such a cognitive reframing of what is possible allowed Toyota to achieve both high quality and high productivity in the manufacture of automobiles, the key being creating a company culture that rewarded identifying and calling attention to problems rather than covering them up.

With respect to any given phenomenon, we can abandon convention and ask, what are the real present possibilities for its near-, middle-, and long-range future? Such thinking can expand the scope of public discourse by introducing innovative images of alternative futures of “what could be.”

Transforming Causal Knowledge

Sociologists, of course, are familiar with the transformation of causal knowledge into contingent predictions. We have long known that the logical structure of a scientific explanation is the same as that of a scientific prediction, except, of course, for one important difference, the temporal vantage point. If we know from past data that $x$ causes $y$, we must make an inferential leap if we wish to say of some future case that $x$ will cause $y$.

Both in science and in everyday life, people make such inferential leaps all the time. To do so, obviously, is a useful tool that helps people make decisions and plan actions. All sociological knowledge, thus, can be restated as contingent predictions to contribute to public debates about what would happen if such-and-such actions were taken rather than some other actions.

For example, H. Wesley Perkins (2003) has discovered a cause of college students’ drinking behavior. He finds that students overestimate the quantity of alcohol consumed by their peers and that such misperception is the strongest predictor of the amount of alcohol students consume. Further, he shows that intervention programs based on a “social norm” or “normative feedback” approach—that is, programs that correct students’ misperception by informing them what the actual campus drinking norm is—are successful in reducing levels of high-risk drinking among students, if the interventions are sufficiently intense, lengthy, and credible.

Thus, sociologists have cause-and-effect knowledge (from past data) to advise college administrators (about how to shape the future): If you effectively communicate an accurate description of drinking norms on your campus to your students, then your students will be less likely to misuse alcohol.

The Relationship between Prediction and Control

Individuals and groups, of course, often try to choose and act to create their own futures. They design or plan the future. Even though they usually
do so less formally and consciously, they are somewhat like an architect designing the blueprints for building some as yet nonexistent structure, such as a bridge or a school. Whether it is choosing to go to medical school, deciding in what cities the American Sociological Association will meet for the next five years, or adding a Bill of Rights in a constitution, people act to shape the future.

Although the future may not turn out as planned, such designs are good bases for forecasting because people intend that they will happen. Moreover, some planned projects involve such large commitments of resources that implications for shaping the future are built into them, whether it is a dam that will create a lake or a nuclear power plant that will produce radioactive waste. Such designs for the future provide both a basis for forecasting the future as well as a means of trying to control it.

In carrying out designs and plans, of course, administrators and public intellectuals must remain alert to the possibility of unanticipated and unintended consequences that are undesirable. Action to protect children from being burned by mandating fire retardant sleepwear and other clothing, for example, inadvertently put children at a new risk from cancer from chemicals in the fire retardant. Be prepared to monitor actions and to alter designs for future action as necessary. Shaping the future is an ongoing, continuous process.

Self-Altering Prophecies

Additionally, in discourse concerning what the future might, could, or will be, sociologists can add the reflexive aspect of people’s anticipations and actions by taking into account self-altering prophecies. Sociologists, of course, have long understood that predictions or forecasts can be self-fulfilling or self-negating. These are cases where the act of making a prediction itself becomes a causal factor influencing the accuracy of the prediction.

For example, a colleague shouts at you when you are crossing the street, “Watch out, that truck is going to hit you!” You jump out of the way and the truck misses you. Although your colleague’s prediction turns out to be wrong (terminally false), it saved you from harm. It was presumptively true because the truck would have struck you if you had not jumped.

An example of a prediction that has a self-fulfilling component can be found in studying how well children do in school. Expectations of teachers partly explain the school performance of their students. Thus, a prediction of a student’s academic success is one of the factors that may lead to that success. Both feedback loops and bandwagon effects are involved in self-altering prophecies.

Clearly, we must assess both a prediction’s truth-value and its utility by more than whether or not it turns out to be true in the end. For predictions
that turn out to be false may nonetheless be useful in guiding action be-
cause they are (or were) presumptively true.

Methods of Futures Research

Futures researchers use methods from many fields of learning and they
have invented or adapted some techniques distinctively aimed at the ex-
ploration of alternative futures. Included are standard methods such as the
extrapolation of time-series data, cohort-component methods that are espe-
cially useful in making population projections, sample survey data, content
analysis, official governmental statistics, focus groups, and many others.

Gordon and Helmer (1964) developed the Delphi method, which is
adapted from survey research methods but uses repetitive questioning of the
same respondents after feedback to them from earlier questioning. Meadows
et al., *The Limits to Growth* (1972), famously used simulation and modeling.
Some futures researchers have used gaming, which is widely used by the mil-
litary. Others have used participatory action research, which Whyte (1991)
helped develop. Anthropologist-futurist Robert B. Textor has adapted the
use of informants for “ethnographic futures research” and has used it for
constructing alternative futures of entire countries (Textor et al. 1984).

Most important, perhaps, is the scenario, which is a—if not the—key
futurist tool. A scenario, in this case a narrative about the future, can be
generated from any of the above methods and many others.

In sum, despite some notable exceptions—for example, population
forecasts, some longitudinal studies, and some research on beliefs and at-
titudes—most sociological research tends to be past-oriented. The research
process itself invites description, analysis, and interpretation of the way
things were. Whether doing participant-observation, conducting sample
surveys, analyzing census or other existing data, or whatever, by the time
the data are collected and analyzed and the report written and published,
the findings presented are usually about the past.

Yet, beyond economic and population forecasts and the rather narrow
forecasting industry, a sociology of the future, however rudimentary, does
exist (Bell 2003, 2004; Bell and Mau 1971). By focusing their research on
images, beliefs, and attitudes about the future or the projection of time-series
data; on possibilities for the future; on transforming causal knowledge into
contingent predictions; on the design perspective, especially the relation-
ship between prediction and control; or on self-altering prophecies; among
other approaches, some sociologists have systematically studied the future.
Sociologists can adapt nearly any method of social research to the study of
possible and probable futures. Adding the results of such studies to public
dialogues, sociologists could increase the knowledge base of decision-making
and social action (Slaughter 2004).
But can we say the same for assertions about preferable futures, that is, for propositions about what is a good or bad, a desirable or undesirable future? How can we as sociologists, for example, know objectively what is socially just, how much economic inequality is ethically defensible, and what rights and responsibilities are morally correct? Additionally, how can we persuade others that our judgments about what makes a better world are right?

THE SOCIOLOGY OF THE GOOD

Social Evolution and Human Values

Accurate evaluation itself may be among the most basic, yet least recognized, of human values. For to know what is truly good or bad for human well-being and to choose the good and not the bad courses of action are obviously essential for the future survival and flourishing of both individuals and groups. Thus, existing human values are neither arbitrary nor capricious. Rather, evolutionary processes of variation, selection, and retention are constantly at work shaping them.

They do so on several different levels. First, humans are biopsychological and social beings who have needs that must be met for air, water, food, sleep, and personal security, if they are going to survive. They also have needs that can be fully satisfied only by interaction with other humans, such as emotional support, companionship, affection, and sex.

Second, morality importantly functions to make social life possible, to permit and encourage people to live and work together (Baumeister 1991:39). Through the cooperation and mutual regulation that it provides, morality promotes organized and coordinated human effort that contributes to survival and beyond that to thrival.

And third, the nature of the physical environment in which humans live helps shape human values. All people everywhere on Earth, regardless of differences of climate and topography, face some similar physical and chemical principles (e.g., time and space, gravity, the nature of air, fire, and water, and mundane things such as objects sharing length, weight, volume, and so forth). The natural world permits only so many solutions to similar problems.

Thus, it is understandable that different societies and religions have reached many similar judgments about which values are the right ones to live by and which are wrong.

Universal Human Values

Moreover, we know pretty well what human values are shared. For example, most of us today would find familiar such values as truth, wisdom,
courage, patriotism, temperance, freedom, sobriety, industriousness, equality of happiness for all people, social harmony, and usefulness, all of which were expressed by Plato before the birth of Christ. Also, equally familiar is the universal standard of morality proposed by Saint Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century; it includes five primary virtues: temperance, fortitude, justice, prudence, and charity (MacIntyre 1984; Pieper 1966).

Among the efforts to put forward universal values, there are also those of social scientists, such as Pitirim A. Sorokin who, Jeffries (2005, 2006) reminds us, provides a foundation for a sociology of good and evil with his notion of an integral/idealistic culture and altruistic values such as self-sacrifice, helping others, compassion, friendliness, and kindness.

Also, Lasswell (1971, 1977) derives eight values from his conception of human dignity; they are shaping and sharing of power, enlightenment, wealth (sufficient but not enormous), well-being, skill, affection, respect, and rectitude. Campbell (1965) suggests industriousness, surplus production, abstinence from indulgence, loyalty, and respect for both authority and knowledge. Boulding (1985) constructs a “G Scale,” to define and measure the good. It includes riches (wealth and economic welfare), justice, freedom, peace, and the quality of life (health, education, and learning, among other things). And the World Order Models Project has proposed, documented, and analyzed a set of values that can be widely accepted as goals for a model of a preferred world, giving more than 100 indicators to measure five global values: peace, economic well-being, ecological balance, social justice, and political participation (Sullivan 1991). Of course, what is defined as bad or evil is equally universal (Baumeister 1997; Bell 2000).

Many other studies confirm the conclusion that human societies everywhere share a core of common values. Further evidence of this fact can be seen in several worldwide affirmations of values, such as “The Universal Declaration of Human Rights” of the United Nations and Towards a Global Ethic of the Parliament of World’s Religions, which was attended by representatives of more than 100 of the world’s religions in Chicago in 1993 (Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions 1993).

Yet we cannot conclude that existing values are necessarily the right or most beneficial set of values for human well-being and freedom. As Edgerton (1992) has demonstrated, some societies are sick. Their values and norms are not necessarily optimal even for their own survival. And, certainly, the evolution of values has not reached some perfect end-state. Thus, there remains a continuing need to test existing beliefs about what values are in fact most beneficial for creating a desirable future.
An Objective Method for Making Value Judgments: Epistemic Implication

There are efforts to assess the validity of value assertions scientifically, efforts to move beyond the practical, but limited, methods such as commitment-deducibility (make a commitment to a source such as the Bible or the Quran and then deduce what is right or wrong from it) and means-ends (pick a goal and then objectively select effective means to achieve it). Such efforts also go beyond theories of ethics such as consequentialist, contractarianist, utilitarianist, and deontological. One such effort is that of philosopher Keekok Lee (1985) who has proposed what she calls epistemic implication.

Epistemic Implication Requires Giving Reasons

As its name implies, “epistemic implication” is assessment by implication. One gives reasons to support an “ought” proposition and one subjects the reasons to rational and empirical tests, thus indirectly also testing the value statement. If the reasons are accepted, then by implication the value proposition they support is also accepted. If, to the contrary, the reasons are negated, then the moral “ought” proposition cannot be accepted—at least on the basis of the falsified reasons.

Reasons Must Meet Five Criteria

But not all reasons are acceptable. Lee gives five criteria that each reason must meet before a reason can be accepted.

First, reasons must be serious. A reason, or the evidence, presented must be serious, that is, it must be something more than a personal commitment, preference, desire, or want. It must be something more than a person’s psychological state concerning the value assertion. Rather, it must be some public external feature of the situation referred to in the assertion and must be open to evaluation by independent observers by some kind of objective—intersubjective—process.

Take the Assertion: You ought to treat other people with respect.
Supported by the Reason: Because treating other people with respect increases your chances of being treated with respect yourself.

This is serious evidence because it refers to objective characteristics that can be falsified or confirmed. We are not now concerned with whether or not the evidence is true, only that it meets the criterion of being serious, open to evaluation as to its truth or falsehood by the independent observation of others.
An example of a nonserious reason is to support the assertion by offering, “Because God told me.” Independent observers cannot confirm or deny that God has spoken to the person or even whether or not there is a God. In any event, such a reason fails as serious evidence, because there is no naturalistic way to falsify such a statement, even if it is false.

Second, reasons must be referentially relevant. To be acceptable a reason must be referentially relevant, that is, the assertion and the reason for it must be about the same thing. They must share a subject term.

Take the Assertion: Criminals released from prison ought to receive severance pay plus a bonus for getting a job.

Supported by the Reason: Because 2 + 2 = 4.

Although the reason or evidence is true according to the arithmetic of real numbers, none of its terms is shared by the “ought” assertion. Thus, it is not referentially relevant and, thus, cannot serve as evidence.

If we supply a different reason, however, such as, “Because criminals released from prison who are so treated are less likely to commit new crimes than released criminals who are not so treated” (Rossi 1987), then we have evidence that is referentially relevant.

Third, reasons must be causally relevant. Additionally, the reason must bear on the value assertion in some causally relevant way.

For example, take the Assertion: People ought not to smoke tobacco.

Supported by the Reason: Because smoking increases their chances of dying of lung cancer.

It is reasonable to hypothesize that there is a causal connection between a person’s smoking tobacco and increased chances of that person getting lung cancer, because a person’s lungs are more or less exposed to the tobacco smoke and the chemicals that have been added in the production of cigarettes. Thus, causal relevance is clear.

Lee’s method is based on the assumption of causality in the world and our ability to discern and confirm—or refute—causal relationships.

Fourth, reasons must be causally independent. Reasons must also be causally independent of the conclusion. A reason is not acceptable if it is produced by the conclusion itself.

For example, take a white supremacist assertion in the period of plantation slavery in the Americas that “Africans ought to be treated as socially inferior,” the reason offered being that “Africans in fact are socially inferior” (Lee 1985:135). Indeed, such a doctrine of racial inferiority was actually used to justify the slavery of Africans (Goveia 1956).

But the reason fails because it is not causally independent of the original assertion. That is, the value judgment contained in the original assertion may have caused the facts cited in the reason. Thus, if the whites’ attitudes led them to treat Africans as socially inferior, then it is not surprising that...
on any number of objective criteria such as self-respect, occupation, education, wealth, and income on average Africans empirically might be shown to be “socially inferior,” that is, to be relatively less well off than whites on each criterion. But such evidence is inadmissible as a reason in support of the value assertion because it is not causally independent of it. It is circular reasoning.

To the contrary, causal direction is established in the earlier example of smoking and lung cancer by time priority (smoking comes before cancer), by manipulative priority (you can’t give a person the tobacco-smoking habit by giving him or her lung cancer), and by explanatory theory.

*Fifth, reasons must be empirically true.* Finally, there is the requirement to put the reason to an empirical test. If the reason meets the above four criteria, then the reason, if true, would support the assertion, while, if false, would refute it (Lee 1985:99). Thus, after we have made a serious effort to refute the reason, if the reason remains unrefuted, then we tentatively accept the value proposition. The argument is that it is reasonable to believe in an unrefuted reason and not reasonable to believe in a refuted reason.

Let’s take an assertion of a male chauvinist: “Women ought to obey men.” He gives as a reason that “Women are less intelligent than men.” This reason is serious and referentially relevant evidence. It may not be causally relevant, however, because more intelligent people may not advise people to do the morally right thing any more than less intelligent people. Thus, the evidence may fail by not being causally relevant.

But the proffered reason fails on another ground, too. It is empirically false. On average, men and women have about the same level of overall intelligence. They do not significantly differ. Thus, if the male chauvinist wants to argue objectively for women’s subjection to men, he will have to find other grounds to do so (Lee 1985:133).

The reason offered for the “ought” assertion in the example about the negative effects of smoking, however, is overwhelmingly supported by many different empirical studies, including the epidemiological evidence compiled in the U.S. Surgeon General’s Report of 1989. That is, the hypothesis that smoking causes lung cancer has survived many efforts to falsify it.

In sum, Raz (1977:210) insists that saying “X ought to do Y” is logically the same as saying “There is a reason for X to do Y.” Following Lee’s five criteria, we sociologists can propose and objectively test reasons given to support value assertions. Doing so, we can, by implication, support or refute the value propositions themselves. Also, we show others exactly how we arrived at a value judgment, because the method is explicit and reveals the underlying process of thinking. Anyone is welcome to follow the same procedures to check the results—to confirm or correct them.
Moral Judgments and the Future

Moral judgments have inherent ties to assertions about the future. This is most obvious when judging consequences, because they always occur in the future from the time some action is being contemplated. Thus, for “a consequentialist the future must matter” (Sumner 1987:207). Judgments of the good on which people base their present decisions to act rest upon anticipations (Charnov 1987:5).

Also, contractarianist, utilitarianist, deontological, and other theories of ethics often involve a futures perspective. Ethics imply standards of conduct, not just for the past and the present, but also for the future (Charnov 1987:4).

Contracts, for example, are often agreements to fulfill certain stated reciprocal behaviors in the future. Utilitarianism tells us to act so as to create the greatest good or happiness for the greatest number of people. Clearly, utilitarians judge their possible alternative acts according to their future results (Harman 1977).

Deontological ethical theories, too, are linked to the future. These are theories that emphasize doing one’s duty and giving respect to individuals. They are thought of as nonconsequentialist theories because they focus on the purposes for taking an action (i.e., one’s intentions) rather than the results of the action. Take, for example, a formulation of Kant’s (1958) categorical imperative: Act only according to the maxim that you want your action to become the basis of a universal law. The categorical imperative deals with the future not only because an intention itself is future-oriented, but also because it does deal with a particular consequence: that is, that the moral principle underlying your behavior will become a universal law. Thus, by your acts you create the moral laws of the future (Tong 1986).

Moreover, ethical theories contain motivations for acting in particular ways. For example, “There is no real recognition that something is good or bad unless it embodies some degree of motivation to pursue or shun it, do or refrain from it” (Sprigge 1988:150). Motivation involves goals desired but not yet achieved, whether those goals are happiness for the greatest number or universal moral laws. “Morality gives people reasons to do things” (Harman 1977:91) and the goals for which things are done are always in the future.

Thus, moral principles themselves often embody an orientation toward the future. In the case of ethical prescriptions it is an image of some future good that you ought to want to achieve, while in the case of ethical proscriptions it is an image of some future abomination that you ought to want to avoid.

Explicitly Include the Future in Epistemic Implication

Although ethical judgments, as we have seen, often have a futures component, ethical thinkers seldom make it explicit. Yet the validity of an ethical
judgment may depend crucially on the truth-value of the implicit futures content of the judgment. Thus, public sociologists ought to make that futures-thinking component of their value commitments explicit. We can do so in the case of epistemic implication by making minor revisions in Lee’s procedures.

For example, we can expand Lee’s statements of serious and causally relevant reasons as well as her definition of “empirical test” to include predictions as evidence. Thus, we can include assertions about the future, when specific grounds warrant them, as “evidence” to support or negate value premises, just as do facts about the past and present (Bell 1993, 2004).

To maintain the distinction between evidence in the strict sense, which is based on empirical observation of the past and present, and predictions, which refer to the as yet unobservable future, I call such reasons “predictive grounds.” As an example, take a case given earlier and make clear that the reason is a prediction:

Take the Assertion: People ought not to smoke tobacco.

Supported by the Predictive ground: Because smoking probably will increase their chances of dying of lung cancer at some future time.

For smokers who currently show no signs of cancer, that prediction, since it is based on past observations about other people, can only be “presumptively true.” The best we can do is “warranted assertability” based on an inferential leap transforming past observation into a probability statement about the future.

But if smokers wait to stop smoking until the prediction is confirmed in their own particular cases by the observation that they have lung cancer, then the utility of the prediction for changing their behavior before it’s too late has been lost. Acting on the prediction could save their lives.

Take into Account All-Things-Considered “Ought” Statements

Everyday life situations, of course, often confront people with complexities that may overwhelm their capacity to make easy moral judgments. Most, if not all, of the moral codes we live by tend to be prima facie statements: “Tell the truth.” “Be kind to others.” “Be generous.” “Be forgiving.” “Be patient.” “Do not kill.” Standing alone, all such statements have exceptions under certain circumstances and sometimes they appear to contradict each other. For example, we cannot always tell the truth and be kind to others at the same time.

Yet the contradiction is more apparent than real, since prima facie statements do not say “Do this no matter what.” Rather they say, “Generally, do this, unless you have a good reason not to do so” or “Generally, do not do this, unless you have a good reason to do so.”
Considering all things, we weigh various reasons and judge outcomes against each other, including good versus good (being kind or telling the truth), perhaps deciding that in some particular case, for example, it would be better, all-things-considered, to be kind to a person rather than to tell the person a hurtful truth.

A BETTER FUTURE IS POSSIBLE

In answering Michael Burawoy’s call for a public sociology—a sociology that, while using the tools of social science, engages in dialogue with the public about vital issues of the times with the aim of improving the public’s well-being—I argue that two features of public sociology must be explored more fully for its successful development.

The first deals with the passing of time and the inescapable futures orientation involved in decision-making and social action. Always, the consequences of present action occur in the future. Always, more or less explicitly, public debate is about the future, whether it is the new-future of some presently contemplated act or the then-future of some act of the past. Always, the underlying question is, “What ought to be done (or have been done) to maintain, construct, or avoid some particular future outcome?”

One problem is that most people don’t have reliable and valid methods to create or evaluate beliefs about the future, including the future consequences of their own and others’ actions. Thus, I propose some principles of futures thinking, for making and testing statements about what might, could, or will happen in the future, taking into account the contingencies of human action, principles that public sociologists can use to describe a fan of possible and contingently probable futures.

A second problem is knowing “What is preferable?” If public sociologists are concerned with the “betterment of society,” then we must ask what is better? And how do we know? I propose epistemic implication as a method of objectively testing value judgments. Using it, public sociologists can examine proposed images of the good society and objectively evaluate the moral claims on which they are based.

Like any good social research, systematic study and testing of propositions about the future and about the good require hard work. But the payoff for public discussion of current problems and what to do about them is great, because more rigorous, complex, and sound thinking is added to public discourse, including the caution that anyone’s beliefs about the future and the good—no matter what or who the source or how strongly the beliefs are held—are to some extent uncertain, contingent, and corrigeable.

I understand, of course, that politics can be dirty business and that many, if not most, sociologists may want to remain out of public debate for fear of
making themselves vulnerable to attack. Claiming to be value-free, garbing oneself in the innocence of only reporting the facts, and demanding the immunity of the academy appear to be safe strategies, especially in today’s world where powerful interests show no restraint in assassinating the character of the bearers of unwelcome messages.

And yet there is an attraction—if not an obligation—to elevate public discourse on the important issues of our time by bringing in more reason, evidence, logic, complexity and nuance, civility, humility, and, as I have stressed here, reliable and valid futures thinking and objective value judging. Public sociologists have commitments to truth and goodness, and to fairness and open-mindedness. Also, they must have moral courage.

Even in a world of special interests, corporate manipulations of the truth, corruptions of power, governmental deceptions, and mass-media thought control, perhaps—just perhaps, public sociologists could help ordinary people become consciously active and effective participants in shaping their own futures. Searching for alternative possibilities for the future, estimating probable future outcomes of different actions, and evaluating the desirability of the alternatives, people could imagine a better world that was truly possible and design the actions that would create it. So doing, they might build, not a sky-high “pile of debris” for the angel of history to see, but rather a future world in which all people on Earth would coexist in peace, would enjoy freedom and good health, and would live long, self-directed, socially beneficial, loving, and satisfying lives.

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The discipline of sociology is an interdependent system. Each part makes a unique contribution to the productivity and creativity of the whole. This is the fundamental principle of Michael Burawoy’s (2005) ideal type model. Four forms of sociological practice are identified: professional, the research and theoretical traditions and their yield of knowledge and understanding; critical, the search for a moral vision for the profession and for society; policy, the formulation of means to realize a given end; public, the reciprocal communication between sociology and a variety of publics. Each form of practice can reach greater validity, creativity, and excellence through the mechanism of their reciprocal interdependence.

The sociological thought of Pitirim A. Sorokin is the ideal exemplar for illustrating the validity and analytical power of Burawoy’s four-form model of interdependence. The scope of his writings is diverse, comprehensive, and innovative. In his approximately sixty years of scholarly work, he produced thirty-seven books and over four hundred articles (Johnston 1998:1). Sorokin’s works span the four forms of sociology. He was a pioneer in initiating a number of areas of theoretical development and research. He explored the nature of the good extensively and devoted considerable attention to discerning and enumerating effective policies to reach it, both within sociology and in the general society. He wrote works for an academic audience, and also for the general public (Johnston 1995, 1998; Nichols 1999).

Sorokin may be considered the premier exemplar of the public sociologist in the systemic meaning of this idea. Many of his works are predominately one form of practice, others embody more than one form. This chapter
organizes ideas from his various works to render accurately his system of sociology within Burawoy’s four forms model.

THE PROFESSIONAL FOUNDATION

Professional sociology is the necessary condition for the other three forms. The research programs and theoretical traditions that are its core provide the knowledge and understanding that give sociology its identity and nature as an academic discipline, and its legitimacy as a science (Burawoy 2005).

Sorokin’s professional sociology is original, diverse, and comprehensive. It rests on a clearly articulated frame of reference and conceptual framework, spans a variety of areas, and incorporates extensive empirical data. It also advocates an ontology and epistemology unique to contemporary sociology.

The Frame of Reference

The most basic sociological phenomenon is interaction, in which the mental state and behavior of two or more participating individuals is influenced to some degree. There are three basic components of interaction: the individuals who are interacting; meanings, values, and norms; and behavior and materials that serve as vehicles or conductors in objectifying this ideological culture (Sorokin 1947:40–42). From a different perspective, there are three inseparable components of the reality that is the subject matter of sociology: society, the totality of interacting individuals and their social relationships; culture, the meanings, values, and norms and the vehicles through which they are objectified; and personality, the thinking and acting individuals. To adequately understand any one of these components, the other two must also be considered (Sorokin 1947:63–64; 1966:635–649).

Within this frame of reference, general sociology is divided into structural and dynamic perspectives. The former focuses on the components and interrelationships of sociocultural phenomena, the latter on processes and change. Special sociologies employ the same concepts and organization to study particular sociocultural phenomena, such as war or the family (Sorokin 1947:16–17).

Sociological Knowledge and Understanding

Sorokin’s analysis of social structure includes consideration of the forms of interaction, the factors of solidarity and antagonism, types of social relationships, the characteristics of organized groups, social differentiation
and stratification (1937c, 1947), and the nature of social space and time (1964b). Social dynamics includes an analysis of how groups originate and maintain their existence (1947), changes in social relationships (1937c, 1947), the nature and factors of social mobility (1959), the sociology of crises (1942), the varieties and uniformities of revolutionary change (1925, 1937c), and the causes of war and the prospects for peace (1937c, 1998b[1944]). The analyses of internal disturbances and of war include a comprehensive quantitative survey of their magnitude and incidence from 500 BC to AD 1925 (1937c).

The structure of culture is described in terms of the nature of cultural integration and its manifestation in both causal/functional and logico-meaningful interdependence. There are three main types of integrated culture: ideational, idealistic, and sensate (1937a, 1937b, 1941a, 1957a). In an ideational culture the nature of reality and the predominant values are viewed as primarily supernatural and spiritual, and are related to some idea of God or the Ultimate Reality. A sensate culture is the opposite, the nature of reality and value being regarded as primarily physical and material. An idealistic culture combines these contrasting conceptions into a harmonious system, with the ideational perspective being foundational. These ideal types of culture are examined in relation to various compartments of culture such as truth and knowledge, scientific inventions and discoveries, philosophical first principles, the fine arts, ethics, and the juridical mentality. In support of these cultural types, extensive quantitative data is presented in tables and figures, generally spanning a period from about 600 BC to about AD 1925.

The analysis of cultural dynamics includes topics such as the conception, objectification, and socialization of cultural systems, the growth and decline of cultural systems in the previously identified compartments of culture, and the analysis of fluctuations in the three main types of integrated culture. Changes from ideational to idealistic to sensate culture are explained by immanent change, due primarily to the unfolding of internal potentialities, and the principle of limits, that the number of basic sociocultural forms is limited (Sorokin 1941a).

The assumption that culture, society, and personality are interdependent systems provides the context for considering the structure and dynamics of personality. Thus the sociocultural inevitably exerts profound influences upon personality. On the other hand, individual personalities inevitably influence the sociocultural (1947:342). Individuals are not passive and each person is an active agent through selectivity, combination, and creativity (1947:356).

The structure of personality is described as involving four basic components: biological egos of two types, conscious and unconscious; social egos; and the supraconscious. Biological egos include basic needs and drives
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while social egos are the reflection within the individual of the culture of the groups to which he or she belongs. The fourth component of personality, the supraconscious, is the source of creativity and of spirituality. It operates through intuition that transcends sense perception and reason. The supraconscious is involved in the individual’s relation to God, and the formulation of basic ideas of goodness and beauty (Sorokin 1947:342–364; 1954a:83–114, 480–488). Altruistic love is a particularly important potential of personality because love can transform both individuals and the sociocultural universe (Sorokin 1950a, 1950b, 1954a:3–79, 480–488).

Personality dynamics are inevitable due to the life cycle movement of childhood, adolescence, maturity, and old age and changes in group and cultural contacts over the life course (Sorokin 1947:714–723). Altruistic transformation is a form of personality dynamics in which individuals increase their practice of altruistic love. Considerable data are presented on self-directed personal change and on the influence of groups on change toward greater altruism (Sorokin 1954a:287–455, 1954b).

In addition to these empirical studies and theoretical formulations, Sorokin’s professional sociology also includes the analysis and classification of sociological theories. In three major works he presented the ideas of other theorists, arranged them in typologies of schools of thought, and critiqued them (Sorokin 1928, 1950c, 1966).

The Integral Ontology and Epistemology


The essential nature of integralism and its occurrence in history is described in Sorokin’s analysis of systems of truth and knowledge. This compartment of culture includes religious, philosophical, and scientific thought and focuses on the basic questions of ontology and epistemology: the nature of reality and how it can be known and understood (Sorokin 1937b:1–180, 1957a:225–283). Three systems of truth are identified in accordance with the foundational premises of the three cultural types: ideational truth is the truth of faith, sensate truth is empiricism, and idealistic truth is the truth of reason. Idealistic truth combines faith and empiricism into a harmonious system of idealistic rationalism. Quantitative analysis of systems of truth in the Graeco-Roman and Western cultures from 580 BC to AD 1920 indicates that, despite fluctuations in dominance, the overall in-
cidence and importance of these three systems of truth was approximately equal over this time (Sorokin 1937b:54–55).

Idealistic culture was predominant in Greece during the fourth and fifth centuries BC and in Western culture during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries AD. The idealistic rationalism characteristic of the systems of truth of these two historical cultures is illustrated by the writings of Plato and Aristotle in Classical Greece, and Thomas Aquinas in the later Middle Ages (Sorokin 1937b:61–123). The empirical data and analyses of these idealistic cultures provides the basis for Sorokin’s formulation of the nature of an integral system of truth, and his vision of an integral culture of the future. In later writings, Sorokin (1961:95–96, 1963b:481; Ford 1963:53) referred to idealistic culture and its system of truth as integral, and in this sense the terms and descriptions of historical cultures are interchangeable.

The foundational characteristic of integralism is the idea that reality, and the human needs and ends that it entails, consists of empirical-sensory, rational-mindful, and supersensory-superrational aspects (Sorokin 1941a:741–746, 1956a, 1957b, 1964a:226–237, 1998b[1944]:283–286). Since this is the nature of the true reality, an integral system of truth includes empirical, rational, and supersensory sources of truth and methods of cognition. Thus the senses, reason, and faith are combined into a harmonious system of truth, as in the historic systems of idealistic rationalism. The truth of faith is eclectic, consisting of both intuition and religious ideas of revelation.

Each of these sources of cognition is fallible. Integralism combines these three ways of seeking truth into one harmonious system of ontology and epistemology. This holistic approach gives the possibility of mutual supplementation and checking of knowledge and understanding across the channels of cognition, increased validity, and a more comprehensive perspective in the system of truth (Sorokin 1941a:741–764, 1963a:372–408, 1998b[1944]:284).

**CRITICAL SOCIOLOGY**

Critical sociology interrogates the adequacy and purposes of disciplinary practice. The nature of the moral foundations and value commitments involved in the practice of sociology are examined and evaluated, as are the morals, values, and social characteristics of society. Such questions provide perspectives for assessing topics that are the focus of practice within professional sociology, and their relation to problems and issues in society. The legitimacy of critical sociology derives from the moral vision it provides as the conscience of sociology (Burawoy 2005).
Two basic perspectives in critical sociology are the identification and analysis of the problematic or pathological, and the proposing of an alternative state that is more positive in realizing some conception of the good. Sorokin’s critical sociology includes both. The moral vision he provides is intended both for sociology and for the general society. This delineation of the nature of the good is derived primarily from aspects of his conception of integralism and its potential for reconstruction.

**Sociology: Limited Progress and the Integral Alternative**

Sorokin’s critical perspective regarding sociology is that it has largely failed in developing its potential. A flawed ontology and methodology that assumes too much similarity between the natural and social sciences has been emphasized. Although a great deal of information has been collected, few valid generalizations have resulted, and the understanding of basic sociocultural uniformities is limited. This meager achievement has inevitably prevented significant practical contributions to reducing social pathologies or improving the general welfare of human beings (Sorokin 1947:616–619, 1956a, 1998a[1941]).

The positive alternative necessary for greater productivity and creativity involves several characteristics: an integral system of truth entailing an ontology and epistemology that take account of sensory, rational, and supersensory reality and modes of cognition; the formulation of some conception of the good to guide scientific practice; referential principles that better represent the unique characteristics of sociocultural phenomena; a greater emphasis on synthesis and generalization; changes in methods; and a different topical focus (Sorokin 1941a:746–764, 1941b:116–132, 1956a:315–317, 1961, 1964a:226–237, 1965, 1998a[1941]).

**The Crisis of Sensate Culture**

The sensate culture of this era is characterized by a constricted perspective that focuses on the empirical-sensory aspects of reality at the expense of a more accurate and comprehensive perspective. Consequently, the omissions and many false parts of the culture render it inadequate as a design for living and as a context for meeting basic human needs. The system of truth is characterized by skepticism, relativism, and separation from a conception of realizing the good. The ethical system lacks universal standards and emphasizes subjectivism, relativism, expediency, and hedonism. A considerable portion of art is antimoral and antisocial. Compulsory relationships are frequent while both contractual and familistic are lessened and often unstable. Interpersonal and intergroup conflicts are common, as is war. Great power is concentrated in a small number of individuals
and groups and is frequently misused, sometimes in ways that profoundly effect human welfare in a negative manner (Sorokin 1941b; Sorokin and Lunden 1959).

The Positive Critique: Seeking and Realizing Ultimate Values

Sorokin develops a positive critical perspective that proposes ultimate values at the most abstract level to address both disciplinary limitations and the sociocultural crisis: truth, goodness, and beauty. At higher levels, these values are inseparable and transformable, in that each one contributes to and to some degree comprises the other (Sorokin 1954a:6, 30–33, 1957b:184). Considered separately, truth and goodness are both directly relevant to the progress and direction of sociology. Truth, a more accurate and comprehensive knowledge and understanding of reality, can achieve greater validity with an integral ontology and epistemology. Love is the essence of goodness. Ontologically, love is the most powerful force for unity, integration, and harmony in the universe (Sorokin 1954a:6–9). Ethically, love is viewed by all major religions as the foundational component of goodness (Sorokin 1954a:78–79).

This abstract view of love as goodness is reformulated with respect to both individual personality and the sociocultural. At each of these levels of analysis goodness as love can become a concept in theoretical development and a variable in research.

Individual Goodness

The potential of individual goodness is expressed through altruistic love (Sorokin 1950b, 1954a, 1964b:160–208). This form of love involves cooperation, mutual aid, unselfishness, sacrifice, friendship, and the performance of duty (Sorokin 1954a:47). Terms such as benevolence, compassion, agape, and the Golden Rule have been applied to this universalistic and creative love (Sorokin 1954a:485).

The increase of love in the sociocultural universe becomes a fundamental positive goal of Sorokin’s critical sociology because of its benefits. Unselfish love exerts powerful effects on the lives of individuals and on society (Sorokin 1954a:47–79, 1964b:160–208). Evidence indicates that love is positively related to longevity, beneficial in some physical and mental disorders, and contributes to the optimal development of personality. On the social level a minimal degree of love is necessary for harmony and group survival. Love reduces enmity and aggression and promotes friendliness between individuals and between groups.

Altruistic love can vary from low to high on five dimensions. These are: intensity, the degree of effort and involvement of self; extensity, the range
of love to individuals and groups; duration, the amount of time love is manifested; purity, the degree of selflessness of love; adequacy, whether love benefits the other in both subjective intent and objective result (Sorokin 1954a:15–35).

Sociocultural Goodness

On the social level love is manifested in two forms, in meaningful interaction that is solidary, and in social relationships that are familistic. In either case, the association between persons is characterized by the same mutual helpfulness, cooperation, and unity that characterizes love (Sorokin 1954a:13). Increasing such solidary interaction and relationships is part of the moral vision of Sorokin’s critical perspective.

In solidary interaction the meanings and values of the interacting parties and their overt behaviors concur and are mutually helpful in realizing the ends they are seeking. This contrasts with the opposition and mutual hindrance characteristic of antagonistic interaction. In mixed interaction, the most common form, both are present to some degree in different proportions.

In the most intense solidary interaction, each of the interacting parties loves the other for his or her own sake apart from utilitarian and hedonistic motives, and this solidarity includes all aspects of the other’s life. At the highest levels of solidarity, love is extended on the interpersonal and intergroup levels to include potentially everyone (Sorokin 1947:93–99).

Social relationships exist when there is a distribution of rights and duties, social differentiation and stratification, and norms defining conduct in an organized group (Sorokin 1937c:19–21). There are three main types: familistic, compulsory, and contractual. Almost all groups are a combination of these types, with the proportion of each varying. Familistic relationships are predominately solidary and typically have high intensity, extensity, and duration. Interaction is mutual and direct, and predominately unselfish. There are high levels of interdependence, attachment, and similarity of values and normative standards.

The prevalence of solidary interaction and familistic social relationships is inevitably related to the characteristics of culture. Most important in this regard is the nature of the values and norms of the interacting parties. Cultures that emphasize mutual aid, love, and sympathy, as expressed in principles such as the Golden Rule, will have high levels of interpersonal and intergroup solidarity. In contrast, cultures emphasizing egoism, rivalry, and material sensory values can expect high antagonism (Sorokin 1947:119–131, 1998c[1951]).

An integral culture will increase interpersonal and intergroup solidarity. It will lessen emphasis on materialistic goals and focus concern on the ulti-
mate and perennial values of truth, beauty, and goodness. Universal norms will emphasize love and solidarity. Since these values are impersonal and altruistic, they do not engender antagonisms. In this integral culture solidarity interaction and familialistic social relationships will predominate (Sorokin 1941b:316–321, 1948:107–108, 1998c[1951]).

The Role of Science

Sociology and the other social sciences can make important contributions by increasing our knowledge and understanding of love and solidarity (Sorokin 1954a:473–480). Purposive scientific endeavor can focus on problems such as how to increase our ability to satisfy basic human needs, documenting the negative effects of crime and war, analyzing the values and ethical philosophies that are conducive to solidarity, discovering techniques for increasing altruism in all aspects of society and culture, and improving our understanding of the optimal circumstances for the effectiveness of different techniques of altruistic transformation.

In an integral system of truth, science, philosophy, and religion would be engaged in a coordinated effort to provide knowledge and understanding of fundamental sociocultural uniformities that have implications for the good of individuals and for the common good. Realization of the ethical principles of love and solidarity, such as those espoused by all the major world religions, is viewed by Sorokin as an important focus of this endeavor (Sorokin 1941b:317–318, 1948:158, 1998c[1951]; see also Johnston 1995:167–168, 179).

The scientific study of love in its various creative forms should provide a powerful force of motivation and unity for social scientists. This focus has great appeal, because love is a common value that transcends individual, disciplinary, and group differences (Sorokin and Lunden 1959:178).

POLICY SOCIOLOGY

Policy sociology uses the theories and methods of professional sociology to develop solutions to problems. Its legitimacy is based on the effectiveness of these solutions (Burawoy 2005).

In Sorokin’s system of sociology the critical perspective defines the problems to be solved, and the goals to be sought. This era is a time of great crisis that can be effectively overcome only through the increase of altruistic love and solidarity (Sorokin 1963b:268–292). This unselfish love must be universal, extending to all of humanity. When love and solidarity are limited to the in-group, they become a source of antagonism toward out-groups (Sorokin 1954a:459–489).
Chapter 6

The theoretical foundation of Sorokin’s policy sociology is the assumption that the subject matter of sociology is society, culture, and personality. Since the sociocultural reality always entails these three interdependent systems, all three must be changed for effective reconstruction to take place (Sorokin 1948:93–94). Further, an infinite number of individual actions shape and direct the content of society and culture. Therefore, though all must be transformed, the necessary condition for social and cultural reconstruction is the self-directed effort of individuals to increase their own personal levels of altruistic love. Extensive case study, biographical, and historical data is presented describing the techniques of altruistic transformation (Sorokin 1954a: 285–455, 1954b). Many of these techniques, such as good deeds and altruistic self-identification, are directly applicable by the individual to himself or herself. Others involve techniques that are applied within and by organized groups.

On the basis of individual altruistic transformation, the second and third policy tasks of reconstruction are the planned change of society and of culture (Sorokin 1948:93–94). This planned reconstruction progresses from micro to meso to macro social and cultural units (Sorokin 1948:234–235). One possible trajectory from micro to macro toward greater love is to first begin by increasing love for family and close friends, then move to abstaining from actions that are harmful to anyone, then to extend love to all those who are in need in one’s community. If all communities do this, a first stage of universal love, in which all are loved by some individuals and groups, is reached (Sorokin 1954a:463–464).

The culture must also be changed. The basic premise regarding the nature of reality is the foundation of cultural integration (Sorokin 1937a:3–152, 1957a:2–52). Therefore, changing this premise to an integral one is the most effective policy approach to fundamentally change the culture to one that will be more creative and foster solidarity (Sorokin 1948:107–108). Additionally, various policies can be instituted to limit abuses and increase the socially beneficial uses of power (Sorokin and Lunden 1959).

The findings of scientific research are vital to understanding the most effective policies to accomplish personal, social, and cultural reconstruction. A concentrated effort of the scientific community is necessary to accomplish this goal in reasonable time (Sorokin 1954a:473–480, 1948:234–235, 1998c[1951]).

PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY

Public sociology involves communication about sociological knowledge and understandings with those outside the academic community, whether
particular groups or the general public. Its legitimacy is based on its relevance (Burawoy 2005).

Sorokin’s system of sociology contains a number of works intended for the general public. They derive directly from his professional writings and are intended to inform readers regarding the central problems of the contemporary era and their solutions. Three major works of this nature include an analysis of the crisis of contemporary culture and social relationships and a vision of their reconstruction (1941b), a formulation of policies for personal, social, and cultural reconstruction (1948), and a historical overview of the misuse of power and a program for limiting the abuses of powerholders (Sorokin and Lunden 1959). Other writings by Sorokin intended for the general public are focused on basic social trends, including religious and moral polarization (1964b), the nature and importance of altruistic love (1950a), and the effects of the sexual revolution on individuals and on society (1956b).

Sorokin’s public sociology advances ideas that have great relevance to the general public. His system of thought provides a comprehensive analysis of this era that gives the potential for closure on basic issues. He describes the nature and source of problems and pathologies, identifies more positive alternatives, describes the nature of the personal, social, and cultural reconstruction that is necessary, and details the means to realize it. The necessary condition for this comprehensive reconstruction is individual transformation toward greater love. This is then followed by collective actions to change society and culture. Thus a program for individual participation and collective action that is potentially available to everyone is provided.

**CONCLUSION**

Several principles regarding the systemic nature of Burawoy’s four form model of sociology are evident in Sorokin’s system of sociology. Most fundamentally, the interdependence of the four forms and the manner they contribute to the comprehensiveness, creativity, and overall contribution of a system of social thought is illustrated. In this sense, and in terms of the content of his ideas and system of sociology, Sorokin is an exemplar of the nature of a complete system of public sociology.

First, the more comprehensive, empirically grounded, and theoretically advanced the professional sociology, the more adequate it is as a basis for the other three forms of practice. Their content and direction is significantly shaped by this base.

Sorokin’s professional sociology provides such a system of sociology as a foundation. His conceptual frame of reference and elaboration of the nature
of the discipline provide for the study of a wide range of phenomena from a systematic and inclusive perspective. Sorokin’s own substantive sociology provides a model of theoretical and conceptual analysis in fundamental areas such as general structure and dynamics, and in a variety of substantive fields. His analysis is linked to empirical data and research using case study, historical, and statistical data. His integral perspective involves an innovative ontology and epistemology that provides for broadening and refocusing the perspective of sociology by incorporating philosophical and religious ideas and conceptions of the good within its frame of reference and practice.

Second, critical sociology can be of great importance in directing professional activity to specific areas of practice. In his autobiography Sorokin (1963b:268) describes how his concern for humankind led him to reorient his professional sociology to the scientific study of altruistic love. Conversely, the knowledge and understanding derived from the professional base can be the source of a critical perspective, as it also was in Sorokin’s case.

Sorokin’s critical sociology illustrates that critical sociology is more vital and powerful in shaping the content and direction of practice if it focuses not only on problems, but also on an alternative vision of the good. In this sense there is a positive critical sociology that can provide a compelling moral vision of a better world. This positive critical sociology is exemplified in Sorokin’s analysis of goodness as altruistic love and solidarity and his vision of a new integral culture as an alternative to the problematic sensate culture of this era.

Third, policy sociology can be given a powerful empirical basis by a body of theory and research, and direction by an explicit and clearly articulated critical sociology. This interdependence is clearly illustrated in Sorokin’s system of sociology. His policy sociology of personal, social, and cultural reconstruction is given its end to be realized by his positive critical sociology of love, solidarity, and a new integral culture. The comprehensive nature of these policies and the direction of deliberate change derive directly from the theory and findings of Sorokin’s professional sociology, and the goals specified in his critical sociology.

Fourth, public sociology is dependent on each of the other forms for its full vitality. Sorokin’s historical and comparative analysis and his statistical findings on social and cultural trends and fluctuations form the basis of his public sociology writings on the state of the contemporary world and his vision of a new integral culture. Likewise, his case studies of individuals and groups and his analysis of the nature, sources, and effects of altruistic love form the basis of his public sociology writings on these topics. Sorokin’s policy sociology pertaining to altruism and the limiting of abuses of power is firmly grounded in his professional sociology, and constitutes an impor-
tant component of his public sociology, giving it a program of practical application. His positive critical sociology of goodness in the form of love and solidarity is basic to the central theme of reconstruction in his public sociology.

Sorokin’s public sociology that emerges from the other three forms is informative, engaging, and readily comprehensible for both organic and traditional publics. It provides a basis for dialogue regarding the good and ultimate values, the policies by which constructive change can be realized, and the role both individuals and groups can assume in reconstruction. Thus Sorokin’s scientific system of four forms of practice provides a compelling and relevant message admirably suited to dialogue with the public about a better world and how it can be achieved.

REFERENCES


II

ESTABLISHING AND PERFECTING THE MODEL
Michael Burawoy’s dramatic reinvention of and powerful advocacy for public sociology at the ASA’s 2004 annual meetings has set off a process to incorporate public sociology into the current discipline. Although it is too early to determine what paths that process will take, so far there seems to be more discourse about public sociology than activity to advance it, or for that matter, a new outpouring of high quality public sociology. This chapter argues that such activity—and outpouring—require some serious structural changes in the discipline and describes several urgent ones, both in the organization of the discipline and in sociological graduate education.

I emphasize urgent because the active development of public sociology is essential to the healthy future of the discipline. Although sociology is growing numerically in a variety of ways, its status in the social sciences and in American intellectual life has not kept up with that growth. Exciting intellectual work is being done in a number of sociology’s fields, but it does not show up often enough in the journals that speak for the entire discipline or in the now existing varieties of public sociology.

Moreover, public sociology is facing formidable competition from other disciplines. For example, a number of economists are now doing research on topics once considered solely sociological. Their work, sometimes called Freakonomics (Levitt and Dubner 2005), frequently offers counter-intuitive conclusions about taken-for-granted aspects of everyday life and the operation of major societal institutions. Because the researchers are economists, they have far easier access to the general public than sociologists.

Likewise, some historians are now writing about periods that have barely become history and are still part of our disciplinary turf. They appear frequently in the literary and other journals that appeal to the educated general
public and their books are reviewed in the major general book reviews that almost uniformly ignore sociological writing.

Anthropology represents another emergent source of competition, for today's social and cultural anthropologists are doing research in America. The research is often so similar to that done by sociologists that some of them have thereafter become sociologists. Furthermore, an increasing number of freelance journalists, a number of whom have clearly taken courses in sociology, are writing books and magazine articles on topics and with methods that verge on the sociological. Perhaps our most ambitious and well-publicized competitors are the life scientists and evolutionary psychologists who regularly discover new genes to instantly explain complex social phenomena that sociologists and other social scientists have labored long and hard to understand.

THE PURPOSES AND VARIETIES OF PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY

For the purposes of this chapter, public sociology will be defined as sociological analysis (or if you will, description, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation) that is intended, mostly in written form, to reach or actually reaches one or another audience in what is usually called the general public. This kind of public sociology is what most sociologists think of when they describe and do public sociology. My discussion therefore excludes what Burawoy (2007) calls organic public sociology, which requires some very different disciplinary, organizational, and other changes in sociology.

The distinction between intent and actuality is important, for however much we want to reach that audience, the public sociology created to appear in print, electronic, and digital mass and “class” media has to be accepted by those media’s gatekeepers. True, we can write what we consider important or interesting, but if the gatekeepers do not agree, they may not open their gates. Then our work cannot become actual public sociology.

Obviously conventional written public sociology (hereafter just called public sociology) ought to help the discipline grow in quality and reputation, but it must do so by fulfilling what I consider public sociology’s primary purpose: to help people, in the general public and elsewhere, understand the society in which they live. In order to achieve that purpose, the discipline should produce public sociology that the public and we consider relevant to and useful for as many sectors and strata of society as possible.

Creating a relevant and useful public sociology requires discussion—and operational definitions—of relevance and usefulness. In a diverse, often polarized and conflicted society, for whom sociology is and can be relevant and useful needs discussion as well. Furthermore, that sociology must include both what people want to know and what we believe they ought
to know as members of society, including even ideas and findings they, or media gatekeepers, would prefer not to know about.

In pursuing various forms of relevance and usefulness, the discipline also has to ponder its place in the division of labor, as well as what I hope is the eventual convergence of the social sciences. Meanwhile, sociology ought to exploit its distinctiveness and emphasize what it does best.

I suggest that sociology continues to be distinctive in four ways:

1. Much of its empirical data, quantitative and qualitative, comes from ordinary people, obtained by going out into “the field” in various ways, but mainly through fieldwork, interviewing, and survey research.
2. Sociology continues to venture into areas and subjects the other social sciences are reluctant or slow to study until we have been there first. Because we concentrate on ordinary people and still do relatively little data gathering among elites, we look at society from the bottom up more often than our sister disciplines.
3. Sociology remains a skilled debunker of conventional wisdoms as well as an investigative reporter and analyst of social injustices. It also looks a little harder at what is taken for granted and unexamined in everyday life, by major institutions, and by the various sectors and strata of society.
4. Sociology remains philosophically more adventurous than most of the other social sciences. As a result, it is sometimes more able to be detached and distanced than they, and it has not refrained from using relativism, relationism, reflexivity, constructionism, and other not always popular ways of looking at the social world.

Eye-Opening Public Sociology

Most existing public sociology is already completed empirical or theoretical inquiry which is summarized, synthesized, and rewritten for the various sectors of the non-sociological public. This is generally described as popularization. Sometimes, though not yet often enough, public sociology offers a sociological take on topics and issues of current interest or concern, although someday I hope sociological columnists and others will be able to supply that sociological take whenever the discipline has something useful and relevant to add to the general discussion.

However, I would like to suggest the need for another public sociology, which I choose to call eye-opening: original, insightful, and attention-attracting empirical and theoretical research on topics useful and relevant to all parts of the general public we can reach, written in English they can understand. In fact, if public sociology is to flourish, sociologists must regularly produce eye-opening studies that enable the general public to understand their society and others in new ways. Sterling examples include the Lynds’ *Middletown*, Riesman’s *The Lonely Crowd*, Liebow’s *Tally’s Corner*,
Hochschild’s *Second Shift*, and Wilson’s *The Truly Disadvantaged*, but a much longer list of past and present ones can easily be assembled.¹

Eye-opening public sociology is in reality just a catchy label for original basic research—the best of the research we conduct and report as a discipline to an audience of peers and students. It becomes public sociology when it concentrates on topics relevant to the general public and when it is written in their English rather than the technical variety I think of as sociologese.

In that case, the gatekeepers of public sociology will not only become interested in the authors of such works, but if the discipline produces enough of them, the gatekeepers’ view of the discipline and other actual and potential public sociologists will be enhanced.

**Topic-Driven and Theory-Driven Basic Research**

However, basic research comes in two varieties. One is *topic-driven*, and if the topics concern or should concern the general public, it is a candidate for eye-opening public sociology. Actually, in order to attract the general public, the topics should include topical ones, that is, those on a subject or issue of the day, provided the researchers can proceed more speedily than academics do normally.

The second variety of basic research, which most sociologists conduct most of the time, endeavors to develop concepts and to formulate or test theories in the discipline; consequently, I think of it as *theory-driven*. Of course, theory-driven research also investigates topics but these are frequently different from, or differently formulated than, those engaging the general public.

Topic-driven research differs from theory-driven research in other ways.² It is not generally considered normal science or a candidate for paradigm change (Kuhn 1962) and it does not seek to contribute to “the literature,” the disciplinary warehouse of research. Consequently, topic-driven research eschews conceptual discussions, theoretical explorations, and literature reviews, as well as the footnotes and bibliographies that show how much we stand on each others’ shoulders.

I do not mean to denigrate theory-driven research, for neither topic-driven research nor public sociology could exist without it. The general public will not pay much attention to debates about structure and agency and discussions of cultural and narrative turns, but these often play an indirect or even direct role in topic-driven research. Theory-driven sociology is therefore one of the raw materials needed to produce public sociology.

Moreover, as long as the producers of public sociology are academics, their topic-driven studies must also satisfy enough of the occupational criteria of theory-driven work to enable them to find jobs and obtain tenure.
Besides, many sociologists do both topic and theory-driven work, and the best of the former is generally also a contribution to the latter.

**SOME DANGERS OF PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY**

Despite its promises, public sociology may also bring with it some dangers for the discipline. One is writing it to publicize or show off the discipline or the work of its authors. Another is producing work that sociologizes common sense or already known ideas and findings, thus reviving old stereotypes of sociology as restatements of the obvious.³

A further danger is that public sociology becomes a new, and inferior track within the discipline (Collins 2007:103) and thus subject to the deadly effects of the academic transformation of new ideas (Hays 2007). A related danger is pandering to the audiences of public sociology by equating popularity with quality (Smith-Lovin 2007:131–132). Conversely, the best public sociology is apt to be controversial, and we lack some of the skills needed for dealing with controversy.

These and other possible ways by which public sociology could hurt the discipline suggests we step carefully in venturing into new venues. More important, such venturing should be preceded or at least accompanied by changes in the structure and infrastructure of the discipline, especially its incentive systems and training programs.

**SOME NEEDED CHANGES IN THE DISCIPLINE**

I will discuss only a few such changes, for the discipline in general and for graduate education. Needless to say, public sociology requires funding, and we need to justify receiving it. Although individual sociologists can produce brief work in public sociology on their own time, funding skillful practitioners of public sociology to do additional work would be desirable.

More urgently, public agencies and foundations are needed to pay for the eye-opening topic-driven research that I believe will result in the most desirable and effective public sociology. Research support is especially necessary because empirical studies that will most interest the general public are likely to be labor-intensive. Ethnographic and depth-interview research is more likely to get past the gatekeepers of public sociology than quantitative work, notable exceptions notwithstanding.

Public agencies and foundations that fund sociology are often concerned with social problems, public policy, and other topical issues that lend themselves to presentation as public sociology. Some even encourage research reports that can be turned into trade books, magazine articles, and
documentaries. Many funders would probably be supportive if grantees were eager to report their findings to the general public, especially if they can come up with eye-opening work.

Since funding decisions are generally made by or with the help of peer reviewers, review panels will have to include more public sociologists or reviewers sympathetic to public sociology. Presumably some funders will ask applicants to demonstrate that their public sociology will pass muster with the relevant gatekeepers.

In an ideal world, sufficient funding would enable the best of the current and new public sociologists to spend all their time researching and writing. This is unlikely to happen in the foreseeable future, if ever; consequently, public sociologists have to continue to earn their living in the academy or elsewhere. However, as academics, new recruits cannot even become prolific public sociologists unless and until they are eligible for the same promotions, tenure appointments, and other rights, privileges, and rewards as theory-driven basic researchers doing normal science and contributing to the disciplinary literature.

At this writing, the number of people who produce public sociology often enough to be called public sociologists is small, and while some who are nationally visible may be respected in the discipline, others are wrongly disparaged as “journalists.” In sociology as in the other social sciences, people who consider themselves scientists first and foremost are often critical of colleagues who seek to communicate their science to the general public, if only because it has to be reframed and simplified to appeal to such an audience. When sociologists who are hostile to public sociology control the academic power structure, in sociology as in other social science disciplines, scholars whose work is looked down on as journalism are not likely to obtain tenure.

A vicious circle operates here; the disparagement and discrimination that accompany public sociology are likely to end once there are more public sociologists, the general public has smiled favorably on their work, and the status and prestige of sociology have risen. However, few sociologists will want to put their career at risk until the stigmatizing of public sociology shows signs of declining.

Obviously, the incentive structure has to be changed, and university administrations can be helpful here. Many universities like the publicity and visibility they gain from faculty members whose work shows up in the mass media or is favorably reviewed in the book reviews that are read by the intellectual and political elite. Some university administrators know or believe that publicly visible faculty attract more and better students, heighten enthusiasm from trustees and legislators, and increase outside funding. But administrations must be willing to confront scholarly opposition to publicly visible new faculty. Some time will pass before theory- and topic-driven basic researchers, not to mention other public sociologists, will recognize their common interests.
Inside the Discipline

Incentive structure changes are needed inside the discipline as well. Because they benefit from name recognition, public sociologists probably have a good chance of becoming ASA and section presidents. Whether public sociologists have as much influence in the committees and networks that run ASA and its sections—or even want to have it—remains to be seen. In any case, the ASA and other sociological organizations must display their enthusiasm and support for public sociology. However, their interests are not too different from those of university administrations and most are likely to be supportive. The ASA is already very supportive, for example, through press conferences and other ways of assisting both public sociologists and some of their gatekeepers.

Probably the fastest way to alter sociology’s incentive structure is to increase the number of publications, including websites, that will publish public sociology. Individuals and groups, including academic departments can set up their own websites and establish public sociology blogs and list serves, but for now, careers are still advanced mainly by publication in print. In addition, the audience for public sociology remains too small to consider constructing commercial websites.

The ASA has made a modest start with Contexts but if audiences can be found, eventually there need to be other magazines. Moreover, these should not have to depend on ASA, or be limited by its peer review and other requirements. Meanwhile, I think even the mainstream academic journals could be more hospitable to public sociology. Some section, regional, and other sociology journals already have back-of-the-book sections for essays and other kinds of writing that do not have to follow the standard research report format and could therefore interest some members of the general public.

The most innovative and lively publishers of public sociology will probably have to be independent of disciplinary and traditional scholarly auspices. If and when money is to be made or status gained from new public sociology magazines and websites, commercial firms and non-profit agencies may come to the fore, although in the long run, I hope that general magazines like The New Yorker, Harper’s Magazine, The New York Review of Books and their digital equivalents will regularly publish the work of public sociologists.

**NEEDED CHANGES IN GRADUATE TRAINING**

In addition to making room for public sociology in the discipline, changes will have to take place in the graduate training of sociologists. Perhaps such changes could even come first, especially on the part of departments that
are prepared to pioneer. The most selective graduate schools are obvious candidates, particularly those located in or near major media centers, but nothing should stop small but ambitious graduate departments from taking the first step.

A logical possibility is to establish separate tracks in the curriculum for public sociology, and even for my suggested bifurcation of basic research into theory- and topic-driven tracks. The prime question, which is probably best answered by various curriculum experiments, is to determine how separate the tracks should be.

I would argue for partial tracks, if only because sociologists in training cannot yet decide in which tracks they will make their careers, especially not until independent career lines in various tracks are established. Moreover, good arguments can be made for cooperation and overlap between the tracks so that students can work in more than one and the tracks can enrich each other.

In any case, for the moment, the first step is the development of a handful of separate courses and the recruitment of faculty who will teach methodological courses and dissertation seminars that emphasize public sociology as well as topic-driven basic research. Where qualitative methods instruction is not yet available, training and practice in ethnographic research and qualitative interviewing will have to be offered. Quantitative researchers will have to learn how to conduct and present their research to audiences with little knowledge or patience for numerology.

Presumably substantive courses in particular fields, say the family or inequality, would be much the same whether students had theory- or topic-driven interests, although the papers and dissertations they would write are likely to be different. Large departments can even be imagined as sometimes teaching both theory- and topic-driven courses in the same subjects, if only to explore the similarities and differences between the two tracks. Perhaps the prime need is for faculty and students who want sociology to be topical, relevant, and useful, and can work on making it so.

If I were developing a curriculum for topic-driven basic research, I would recommend a joint course with a Graduate School of Journalism. Journalists are trained both to be topical and to write in jargon-free English, and sociologists—even those whose research interests are theory driven—can benefit from the journalists’ focus on topicality. Conversely, journalists could benefit from the sociological expertise in systematic research, even if most will never have the time or the sufficiently sophisticated audience to do much systematic research for their news stories.

Bringing sociology and journalism students together has another virtue; both are being trained to study society but in very different ways and for different audiences. Journalists are trained to look for novelty and outliers; sociology puts more emphasis on recurring patterns and the typical. Mutual
familiarity with this division of labor should be beneficial to students in both disciplines. In addition, bringing the two disciplines together might reduce their exchange of distrust and disparagement.

I would also establish an introductory workshop and even an advanced one in the sociology of American society which uses daily newspapers, news magazines, and their internet equivalents as basic texts. These sources not only focus attention on topical subjects but they provide information about various parts of society that all sociologists ought to be familiar with. The news media are also fruitful sources of ideas for new studies—and they always offer opportunities for sociologists to extend journalistic research and to debunk incomplete or inaccurate news reports.

Such courses would be essential for students ready to undertake public sociology and topic-driven research but at least one such course should be required for all students. It is particularly necessary for students who so concentrate on the professional literature that they never read or view news of any kind, thus becoming incapacitated to understand the society they are being trained to study.

Since most other social sciences are now developing “public” tracks equivalent to public sociology, eventually a joint social science course in how to research and write for the general public ought to be created and taught widely.

More immediately, every department that seeks to train public sociologists must offer a writing course which will equip its students to speak to and write for the educated general public, and eventually even for less educated ones as well. Actually, I would require such a course for every sociology student, and include a section on code switching so that students can learn to write both for their scholarly peers and for the general public. Public sociologists in training would also be helped by a book-writing course, or at least a dissertation seminar that helps them either to write their dissertation as a book, or trains them to convert it quickly and with a minimum of effort to one that will attract at least some non-academic readers.

Nonetheless, for the foreseeable future the prime audience for public sociologists will continue to be the young educated public, that is, undergraduates. Most will not only be more receptive to public sociology than to the academic discipline but they will probably also pay more attention to topic-driven rather than theory-driven courses. Thus, courses that teach them about their society and what sociological analysis can add to their understanding of it will be more attractive than courses that teach them concepts and theories to prepare them for graduate work in sociology.

Consequently, sociologists who want to spend their careers teaching undergraduates rather than doing research should be trained primarily as public sociologists. Indeed, if they are sure they do not want to do research or
to write, they should be trained for a teaching career, and in lieu of writing dissertations, develop courses that use public sociology and topic-driven research to enrich the undergraduate curriculum.

**RECRUITING PUBLIC SOCIOLOGISTS**

For the past several decades, the discipline, at least in America, has primarily trained normal scientists, sometimes beginning with undergraduate majors. I assume that as public sociology becomes more visible, some majors and prospective graduate students will also become interested in it, but broader recruitment should be undertaken as well.

Disciplines which seek normal scientists attract hedgehogs, to use Isaiah Berlin’s classic dichotomy, who focus on one or a few closely related objects of study to make their careers and typically conduct theory-driven research. However, public sociology is better served by foxes who are able and willing to study several objects and fields, and are therefore flexible enough also to orient themselves toward the topical.

I am not familiar with aptitude tests that distinguish foxes from hedgehogs but would think that all scientific disciplines that are trying to develop public tracks could use such tests. In the meantime, prospective foxes are more likely to be found among undergraduate journalists and other writers—even budding fiction writers—who are discouraged from specializing in a single topic.

Actually, young journalists are sometimes attracted to sociology because they find reporting too superficial or hasty and want to dig to a greater intellectual depth. Consequently, journalism is a relevant recruiting territory for public sociology. I would also reach out to creative writing departments, for a significant number of novelists actually write sociology, even if their characters are fictional. Since they are frequently loath to recognize or admit that their work bears any resemblance to sociology, I would not expect fledgling novelists to instead become public sociologists, but their fiction might sometimes benefit from a properly designed course in sociology.

Some essayists, social and even literary critics are also doing our kind of work. They write essays not research reports, but the best of their work suggests that sociologists would benefit from the humanist and philosophical intellectual training that is sometimes missing from the sociological curriculum. Concurrently, social criticism would benefit from contact with sociology. Some sociology departments might therefore benefit from cooperative ventures with socially inclined departments in the humanities, perhaps resulting, some day, in the emergence of scholars who can be both public humanists and public sociologists.
Other sources of future public sociology will become evident if and when more sociologists “go public.” However, the discipline must first put greater priority on becoming more relevant and useful to the larger society, and choose clear English over technical writing. If sociology would make its next “turn” in those directions, its desirability, prestige, and ability to attract lively young minds to its ranks should rise. Eventually, it might no longer even be confused with social work.

NOTES

This chapter has benefited considerably from the editor’s comments on an earlier draft.

1. Burawoy (2007:28) suggests Du Bois’s *Soul of Black Folks*, Myrdal’s *American Dilemma*, *The Lonely Crowd*, and Bellah et al.’s *Habits of the Heart*. Although eye-opening public sociology should not be judged by sales figures, a number of other obvious examples can be found in Gans (1997).

2. My distinction resembles in some respect that between ideographic and nomothetic studies.

3. Stinchcombe (2007:135) warns that “we do not have enough truth to offer,” and while he may be unduly pessimistic, he is also often right on target.

4. Envy may be present too, especially if public sociologists write best sellers, are recruited into the national cultural elite, or spend some time on the celebrity circuit.

5. In my presidential address to the ASA (Gans 1989) I had suggested that the authors of articles in ASA’s and sociology’s other journals be required to write their abstracts in clear jargon-free English. Then journalists could read them, learn about what sociologists were doing, and perhaps write articles for the general public about their work. I still think it’s a good idea.

6. Gyorgy Konrad, the prominent Hungarian novelist, worked as a sociological researcher before he began to write novels.

REFERENCES


Chapter 7


I, in common with other contributors to this volume, am in favor of public sociology, and I am a sometime practitioner of it. My contribution, however, is almost certainly more cautionary than most of the others. Whereas public sociology is necessary if sociology is to be relevant and deserving of the support that the discipline receives from the societies in which it exists, bad versions of public sociology, which Burawoy mentions but does not discuss in detail in his eloquent ASA presidential address (Burawoy 2005), could threaten the modest and fragile credibility and respectability that sociology has been able to gain during its relatively short existence. Furthermore, bad public sociology can have social consequences inconsistent with the goals of those who practice it, and participating in public sociology carries risks for the individual sociologist. Some of the personal risks are unavoidable, and effective public sociologists cannot be preoccupied with avoiding them, but irresponsible or incompetent public sociology can harm careers and reputations as well as have other negative consequences.

I am not the first supporter of public sociology to discuss the perils associated with it (e.g., see many of the contributions to Clawson et al. 2007), and the critics of public sociology have expounded on what they perceive to be numerous dangers involved in its practice (e.g., see Nielson 2004; Tittle 2004; Stinchcombe 2007). Therefore, little, if anything, that I say here is entirely new, my intended contribution being to combine my own less than unique ideas with points made by others to formulate a set of suggested standards for distinguishing between good and bad public sociology. In developing these standards, I draw heavily on examples from family sociology and family sociologists’ participation in the heated public debates that have been called, with only moderate hyperbole, “the family
wars.” As Orlando Patterson has pointed out (2007), there has not been a vigorous sociological presence in those debates, but the participation of sociologists has been extensive enough to provide numerous examples of how daunting the practice of good public sociology can be. As one of the few participating sociologists, I have a number of impressions (which I would like to consider insights) based on personal experience.

It would be impossible to formulate a set of standards for good public sociology that would satisfy all supporters of public sociology, and I do not try to do that. For instance, my concern about the reputation and respectability of sociology is likely to be distasteful to those who believe that a major purpose of sociology should be to oppose all hierarchical social arrangements—a goal inconsistent with trying to maintain a position in a hierarchy. A larger number of readers are likely to find my vision for the discipline to be too influenced by the positivist tradition, even though I have been a critic of aspects of that tradition. And any readers who believe that sociology, as a discipline, should spearhead a social movement to remake the world into what sociologists believe it should be will find themselves largely in disagreement with me, because I consider that view arrogant and elitist (cf. Tittle 2004). Finally, some readers may want a clear distinction between what sociologists may properly do in their professional role and what they may properly do as private citizens—a distinction I do not make because it seems to me that it is impossible in many if not most real world situations to cleanly separate the roles of citizen and sociologist. In spite of these anticipated disagreements, I hope that my suggested standards and my defense of them will stimulate discussion of the issues involved, even among those who strongly disagree with me in some ways.

I state my suggested standards in terms of what a good public sociologist will do, and thus I deal with what individual sociologists, rather than the discipline as a whole, can do to foster good public sociology and say little about how structural impediments to it might be removed or lessened. I discuss the standards in no particular order except that the first two are the most basic and together are a summary of my view of what most public sociology should be.

These first two standards involve the distinction between “ultimate” and “derivative” values (the latter sometimes being called “proximate,” “mediating,” or “secondary”) and thus I must define these concepts before discussing the standards. An ultimate value is a judgment about the goodness or badness of some object or condition that does not depend on a belief about the nature of empirical reality. When one explains why one holds an ultimate value, one does not make a causal statement about empirical, non-transcendent reality. Rather, one will say “it is good just because it is,” “because God wills it,” or something similar. Ultimate values are based in religion, humanistic traditions, philosophies of various sorts, and perhaps
even partially in the unique biology and biography of the individual. In contrast, what I call a derivative value depends on—is derived from—both an ultimate value and a belief about empirical reality, as when someone says that marital stability is good because it contributes to the well-being of children. In other words, a derivative value is linked to an ultimate value by a belief about non-transcendent reality.³

**Standard 1**: A good public sociologist will support causes, social movements, and public policies that comport with his/her ultimate values by helping devise effective means for attaining movement and policy goals and by helping assess the effectiveness of the means advocated by others who strive to attain those goals.

**Standard 2**: A good public sociologist will make only tentative commitments to specific means for attainment of goals, including those supported by a “preponderance of the evidence,” and thus will refrain from dogmatic adherence to “derivative values.”

A crucial aspect of these standards is that they are not based on the assumption that all sociologists must have the same ultimate values. If sociology is truly a “scientific discipline,” as the website for the American Sociological Association states that it is, it cannot assess the relative validity of competing ultimate values, because, in an empirical sense, ultimate values are neither valid nor invalid. A scientific discipline does not necessarily have to follow the “normal science” model of the natural sciences, but it must deal with empirical, non-transcendent reality and cannot, for instance, assess the value of prenatal life, or assess the relative importance of prenatal life and the needs and desires of the pregnant mother. Thus, sociologists may be either “pro-choice” or “pro-life,” and which of these they are is not relevant to their sociological competence. It follows that some sociologists may employ their sociological knowledge and skills in service of the “pro-choice” movement, while others may do the same for the “pro-life” movement. Both are public sociologists, and the ideological camp to which they belong has nothing to do with whether they are “good” or “bad” public sociologists. It follows that public sociology is to be participated in by individual sociologists and not by the discipline as a whole (cf. Massey 2007; Nielsen 2004). The discipline and its organizations, such as the American Sociological Association, may try to facilitate and promote public sociology, but they cannot properly dictate to individual sociologists what the goals of their public sociology should be.

To say that sociology cannot assess the validity of ultimate values is not to say that sociology should, or can be, “value free.” Most value judgments are what I define above as “derivative,” in that they depend in part on an alleged empirical relationship, an example of such a judgment being the statement that “comprehensive sex education is good because it lowers the incidence of pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases among adolescents.” The
empirical part of this statement is amenable to scientific investigation, as are all alleged causal relationships that link a derivative value to one or more ultimate values. Assessing the validity of causal claims about social and cultural phenomena is of course a central task of sociology, and it is hard to imagine how a sociologist could select topics for research or theoretical treatment so abstract, or so trivial, that their study would have no relevance to the interplay of competing derivative values in public debates. It seems to me, therefore, that sociologists must be involved in the assessment of derivative values, whether they want to be or not, and what they do will almost inevitably have implications for public issues and discussions.

Another one of the several reasons why sociology cannot be value free is that there are some values, along with their associated norms, that must be embraced by sociology as a whole if it is to be a scientific discipline. The most basic and obvious of these is that trying to gain knowledge of social and cultural phenomena is worthwhile. This may be an ultimate value to some sociologists—those who value knowledge for its own sake—but is probably embraced by most sociologists largely because they think that the knowledge can be instrumental in the attainment of ends consistent with their ultimate values about human life, human happiness, justice, and so forth. Being a scientific discipline also requires sociology as a whole to embrace a scientific epistemology, which includes, or leads to, norms about openness, skepticism, and questioning of dogmas about the nature of reality. More specifically, it requires that good sociologists be willing to change their beliefs about reality in the face of evidence that their previous beliefs were incorrect, and it requires that sociologists let the evidence lead where it may regardless of where they would like it to lead. (Being a scientific discipline does not, however, resolve all questions about what constitutes good evidence.)

It follows that a good public sociologist will not dogmatically embrace derivative values. And in view of the fact that valid knowledge of social and cultural phenomena should ordinarily facilitate effective efforts to further ultimate values, dogmatic adherence to derivative values is inconsistent with being true to one’s ultimate values.

It is inevitable that what I say in the previous two paragraphs will elicit from some readers the mantra that the kind of objectivity dictated by scientific norms is impossible in sociology because sociologists, being human beings, are situated within the phenomena we study—an issue that has been discussed extensively since the writings of Karl Mannheim (and some other theorists) on the sociology of knowledge early in the twentieth century (Mannheim 1936). Mannheim, unlike some contemporary scholars (perhaps more often in the humanities than in sociology) who deal with this issue, did not advocate abandoning the ideal of objectivity and did not come close to saying that there is no objective social reality about which we
can gain valid knowledge. Rather, he was concerned about how the partial knowledge of different persons resulting from their different positions in the social structure and from their different interests could be combined to gain more nearly complete knowledge and how “free floating intellectuals” can transcend the perspectives of specific social locations.

I agree more with Mannheim than with the more nihilistic of the contemporary critics of the ideal of objectivity. The difficulty of our adhering to the norms of openness, skepticism, and the like is undeniable, and perfect adherence probably is impossible for most if not all sociologists. However, perfect, across-the-board compliance to social norms never occurs, and that lack of compliance does not render the norms useless. To me, giving up on the ideal of objectivity because perfect attainment of it is impossible makes no more sense than giving up on the ideal of justice because perfect justice is unattainable.

Much of what I say below deals with how public sociologists strongly committed to their ultimate values may be able to gain a reasonable degree of objectivity about the effectiveness of the different means being advocated and used for the attainment of the goals they believe in. At this point, I will only say that I agree with commentators who urge sociologists to be constantly aware of how their position in the social structure may bias their perceptions of reality. If by having such awareness and by largely avoiding other sources of bias, public sociologists can approach if not attain the ideal of objectivity, they are likely to make a stronger contribution to the causes they support than they could by engaging in frontline activism.

**Standard 3**: A good public sociologist will avoid formulating positions and arguments for the purpose of gaining the approval of (sometime) political and ideological allies and should, insofar as possible, avoid letting those persons become his/her main significant others.

In public discussions of political and ideological issues, an inordinate amount of time and effort is devoted to communications that are almost certainly ineffective in converting undecided persons to the positions being advocated. (Does anyone seriously believe that Rush Limbaugh is an effective recruiter to his brand of conservatism?) This includes derision, sarcasm, name-calling, ad hominem attacks on opponents, and the use of ideologically loaded words that have a common emotional valence only among the already converted. Such communication that is ineffective for its ostensible purpose may grow in part out of ignorance of the psychological principles of persuasion, but I suspect that it grows largely out of the fact that its real purpose is usually to entertain and please the already converted and to gain their approval and applause.

Public sociologists who align themselves with particular causes are susceptible to being lured into the trap of writing or speaking to please their allies, and much public sociology, it seems to me, can serve no other purpose
than to demonstrate what a truly great feminist, or liberal, or conservative, or whatever, the sociologist is. Such posturing is of course a major threat to objectivity, and at best it is a huge waste of time, effort, and talent. My impression, which could be incorrect, is that young sociologists are especially prone to grandstanding for their ideological compatriots when they participate in public sociology. When a sociologist engages in public discussion, he or she should ask “how is this going to further the goals of my cause,” not “how much applause am I going to get for my participation.” A good public sociologist must be willing, when necessary, to disagree with, and thus incur the disapproval of, persons who share his or her goals. It follows that good public sociologists will refrain from becoming highly dependent on the approval of their sometime ideological compatriots.

Avoiding such dependence may be very difficult, especially when one has been ostracized by other ideological factions. I give an example from personal experience. In the 1990s I joined a small group of family sociologists who had become convinced that, contrary to the orthodoxy of the time, family structure matters, that not all family forms are equally good for children. That position, especially as I expressed it in a critique of family textbooks (Glenn 1997a, 1997b), led to a barrage of criticism from liberal and especially feminist sociologists and a great deal of approval from conservatives. (Even though I disagreed with conservatives on most issues—and still do—I became labeled a defender of the “traditional” family and discovered, several years later, that the Heritage Foundation had listed me, without my consent, as one of their recommended consultants.) Although the favorable attention from conservatives was unsolicited and somewhat embarrassing (and diminished a few months later among conservatives who noticed when I argued that enactment of no-fault divorce had little effect on divorce rates, Glenn 1997c), I felt considerable temptation to try to keep it coming, my having become persona non grata in some liberal circles. Rejection by one lover makes it tempting to fall into the arms of another. A good public sociologist must resist that temptation, however. To put it bluntly, a good public sociologist must be willing to be without a lover, to be willing to endure criticism from different directions. It follows that anyone highly sensitive to criticism is not suited for public sociology.

This is not to say that the only good public sociology is that practiced by the isolated person sitting alone at his/her computer writing op-ed pieces, letters to editors, and similar materials for public consumption while eschewing affiliation or alliances with think tanks, activist organizations, and so forth. Such isolation is the best way to avoid biasing influences, but it limits the extent and effectiveness of participation in public discussion. The most extreme and dogmatic of the ideological and political organizations are best avoided, in my opinion—whether they be on the left, on the right, or dogmatically centrist—but some think tanks and organizations allow
for considerable diversity of views and encourage debate among persons affiliated with them. These same groups are susceptible to being influenced and educated by sociologists and other scholars and often welcome such influence.

Occasionally sociologists who support certain causes may not perceive that there are any organized groups effectively pursuing those causes or that could be influenced to do so. In these cases, “loner” public sociology, or public sociology in loose cooperation with other critics and skeptics, is of course the only good option.

**Standard 4**: A good public sociologist will oppose extreme, irresponsible, and unwarranted claims about empirical reality made in ideological debates by both opponents and sometime allies.

This is a topic on which my personal experience is again relevant. Having taken the position that the preponderance of the evidence indicates that family structure matters, and matters to an important extent, I have been faced repeatedly with claims consistent with my position but based only on simple correlations, which of course are not a good basis, by themselves, for conclusions about causation. Very often I have read arguments about the importance of children growing up in intact two-parent families that are based on simple comparisons of the prevalence of delinquency, mental health problems, marital failure, and so forth among persons who grew up in different kinds of family structures. Such evidence is suggestive of causation, but persons who grew up in different kinds of families differ in too many other ways for these comparisons to be strong evidence for the effects of family structure. These unwarranted inferences of causation probably result more from a lack of understanding of the principles of causal inference than from anything else, and it is tempting to ignore them in view of the fact that they generally do not seem to be grossly incorrect. However, to do so would be bad public sociology. A good public sociologist will hold all participants in public debates to the same standards, regardless of whether or not he/she considers their conclusions to be basically correct.

Frontline activists tend to be zealots, at least to some degree, and to hold exaggerated views of the importance of their cause and of the detrimental consequences of whatever it is they oppose, whether it be marital failure, domestic violence, abrogation of fathers’ rights, or whatever. One might argue that such zealotry contributes to, perhaps is even necessary for, successful social action. Without it, would anyone be motivated to make the sacrifices and take the risks involved in being a frontline activist? I am not sure that that argument is incorrect, and therefore I stop short of saying that a good public sociologist will oppose all zealotry in the social movements in which he/she participates. I do believe, however, that a good public sociologist will try to discourage fellow movement members from making extreme and unsupported factual and causal claims and will avoid
personal involvement in the zealotry. To do otherwise is to risk harm to the sociologist’s personal reputation (a risk the person may be willing to take) and, more important, to risk harm to the reputation of sociology as a discipline. Furthermore, I believe that public sociologists can best serve the social movements and causes they support by maintaining enough detachment to exert moderating influence against intemperate and ill-considered activism that is ultimately inimical to the causes.

An extreme example of a public sociologist’s unwarranted (and in this case unethical) zealotry would be the fabrication of evidence to support a political cause. I trust that such dishonesty has never been common in sociology and is even rarer today than it was in the 1960s and 1970s, when some sociologists did admit privately that they had or would fabricate evidence for political reasons. I am less confident that there is not a great deal of unconscious (or perhaps even semi-conscious) bias among sociologists growing out of perceptions that some factual and causal claims are more politically useful than competing ones. That is, when the evidence is ambiguous, perceptions of political utility may often lead to one conclusion rather than to an equally plausible one or to an admission of how inconclusive the evidence is. A good public sociologist will guard against such bias, because false claims are very likely eventually to be revealed as such, to the detriment of the reputation of the sociologist, the reputation of sociology, and the attainment of the movement goals the sociologist supports. Successful social action is likely to be facilitated by valid knowledge of the reality that the activists seek to change, and false beliefs, however politically useful they may be in the short term, can lead to ineffective activism.

A more morally complex issue is posed when sociologists embrace factual and causal conclusions not consistent with empirical evidence in order to avoid stigmatizing or causing feelings of guilt among such persons as divorced parents and unmarried mothers. Some sociologists and other family scholars have even opposed academic discussion of possible negative consequences of nontraditional family structures, and I assume that they are even more opposed to sociologists’ participating in public discussion of the topic. Although the motivation for it is admirable, such opposition is anti-scientific, and in my opinion it is shortsighted and likely in the long run to hurt those it is intended to help. Public policies and personal decisions need to be based on sound empirical evidence, and the gathering of such evidence is hampered by making some topics off limits for discussion, research, and theoretical treatment.

**Standard 5**: A good public sociologist will resist all influences, both internal and external, to make causal conclusions stronger than the evidence warrants.

Adherence to this standard may be especially difficult, given that sociologists and other social scientists are prone to make stronger factual and
causal statements than the evidence warrants even in their academic publications (Glenn 1989). Apparently many sociologists, in common with just about everyone else, have a strong need for certainty and often have trouble dealing with the probabilistic nature of the evidence their research yields. We need to feel that what we do is important, and doing so is hampered by our honestly facing the limits of what we can know. These limits grow out of, among other things, the fact that we can rarely use randomized experimentation and cannot, by use of the kind of quasi-experimental methods quantitative sociologists use, definitively prove cause and effect. Quantitative social scientists, including sociologists, have pursued the illusive goal of rigor by employing ever more complicated statistical modeling, often based on an ever greater number of unproven, possibly incorrect, and hard to assess assumptions. Qualitative sociology is plagued by its own problems, including lack of representativeness of the persons studied and the fact that conclusions about what causes what must be based on the subjective, and one might suspect often faulty, judgments of the researcher. Therefore, virtually all causal (and many descriptive) conclusions made by sociologists should be stated tentatively, in both academic and public discourse.

The “public discourse” part of the above rule poses special problems, because neither media representatives, policymakers, activists, nor members of the general public are inclined to like what they consider to be wishy-washy statements; they want pronouncements of truth. In other words, they want from us what we cannot honestly give. The more sophisticated of these persons can sometimes be educated to understand and accept statements based on the “preponderance of the evidence,” and the extent to which this task can be accomplished sets limits to what a good public sociologist can do.

Unfortunately, it is often difficult to prevent the media, activists, and others from distorting and misrepresenting what we say. I have found that even the more respectable of the media, such as the New York Times, are likely to edit out the tentative part of statements made to them, and some distortion by activists is predictable and probably unavoidable.

It is my impression, however, that the sociologists themselves are often responsible for exaggerated and unsupported claims that are attributed to them and that they make these claims, or allow them to be disseminated, in order to gain media attention. If the claims appear in press releases issued by university public relations offices or are in magazines that use fact checkers, it is reasonable to assume that the sociologists to whom they are attributed bear major responsibility for them. Enjoyment of media attention is normal and usually harmless, but if one strives too much for it or becomes addicted to it, it can prevent one from being a good public sociologist.

**Standard 6**: A good public sociologist will recognize, and communicate to others, the limits of sociological knowledge, while at the same time
believing in, but not exaggerating, the contribution sociology can make toward attainment of social ends.

It follows from the discussion of Standard 5 above that the ethical public sociologist will not make extravagant claims about what can be accomplished through applying sociological knowledge and theory. The limits of sociological knowledge place limits on what can be accomplished through public sociology, and unlike many proponents of public sociology, I believe that the potential accomplishments are rather modest, though definitely worthwhile. We sociologists are not wizards capable of effecting a major transformation of society, but we can contribute to social betterment (defined by our own ultimate values) in specific, discrete ways through the application of our imperfect, probabilistic knowledge and our underdeveloped theory. We should not claim that we can do more than that.

**Standard 7**: A good public sociologist will be motivated primarily by the prospect of such psychic rewards as a feeling that he/she is making the world a better place rather than by anticipation of monetary rewards, career advancement, professional recognition, public acclaim, and other “extrinsic” rewards.

I have already discussed how a quest for such rewards as approval from movement allies and media attention can lead the public sociologist astray, and I could also discuss how seeking nonacademic monetary rewards could have pernicious effects. I do not dwell on the latter, however, because, contrary to what some people may believe, engaging in public sociology provides few opportunities, and thus few temptations, to compromise one’s integrity for the sake of money. Consulting fees and stipends that sociologists can earn by cooperating with activist organizations and think tanks are rarely enough to begin to compensate for the loss of academic salary (including summer salary) that participation in public sociology entails. When I started participating in public sociology and thus devoting less time to publishing in refereed journals, my annual salary increases went down accordingly (and appropriately, in my opinion). I have spent entire summers doing public sociology while receiving much less in honoraria than I could have earned by teaching a course in a six-week summer session. The only way that public sociology is likely to be lucrative is if one publishes a best-selling trade book, and the prospects for doing that are slim. Therefore, public sociologists should not expect substantial “extrinsic” rewards not only because seeking such rewards can bias their perceptions and claims about reality but also because expecting such rewards is likely to lead to disappointment and frustration.

Burawoy (2005) believes that the academic rewards for his four kinds of sociology should be more nearly equal and thus, I infer, he must believe that participating in public sociology should be more highly rewarded within the academy with promotions and salary increases than it is. In principle, I
agree, because what pure-science sociologists do is for naught if sociological knowledge is not applied to real-world problems (cf. Hays 2007). There are practical obstacles, however, to increasing the academic extrinsic rewards for public sociology. How, for instance, is the quality of public sociology to be judged? This may seem a strange query in the middle of an essay proposing standards for good public sociology, but even in the unlikely event that widespread agreement should emerge about my or any other set of standards, gauging degree of compliance with the standards would be extremely difficult. Although most of us who have our work judged by journal referees and reviewers for publishers of academic books often grouse about the quality of the reviews and sometimes feel that they lower rather than increase the quality of our work, it is hard to argue for routine rewards for work that is not in some way evaluated by members of the academy. How, for instance, are deans and promotion committees to judge the quality of op-ed pieces in regional newspapers or articles in popular magazines? Even more serious, increasing academic rewards for public sociology would almost certainly set off internecine conflicts about the relative worth of the different causes supported by different public sociologists and lead to inequality of rewards based on how popular (among sociologists and other academic evaluators of sociologists’ work) the different causes are. Imagine the dissonance that would be felt by a feminist “pro-choice” sociologist faced with a decision about whether or not to reward “pro-life” activism. Still another argument against substantial academic rewards for participating in public sociology is that they would draw too much effort and talent away from basic research and theory building (cf. Stinchcombe, 2007). Activism and applied work not based on sound evidence and theory may be not just useless but destructive, and thus it would be undesirable for a large proportion of the most capable and creative sociologists to devote most of their time to public sociology during the prime of their careers.

Regrettable though it may be, substantial participation in public sociology by early-to-mid-career persons is likely to carry large financial penalties—a sacrifice that persons with heavy family responsibilities may not, and arguably should not, be willing to make. Consider, for instance, the penalty for a person 30 years from retirement who gets an annual salary increase $4,000 less than he or she would have received had the time devoted to public sociology been spent writing journal articles instead—not an unlikely occurrence. The long-term penalty for this participation will be $120,000, though somewhat less in, say, 2008 dollars when future inflation is taken into account. In contrast, for a person only five years from retirement, the penalty would be only $20,000. The latter person might be able to recover most if not all of the penalty by earning consulting fees and nonacademic honoraria, but the former person would have little chance of recovering even a small proportion of his/her loss.
Therefore, the most active public sociologists are likely to be relatively old, to have independent sources of income, to not have dependent offspring, and/or to have unusual commitment to the causes they support. These characteristics have some potential for biasing perceptions of reality and lowering the quality of participation in public sociology, but it seems to me that the danger of such bias is relatively small in the total array of threats to good public sociology. Indeed, some of these characteristics may promote effective and appropriate participation in public sociology. For instance, the older sociologist may have reached the point of perceiving the ultimate unimportance in the long run and in the greater scheme of things of such goals that occupy so much attention of sociologists as departmental rankings and personal citation counts. This sociologist may have reached the point of wanting to feel that his or her life’s work has resulted in more than largely ignored academic publications and the ephemeral symbols of success, realizing how little anyone will care about the latter in years to come. If so, he or she is likely to be a more dedicated and single-minded practitioner of public sociology than most younger sociologists would be.

**Standard 8:** A good public sociologist will empathize with the persons he/she wishes to influence and thus will, among other things, communicate in clear, jargon-free language and avoid postures likely to be irritating to non-sociologists.

Sociologists, of all persons, should be able to “take the role of the other,” but it seems to me that some become so immersed in their intellectual and ideological in-groups that they lose their ability to perceive how they come across to outsiders. Language that may be appropriate for in-group discourse—including terms such as “hegemonic,” “subaltern,” and so forth—are likely to evoke ridicule when used in public discussions, even, and perhaps especially, in intellectual circles. The meaning of these terms can and should be expressed in more widely understood and less ideologically loaded language. Some sociological terminology has become widely understood outside of the field, “significant other” being a good example, and may appropriately be used in communicating to well-educated publics. However, a good rule of thumb is, when in doubt about the appropriateness of a term, avoid its use.

A related point is that the mantle of victimhood is not attractive when donned by persons such as tenured full professors in major universities, who are perceived by most others (correctly, in my opinion) as being among the most privileged persons in the society. Personal grievances may relate to the causes one supports with public sociology, but they are best left out of public discussions because they are unlikely to attract support for the causes and may have the opposite effect. It is wise to follow the rule, dwell as much as you like on the negative consequences of a social condition on others, but refrain from whining about its effects on you.
Standard 9: The good public sociologist will be mindful of how his/her participation in public debates, discussion, and activism will affect the reputation, public image, credibility, and respectability of sociology as a whole and will avoid statements and actions that will unnecessarily tarnish the image of the discipline.

"Unnecessarily" is a key term in the preceding statement. I certainly do not mean that a good public sociologist must gauge the appropriateness of what he or she says in terms of how many people will disagree with it or have their sensibilities offended by it. If the statement or action is essential to making an important point, the fact that some people will not like it is not relevant. However, one may question the necessity of some public statements and actions by sociologists. These include, but are not limited to, some of the bad forms of public sociology that I discuss above, such as making exaggerated and unsupported factual and causal claims and making sensationalist statements to gain media attention. The "media hound," the sociologist who seeks media attention for its own sake, is likely to be to some degree an embarrassment to the discipline as well as an ineffective public sociologist. Sociologists who engage in such high-profile behavior as appearing on television, giving radio interviews, and writing for mass circulation publications have a special responsibility to avoid reinforcing the negative stereotypes of sociology that are widespread even among highly educated and intelligent persons, both inside and outside of the academy. Who among us except the most insular and isolated within our ivory towers has not heard such terms as "soft-headed," "overly ideological," and even more derogatory terms applied to sociologists? (Finding out just how widespread these negative images of sociology are would be an appropriate task to be undertaken by the American Sociological Association.)

Although concern about reputation and the position of sociology in the hierarchy of academic prestige may strike some sociologists as unseemly, we can ill afford a lack of concern. The respectability and credibility of sociology provide not just psychic rewards to sociologists but also the resources we need to accomplish the tasks we set for ourselves, including especially effective participation in public discourse. If we lack credibility in the public arena, who will listen to us? Furthermore, credibility and similar qualities are depletable, and once lost they are not easily regained. Therefore they should not be squandered in the pursuit of short-term goals.

I disagree, however, with an argument occasionally made against public sociology, namely, that sociologists should try to protect our reputation by keeping our internal disagreements concealed from outsiders. Sociologists do not speak in one voice, and trying to create the illusion that we do strikes me as deceptive and unethical. We are a discipline in which debate and disagreement are encouraged rather than suppressed (usually), and it seems
to me that our reputation is best enhanced by putting that characteristic of
the discipline on display.

CONCLUSION

The above list of suggested standards for good public sociology is far
from being comprehensive of all of the relevant issues. I have deliberately
avoided some of those issues, both because my views on them are not well
crystallized and because there is not space is this short essay to cover them
adequately. Examples are those raised by Burawoy’s advocacy of teaching
as a form of public sociology (Burawoy 2007). How, if at all, can using the
classroom as a laboratory for developing techniques of public sociology, as
Burawoy advocates, be justified? How can this use of teaching be accom-
plished without engaging in political and ideological indoctrination, while
respecting the diversity of the ultimate values of the students, and without its
being an abuse of power and authority? Are there acceptable forms of ideo-
logical indoctrination, given that encouraging students to view reality from
a skeptical, scientific perspective might in itself be viewed as indoctrination?
These are difficult questions to which there are no simple answers, and thus
they deserve treatment in a separate essay. I will only say here that the kind
of public sociology practiced through teaching and textbook writing is so
different from the kind of public sociology that I discuss above that it needs
its own, more constraining set of standards—ones that take into account
among other things the power difference between professors and students.

I conclude with a couple of caveats. First, my suggested standards are
ideals, not rules to which any public sociologist is likely to adhere at all
times in all situations. In my practice of public sociology, I have not always
adhered to all of the standards, their being based perhaps as much on what
I now think I should have done as on what I have done. Second, although
I have included only standards about which I have strong opinions, my be-
lief in their correctness is not absolute, and I welcome dialogue with those
who think that they should be revised.

NOTES

1. I use essentially the same definition of public sociology that Burawoy (2004)
uses, except that my distinction between public sociology and policy sociology is
slightly different from his. To Burawoy, work commissioned by a client is policy
sociology (although he says that such work may eventually enter the public realm),
whereas I consider such work to be public sociology if the primary motivation for it
is to further a cause rather than to earn a fee and if the goal of the work reflects the
values of the sociologist and not just those of the client.
2. Beyond such mundane activities as clerical work and providing transportation to the polls, a sociologist’s participation in activism will almost inevitably bring his or her professional image, knowledge, and skills into play. When that happens, the distinction between sociologist and citizen tends to dissolve.

3. The distinction between ultimate and derivative values in real world situations is not quite as clear-cut as my brief discussion makes it seem. For instance, the same value may be ultimate to one person and derivative to another, and activists may become so committed to derivative values that those values become ends in themselves, in other words, ultimate values. Furthermore, there are multiple layers of derivative values, the higher order of which are linked to ultimate values by more than one judgment about empirical reality. To make things even more complicated, the object of a derivative value may relate to more than one ultimate value and have contradictory consequences for the different ultimate values of one person. For a more elaborate, but still incomplete, discussion of these issues, see Glenn (2001).

4. Occasionally, the accumulated evidence from replications and triangulation support a degree of confidence in causal conclusions that is near certainty. However, this rarely happens in sociology, and even when it does, “near certainty” is not absolute certainty.

REFERENCES


In a Social Forces symposium on public sociology, David Brady (2004:1632) argued, “For public sociology to make a real impact, we need a concrete set of proposals. We need practical steps that individual sociologists and departments can implement. . . . Without realistic means by which to achieve the goals of public sociology, I am afraid it will not make much of a difference. For public sociology to have an impact, we need a plan.” Brady’s comment highlights an ongoing problem in the emergent debate about public sociology: far more has been written about the goals of public sociology than on how to pursue it, practically.¹

This article takes up Brady’s challenge to identify “successful strategies for the public presentation of sociology” by introducing a series of concrete proposals about how to write public sociology. Those sociologists who have addressed writing for audiences beyond the discipline have tended to focus on how to write in an “accessible” manner, generally arguing that sociologists should abandon their jargon and abstractions and write in “plain English” (Gans 1989:6). This is most definitely a helpful suggestion. However, writing in plain English is only a necessary, not a sufficient, component of successful public sociology. Sociologists will more effectively engage with publics and enrich society by making our writing not just accessible, but accountable to publics. A focus on accountability will provide greater payoffs in bringing the sociological perspective to diverse audiences than a focus on accessibility alone.

To be “accountable” to publics means to be responsible to them. Exactly what that “responsibility entails” is the subject of heated debates among public sociologists. For the purposes of our chapter, it is not important whether one conceives of that responsibility as one of advocating for social
improvement (e.g., Burawoy 2005); of providing essential information, context, and/or background information to public debates (e.g., Gans 2002); or of holding fast to scientific methods and principles wherever they might lead (e.g., Boyns and Fletcher 2005; Tittle 2004). From any perspective, meeting this responsibility requires the public sociologist to suffuse his or her writing with both form and content that resonate with publics. This does not mean that sociologists should simply yield the floor to publics by responding only to their interests, however; on the contrary, one of the biggest contributions of public sociology is often to reorient the public’s focus to issues that have been neglected, or to confront publics with methodologically sound research that contradicts their cherished assumptions. In sum, accountability, however conceived, requires being responsive to one’s chosen public’s viewpoints and debates, familiar with its key influences and styles, and aware of its ideas and frames of reference.

Accessibility—artfully presenting arguments and findings using the formats, stylistic devices, and narrative strategies that resonate with their chosen public—is a key component of accountable writing, but it is not the whole of it. Besides being accessible, accountable writing must also be in dialogue with and relevant to publics. Dialogue is an exchange of knowledge in which the sociologists and publics learn from each other. To achieve dialogue, authors must mobilize knowledge of their chosen public to construct their writing in ways that acknowledge the existing conversations a public is having, engage with the terms of their debates, and open the door to further dialogue by inviting the public to take the role of friendly critic. A complement to dialogue, relevance involves making sociology useful and of interest to publics by crafting arguments in relation to those issues, voices, and ideas that suffuse the public’s life-world. Relevant sociological writing can draw publics into sociology and reorient their current conceptions by demonstrating the utility of sociology to their own lives.

We begin by laying out more concretely what “accountability” implies for the practice of writing public sociology, arguing that accountability requires three components: dialogue, relevance, and accessibility. We then present our positive program for writing public sociology, illustrating our theses with selections from exemplary works of sociology. We conclude with some thoughts about how these principles can be applied to the other interdependent forms of sociology—critical and policy sociology—and what a stronger focus on writing for multiple publics would imply for graduate education.

FROM ACCESSIBILITY TO ACCOUNTABILITY

As a discipline, sociologists have rarely taken much time to consider how to improve their writing. However, the issue has been of interest to those
invested in the idea of public sociology. Of utmost concern, it seems, is that public sociology be made “accessible” to lay publics. In a recent symposium at Boston College, for example, nearly all of the participants referred to “accessibility” as a central concern of public sociology, with Charles Derber going so far as to say that “the essence of public sociology is the quest for knowledge accessible to the public” (Burawoy et al. 2004:119). But “accessibility,” while often extolled, is rarely defined. In most cases, however, “accessibility” appears to boil down to “the avoidance of jargon.” This is a central point made by Herbert Gans in his 1989 presidential address to the American Sociological Association. In order to increase sociology’s appeal to the lay public, Gans suggests that “the abstracts of our journal articles and the summaries of our academic books [should] be written in nontechnical English . . . [and not] in ‘Sociologese;’” he further cautions that sociologists should avoid “the use of jargon, too many numbers, irrelevance, [and] academic restatements of the obvious” (Gans 1989:9).

While accessibility is doubtless necessary for successful public sociology, it is not sufficient for effective communication to publics. Conceiving of accessible writing in what are essentially stylistic terms overlooks how the obstacles to effective public sociology inhere not only in our disciplinary jargon and chosen subject matter, but in the structure of sociological writing itself, including our frames of reference and our ability to discuss our work in terms relevant to our chosen public.

Rather than focusing on “accessibility,” therefore, we argue, building on the work of Michael Burawoy (2004, 2005; Burawoy et al. 2004), that public sociology should instead aspire to be “accountable.” “Accountability” is in many respects at the core of Burawoy’s vision of public sociology in the same way that “accessibility” is central to Gans’s program. In Burawoy’s (2005:16) view, public sociology’s accountability to “designated publics” is one of the key things that distinguishes it from professional sociology, which is accountable to academic peers. Despite, or perhaps because of, its importance, Burawoy never fully explains what he means by the term; here we follow this practice by leaving open to interpretation exactly what sociology’s “responsibility” to publics is. The techniques for obtaining accountability, nonetheless, should apply to aspiring public sociologists of any stripe. We argue that accountability is achieved by making a good-faith effort to engage with chosen publics in an attitude of mutual respect, taking the position and knowledge of one’s chosen audience into consideration. For the purposes of writing, this means supplementing accessible language with accessible content, which in turn requires knowing what debates and points of reference are relevant for a chosen public. This broader approach suggests that accessibility must be paired with two additional features that enhance accountability: dialogue and relevance.
Dialogue is a central feature of Burawoy’s conception of public sociology. Public sociology, for Burawoy, is largely a matter of engaging in an exchange of ideas with existing publics by meeting them where they are; public sociology “strikes up a dialogic relation between sociologist and public in which the agenda of each is brought to the table, in which each adjusts to the other . . . [T]he goal of public sociology [is] to develop such a conversation” (Burawoy 2005:9). For Burawoy, public sociology is dialogical precisely because it takes account of the position of its public audience. Thus, the writing of public sociology, as well as its research, should engage in dialogue with publics by directly engaging with their existing conversations. This means listening to those voices that are part of those conversations, acknowledging the terms and conventions of public debates, and providing a framework for continuing the conversation.

However, dialogue is inadequate unless it is paired with relevance. Burawoy argues that relevance is the gold standard by which public sociology gains its legitimacy (2005:16), and thus a prerequisite for any fruitful dialogue. To gain legitimacy, public sociologists must work to show publics how sociology is useful to them and can contribute to their understanding of those topics and issues that concern them. We can entice publics into reading—and using—sociology by writing in a way that builds public confidence in sociology, by putting abstract findings and concepts into readily recognizable terms, and by emphasizing the strengths of the sociological approach to understanding pressing issues.

Together, dialogue and relevance are the building blocks for presenting sociological content in a way that maximizes the likelihood an audience will find it worthwhile. Further, casting findings in accessible formats, free of jargon and extraneous numbers, will make that content still more appealing. By moving from accessibility to accountability, we ensure that both the form and the content of public sociology will be truly public-minded. The remainder of this chapter sets forth some techniques for obtaining dialogue, relevance, and accessibility, illustrating each with selections from exemplary works of public sociology.

THE PROBLEM OF MULTIPLE PUBLICS

To be successful, a public sociologist must know her chosen public, including that public’s interests and what that public considers legitimate knowledge. Yet this raises the sticky question of how to define a public. The question of exactly which “public” public sociologists are supposed to be speaking to has been a source of great contention (e.g., Brady 2004; Braithwaite 2005; Burawoy et al. 2004). For our purposes here, however, it does not matter exactly which “public” public sociologists are writing
to, only that the public sociologist have some “public” in mind. The points
of reference and public debates that are relevant will vary from public to
public, and it is the public sociologist’s job to assess the terrain before be-
ning writing.2 An audience of grassroots progressive activists will have
very different points of reference from those of the “thin, passive, and
national” public that reads the New York Times (Burawoy et al. 2004:104),
and still different points of reference from an audience of legal and criminal
justice professionals (Uggen and Inderbitzen 2006). What matters then is
not which public one is writing for, but that one understands what exist-
ing debates and points of reference inform discussion among one’s chosen
public. It is these voices and points of reference that public sociologists
must acknowledge as they write; it is these debates that provide the starting
point for dialogue.

**DIALOGUE**

Writing in dialogue requires knowledge of a debate’s points of reference,
as well as to the debate’s terms, issues, and conventions. On this count,
compared to public sociologists, professional sociologists have it easy. Pro-
fessional sociology speaks to a well-defined audience of other sociologists
divided into a number of specialized subdisciplines. The referents for pro-
fessional sociology are likewise delimited, consisting mainly of sociological
books, articles in professional journals, and professional conference presenta-
tions familiar (or ostensibly familiar) to other members of the discipline.
The debates among these scholars are also reasonably bounded and cast
in terms of theoretical and empirical debates made familiar to sociologists
through graduate education and other processes of professionalization.

Public sociologists, by contrast, often find themselves in unfamiliar
terrain when they venture beyond the academy. To avoid forcing the lay
public to participate in the conversations of professional sociologists, pub-
lic sociologists must cast a wider net for points of reference, identify the
terms of public rather than professional debates, and present findings and
describe methods in such as way as to promote further dialogue. In practice,
this means engaging with, and reviewing, a diverse set of “literatures,” in-
cluding a variety of voices from inside and outside academia, and a variety
of media, from written to oral to visual communication. In brief, any influ-
ential body of thought that one’s chosen public is producing or consum-
ing is potentially an important literature to review. Similarly, it may mean
engaging in debates with terms that differ from those familiar within the
discipline. Public debates and scholarly debates do not always align, either
in their terms or in the questions they ask; public sociology must speak to
the former rather than the latter. Finally, public sociology should be written
in a way that encourages further dialogue. This means presenting data and methods with sufficient transparency that one’s chosen public can readily assess the strengths and limitations of one’s argument, with an eye toward continuing the discussion.

**Writing in Dialogue with Public Perspectives: Looking beyond the Academy**

Engaging with existing dialogues will of necessity lead public sociologists into uncharted waters and require them to address voices from beyond sociology, and indeed from beyond the academy. If important voices in a debate hail from cable news networks, those voices ought to be recognized. If they come from organizers or everyday people on the street, those voices ought similarly to be acknowledged by the public sociologist. Public sociology requires that the sociologist cast a wide net to capture the many important voices that input into a given debate. One cannot dialogue with a public without acknowledging and engaging the multiple arguments that shape the ongoing conversation.

In their journal article about school shootings, Michael Kimmel and Matthew Mahler (2003) nicely demonstrate engagement with a variety of non-academic participants in a public debate where the sociological perspective is desperately needed. They open the article by describing a number of widely used explanations for school shootings, including psychological explanations, violence in the media, and bad parenting. In so doing, they address some of the proponents of these explanations, including celebrities, politicians, and the shooters themselves. For example, they write:

The concern over school shootings has prompted intense national debate, in recent years, over who or what is to blame. One need not look hard to find any number of “experts” who are willing to weigh in on the issue. Yet despite the legion of political and scientific commentaries on school shootings, these voices have all singularly and spectacularly missed the point.

At the vanguard of the debates have been politicians. Some have argued that Goth music, Marilyn Manson, and violent video games are the causes of school shootings. Then-President Clinton argued that it might be the Internet; Newt Gingrich credited the 1960s; and Tom DeLay blamed daycare, the teaching of evolution, and “working mothers who take birth control pills.” Political pundits and media commentators also have offered a host of possible explanations, of which one of the more popular answers has been violence in the media. “Parents don’t realize that taking four-year-olds to *True Lies*—a fun movie for adults but excessively violent—is poison to their brain,” notes Michael Gurian. (Kimmel and Mahler 2003:1441)
By looking to voices beyond the academy, Kimmel and Mahler are able to give readers a point of reference through which to enter the article and then be exposed to the sociological contribution held within it. It is worth noting that Kimmel and Mahler address these voices in order to refute them, showing that this strategy need not lead to the “pandering” pathology characteristic of some public sociology (Burawoy 2005). By describing commonly held beliefs about what causes school shootings, Kimmel and Mahler enter into current public debates; by then pointing to the flaws in these beliefs, they are able to use the sociological toolbox to improve the lay reader’s understanding of issues of public importance.

Addressing the relevant interlocutors in public debates will sometimes mean reviewing “literatures” that are not, strictly speaking, literature: television, movies, music, radio, and so forth. Patricia Hill Collins’s book *Black Feminist Thought* (2000:16) provides an excellent example of this technique:

For example, rap singer Sister Souljah’s music as well as her autobiography *No Disrespect* certainly can be seen as contributing to Black feminist thought as critical social theory. Despite her uncritical acceptance of a masculinist Black nationalist ideology, Souljah is deeply concerned with issues of Black women’s oppression, and offers an important perspective on contemporary urban culture. Yet while young Black women listened to Souljah’s music and thought about her ideas, Souljah’s work has been dismissed within feminist classrooms in academia as being “nonfeminist.” Without tapping these nontraditional sources, much of the Black women’s intellectual tradition would remain “not known, and hence not believed in.”

Here, Collins includes the rap music of Sister Souljah as a relevant “literature” to the discussion of black feminism because it is an important, influential voice in the public debate about how to understand the lives of black women. In so doing, she makes her work both more accessible and relevant to her public, and more comprehensive in its scope.

Collins’s work is exemplary as a model of public sociology, in this example and elsewhere, in that she is an avid proponent of incorporating public conversations into sociological work and using sociology to contribute to public debates. In the preface to the first edition of *Black Feminist Thought*, Collins argues against only incorporating sociological voices and theory into her argument. Instead, she makes a case for including a wide range of voices in a varied set of styles. She argues that including these voices offers a necessary mixture of viewpoints and highlights the ability of all black women—from contemporary academics to nineteenth-century slaves—to contribute to black feminist thought. By incorporating ideas from a wide range of black women, Collins not only “highlights the diversity, richness, and power of Black women’s ideas” (2000:viii), she also enters into and
makes a contribution to a conversation black women were already having. By including not only written literatures but also music, art, oral histories, and speeches, her work achieves a fullness and relevance that it would not have otherwise.

Writing in Dialogue with Existing Conversations: Engaging with the Terms of Public Debates

Just as public sociologists should incorporate a wide variety of public voices into their text as a way to create dialogue, they should also engage with public debates as they are, not as sociologists might wish them to be. Despite their apparent similarities, many academic debates have terms and conventions that differ greatly from those of the public debate. But speaking to the terms of public debates is essential to dialogue because it provides lay readers with a point of access that they can immediately grasp. At the same time, it provides an opportunity to reorient those debates by bringing in a sociological perspective or presenting sociological research that challenges publicly accepted knowledge.

Andrew Greeley’s (1994) essay in The New York Times Magazine offers an excellent example of contributing to public debates. Greeley’s essay addresses the question of why American Catholics, who are notorious for disagreeing with the church hierarchy, continue to affiliate with Catholicism. While there is a vigorous debate in the sociology of religion about the factors that contribute to denominational commitment and apostasy, Greeley does not present his essay in terms of that debate. Instead, he chooses to approach the question from the terms of the public debate:

[T]he question persists. In its most naked form it demands to know, “How can someone who is intelligent and well educated continue to be a Roman Catholic in these times?” The question is not a new one. It has been asked by anti-Catholic nativists for 150 years. Often the latent subtext is, “How can anyone who is intelligent and well educated believe in any religion, especially Catholicism?” (Greeley 1994:38)

The question Greeley poses casts the issue of Catholic retention in terms of the basic sanity and intelligence of Catholics—the terms on which his public (the educated, probably agnostic general public of New York Times readers) sees the debate. The fact that Greeley does not bring up the terms of the sociological debate (for example, to what extent the church may be “strict”) is an asset here. Having engaged his audience on the terms of the public debate, he can give his sociological answer: it is the power of narrative and heritage that keeps them in the church. Greeley’s attention to the terrain of public debates allows him to tell his story in a way that is meaningful to his audience, and therefore truly dialogical.
Writing as Invitation to Further Dialogue: Providing Transparency

Dialogue does not stop with the sociologist’s contribution, since publics will hopefully react to public sociology through approbation or constructive criticism. Public sociology should lay the groundwork for the continuation of dialogue by presenting findings in ways that maximize transparency about data and methods such that the chosen public can assess the validity and applicability of the sociologist’s contribution. In short, through clear explanations of methods and findings, public sociology should invite the reader to adopt the role of friendly critic, with an eye toward improving both public debate and future research.

While transparency is standard practice in professional sociology, public sociologists should take particular care to present data that illustrates the full contours of the issue being explored, and enough information about methods to suggest the strengths and limitations of the argument put forward. There are a number of ways to achieve these goals. The most extreme form can be seen in Bob Blauner’s *Black Lives, White Lives* (1989), which includes interview transcripts in their entirety. Rather than incorporating data and analysis in one narrative, he offers his analysis separately in introductions and the conclusion. By using this strategy, Blauner allows his readers to develop their own interpretations of his research independently, facilitating future dialogue. While Blauner’s approach is extreme (and in many respects contradicts other features of public sociology, such as the use of familiar narrative and conventions, discussed below), the principle behind it could be applied in a more moderate form, opening the door to further dialogue with the audience.

Besides presenting data in a way to let publics evaluate it themselves, public sociologists can also encourage dialogue by describing their methods clearly and by demonstrating an openness to public feedback. These two techniques are demonstrated in an exemplary fashion in Arlie Hochschild’s *The Second Shift* (1997). Hochschild is also extremely transparent about her methods, and literally walks her audience through the research process as she follows her subjects into the home. In so doing, she allows her chosen public to see exactly how she came to her conclusions, and to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of her argument. Furthermore, Hochschild writes much of her book as a dialogue between herself and her interviewees, demonstrating a desire for dialogue. For example, in her description of her methods, she writes:

We asked members of working couples raising children under six and working full time jobs if they would be willing to talk to us in greater depth. Interviewed from 1980 through 1988, these couples, their neighbors and friends, their children’s teachers, daycare workers and baby-sitters, form the heart of this book.

When we called them, a number of baby-sitters replied as one woman did, “You’re interviewing us? Good. We’re human too.” Or another, “I’m glad you
consider what we do work. A lot of people don’t.” As it turned out, many day-
care workers were themselves juggling two jobs and small children, and so we
talked to them about that, too. (Hochschild 1997:5)

Here, she shows a willingness to listen closely to her interviewees and how
this listening helped improve her methodology. This willingness to engage
in dialogue invites further conversations.

**RELEVANCE**

Non-sociologists need to be enticed into reading sociology; consequently,
public sociology must be written in a way that shows that sociology is
*relevant* to its chosen public. Publics read books and articles because they
are engaged in public debates of interest or importance to them. They read
to identify information that helps them to understand issues relevant to
these debates, and they seek to glean knowledge from their reading that
will enable them to contribute to these public debates. Unlike professional
sociologists, publics are not necessarily already convinced that the socio-
logical perspective will be particularly helpful to them as they engage in
these public debates (cf. Scott 2005). The key question in the lay reader’s
mind is not, “why this particular study,” but “why sociology *at all*?” In a
world of competing voices and perspectives, publics must be convinced to
spend their time reading sociological writing by highlighting its *relevance*
to that public.

Relevant writing has two primary characteristics. First, it *builds public con-
fidence in sociology* by emphasizing the utility of the sociological perspective.
Rather than heavily critique past research as is done in professional sociol-
ogy, relevant public sociology will construct public confidence in the value
of sociology by focusing on how a work builds on past sociological work,
or how the sociological perspective improves our understanding of a given
social phenomenon. Second, it offers *concrete examples of abstract concepts*.
Sociological knowledge is relevant to publics when presented in a way so
as to allow the reader to relate abstract concepts and figures to their lives in
a concrete, everyday manner.

**Building Public Confidence in Sociology**

Public sociologists should not assume that their public is already con-
vinced of the virtues of the sociological perspective. Many Americans see
social concerns, such as poverty or crime, in purely individual terms. Part
of the challenge of speaking to these publics is to get them to see the world
in social terms. Other groups, such as radical activists, may already have
a sociological imagination, but may nevertheless be skeptical of the value of academic knowledge to their activist concerns. Part of the challenge of speaking to these publics is to convince them of the virtues of academic knowledge. Thus, a central difference between professional sociology and public sociology is that the latter is also frequently a project of building public confidence in the value of sociology. While professional (as well as critical and, to a lesser extent, policy) sociology must of necessity adopt a largely critical stance toward existing sociological work, public sociology should instead emphasize how it builds on past work and increases public knowledge of a given topic.

Wade Clark Roof’s (1993) book *A Generation of Seekers*, which looks at the spiritual practices of the Baby Boom generation, illustrates this “critique less, build more” approach very well. Rather than dwelling on flaws in previous scholarship, Roof portrays his work as building upon previous work. In his introduction, he writes:

Many years ago sociologist Karl Mannheim wrote about generations and their importance in bringing about social change. . . . [T]he years of youth and early adulthood are a critical period for learning about the larger society; memories arising out of the intersection of personal and national history during these years live on in our lives. Thus because they have quite differing pasts, the generations see and act toward the world differently: A Depression generation is frugal, a Vietnam generation is wary of war.

Timing is right for a look at the boomers. The oldest members of the generation are now in their forties, many of them are in their mid-to late thirties. Today, they are reshaping our national life. (Roof 1993:3)

Rather than critiquing sociologists for failing to address generational aspects in their previous work, Roof instead leaves the critical moment aside and frames his work as building on Mannheim, posing new questions and bringing this approach to a broader audience.

Roof also helps to build public confidence in the value of sociology by speaking positively about previous sociological work. In addition to identifying Mannheim as a sociologist in the above quote, Roof (1993:6–7) refers a few pages later to one of the seminal works of sociology of the period:

Hence our concerns are similar to those of Robert Bellah and his associates in *Habits of the Heart*. These commentators concentrate primarily on white, middle-class Americans, looking at their individualism and struggles to commit themselves across broad sectors of personal and public life. . . . We have been inspired by their work, yet our focus differs in three important ways: One, we look only at religion and spirituality and thus are more concerned with what is happening within this particular realm. Two, by examining a broad cross-section of the boomer population, we explore more the diversity, the strains, and tensions surrounding religious belief and practice in America.
today. Three, given our concern with generations, we are interested in how boomers may be transforming religious and spiritual life.

While Roof engages in some product differentiation, his tone is overall highly positive and not critical. Indeed, the take-home from this passage is clearly one of building on the Habits team’s efforts. The distinctions he makes suggest his work has a different focus without implying that Habits is a flawed book. In saying that his book is “inspired” by Habits, moreover, Roof builds the “sociological brand” by suggesting other exemplary works of sociology to his readership. In so doing, he encourages his public to see sociological writing as relevant to their own lives and concerns.

Rendering the Abstract Concrete

Sociological thought tends toward abstraction. Many of its categories, measures, methods, and ideas are complex and opaque to non-professionals. Public sociology can only be made relevant and useful to publics when they can readily grasp the concepts that animate sociological thought. Consequently, one of the challenges of public sociology is to translate our findings into terms that are instantly meaningful to our chosen publics.3

This task is accomplished admirably by Christopher Jencks (2004:35) in an American Prospect article on low-wage jobs. In his first paragraph, Jencks writes:

When America’s most recent economic boom ended in 2001, the economy was turning out $7 trillion worth of consumer goods and services a year—enough to provide every man, woman and child with almost $25,000 worth of food, housing, transportation, medical care and other things every year. If all that stuff had been divided equally, the typical American household, which now has three members, would have gotten about $75,000 worth. Yet as we see in this issue of the Prospect, based on new research by the Russell Sage and Rockefeller foundations, a lot of Americans had to scrape by on far less than that. Almost one American worker in five reported having been paid less than $8 an hour in 2001. That works out to less than $17,000 a year even if you work full time. And many low-wage workers earned considerably less than $17,000 because they were unemployed for part of the year, worked less than 40 hours a week or earned less than $8 an hour.

Here, Jencks successfully takes familiar but somewhat inaccessible figures and makes them instantly meaningful by converting them into an immediately recognizable metric: annual income. The size of the American economy ($7 trillion) becomes $75,000 a year per family; low wages ($8 an hour) become $17,000 a year per worker. Put in these terms, the figures
become much more personally accessible, thereby making it instantly clear why the statistics matter.

Besides translating inaccessible findings, Jencks translates somewhat abstract concepts into concrete, immediately meaningful phrases. For example, following a comparison of income inequality in the United States and Europe, he summarizes the concept of “economic inequality,” by asking, “So why do ordinary American workers get to keep less of what they produce than ordinary workers in other rich countries?” (Jencks 2004:36). Again, an abstract concept becomes immediately meaningful through choice of phrasing. In making his data and ideas meaningful in this way, Jencks goes a long way to making them relevant to his public.

ACCESSIBILITY

At a minimum, public sociology should, as many have emphasized, avoid the use of sociological jargon, excessive statistics, and untranslated theorizing. However, the form of public sociology can be still further improved by making use of public forms and conventions of writing. By using the narrative conventions and stylistic devices publics are used to consuming, sociologists reduce the obstacles of form that might otherwise deter lay readers. We suggest two in particular: adopting popular forms such as vignettes, and subordinating external references to allow the narrative to flow unimpeded.

Writing in the Form Your Public Reads

Different types of sociology have characteristic formats. The paradigmatic form of professional sociology is the journal article, which—in separate sections—provides a review of previous research, an exposition of methods, and a presentation of research findings. Policy sociology, likewise, is written in the genre of a policy paper, with an executive summary and an explicit set of recommendations (e.g., Young and Quinn 2002). Critical sociology, by virtue of its normative focus, often takes the format of a philosophical rumination (e.g., Bellah et al. 1985:297–307). Like the other three forms of sociology, public sociology should be written in a style that its audience reads, whatever that may be. Sociological contributions written in a form legible to the public are more likely to seem relevant to that public. This means that the public sociologist must take care to identify the appropriate genre for her audience, and should consider incorporating stylistic aspects from those literatures into her own writing.

To emphasize relevance to publics and increase accessibility, public sociologists should write using stylistic devices similar to those used in other texts one’s public reads. An example of someone who does this well is
Hung Cam Thai (2003). Thai presents his research findings in a way that draws upon the style of newspaper articles, using a vignette in his first paragraph to hook the reader:

Men and women like Mihn and Thanh have dreams, but their dreams clash. He wants the best of tradition and she wants the best of modernity. He believes the respect he has been searching for did not arrive with him when he migrated to the United States almost 20 years ago, but instead was left back safely in Vietnam. She feels that the marital respect she needs is waiting for her in the United States and that she will get it when she joins him through marriage migration. Minh, 37, represents one of the more than two million Viet Kieus, or Vietnamese people living overseas, who make up an aging diaspora that largely began in the mid-1970s, after the postwar years. He is also one of the over a million Viet Kieus who returned to visit family and friends during the year 2000, a dramatic increase from the 160,000 who did so in 1993. Thanh, 32, will soon join Minh as one of the over 200,000 women and men worldwide who come to the United States each year through marriage migration, the number one mechanism for contemporary legal migration to the United States. (Thai 2003:275)

Once Thai has hooked the reader with a story about a couple’s dreams for marriage, he brings in previous studies that emphasize that this Vietnamese couple is part of a much broader social trend. The vignette mimics a form of journalistic writing familiar to a wide variety of publics and gives readers a concrete, human example of an issue that might otherwise seem distant and abstract. By beginning his narrative with a vignette from his research, Thai both contextualizes his references and makes his point immediately meaningful to his audience, thereby improving both his work’s meaning and relevance to his audience.4

Clearing the Way for Narrative

Publics rarely read texts chock full of citations and so, although one needs to acknowledge outside voices to create dialogue, references should not be allowed to overwhelm the narrative. By incorporating references throughout the text, public sociologists can enhance their ability to tell a coherent and compelling story from beginning to end of their book or article, while still providing their readers with multiple points of entrée into the text and context for their findings.

In his book, One Nation After All, Alan Wolfe (1999) skillfully weaves information about the larger context of his findings in with his own data. He subordinates his literature references to his narrative, so that his narrative reads fluidly and one hardly notices when he is incorporating references to other studies. For example, in his chapter on middle-class Americans
and parenting, where he argues that worries about dangers facing their children make parents more conservative than they otherwise would be, Wolfe writes:

That does not mean, of course, that teenage sex is a nonissue for middle-class American parents; 84 percent of the American people think that teenage pregnancy is a serious problem. A feeling that parents have lost control over their children’s sexuality is one of the deepest currents in American public opinion. . . . Sociologist Kristin Luker, studying sexual behavior, could just as easily be discussing drugs and violence when she writes, “What parents . . . seem to want is some measure of control over how their children behave in the world of sexual freedom that opened up in the 1970s.” And control is precisely what most Americans think they may never obtain. (Wolfe 1999:120)

Throughout the book, as in this quote, Wolfe uses references to others’ data primarily as a means to support or expand the narrative he is telling about his own research findings. Several subtle techniques help to make his writing accessible, and even compelling, to lay readers. First, Wolfe removes his citations to the rear of the book. Citations are not even noted within the body of the text, but instead are referenced by line and page number at the rear. While frustrating to social scientists, for lay readers, the lack of footnoting or citations allows for the uninterrupted flow of the narrative and allows them to forget that they are reading an “academic” book. But more important than this layout trick, the studies he cites are interspersed among his own findings, brought in at times to highlight or provide context to his overall argument. In the quote above, for instance, Wolfe brings references to other studies in almost offhandedly; the almost subliminal nature of the presentation allows the narrative to flow unabated, and important information is presented in the context where it is most meaningful. Finally, and relatedly, Wolfe spreads the moments when he cites existing literature throughout the book. As a result, there is no imposing block of literature to wade through in order to get to the author’s argument, as there would be in a work of professional sociology; the two are seamlessly interwoven. By bringing in data as context and by smoothly weaving these references into his explanation of his own findings, Wolfe is able to let his narrative about his research shine and does not subordinate it to a summary of literatures. In this way, he is able to keep his writing engaging as well as focused on how it is relevant to his chosen public.

IMPLICATIONS FOR GRADUATE EDUCATION

The above discussion is relevant for all sociologists interested in writing for publics beyond the discipline. However, it is perhaps most relevant for
those just entering the field—graduate students. Our discussion suggests both that greater attention must be paid to writing generally, and to writing for public audiences more specifically, in programs of graduate education.

Currently, there is a lamentable lack of attention to writing in graduate curricula. The focus of most doctoral programs is, as it should be, on equipping students with the tools and analytic skills necessary to conduct research (Brint 2005). Unfortunately, this has meant that teaching students how to communicate effectively is often overlooked entirely. To the extent that students are taught how to write at all, they are taught how to write professional sociology for the consumption of professional sociologists. Worse, this teaching is often left implicit, and students are expected to learn through osmosis by aping the format of journal articles. Small wonder that sociologists have so frequently been excoriated for their awful writing skills (Cowley 1956!)

This inattention to effective communication represents a potentially fatal obstacle to public sociology. As this form develops, and the number of publics sociologists attempt to speak to expands, the more important it will become for graduate curricula to seriously grapple with the problem of writing for multiple audiences. At a minimum, this will mean explicitly discussing the principles of effective writing, and highlighting that the way sociologists write for each other cannot simply be reproduced when writing for non-sociologists.

The problem of writing is infinitely more complex for reflexive forms of sociology—public and critical—than it is for the instrumental forms. Professional and policy sociology have well defined audiences whose referents and interests are clearly established. Consequently, they also have well defined genres with clear formal conventions: the policy paper and the professional book and journal article. Indeed, the fact that so much teaching about writing can be left implicit rests on the regular interaction (through coursework and the research process) students and their advisors have with these familiar genres.

As Burawoy (2005:7) notes, however, public sociology speaks to multiple publics. This implies a multiplicity of genres. For public sociology, learning how to define the public one hopes to reach and to learn their referents and conventions becomes a central concern. Critical sociology, the fourth form Burawoy identifies, faces a similar problem. Although Burawoy (2005:16) states that critical sociology must be accountable to “critical intellectuals,” in reality—as a moral and reflexive criticism of intellectual groundings—it must be aimed at all intellectuals. (After all, what good is it for critical sociology only to persuade other critical intellectuals? The goal is to persuade all intellectuals to reconsider their normative commitments.) Burawoy himself acknowledges that critical sociology’s reference base must “transcend disciplinary boundaries.” But here, too, this implies a multiplicit-
ity of genres and conventions to which one needs to speak, since disciplinary writing conventions and referents can vary widely.

For public sociology to succeed, sociology departments must focus greater attention on writing generally, and on writing for multiple audiences. The principles outlined in this chapter represent a starting point for developing courses or workshops in effective communication. Learning to define one’s audience, determining the referents that will make one’s work relevant to that audience, and the conventions that make one’s work accessible to that audience should be core components of these efforts. Following Burawoy’s (2005) suggestion to develop a “sociology of publics” can only enhance the potential that graduate writing courses hold for advancing the project of public sociology.

CONCLUSION

Public sociologists have frequently called for sociological writing to be accessible, generally arguing that this means writing in “plain English” (Gans 1989). This is most definitely true, but writing in plain English is only a necessary, not a sufficient, component of accessibility. Our goal instead should be to write accountably for our chosen public. We have argued that accountability is, in turn, fundamentally about engaging with a designated public through dialogue, relevance, and accessibility.

We believe that the proposals we have presented in this chapter should apply to public sociological writing irrespective of the particular approach to public sociology that one takes. Burawoy’s approach is often understood as a significant departure from the more conventional approach to public sociology associated with Gans (see, e.g., Hausknecht 2002), a divide Burawoy characterizes as one of “traditional” versus “organic” forms of public sociology (2005:7). Despite the divergence of goals and vision of these two forms, in the practice of writing the distinctions between approaches evaporate, as both approaches require accessibility, accountability, dialogue, and relevance in order to successfully communicate with publics. To obtain these goals, public sociologists must reassess the purpose and the form of their writings, and cast a broader net for relevant voices with whom to engage.

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NOTES

Authors are listed in alphabetical order; work on the chapter was divided equally.

1. This seems to be particularly true for the various symposia on and special issues of journals devoted to public sociology. See, for example, the June 2004 issue of Social Forces 82(4) and the June 2005 issue of the British Journal of Sociology 56(3).

2. There is a great need for a “sociology of publics” that can assist public sociologists in this endeavor. Due to space limitations, however, we are unable to discuss this here.

3. This does not mean “dumbing down” sociology. As John Scott (2005) notes, there is a risk of oversimplifying sociological concepts in a manner that make them seem like academic restatements of the obvious. The trick for public sociology is to cast findings in ways that retain the subtlety and nuance of the concepts while making those conceptual nuances evident to the public.

4. Different audiences are likely to find different stylistic techniques particularly appealing. Executive summaries, side boxes, pamphlets, and bullet points are other familiar techniques that public sociologists might use depending on their public. As with literature selection, defining and knowing one’s public is a crucial first step to realizing the benefits of this writing strategy.

REFERENCES


The tremendous enthusiasm with which the idea of public sociology has been embraced is a positive development. It indicates that many sociologists are aware that their discipline is not simply “academic” and that the kinds of questions they engage with require a wider conversation with a wider non-professional public. Some proponents of public sociology also aspire to embrace the role of a socially aware intellectual. Back in the early sixties C. Wright Mills reminded us that the “intellectual ought to be the moral conscience of his society.” Of course sociologists and intellectuals do not all share the same philosophy and political outlook. They live for different ideas. But despite differences, which are sometimes bitter and far-reaching—intellectuals share a common desire to influence the world. In particular they possess a common commitment to function as the critical voice for the truth as they see it. Accordingly they are partisans of the truth. C. Wright Mills argued that “in the first instance the politics of the intellectual are ‘the politics of truth.’” He took the view that through the pursuit of the truth, the intellectual held the powers that be to account. “Whatever else the intellectual may be, surely he is among those who ask serious questions, and, if he is a political intellectual, he asks his questions of those with power” (Mills 1963a:238).

In some cases the turn toward public sociology may be motivated by narrow professional ambitions. Sometimes it seems that the embrace of “public sociology” is motivated by the wrong motive—the imperative to be seen to be “relevant.” This orientation is to some extent expressed through the attempt to institutionalize public sociology. Such an initiative may encourage public sociology to become a caricature of itself. Perhaps it is best to think of public sociology as what we do rather than as a subject to
be institutionalized. The transformation of public sociology into a subject to be studied risks turning it into an exercise in academic credentialism rather than a contribution to the development of the public sphere. One of the most important justifications for public sociology is the contribution it can potentially make to the emergence of a more intellectually oriented public sphere. Such a contribution requires that sociology evolve through a wider engagement with public life in order to assist the influence of the sociological imagination in society. Indeed as this essay argues, one of the main purposes of public sociology has to be its commitment to rising to the challenge of recapturing the sociological imagination.

Michael Burawoy (2005) has made an important contribution by providing a framework for conceptualizing the division of sociological labor between what he calls professional, critical, policy, and public sociologies. However, these conceptual distinctions aside, it is important to note that the sociological imagination has always been open to engagement with a wider public and has always been critical. Indeed the very fact that we now talk about public sociology may suggest that the relationship between sociologists and their audience requires to be made more self-conscious. As Burawoy (2005:17) argues, public sociology justifies itself “on the basis of relevance.” But relevance is a very tricky concept. In current times relevance is often used as a term that celebrates common sense and in that sense encourages an uncritical view of life as it is. In education the curriculum of relevance often privileges the affirmation of people’s immediate experience and deprecates the more abstract and conceptual dialogue that is required to capture complex reality. Of course Burawoy (2005:17) is aware of this problem and he warns of the “danger that public sociology speak down to its publics.” Flattering “ordinary folk” and speaking down to them often go hand in hand when sociologists become more concerned with connecting than with the content of their ideas. Such an approach is motivated by the conviction that people will feel alienated unless they engage with experiences that are deemed to be directly relevant to their lives and linked to their personal experiences. But inevitably this emphasis on relevance exists in a state of permanent tension with the acquisition of sociological knowledge and of an understanding of the way that society works. Powerful ideas often have an abstract character and are developed through the assimilation of a range of conflicting experiences. That is why they often appear so much at odds with everyday common sense and with the insights gained through personal experience. Acquiring sociological knowledge can not be confined to the process of reflecting on an individual’s story of life. It also requires a form of education that actually distances people from the immediate and everyday so as to stimulate the mind to imagine other possibilities. Unfortunately there is no direct route from personal emotions to objective knowledge and we all need to be confronted with worlds that are “irrelevant” to our lives.
The relevance of public sociology today can be demonstrated through its ability to encourage its audience to discuss and debate issues that both transcend individual experience and possess a capacity to bind people together in a common conversation. I believe that the key challenge it faces is to assist the recovery of the public’s sociological imagination. This problem will be addressed in section 2. But before dealing with this problem it is worth reflecting on current thinking about the public.

**THE PUBLIC**

Those engaged in the pursuit of public sociology can not take the focus of their engagement to be self-evident. The public is itself subject to important cultural and historical variations and its meaning is far from self-evident. Habermas’s (1991) discussion of the transformation of the public sphere points not only to national and cultural variations but also to important differences in the way that the public is conceptualized and the manner in which it asserts itself. As Habermas remind us it was not until the late eighteenth century that public opinion came to constitute an important role in the political and social life of France and Britain. Consequently in Britain there was a growing belief that the public could arrive at “a considered opinion” through “education and information.” The shift from “common opinion” to “public opinion” was symptomatic of the growing valuation of the latter (Habermas 1991:66). However as the public sphere began to encompass people without property the dominant elites began to feel uncomfortable with the influence of this new force. Tensions in the public sphere acquired intensity and gradually the ruling elites began to experience the enlargement of the public as an intimidating force. It is at this point that anti-mass theories begin to raise anxiety about the “yoke of public opinion” or the “tyranny of public opinion.” More benevolent conservative thinkers adopted the view that since the public could not always be counted on to do what was in everyone’s interest it needed to be steered by enlightened leaders.

Within the Anglo-American social sciences, from the late nineteenth century onward the negative reaction to mass movements is palpable. Writers on both sides of the Atlantic emphasized the volatility of the urban mob, its vulnerability to manipulation by the media, and its ultimate destructiveness. As I note elsewhere there was a powerful elitist consensus that transcended the political divide: for conservative writers, the entry of the masses into social and political life represented a danger to civilized society, whereas for those from a liberal/leftist perspective the threat was to democracy (Furedi 1994:112–115). Although these sentiments were substantially modified in the twentieth century, they continued to exercise a formidable
influence on the conceptualization of the public. In current times this orientation toward the public assumes that the public (a) is rarely capable of grasping its own interest, and (b) is easily swayed through the manipulation of its irrational emotions by the media or other cultural influences.

Despite the rhetorical valuation of the public and of its opinion, cynicism toward “ordinary” folk has acquired an unprecedented force. As in the past, such elitist attitudes are not confined to one section of the political divide. Traditional conservative anti-mass sentiment coexists with so-called cosmopolitan leftist contempt for the silly people who voted for George W. Bush. Whenever I travel to the United States I meet fellow sociologists who are convinced that the problem with “the people” is that they do not know what’s in their best interest. During the past two decades this sentiment has gained influence among liberal and left-wing activists and thinkers.

“People getting their fundamental interests wrong is what American political life is all about,” notes Thomas Frank in his best seller *What’s the Matter with America*. Otherwise Frank argues, how could they possibly vote for the Republicans (Frank 2004:1). This diagnosis of the problem is symptomatic of the sort of “intellectual vanguardism” that Burawoy hinted at when he warned of the danger of speaking down to the public (2005:17). Unfortunately such patronizing assumptions about ordinary folk are widespread in contemporary political discourse—and sociologists are not immune to its influence.

The belief that people are too simple to understand the complexities of public life was also widely expressed during the heated exchanges that surrounded the recent referenda on the European Union (EU) in France and Holland. Margot Wallström, vice president of the EU, commented on her blog that because the constitution is a “complex issue to vote on” it can confuse many citizens and lead them to “use a referendum to answer a question that was not put to them” (Furedi 2005). Whatever the rights and wrongs of the populist rejection of the EU treaty, the manner in which the No campaign was disparaged by professional politicians betrays a powerful anti-democratic temper. It is not just in the EU where the political elites express their disappointment with a public it does not understand through disparaging the electorate. In the United States, this sentiment has been systematically articulated by Democratic Party activists, who can not understand why many blue collar workers vote for Republicans. According to George Lakoff, one of the most influential thinkers influencing the liberal wing of the Democrats, “people do not necessarily vote in their self-interest” (Lakoff 2004:11).

The belief that the public is too simplistic or too gullible has led some Democratic Party activists to blame the defeat of their presidential candidate in two successive elections on the stupidity of the people. One liberal activist, Michael Gronewalter, states that “civility and intelligent dialogue
are useful tools among intelligent people” but are inappropriate for engaging with the public. He argues:

I really think the problem is that we liberals are in general far more intelligent, well reasoned and educated and will go to astonishingly great lengths to convince people of the integrity and validity of our fair and well thought out arguments. The audience, in case anyone has been paying attention, isn’t always getting it! I suspect the problem is not the speaker—it is most of the audience. (Gronewalter 2002)

This point was reinforced by Arianna Huffington. “Thanks to the Bush campaign’s unremitting fear-mongering, millions of voters are reacting not with their linear and logical left brain but with their lizard brain and their more emotional right brain,” she observed (Huffington 2004). The audience, which is another name for the public, is implicitly condemned for not getting the incredibly sophisticated message articulated by very clever political activists. “Do you feel like you live in a nation of idiots?” asks the consummate cynic, Michael Moore (2001:87), knowing that his very educated readers will share his contempt for his moral inferiors.

In the United States, the Left’s apprehension with the growing influence of the so-called Religious Right is often motivated by the suspicion that it finds it difficult to connect with the emotional and cultural life of ordinary folk. But instead of coming to terms with the challenge of overcoming this barrier, it prefers to dwell on the irrationalism of those who can be so easily swayed by the Religious Right. Sometimes the Left’s denunciation of the Religious Right sounds like a critique of the mental capacity of significant sections of the electorate. According to one Democratic Party activist, the American public has become a sort of “Fast Food Electorate” and it is as if “Americans suffer collectively from a plague of Attention Deficit Disorder.” In the EU this recalcitrant public is dismissed as a bunch of backward looking xenophobes. After the rejection of the EU treaty by the French and the Dutch electorate, the UK Liberal Democratic member of the European Parliament, Andrew Duff, characterized the opponents of the EU constitution as neither liberal nor democratic. “The rejectionists are an odd bunch of racists, xenophobes, nationalists, communists, disappointed centre-left and the generally pissed-off,” he told Parliament Magazine (2005).

Throughout history the political elites have tended to be anxious and sometimes hostile to public opinion. Most of the classical studies of public opinion—many written from a liberal perspective—tend to be negative about their subject matter. Often it is the liberal disappointment with the inability of the people to do what it is in their interest that shapes the discussion of public opinion. Not surprisingly public opinion is invariably treated as a “problem.” The American commentator Walter Lippman’s 1922 study, Public Opinion, provides the classic statement. He warns that the proportion
of the electorate that is “absolutely illiterate” is much larger than we suspect
and that these people who are “mentally children or barbarians” are natural
targets of manipulators (Lippman 1934:75). This view of public opinion
dominated the social science Anglo-American literature on the subject.
Frequently it conveyed the patronizing assumption that public opinion
does not know what is in its best interest. Edward Paget (1929:439), an
American sociologist, argued in 1929 that “public opinion is often very
cruel to those who struggle most unselfishly for the public welfare.” By the
fifties many liberal intellectuals regarded populist strands of public opin-
ion with hostility. According to one account, for fifties liberal intellectuals
like Bell, Shills, Lipset, and Hofstader “populism became the paradigmatic
case of American-style xenophobia” (Singh 1998:513). Even a progressive
thinker like C. Wright Mills, who did so much to promote the ideal of the
sociological imagination, could adopt a relatively pessimistic account of the
public. In the early sixties he asked, “must we not face the possibility that
the human mind as a social fact might be deteriorating in quality and cul-
tural level, and yet not many would notice it because of the overwhelming
accumulation of technological gadgets?” (Mills 1963a:245).

So the tendency to stigmatize populist politics as a symptom of psycho-
logical disorder and irrationalism has a long history. In his important study
The Populist Persuasion, Michael Kazin notes that in the United States during
the Cold War, populism became the “great fear of liberal intellectuals”
(Kazin 1995:287). They blamed mass democracy and an “authoritarian”
and “irrational” working class for the rise of McCarthyism. Indeed their
hostility to McCarthyism like their antagonism to the Religious Right today
was underpinned by distrust and antipathy toward “the very kinds of white
American-Catholic workers, military veterans, discontented families in the
middle of the social structure—who had once been the foot soldiers in
causes such as industrial unionism, the CIO and the Popular Front in the
1930s and 1940s.” A decade later they were perceived as the enemy of liberal-
ism. Whereas “former liberals had worried about the decline of popular
participation in politics,” now “they began to wonder whether ‘apathy’
might not be a blessing in disguise” notes Christopher Lasch (1991:153) in
The True and Only Heaven, his important study of the populist revolt against
the liberal elite.

Elite apprehensions toward populism were linked to the belief that the
mental outlook of the “lower classes” was distorted by its brutal upbringing.
It was claimed that the emotional outlook of the working class created
a propensity to adopt anti-democratic and authoritarian causes. The com-
ments of the American political scientist Seymour Martin Lipset, a leading
voice on this subject during the Cold War, is paradigmatic in this respect:
“to sum up, the lower-class individual is likely to have been exposed to
punishment, lack of love, and a general atmosphere of tension and aggres-
sion since early childhood—all experiences which tend to produce deep-rooted hostilities expressed by ethnic prejudice, political authoritarianism, and chiliastic transvaluation religion” (Lipset 1963:114). The contrast drawn between the emotionally refined middle classes and the emotionally illiterate working classes was also forcefully drawn by Hans Eysenck, a well-known British psychologist. Eysenck claimed that “middle-class Conservatives are more tender-minded than working-class Conservatives; middle-class Liberals more tender-minded than working-class Liberals; middle-class Socialists more tender-minded than working-class Socialists and even middle-class Communists more tender-minded than working-class communists” (Eysenck 1960:137).

Lipset and Eysenck’s pathologization of the political behavior of the lower classes continues to influence social attitudes today. George Lakoff, whom Howard Dean has described as “one of the most influential political thinkers of the progressive movement,” characterizes Bush supporters as dominated by a “strict father morality” which is hostile to “nurturance and care.” That’s another way of saying that they are morally inferior people. And they are certainly inferior to progressives, who apparently have a “nurturant family” orientation. In Eysenck’s vocabulary, they are more “tender-minded” than those nasty brutes in Ohio who voted for Bush. Through counterposing two different types of moral beings, Lakoff and his adherents can reconcile themselves to the fact that it was their moral superiority that lost them the election. In this way they prove to be no less committed to playing the moral card than the target of their opprobrium—the Religious Right. The difference between the two is that Lakoff has seen the “psychological light,” whereas those with a “strict father morality” have opted for the “religious light” (Lakoff 2004:11–12).

The view that a significant section of the public is too stupid to grasp the high-minded and sophisticated ideals of American liberals expresses a profound sense of contempt toward ordinary folk. Furthermore, it uncritically transfers responsibility for the contemporary malaise of political life on the simplistic and uneducated electorate. From this standpoint, it is not the inability of liberal politics to connect with significant sections of the public, but the narrow-mindedness of the electorate that accounted for the defeat of Kerry. In Britain a similar argument was used to account for the ascendancy of the Thatcher era. Thatcher’s electoral victims were associated with the influence of working-class authoritarianism. Left-wing and liberal academics characterized Thatcherism as a form of authoritarian populism that had somehow seduced sections of an easily misled working class (Gamble 1994). They argued that a heady mixture of nationalism, racism, and appeal to self-interest created a powerful right-wing populist movement that provided Thatcher with grassroots support. In those days it was fashionable to poke fun at “Essex Man” and “Essex Woman,” supposedly the embodiment of the
irrational but materialistic and selfish working-class supporters of Thatcher who would not respond to the high-minded appeals of left-wing politicians. Today, a not dissimilar argument is used to account for the limited gains that right-wing fringe groups have made in working-class constituencies such as Barking in East London.

The direct and transparent denunciation of people’s mental capacities made by leftists and liberal political thinkers and activists is rare in a culture that professes to be anti-elitist. Such stereotyping would meet with condemnation if it were directed at minorities or another section of society. That is why usually such contempt is transmitted through euphemisms and through nods and winks. In the sixties, critics of populism pointed the finger at “hard hats” and “materialist” working people. Today in the United States such attitudes are expressed through terms like “NASCAR dads,” “Valley Girls,” “Joe six-pack,” or “redneck.” Lakoff claims that Bush’s popularity with the NASCAR dads is due to their common identification with strict father values. The old Cold War thesis of the “authoritarian working class” has been recycled to help liberals rationalize their sense of isolation from everyday society. The pathological roots of backward attitudes are to be found in the poor quality of parenting experienced by Lakoff’s stereotype conservative. In the UK, NASCAR dads have a different name. They are dismissed as “chavs,” “white van man,” “Worcester Woman,” or “tabloid readers.” Since these are people who can not be mobilized for progressive causes, the best course of action is to try to isolate or ignore them and minimize their influence on society.

The tendency to treat supporters of populist campaigns as the enemy betrays a feeble attachment toward democratic politics. After all, supporters of populism constitute an important section of the people and they need to be taken no less seriously than those whose views appears more enlightened. It is also important to note that populist movements are influenced by a variety of contradictory motives. Disenchantment with the political system and the elites can lead people to adopt a narrow-minded divisive attitude of them-and-us toward other groups. But often populist movements are influenced by an aspiration for social solidarity and even by egalitarian impulse. It is worth recalling that historically many populist movements such as the Chartists were associated with the politics of the Left. As Kazin observed, in the United States for over a century the language of populism was an inspiration to movements of the Left. It was only in the 1940s that American populist political discourse began to migrate from the Left to the Right. In principle there is no reason why the populist imagination should be monopolized by one single political voice (Kazin 1995).

As sociologists, it is important to realize that our public should not be confined to those whose sentiments resonate with the culture of universities and associated institutions—non-governmental organization, advocacy
groups, and social movements. One of the challenges confronting public sociology is to promote a sociologically informed view of the world.

**RECOVERING THE SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION**

Today, Western culture makes sense of the experience of social isolation by interpreting behavior through the highly individualized idiom of therapeutic discourse. Our culture has fostered a climate where the internal world of the individual has become the site where the problems of society are raised and where it is perceived they need to be resolved. This shift of focus from the social to the internal life of the individual has also led to a reorientation of intellectual life toward a preoccupation with the self. And since the self is defined through feelings, the state of emotion is often represented as the key determinant of both individual and collective behavior. Social problems are frequently recast as individual ones that have no direct connection to the social realm.

Today, the conviction that our experiences are the outcome of personal choices is fueled by a heightened sense of individuation. In an age of hyper-mobility and the fragmentation of communities and social networks, people’s lives have acquired an intensely atomized character. The German sociologist Ulrich Beck writes of the “isolation of individuals within homogeneous social groups” (Beck 2002:33). As a result our ability to perceive the many things that we share and to grasp the wider social forces that influence our decisions is compromised by the experience of isolation. In such circumstances finding meaning in our social experience is fraught with difficulty. Isolation also encourages individuals to interpret the difficulty they have in making sense of their lives as the product of their internal life rather than as a statement about the inability of society to provide people with a common web of meaning. In current times the distress that emerges from social conditions is frequently experienced as a problem of the self. The cumulative outcome of this process is the decline in the influence of the sociological imagination.

Since modernity the sociological imagination has influenced different publics to acquire a grasp of the historical and social dimension of their experience. In his classical account, C. Wright Mills observed that the “sociological imagination enables its possessor to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals” (Mills 1959:5). For Mills the sense of history provides people with a web of meaning through which individual experience is connected with the life of others. Mills believed that “through this imagination, individuals understand their own experience and their personal trajectory through grasping the period they live in and the fate of
other people.” As a result people grasp how their individual biography is bound up with the fate of others. Mills took the view that the “sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relation between the two within society” (Mills 1959:5).

For a variety of reasons the sociological imagination does not resonate with the cultural temper of our times. And as we noted elsewhere increasingly the distress that emerges from social conditions is often experienced as individual deficits. Back in the fifties Mills noted that “many great public issues as well as many private troubles are described in terms of ‘the psychiatric’—often, it seems, in a pathetic attempt to avoid the large issues and problems of modern society” (Mills 1959:12). It seems that this tendency has intensified and exercises a significant influence on the conduct of public life.

One of the consequences of this decline in the sociological imagination is a growing tendency to redefine public issues as the private problem of the individual. This mood is vividly captured through the individualized idiom of therapy. Through the language of psychology, therapeutic culture frames the way that problems are perceived. “The result is that social problems are increasingly perceived in terms of psychological dispositions: as personal inadequacies, guilt feelings, anxieties, conflicts and neuroses,” concludes Beck (2002:39). As British psychologist David Smail argues, the language of therapy helps to construct a common sense that regards feelings and behavior as the outcome of “interior causation” (Smail 2001:ix). Everyday common sense instructs us to regard feelings and behavior as the product of passions that come from inside ourselves.

Of course understanding the self and the internal life of the individual is important for comprehending individual behavior and the wider life of the community. However, a one-dimensional preoccupation with the self often leads to overlooking the social and cultural foundations of individual identity. This approach leads to a novel and specific representation of the self—one that the sociologist John Rice has characterized as an “asocial self” (Rice 1996:88–89). From the standpoint of the asocial self what matters is its internal life. The significance of social and cultural influence is discounted in favor of a narrow psychological deliberation of personal emotions. In previous periods of modern life, important intellectual trends tended to attach little significance to the individual self in their explanations of society. A crude economic or social determinism had little room for the individual subject. For example, a bewildering variety of human action—why people joined clubs, why women had small families, or why a particular group hated foreign people—was explained as the outcome of economic circumstances. But yesterday’s economic and social determinism has been overtaken by a new and far cruder variety of determinism—that of emotional determinism. The state of our emotions is now represented
as the cause of many of the problems faced by contemporary society. The way we feel about ourselves—our self-esteem—has become an important explanatory tool for making sense of the world (Furedi 2004:24–43).

On both sides of the Atlantic, explanations oriented toward the emotions are now used to make sense of problems that in the past were illuminated through socioeconomic or philosophical analysis. “Problems that were once considered political, economic, or educational are today found to be psychological,” notes Eva Moskowitz (2001:2) in her important study of the history of therapeutic culture in the United States. Moskowitz notes that America’s “obsession with feelings” in the 1970s helped establish an environment where social problems tended to be framed from a psychological perspective. This trend was particularly evident in relation to the problem of racial oppression, where increasingly the consequence of discrimination was interpreted in therapeutic terms. According to this approach those who suffered from racism suffered permanent damage to their personality. In effect they became damaged people. In turn Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn (2001) has noted that the cure for the damaged personality requires therapeutics leading to an emphasis on managing attitudes and away from tackling the question of equality. In Britain too there is a growing tendency to psychologize the problem of racism. Whereas in the past critics of racism emphasized the salience of economic inequality, discrimination, and violence, today there is a tendency to adopt the therapeutic language of victimization.

The tendency to perceive the failures of institutions and of society in terms of their impact on individual emotions is not confined to the issue of racism. When *The Guardian* newspaper published a major report on the crisis in Britain’s education system, its emphasis was on the emotional damage suffered by poor children, rather than on their social conditions or the failure of the system of education: “Poverty does its worst damage with the emotions of those who live with it” (*The Guardian* 1999). It seems that society is far more comfortable in dealing with poverty as a mental health problem than as a social issue. This approach is supported by a widely held premise that adverse circumstances, even relatively banal ones are stress-inducing and cause trauma and various forms of mental illness. The prevailing cultural climate provided a fertile terrain for the growth of therapeutic critique of social problems. Its orientation toward psychological damage caused by systemic forces was one that could readily be accommodated by the individualistic temper of our time. The cumulative effect of these trends was to individualize protest and encourage what Beck characterizes as the “individual-therapeutic ways of handling problems” (Beck 2002:37).

The individual-therapeutic response is symptomatic of the tendency to experience problems in an individuated and fragmented manner. The shift of focus from society to the individual has important implications for the way that the public is conceptualized. From this perspective the
public tends to be represented as a collection of individuals rather than a community of people whose influence is greater than the sum of its parts. So corresponding to the erosion of the sociological imagination is a weak concept of the public and of the people that constitute it. It appears that the declining influence of the sociological imagination is paralleled by a diminished status assigned to the sense of agency.

To understand the sense of powerlessness that pervades public life it is necessary to look at the way contemporary culture influences the way we regard ourselves as human beings. The prevailing sense of diminished subjectivity is underwritten by a distinct code about the workings of human behavior and personhood. Every culture provides a set of ideas and beliefs about the nature of human beings and what constitutes their personhood. Our ideas about what we can expect from one another, how we handle uncertainty and change, deal with adversity and pain, and how we view history are underpinned by the particular account that a culture offers about personhood and the human potential. As I argue elsewhere, the defining feature of the current Western twenty-first-century version of personhood is its vulnerability (Furedi 2004).

The belief that people exist in a state of vulnerability informs the way that we are expected to make sense of our experiences. As a cultural metaphor, vulnerability is used to highlight the claim that people and their communities lack the emotional and psychological resources necessary to deal with change, make choices, and possess the emotional resources to deal with adversity. From this perspective public life itself can exist only in a feeble form. It is this diminished sense of agency presupposed by the association of personhood with vulnerability that public sociology needs to confront. It is worth recalling that on balance Mills had an optimistic view of personhood. With a hint of irony he noted that “we have come to know that the limits of ‘human nature’ are frighteningly broad” (Mills 1959:6).

Cultivating the Active Side of Public Life

Public sociology can make an important contribution to community life through its emphasis on the social dimension of people’s experience. It needs to project a sense of a world that can encourage purposeful public activity and the exercise of agency. Of course it is not a question of simply taking sociology to the public. If it is to resonate with a wider audience it needs to be a sociology that develops through public engagement. That requires public sociologists to resist the prevailing anti-populist prejudices that inform the thinking of the cultural elites. Respect for the public is important. But respect does not mean an uncritical acceptance of public life as it is now constituted. It is precisely because we respect the intelligence
of our public that we are prepared to question its prevailing outlook and common sense and enter into to an open-ended dialogue with it.

An intelligent public is the product of intellectual and cultural ferment and lively debate. Historically such publics have emerged in response to issues and problems that exercised a great significance over its life. Not infrequently such publics have thrown up their own intellectuals who were prepared to ask questions of those in power. There is no reason why sociologists can not make a significant contribution in this respect. Indeed unless we see ourselves as part of a public we will lack the language with which to conduct a wider conversation. Language and attitude to language is crucial. One of our tasks is to convey complex ideas in a simple—not simplistic!—form. Nor is it simply the case of taking our sociology to a wider audience. It is also a question of developing a sociology that is open-ended and able to yield to new experience. As sociologists who aspire to engage with a wider public we have to realize that one of the principal tasks facing us is the restoration of the sociological imagination among ourselves. Sociology needs to possess a robust sense of the social if it is to invite the attention of the kind of people who can constitute active participants in an articulate public. What is required is what Burawoy has characterized as “organic public sociology.” “Between the organic public sociologist and a public is a dialogue, a process of mutual education,” he notes (Burawoy 2005:8). One important outcome of such a dialogue will be to render visible the important connections that underpin altruistic sensibility and future acts of social solidarity.

REFERENCES


Chapter 10


III

TEACHING AND PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY
The clearest trend in American sociology over the past several years has been toward pursuing what Michael Burawoy coined “public sociology.” Just as clear is that the idea of giving sociology a more public face has moved American sociologists, albeit in two opposite directions. Indeed, public sociology’s proponents are matched in their enthusiasm only by the vehemence of their opponents.

Regardless of their respective positions, sociologists brave enough to enter the debate over the virtues and vices of public sociology have largely ignored a crucial way in which to take the discipline public; namely, through teaching. In all that has been written about public sociology, very little has been said about students, perhaps sociologists’ largest and most obvious public audience. And the few published essays that have discussed the teaching of sociology have focused solely on undergraduate and graduate students. To this point, every aspiring public sociologist, as well as each opponent of public sociology, has completely ignored what may very well be a much more important public: high school students.

This chapter begins with a brief outline of the intellectual lineage of public sociology and a summary of the little that has been written about the connection between public sociology and the teaching of sociology. The bulk of the chapter is devoted to discussing how Burawoy’s four “faces” of sociology have been, are, and could be applied in high school classrooms. In the process, it brings to light the absolute necessity of a solid foundation of professional sociology. I ultimately argue that without the strong presence of professional sociology, the other three types cannot and will not be developed in high school sociology courses.
TEACHING SOCIOLOGY: A NEGLECTED EXAMPLE OF PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY

Sociologists have always been the most introspective of social scientists. Since Robert Lynd (1939) famously asked Knowledge for What? 70 years ago, each succeeding generation of sociologists has struggled to define the discipline’s purpose, mark its boundaries, and confront its theoretical and methodological weaknesses. Michael Burawoy’s relatively recent call for a more “public sociology,” and the lively debates it has stirred up, is only the most recent case in point.

Like previous sociologists who have been courageous enough to offer a vision of what the discipline could and should be, Burawoy has said relatively little about how his notion might be realized by teaching sociology. In fact, most sociologists—critics and supporters of public sociology alike—have said very little about connecting the teaching of sociology to the promotion of public sociology. And among the few commentators who have discussed teaching, not a single one has devoted any attention to teaching below the undergraduate level.

Besides Burawoy himself, just one of the contributors to a 2004 Social Forces symposium on public sociology even mentioned teaching—and only in footnotes (see Brady 2004). The journal Social Problems also published a symposium on public sociology in 2004. Like the papers in the Social Forces special issue, its essays, with two minor exceptions, had nothing to say about teaching (see Pfohl 2004 and Vaughan 2004). One year after the Social Forces and Social Problems symposia appeared, The American Sociologist published a special double issue on public sociology, an ambitious project which was eventually turned into a book (see Nichols 2007). Only Edna Bonacich (2005) devoted any space—a page and a half, to be exact—to the link between public sociology and the teaching of sociology. She admitted to “try[ing] to inject a ‘Marxist’ understanding” into her undergraduate course on Research Methods in Ethnic Studies (2005:113). She did so by asking students to participate in group projects on “‘lessening inequality’ or ‘countering racism’” (2005:114). Bonacich’s essay, as well as her teaching style, clearly leaned toward outright activism rather than sociology.

Nichols’s (2007) edited volume on public sociology is one of three that have appeared over the past couple of years. Clawson et al.’s (2007) collection offers essays by fifteen prominent sociologists—including two by Michael Burawoy himself—on public sociology. And a third collection of essays on public sociology, Blau and Smith’s (2006) Public Sociologies Reader, appeared one year earlier. Among the three books, there is not a single mention of using high school classrooms as what Burawoy would call “laboratories” for public sociology.
As the person who has spearheaded the campaign for public sociology, Burawoy has written relatively little about teaching. And, like previous authors’ comments, his observations have applied only to college and university classrooms. Perhaps Burawoy’s clearest statement of the relationship between teaching and public sociology is in his contribution to the Social Forces symposium, where he suggested, quite correctly, that “students are our first public” (Burawoy 2004:1608). Borrowing the terms and themes found in Freire (1993[1970]) and, before him, in Gramsci (1971), Burawoy differentiated “traditional” from “organic” public sociology, and discussed in one paragraph—of a 16-page article—how each results in a unique teaching style:

In the traditional approach we treat [students] as empty vessels to be filled with knowledge. The lecturer stands above the lectured in a position of unquestioned authority—the possessor and disseminator of truth. Dialogue, if it takes place at all, does so behind the back of the lecturer. In the organic approach to teaching, students are treated not as tabula rasa but as carriers of accumulated experience, brought to the surface and turned into knowledge through dialogue. That experience may be cultivated from a student’s own biography and augmented through specific engagements (e.g., service learning)—the underlying presumption is that the teacher and taught have an organic relation, that the educator too must be educated. (Burawoy 2004:1608)

Few sociologists are likely to disagree with Burawoy’s “organic” conceptualization of teaching. As attractive as it might be, however, it says very little about precisely how it qualifies as public sociology.

It is undoubtedly true that our students are our first public. But undergraduates are not necessarily the largest or most important, and they are certainly not the only, potential public audience for sociology. In fact, more than one-third of a million students each year take a sociology course at some point in high school (U.S. Department of Education 2001). These students constitute a very large and very public captive audience. Practicing and aspiring public sociologists alike should begin examining the kinds of sociology that high school students have been and are exposed to—as well as thinking about the kinds they should be exposed to.

What follows is an outline of the past, present, and probable future presentations of Burawoy’s four “faces” of sociology in high school courses. I suggest that none of the four has ever been prevalent in high schools, and only one—professional sociology—is at all likely to become more common. But even establishing that type, I argue, will take a lot of work. The fact of the matter is that without a deep and solid foundation of professional sociology, the other three types cannot and will not develop at the secondary level. This is a lesson, incidentally, that carries over into each
subfield of sociology, insofar as its practitioners are interested in connecting their particular area of expertise to public sociology.

PRESENTING SOCIOLOGY’S FOUR “FACES” TO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Regardless of one’s own orientation to sociology, every self-reflective sociologist would do well to devote serious attention to Burawoy’s fourfold conceptualization of the field; that is, professional, critical, policy, and public sociologies. Though one may quarrel with Burawoy’s definition of each type, and with the relationships he observes among them, it is difficult to deny that his model neatly categorizes an increasingly messy field. It also provides a useful framework for thinking about the ways in which sociology has been taught in high schools—a subject that has been largely ignored by sociologists for more than 95 years (DeCesare 2007).

Professional Sociology

Burawoy (2005:10) suggests that the role of professional sociology is to “supply[ing] true and tested methods, accumulated bodies of knowledge, orienting questions, and conceptual frameworks” for the practice of both policy and public sociology; indeed, it provides the legitimacy of and expertise for both types. Professional sociology, in short, consists not only of currently popular sociological theories and research methods, but of the historical debates and questions that led to their development. For the purposes of this chapter, it is helpful to think of professional sociology as composed of the theoretical frameworks, methodological approaches, and historical perspectives that dominate American sociology.

“Professional sociologist” is, for most academic sociologists, our “master identity.” Importantly, as Burawoy (2005:10) correctly points out, “there can be neither policy nor public sociology without a professional sociology.” It is the seed from which the other three types grow. Obviously, then, if sociologists hope to develop a more public—or, for that matter, critical or policy—brand of sociology in high school courses, it is necessary, first, for professional sociology to have a strong presence.

Unfortunately, the little existing research indicates that professional sociology—that is, academic sociology: formal theory, research methods, and a history of the discipline’s development—has been a relative rarity in high school sociology courses over the past 95 years. Marlene Weber (1978) carried out a survey of high school sociology courses and teachers in Wisconsin. She found that more than half (57.2 percent) of the courses focused solely on social problems or on a combination of social problems
and sociology. Very little academic sociology—in other words, professional sociology—was being taught at the time. In a follow-up to Weber’s (1978) research, Kraft (1981) again surveyed Wisconsin high school sociology teachers. He found that only about one-fourth (27 percent) of the courses stressed “sociology as [a] scientific discipline”; the other 73 percent emphasized social problems, practical interpersonal relationships, or some other approach (p. 67). Like Weber (1978), Kraft (1981:71) was forced to the conclusion that, at least in Wisconsin’s high schools, there was a “lack of emphasis on the scientific nature of sociology” in favor of a superficial focus on current social problems.

Though it would be nearly two decades before the publication of the next study of the content of high school sociology courses, it was apparent that nothing had changed. Dennick-Brecht (2000), Lashbrook (2001), and DeCesare (2007) found that a large majority of high school sociology teachers in Pennsylvania (88.9 percent), New York (72.5 percent), and Connecticut (91.1 percent), respectively, used a standard introductory textbook—the overwhelming majority of which were college-level texts. Though a large percentage of teachers in each state ostensibly relied on a textbook as their primary teaching tool, at least some in Connecticut used it “as a reference more than a bible,” as one teacher told me during an interview. In other words, some teachers use texts solely to introduce students to the terminology and definitions that supposedly characterize sociology.

To provide the “meat” of the course, teachers utilized readings other than a textbook. Lashbrook (2001) and DeCesare (2007) both reported that an overwhelming percentage of the teachers in their respective samples (94.4 percent in New York and 82.1 percent in Connecticut) incorporated national and local newspaper as well as newsmagazine articles (e.g., New York Times, Hartford Courant, Newsweek, U.S. News & World Report). These, of course, focus almost exclusively on current events, and are notoriously deficient in the extent of the sociological analyses they offer.

There is more. Research methods, which is generally considered one of the two pillars of professional sociology, was included in fewer than three-fourths (72 percent) of the courses I studied in Connecticut; the second pillar of professional sociology, theoretical perspectives, was offered in fewer than half (45 percent) of the courses (DeCesare 2007). These topics were included in 82.4 percent and 43.7 percent of New York high school sociology courses, respectively (Lashbrook 2001). The most recent results clearly indicate that professional sociology is being deemphasized in favor of topics that teachers perceive to be more interesting and relevant to students: culture, race, gender, deviance, and the like.

One final point has to do with teachers’ conceptions of sociology as a field of study. In short, they do not take it all that seriously. When pressed during interviews, teachers are typically much more concrete and articulate
about sociology’s perceived weaknesses (e.g., too much jargon, irrelevant to the real world, too much theory and abstraction, etc.) than they are about its strengths. Here is how one teacher responded to my asking whether he thought high school students were capable of understanding sociology: “Why wouldn’t they be able to understand sociology? It’s not rocket science!” (see DeCesare 2006). The perception that sociology is easier and “softer” than most other courses in the curriculum is a fairly common one among high school sociology teachers, and is likely due primarily to their lack of training in sociology (see below).

Based on the conclusions drawn by recent researchers, and on past teachers’ published course descriptions (cf. DeCesare 2007), it is clear that professional sociology, as Burawoy describes it, is not, and rarely has been, an important feature of high school sociology courses. It is crucially important for more professional sociology to be incorporated into high school sociology courses. In its absence, a high school course in the field becomes little more than a meandering discussion of current events. In its absence, high school students will leave the course with the impression that sociology lacks any theoretical or methodological rigor. In its absence, and most importantly for the purposes of this chapter, Burawoy’s other three types of sociology cannot develop.

Consider the following, as just one illustration of the vast difference between the usual high school sociology course and one that is based on professional sociology. Many high school teachers include a section on education in their sociology courses. As it stands, it typically includes an unfocused—and unsociological—group discussion of the pros and cons of the controversial topic du jour: school vouchers, bussing, the No Child Left Behind Act, and the like. Injected with a dose of professional sociology, it would become something far more useful, interesting, and sociological. The teacher might lead students through an examination of the social functions of schooling by framing the in-class discussions with fundamentally sociological questions: Who is involved in the process of schooling, and what roles do they play, what statuses do they occupy, and how are they structurally and organizationally connected to one another? How are districts, schools, curricula, and classrooms organized, and why do they look as they do? In what ways do teachers and school environments socialize children into acceptable behavior, attitudes, and morals? How does the education system produce and perpetuate inequality based on sex, race, and social class? What are the causes of stratification both within and across schools and school districts? Fruitful sociological questions abound, and would be both more interesting and more relevant to high school students than stale, cliché-ridden debates about this or that contentious topic in education.
Critical Sociology

Lest professional sociology get too carried away by its self-assumed virtues, critical sociology lies in wait, ready to “examine [its] foundations—both the explicit and the implicit, both normative and descriptive” (Burawoy 2005:10). Critical sociologists, in short, keep professional sociologists intellectually honest. Burawoy cites Robert Lynd, C. Wright Mills, Alvin Gouldner, and Alfred Lee as exemplars of the former. Certainly, critical sociology has, almost from the field’s beginnings in this country, played a crucial role in its development.

But critical sociology is virtually non-existent at the high school level. I am not aware of a single study that has documented the importance to high school teachers of a Lynd, a Mills, a Gouldner, or a Lee. It is true that a few teachers include an excerpt from *The Sociological Imagination* in their courses. It is also true that some aim for Mills’s primary goal of enabling students to recognize the relationship between biography and history. But these teachers are very few, and even they do not seem to fully appreciate or understand the criticisms leveled by sociology’s best-known intellectual pugilist. In fact, judging by the available data, many teachers have never heard of these figures, let alone thought about how to incorporate either them or their sharp criticisms into their sociology courses.

Critical sociology, as Burawoy (2005) has argued, is intimately tied to professional sociology. Since professional sociology is difficult to find in high school sociology courses, it should come as no surprise that a critical appraisal of it is also rare. Critical sociology can only grow where professional sociology is deeply rooted. If and when professional sociology begins to stretch its roots into the fertile ground offered by high schools, teachers must also be prepared to offer students a critical assessment of the field. As they should be in undergraduate courses, Mills, Gouldner, Lynd, and the like should become familiar figures in high school courses.

Students should be exposed to the epistemological, theoretical, and methodological debates that currently characterize the field. For without exposure to Mills, Gouldner, and Lynd, and the ideas they offered to students of the field, high school students who take a course in sociology will depart with the badly mistaken belief that sociology is, and always has been, an incontestable body of truth, facts, and knowledge. They will be ignorant of the debates about sociology’s status as a science, the “proper” role of sociology in society, sociologists’ ongoing struggle with objectivity, the relationship between sociology and democracy, and the place of values in sociological research—among other things. Sociology, of course, is a fluid and contestable body of knowledge, and it should be taught to high school students as such.
Policy Sociology

Policy sociology, according to Burawoy, is “sociology in the service of a goal defined by a client”; its purpose is typically to “provide solutions to problems that are presented to us, or to legitimate solutions that have already been reached” (Burawoy 2005:9). Policy sociology, in other words, may be thought of as the practical side of professional sociology.

Given high school teachers’ well-documented lack of training in sociological theory and methods (DeCesare 2007), it is perhaps not surprising that very little policy sociology is practiced in high school sociology courses. Some, however, is, though necessarily in rudimentary form. A few teachers I interviewed reported conducting a schoolwide survey of students’ attitudes and beliefs, and subsequently presenting the results to administrators in the hope of changing school policies. After the infamous shooting at Colorado’s Columbine High School in 1999, for instance, one Connecticut teacher guided her sociology students through the development and administration of a questionnaire about bullying. The students presented their results at a schoolwide assembly that also included a panel discussion about how to use the study’s results to inform new policies about bullying and violence.

A second example of policy sociology was a study of academic cheating. One teacher I interviewed had her sociology class carry out a survey of nearly 200 of their peers’ attitudes toward cheating. One questionnaire item asked: “If you saw someone cheating, would you report it?” Of the 182 students who responded, nearly 97 percent (n = 176) said “no.” This result, along with some commentary on it from the teacher of the course, were ultimately incorporated into an academic journal article (see Bushweller 1999).

Inspiring and interesting as these few examples are, they are rare. Policy sociology, like critical sociology, is difficult to find in high school classrooms. This is unfortunate, since policy-related activities can teach students at least three important lessons: that sociologists study important and timely issues, that sociology is applicable to the “real world,” and that sociological research can and does inform policy makers’ decisions. These are lessons that are too often lacking in introductory sociology courses—at both the high school and college levels. Nevertheless, projects in policy sociology obviously should not be undertaken by teachers who have not been trained in sociological theory and methods. At best, any empirical results they and their students obtain would likely be meaningless; at worst, they could become dangerous if they fell or were placed into the wrong hands.

Public Sociology

Given what has been said so far, what are the prospects of using high school classrooms to develop a more public “face” for sociology? Not
promising. From my perspective, individuals who seek to teach or practice public sociology—teachers, sociologists, or whoever else—first need a clear and comprehensive understanding of professional sociology. Very few teachers, as I and others have pointed out, have been adequately trained in professional sociology, and even fewer have any familiarity with critical or policy sociology. They are, quite simply, teachers, first and foremost. And they are teachers of a variety of disciplines including, typically, history and psychology in addition to sociology. It is telling that I have not met one high school sociology teacher who thinks of him or herself primarily as a sociologist.

Still, and despite the rarity of it at the moment, public sociology can be found here and there in high school classrooms. Consider again the earlier example of the panel discussion of bullying that was prompted by one sociology teacher's class project. It is, I think, a prime example of public sociology. In this case, the dialogue was between the student researchers (playing the role of sociologists), the panel, and the larger student body (a public). The goals were to raise awareness about bullying and violence in school, to stimulate a wider discussion of it, and to produce a meaningful and positive change in school policy. It is not difficult to imagine other topics that would lend themselves to a similar public conversation in schools: drug use, techniques for becoming a successful student, gangs, peer pressure, and the like. If sociology courses were taught by teachers who had been trained in professional sociology, conversations about these and other subjects would be the norm, rather than the exception. The public sociologist’s mind boggles at what could be, if only we were to devote serious attention to increasing sociology teachers’ exposure to professional sociology.

**PATHS FORWARD**

But all is not lost. Critical, policy, and public sociologies can, I believe, be incorporated into high school classrooms. But there is a lot of work to be done before that can happen. Quite simply, but most importantly, high school sociology teachers must be better trained in professional sociology. There must be a sustained effort on the part of the ASA both in lobbying for legislation aimed at increasing the required coursework in sociology for high school teachers of the discipline, and in working to professionalize high school sociology teachers into the discipline. This is quite an old argument, but it is worth repeating (cf. DeCesare 2005a). The simple fact is that the ASA is the largest and most powerful sociological organization in the country; if there is to be change in the high school sociology classroom, it must be actively supported, if not initiated, by the association.
The ASA might take a cue from another national body, the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS). Several of the teachers I surveyed have benefited from this organization (see DeCesare 2007). One said: “I went to the NCSS conference in Washington, DC during November [2001]. One meeting was for sociology teachers. Four teachers showed up plus the V[ice] P[resident] (?) from the American Sociology [sic] Association. A high school teachers [sic] network of some sort seemed to be a good goal among those who attended. This would be centered on the internet.” Only a national organization—like the ASA or the NCSS—has the resources necessary for managing a national network of high school sociology teachers, even if it were only to be housed on the Internet (cf. DeCesare and Lashbrook 2004).

A more general and consistent emphasis placed by the ASA upon teaching might draw some high school sociology teachers into the discipline’s professional activities. As long as high school sociology teachers continue to view sociologists solely as researchers, rather than as teachers like themselves, they will not be motivated to participate in the discipline’s professional activities. It is therefore another one of the tasks of the ASA to change the misperceptions of sociology and sociologists held by most high school sociology teachers. The association might consider, for example, offering free trial subscriptions of its journal *Teaching Sociology*, rather than *Contexts*, to high school teachers. One of the virtues of the former is that it makes clear the fact that all sociologists are not just researchers; most are teachers as well, and many study ways in which to improve the teaching of sociology.

Unfortunately, these recommendations are the latest in a series of recent—and largely unheeded—suggestions made by sociologists for how the association might increase teachers’ involvement and improve the quality of their courses (cf. DeCesare 2002; Dennick-Brecht 2000; Dorn 1986; Lashbrook 2001; Piker-King 1982; Rienert et al. 1998). Thus far, the ASA has rested content with trying to reform the courses themselves, rather than with trying to improve teachers’ training.

In the early 1990s, for example, the ASA created a Task Force on Content Standards for the High School Course in Sociology. It marked the first time since the New Social Studies movement of the 1960s and early 1970s that an ASA-sponsored body devoted itself to sociology in high school. The Task Force published “The High School Course in Sociology: Objectives and Standards” in 1993. The group’s position on sociology was made clear in the first sentence: “Sociology is the scientific study of human behavior.” The authors of the “Objectives and Standards” went on to describe sociology as an “empirical science” and a “social science” (p. 2).

The fourteen major sections of the proposed course were: (1) Sociological Perspectives, (2) Sociological Methods of Inquiry, (3) Culture, (4) Social
Structure, (5) Socialization, (6) The Self and Social Interaction, (7) Deviance, Crime, and Social Control, (8) Groups and Organizations, (9) Social Institutions, (10) Stratification, (11) Racial and Ethnic Relations, (12) Gender and Age Inequality, (13) Demography and Urbanization, and (14) Social Change. To readers who have seen any of the dozens of introductory college textbooks currently on the market, this list will look familiar—the topics correspond quite nicely to the typical textbook’s chapters. Each of the sections of the semester-long course had at least nine objectives that “the learner will be able to do” after being exposed to that section. There were a total of 167 course objectives.

An important point is that only one of the six task force members, Robert Greene, was a high school teacher; he was also the only teacher of the ten “contributors and collaborators in the formation of standards.” It is unclear when the task force was dissolved, and it is unknown how much of an influence, if any, its statement of content and objectives actually had. Nevertheless, its goal was clear: to introduce more professional sociology into high school sociology courses.

Ten years after establishing the Task Force on Content Standards, the ASA appointed a Task Force on the Advanced Placement (AP) Course for Sociology in High School in 2001. Of the fourteen original members, it was again only Robert Greene who was a high school teacher. Before disbanding in 2005, the task force worked with representatives from both the American Political Science Association and the American Association of Geographers in an effort to set forth curriculum standards for the AP course in sociology. Such standards are a necessary precursor to the implementation of an AP exam. In 2002, the Task Force completed a first draft of its proposed AP sociology curriculum.

Because the curriculum represented the first official ASA statement about course content and objectives to appear in ten years, and because it embodies the ASA’s current vision for high school sociology, the proposed AP curriculum deserves careful examination. Here is the course outline: (1) The Sociological Perspective, (2) Research Methods, (3) Culture, (4) Socialization, (5) Social Organization, (6) Social Inequalities, (7) Deviance and Conformity, (8) Social Institutions, and (9) Social Change. Readers will notice, first, the similarity to “textbook” sociology. In comparing this list to the list created by the 1993 task force, little change is evident. Perhaps most obvious is the fact that this outline is much shorter than the 1993 outline, even though it is for a year-long rather than a semester-long course. However, most of the topics that appeared on the earlier list were subsumed under one of these nine more general headings.

Second, this is a course in academic, or professional, sociology. According to the draft of the course outline, the first topic, “The Sociological Perspective,” introduces “sociology as a discipline that is both basic science and
applied science.” More of the same follows in the second section on “Sociological Theory and Research Methods”: “This section of the course introduces students to the dynamic interplay between theory and the logic of the scientific method in sociology. . . . They will recognize that sociology is a science.”

The ASA’s approach to high school sociology courses has been consistent since the 1960s: teach academic sociology. But the ASA has missed a crucial point: teachers have never been trained to teach academic sociology (DeCesare 2007). Teachers’ lack of formal training in, and professional exposure to, the discipline is the primary reason why they have taken a current events approach. Most high school teachers never learned much, if anything, about sociological theory, research methods, or sociology’s scientific aspirations (DeCesare 2007). It seems unreasonable, therefore, to expect them to teach professional sociology. On the other hand, anyone who reads the newspaper or newsmagazines, or who watches television, is familiar with social problems and current events. It seems that teachers, by focusing on social problems, are teaching what they are most familiar with. They will likely continue to do so.

Even if they are trained in professional sociology, many teachers will probably continue to teach current events instead of sociology anyway. There are at least two major reasons for this. The first is purely pragmatic: Teachers need to consider what will be of interest and seem relevant to high school students, especially in the context of an elective course that could very quickly disappear from the curriculum if students do not enroll in it. Put bluntly, students are more interested in social problems that they are already familiar with than in sociological theory or research methods. Of the subjects covered in high school, which are more relevant and interesting to students than current events? Probably not many—and certainly not the principles of a vaguely defined scientific discipline. There is no reason to think that adolescent students’ interests will change any time soon.

A second reason that teachers are unlikely to introduce professional sociology into their classrooms, even if they are familiar with it, is structural: they teach in the context of a social studies curriculum. Citizenship education and the teaching of democratic values have been the dual goals of the American social studies curriculum since it was first developed immediately following the Civil War. This point is often overlooked in the scholarship on teaching sociology, even though early sociologists were aware of it. Edward Hayes (1923:419), for example, observed more than eighty years ago the “insistent and wide-spread demand among public school authorities for important changes in the curriculum of the public schools designed to provide a more adequate preparation for citizenship.” Put bluntly, teachers have little incentive to tinker with such a long-standing curricular objective, and little power to do so; indeed, they may be sanctioned by administrators, colleagues, parents, and students for attempting to do so.
Presenting Sociology's Four “Faces”  

Given the position that high school sociology teachers are in, it is not surprising that the ASA’s course-based efforts to inject more professional sociology into high schools have largely failed. We must begin to focus on the backgrounds, training, and experiences of teachers themselves if we hope to change the nature of high school sociology courses. The ASA has long ignored this point, and evidently continues to do so. An alternative avenue for increasing teachers’ professionalization runs through our various regional and state associations. I agree with Rienarth et al. (1998) that most regional sociological associations need to take a more active role in changing high school sociology for the better. It is somewhat disheartening that this suggestion was first put forth by Harold Meyer (1936) before World War II, and it is still being echoed today. Regional and state associations might follow the examples of the Wisconsin Sociological Association and the North Central Sociological Association, which regularly offer workshops for high school teachers at their annual meetings (cf. Hougham 2005a). It might be the case that high school teachers would be more willing to attend the smaller, and often more personal, annual meetings of the regional and state sociological associations than the large-scale annual ASA meetings. This presents an opportunity, especially for state sociological associations, to provide a “home” for high school sociology teachers (Rienarth et al. 1998:72). The smaller associations might also be able to communicate more effectively with local high school teachers than the ASA (Short, Watts, and Matlock 1986). For these reasons alone, regional and state sociological associations should encourage high school teachers to participate more consistently in the activities they sponsor.

Local and regional associations should also continue lobbying their respective legislatures to impose minimum educational requirements on high school sociology teachers. Even without the support of the ASA, regional and state organizations could make a significant impact on legislators, local boards of education, and school administrators. After all, as Rienarth et al. (1998) point out, educational policy is made at the state and local levels. A big enough impact at these levels may even provoke the ASA into more sustained action on behalf of high school sociology and teacher training. In other words, rather than waiting for change to trickle down from the top of the organizational hierarchy, regional and state sociological associations should attempt to introduce change from below.

The discipline’s organizations should and must take the lead in improving relations between their members and high school teachers. But it is up to sociologists themselves to do the “dirty work.” If sociologists want to see a different type of sociology offered in high schools, they must model it, not simply write and talk about it. For when sociologists write and talk about anything, it is usually to one another. Former ASA representatives Carla Howery (1985) and Felice Levine (1997) have each provided a list
of the many ways in which sociologists can assist in the teaching of high school sociology, and in the process, contribute to the professionalization of teachers. Among them are to deliver guest lectures in high schools; prepare a videotape about sociology; help with the school’s career day; visit annual meetings of state councils on the social studies to talk to teachers; become active in local school board activities and serve on advisory panels for curriculum materials, guest speakers, and selection of films; look at teacher training programs in schools of education and how sociologists can contribute to strengthening them. It is important that sociologists continue these efforts and initiate new ones.

Perhaps it should not be just any sociologists, at least at first. Jeff Lashbrook and I have argued that the discipline’s “charismatic leaders” should take the lead in bringing about the kinds of changes sociologists wish to see in the high school classroom (see DeCesare and Lashbrook 2004). This suggestion is not as outlandish as it might seem. As early as the 1920s, prominent sociologists like Robert Park, Emory Bogardus, and Charles Cooley were taking public positions on sociology’s unique contribution to the high school social studies curriculum. Others, during the 1960s, publicly debated the merits of high school courses in sociology. Still others served in important roles in the nationwide Sociological Resources for the Secondary Schools (SRSS) project during the 1960s and early 1970s. Today’s most famous sociologists should follow the lead of their best-known predecessors, and make the professionalization of high school sociology a top priority. Doing so would likely convince other sociologists of the topic’s importance.

There is also the possibility that forming partnerships between university sociology departments and high school social studies departments might encourage some sociology students—both undergraduates and graduates—to pursue a teaching career in a secondary school. Other researchers have also recognized the importance of encouraging sociology majors to teach in high school (Rienerth et al. 1998). Irving Horowitz (1968:138) once went so far as to call for “the activation of some of the very best sociologists in [high school sociology] programs.” Through the forging of partnerships between secondary and post-secondary institutions, academic sociologists with an interest in teaching could, for instance, teach one fewer class at the college level and assist high school instructors in the teaching of their courses during a given semester. On the bright side, several university sociology departments have begun reaching out to their local high schools: Appalachian State University, Fairfield University, UCLA, Temple University, and the University of Rhode Island have been at the forefront of this cooperative effort (see Hougham 2006, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c; Hougham and Hougham 2005).
The important point in all of the suggestions offered above is that there must be a more sustained commitment on the parts of both the ASA and its regional affiliates, as well as academic departments of sociology, to increase the presence of professional sociology in high school sociology courses. As I argued above, it is only after professional sociology becomes a normal feature of the courses that we can hope to develop any of Burawoy’s other three types.

CONCLUSION

In all that has been written about public sociology over the past several years, very little has been written about teaching sociology—and nothing at all has been written about teaching high school sociology. But, as I have argued, high school students constitute perhaps our largest and most accessible public audience. As I mentioned earlier, over one-third of a million high school students enroll in a sociology course each year. We would do well to think seriously about what these hundreds of thousands of students have learned, are learning, and could learn from their sociology teachers.

In a first step toward doing so, this chapter has outlined the past, present, and future of high school sociology courses, as each is connected to Burawoy’s four forms of sociology. Admittedly, I have not painted a rosy picture. There is an enormous amount of work to be done if the ASA and individual sociologists are serious about developing a respectable high school course—and a high school course that prominently displays even one of Burawoy’s four “faces” of sociology. The biggest hurdle right now—and for the past 95 years, for that matter—is teachers’ general lack of training in professional sociology. I have suggested that the ASA, regional organizations, and academic departments of sociology each have important roles to play, though the ASA’s is the most important. The association must renew, and then sustain, its efforts to “bring teachers into the fold,” as one teacher in Connecticut pleaded. Sociologists have suggested a variety of ways in which the ASA might reach out to teachers, and to offer them meaningful professionalization experiences (cf. DeCesare 2002; DeCesare and Lashbrook 2004; Howery 1985; Levine 1997), but the association has not done much on either front.8

In closing, let me be as blunt as possible: Without a serious commitment on the part of the ASA, none of Michael Burawoy’s four faces of sociology will become fixtures in high school sociology courses. And unless we first plant the seeds of professional sociology, the others will not—and cannot—ever grow.
I owe a good deal of thanks to Vince Jeffries for several reasons. With regard to this chapter specifically, I wish to thank him for his extensive and thoughtful suggestions for improvement.

1. What follows is a review of the little relevant research from the past 30 years. For the purposes of this chapter, it suffices to say that there has been remarkably little change in terms of content and objectives between 1911, the year in which the first high school sociology courses were offered, and the present. See DeCesare (2007, 2005b) for an analysis of the content of the courses that existed between 1911 and the late 1970s.

2. I say “supposedly” because Best and Schweingruber (2003) have pointed out the disconnect between the terminology used in introductory textbooks and the language that is actually used in sociological journal articles.

3. Thanks to Vince Jeffries for suggesting several items on this list, as well as some of the topics I mention below that lend themselves to a “public” conversation among student researchers and the larger student body.


5. There is some confusion about the publication date, which is exacerbated by the fact that the document itself is not dated. Dennick-Brecht put its publication at 1993 in some places in her dissertation, then at 1996 in others (see Dennick-Brecht, “Schools in Pennsylvania”). The ASA representative and 1989 task force member whom I contacted could not remember the date that the “Objectives and Standards” were published.

6. See Andriot (2007) for the only discussion of standards in the high school sociology course.

7. For the latest example of the ASA’s misplaced emphasis, see Executive Officer Sally Hillsman’s (2007) pronouncement that the association continues to work on implementing an AP course in sociology. This, despite the facts that (1) the College Board rejected the ASA’s original AP course proposal in 2004; (2) more than 60 percent of public high schools in the country do not even offer a regular course in sociology (DeCesare 2008); (3) the regular courses that do exist are in dismal condition (DeCesare 2007); and (4) in at least one state, regular sociology courses are in danger of becoming extinct (Reiling and Kinney 2007).

8. See Howery (2004) for one idea that was put into practice, albeit with no known results so far.

REFERENCES


Chapter 11

Public sociology is centrally related to the teaching of sociology, given that it is defined by Burawoy (2005) as reflexive knowledge aimed at extra-academic audiences. Students taking sociology for the first time are part of larger extra-academic audiences. Many who become interested in sociology wonder what they might do with it. Burawoy’s (2005) typology of sociological labor greatly enlarges the spectrum of possibilities for students happy to see that there are a number of career pathways they could follow in sociology, across the quadrants of Burawoy’s fourfold table encompassing professional, critical, policy, and public sociologies. This chapter first describes Burawoy’s four types of sociology and how they relate to the teaching of sociology. It then considers some relationships, tensions, and synergies between parts of the typology, how each might influence the others, and the implications of such influences for teaching and learning.

In his 2005 presidential address, Burawoy clearly situates professional sociology as the foundation for everything else, because professional sociology provides the scientific knowledge base. Like other fields, sociology needs an institutional base, with clear training and career paths. Graduate education is not financially sustainable on its own in most departments, so the fiscal viability of sociology in research universities depends on undergraduate majors, minors, and service courses (Abbott 2000). Moreover, since 70 to 80 percent of advanced degree holders in sociology work in academia, the majority of career paths involve teaching.

Critical sociology examines “the foundations—both the explicit and the implicit, both normative and descriptive—of the research programs of professional sociology. . . . [and it] attempts to make professional sociology aware of its biases, silences, promoting new research programs
built on alternative foundations. Critical sociology is the conscience of professional sociology just as public sociology is the conscience of policy sociology” (Burawoy 2005:10). Critical sociology does more than simply challenge or criticize existing arrangements and practices, although it certainly does that. It also scrutinizes what we know and how we know it. It asks what is missing from a particular formulation of a question or problem, whose perspectives are omitted, what other perspectives might be possible in a given situation, and what are the hidden assumptions in a statement? It includes issues of major concern to professional sociologists, such as sampling and representativeness, measurement and measurement error, design, and inferences about causal relationships, and considers the difference between explanation and prediction. It anticipates unintended consequences from planned social action and looks for them. One of the major contributions of sociological research has been to bring out the unintended consequences of planned social changes, as in Karen’s (2005) discussion of the No Child Left Behind legislation. Because of the likelihood of such unanticipated consequences, both professional and critical sociology encourage the building of meaningful feedback loops into social policies.

“Policy sociology is sociology in the service of a goal defined by a client.” Its purpose “is to provide solutions to problems that are presented to us, or to legitimate solutions that have already been reached” (Burawoy 2005:9). Policy sociology is concerned with the application of sociological principles, insights, and empirical research in everyday life, for the amelioration of social problems, usually in the realm of government (or some other social institution). Policy sociology can also provide strategic research sites for understanding better how things work (or don’t work) in the social world.

Public sociology, the fourth cell in Burawoy’s typology, “brings sociology into a conversation with publics” (2005:7). It is one thing to recognize public sociology, but “another thing to make it an integral part of our discipline” (Burawoy 2005:9). In contrast to policy sociology, public sociology “strikes up a dialogic relation between sociologist and public in which the agenda of each is brought to the table, in which each adjusts to the other” (Burawoy 2005:9). “The approaches of public and policy sociology are neither mutually exclusive nor even antagonistic” (Burawoy 2005:9).

“Public sociology is often an avenue for the marginalized, locked out of the policy arena and ostracized in the academy” (Burawoy 2005:14). It may well be about efforts to change “official” practices. As such, it is often rooted in non-governmental organizations and may even be distinct from any institutional setting. For some examples, see Willie, Ridini, and Willard 2008.
ANALYZING TEACHING IN TERMS OF THE FOUR TYPES

How do these four types illuminate the teaching of sociology, in terms of cognitive practices and potential pitfalls (see Burawoy 2005:16 and table 3)? Teaching sociology is a form of public sociology because teachers are bringing sociology into dialogue with new publics. But they may also have professional audiences (e.g., graduate students) and peers if they publish about teaching. We consider below what some sociologists say about their teaching in each quadrant and how they involve students.

Professional Sociology

Professional sociology is related to where teaching occurs, what is taught, and to norms of accountability. Although teaching generally occurs within the academy, the home space of professional sociology, its arena is broadening to include high schools (see chapter 11 by Michael DeCesare in this volume), community colleges, four-year colleges, comprehensive regional universities, as well as research universities. Teaching and learning may also occur in labor unions or communities, or through digital media including public television, web learning, and podcasts.

Teaching always involves decisions about what to teach. Do we teach primarily or only “professional” sociology, or do we also teach public, policy, and critical sociology? In what proportions? Studies of teachers, syllabi, and an ASA task force have all identified the importance of teaching key theoretical and empirical sociological knowledge and scientific norms (Grauerholz and Gibson 2006; McKinney, Howery, Strand, Kain, and Berheide 2004; Wagenaar 2004). Another study of peer-designated leaders in professional sociology revealed that the most important understanding they wanted students to gain was a sense of what is distinctive about a sociological perspective on social phenomena, compared to psychological, economic, political, anthropological, or linguistic perspectives. They see this as the power of social factors—contexts, relationships (particularly power relationships), structures, patterns, institutions, values, attitudes, and practices—for explaining social behavior over and beyond individual personalities, temperaments, and traits (Persell, Pfeiffer, and Syed 2007).

Leaders also wanted students to understand the difference between opinions, on the one hand, and views based on systematic principles and empirical research that observe publicly discussed standards. They want students to understand that “science is a method not a subject matter” (as Cora Marrett said at a Science Policy Breakfast at the American Sociological Association annual meeting, August 12, 2007) and want them to be exposed to research. Indeed, the leaders interviewed placed somewhat greater stress
on research and getting students involved in research than did sociology teachers more generally (Persell, Pfeiffer, and Syed forthcoming).

Professional sociology includes numerous research programs dealing with inequality, whether based on social class, race, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, or some other characteristic, and leaders saw the centrality of inequality in power and resources as another key understanding they wanted students to gain. Moreover, they often stressed the importance of incorporating data on these issues into courses (Persell, Pfeiffer, and Syed forthcoming).

Another important understanding concerned the concept of the social construction of reality, including things that economists posit as “natural laws” or deities, such as the “market” or market forces. This perspective asks students to constantly question definitions that appear to be rooted in nature, such as gender, race, and deviance, and explicate their socially constructed features (evident, for example, in the way definitions vary by time and place).

Professional sociology affects more than the place and content of teaching. It also offers standards for professional practice and accountability. A major example is the way “Professional sociology is accountable to peer review” (Burawoy 2005:16). One of the big debates in teaching currently is how to make it more accountable to peers. There are greater calls for professional practices in teaching, not only in sociology but in many academic subjects. Since teaching is often done away from the scrutiny of fellow professionals and since the principle “publics” for teaching are students who can assess only certain aspects (e.g., helpfulness, punctuality, enthusiasm, organization, responsiveness, and so forth), students may not be in the best position to assess the degree to which a course or a program represents various issues, approaches, or knowledge in a field. Also, while students may be able to say whether or not they like particular methods of teaching, they may not always be able to assess the effectiveness of various methods, at least in the short term.

Interviews with peer-recognized leaders in the field of sociology reveal that some feel a tension between what might be seen as a professional responsibility for teaching introductory sociology students something about the field of sociology, its history, major theories, and how it differs from other social and behavioral sciences, and, on the other hand, teaching students about society and/or social problems, which students might find more immediately engaging and useful (Persell, Pfeiffer, and Syed 2007). Some articulated this as a tension between seeing introductory courses as gateways and background for the major, in contrast to seeing them as a chance to recruit new students into sociology. Many sociology electives (e.g., social problems, family, education, inequality, gender, race, and others) serve dual purposes as gateways to a major and as “service” courses
for students who will never be majors. Such service enrollments are often important for the fiscal accounting increasingly imposed on academic departments. Moreover, even among majors, usually only a few are planning to study sociology in graduate school. Nevertheless, the “professional sociologist” in many teachers seems to think that even if few students go to graduate school, they should be prepared for the theory, methods, and substance they will encounter. This dilemma raises the question of who is our public in teaching sociology? To whom are we accountable? Our answers shape the learning goals and content of courses and curricula.

The pathology of professional sociology can become evident in teaching if instructors are so embedded within the subject that they are not able to explain clearly why a problem is important or how it connects to issues beyond the walls of academic sociology. When instructors can help learners connect the concepts, theories, and methods of sociology to their everyday lives, students are better able to understand and remember what they are learning. Probably all of us have had the experience of taking a course in a subject we thought would be fascinating, and then finding that the instructor spent all his/her time dissecting minute debates between scholars in the field, without ever connecting to larger issues. Professional sociology bases its legitimacy on adherence to scientific norms (according to Burawoy 2005: table 3), but that may be an inadequate basis for its legitimacy in teaching.

Critical Sociology

In relation to reflexive critical sociology, teaching faces additional dilemmas, including concern for sociology’s identity and public image (Boyns and Fletcher 2005), a tension between moral and scientific passions (Brint 2005), and the possibility that exposing ideological biases will limit its influence on publics (Turner 2005). Leaders placed critical thinking very high on their list of what students should understand, although they were not too explicit about what they meant by it and how it relates to critical sociology (Persell, Pfeiffer, and Syed 2007). Some of what the leaders mentioned includes the use of comparative and international examples and analyses particularly at the societal level, to show how things vary. Others mentioned the importance of students learning to question scientific knowledge and methods. However, if we use critical sociology to challenge the foundational basis of sociological knowledge, students may not take sociology seriously or believe the empirical findings that are reasonably reliable and valid. Critical sociology suggests that the legitimacy of sociology may be undermined if it fails to offer moral visions that go beyond scientific norms.

However, if we venture too far into normative truths, we make it difficult for students to identify the difference between normative and empirical
statements. If we offer a moral vision, they may reject it and simply choose an alternative moral vision. It may seem easier, more comfortable, and more defensible for many of us to say that learning sociology is like becoming familiar with the culture and mores of another society, and that we want them to learn this new way of thinking. On the other hand, if we neglect the moral visions of sociologists and the motivation to improve the world that brought many into the field, we risk giving students a desiccated version of sociology when they could have a juicy full meal. Reflecting on teaching, Burawoy notes that it is “as if graduate school is organized to winnow away at the moral commitments that inspired the interest in sociology in the first place” (Burawoy 2005:14). He seems to be suggesting that if there were some space for students’ moral commitments to exist within sociology, fewer students might be lost along the path to a Ph.D., with the further implication that sociology would be less likely to lose those with moral commitments. There are times, however, as Brint noted, when there is a conflict between what we learn and what we want to believe, leading to tension between our moral and scientific passions (2005:46). Neither Burawoy nor Brint discusses how to deal with such tensions.

While often seen as primarily concerned with critiquing existing policies, formulations, or practices, critical sociology can also offer positive alternatives, according to some scholars. Building on Sorokin’s thinking, Jeffries (2005) suggests considering notions of the good, something that is very consistent with Burawoy’s view that critical sociology “supply moral visions” to both the profession of sociology and society (2005:16). The “assessment of values is fundamental in evaluating what problems should be studied . . . and in justifying their relative importance” (Jeffries 2005:72). Sorokin suggests that sociological analysis could utilize “ideas from religious traditions pertaining to topics such as human nature, the characteristics of goodness and of perfection, the ends of human existence, and moral and ethical precepts” (Jeffries 2005:73), since they are especially relevant to the sociocultural level and to individual personality. As an example, Sorokin notes the importance of the sociological problem of solidarity and antagonism when he writes, had we the knowledge “to increase the familistic and eliminate the antagonistic from interpersonal and intergroup relationships” we might have been able to reduce or eliminate war, crime, coercion, compulsion, and misery. Such a statement seems to assume that crime, coercion, compulsion, and misery do not occur in families, an assumption that is seriously challenged by numerous conflict and feminist researchers studying the family. Similarly, when Sorokin suggested that “love is the heart and soul of ethical goodness itself and of all great religions” (Sorokin 1954a:79, cited in Jeffries 2005:75), is he failing to consider how often love is subverted or corrupted in many religious institutions and families, and how difficult it has been to realize in human practices?
Nevertheless, starting with values can lead to a focus on “the goodness of individuals, defined in terms of virtue and benevolent love . . . [and on] social solidarity, the manifestation of goodness in interaction.” This raises two general theoretical and research problems: “how culture and society influence individual goodness, and how individual goodness influences culture and society” (Jeffries 1999, 2005:76). Sorokin’s and Jeffries’s points raise the question of whether there is agreement on “the good,” but I think they might be pleased to see that question being debated. I wonder what they would think of Barrington Moore Jr.’s comment in *Reflections on the Causes of Human Misery and upon Certain Proposals to Eliminate Them* on how people might be more likely to agree on their conceptions of misery, but might disagree more in their conceptions of happiness. We might also wonder if happiness is equivalent to “the good.” How do we reconcile conditional, contingent, and contextual scientific thinking with normative and moral thinking? Can normative thinking get beyond either/or binaries and into more contextualized and nuanced ways of responding to the social world? Is it possible to suspend judgment while we try to find out what is actually happening? What about the human potential for evil as well as for good? How do societies and individuals protect against that? Who is involved in the definitions of good and evil, and their implementation in practice? To what degree should sociology be involved in such philosophical questions? If constructive critical sociology discussed these and similar questions it might help instructors bring notions of the good into their classrooms.

The pathology of critical sociology can certainly surface in teaching if classrooms or departments become dogmatic in their moral or normative beliefs and practices. A monochromatic climate will stifle inquiry and debate, make students who don’t share the “party line” feel unwelcome and drive them away. An additional drawback is that such an atmosphere, lacking sufficient challenges, is unlikely to sharpen and strengthen the quality of arguments and evidence offered to support the dominant position. I remember a student who was very outspoken in an introduction to sociology class when we were discussing the American Dream and social mobility. Not only did he believe that the system was open to anyone who worked hard, he was also convinced that there were no longer differences between men and women in terms of their occupations and earnings. In his group research project he investigated that topic and was very surprised to find that while younger men and women were becoming more similar with respect to occupations, their earnings were far from equal. He and the other students also became more sensitive to how men and women were distributed by particular occupations within the broader category of “professional and managerial workers.” The data clearly did not confirm his worldview. Perhaps because they found the data themselves and because he
was free to articulate an alternative hypothesis initially, he was convinced by what they found.

Policy Sociology

While professional and critical sociology usually exist within the academy, policy sociology and public sociology are less common there. One of the unexpected findings from the interviews with professional sociology leaders was the value a number placed on “improving the world.” They wanted their own sociological work to do this and they wanted to imbue students with the idea that sociology could and should be used to improve the world. Policy issues, for example, regarding the death penalty or legal options for abortion or stem cell research, may help students learn how to use empirical data to analyze possible costs and consequences of various social policies, as well as become better at identifying competing value claims, some of which cannot be adjudicated by empirical evidence. Policy sociology often legitimates itself in terms of whether the policies advocated are effective in accomplishing a stated goal. One major issue is who articulates that goal? Is it a particular client, who may have a specific perspective on the issue and one that may differ from those of other participants in the situation? Because policy sociologists may be relatively more dependent on the funding received from clients than academic sociologists are, they may be less able to resist restrictions on how studies are framed, who is included, or open publication of results. This is the only form of policy sociology articulated by Burawoy. However, some sociologists have initiated policy sociology by clearly identifying problems and presenting specific solutions to them, as Jeffries notes about the work of Sorokin, Yablonsky, and Jacobson (cited in Jeffries 2005:79–80). It is noteworthy that Sorokin held an academic post at Harvard, Yablonsky holds an academic position in the California State College System, and Jacobson worked in government and currently directs the Vera Institute for Justice, suggesting the importance of a relatively secure position for providing the relative autonomy and insulation from client pressures needed to initiate independent policy proposals.

Public Sociology

In one sense, all teaching is public sociology in that it is talking about sociology to non-sociologists. Instructors have considerable (although far from complete) freedom to decide what and how to teach in many of their courses. To what degree do they acquaint students with all four of the quadrants of sociology identified by Burawoy? Decisions about content have been supplemented by efforts to provide students with opportunities to learn more about public sociology by doing it in some form.
Since public sociology depends for legitimacy on its relevance, its risk of pathology comes from judging issues by their current trendiness, whether by virtue of being in the news or on afternoon talk shows. There, the quest for novelty may trump social significance, for example by ignoring how widespread or enduring a particular phenomenon is. There is the further risk that public sociology “can be held hostage to outside forces . . . [or] pander to and flatter its publics . . . thereby compromising professional and critical commitments” (Burawoy 2005:17). Besides the independent contributions each of the four types of practice may make individually, they may also interact with each other in interesting ways.

RELATIONSHIPS, TENSIONS, AND SYNERGIES WITHIN THE TYPOLOGY

Professional sociology can offer experience in using peer review as a way of setting standards and assessing quality that would be useful for teaching, public sociology, and policy sociology. For example, the rigorous standard of theoretically grounded and empirically validated knowledge raises the bar for assessing teaching effectiveness, potentially enhancing teaching and learning. For several years in this decade, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching ran summer workshops for faculty from a variety of fields (e.g., dance, law, pharmacy, political science, biology, chemistry, psychology, sociology, among others) who struggled to ascertain whether their approaches to teaching were helping students to learn, and why or why not. Both professional and policy sociologists have a battery of quantitative and qualitative research methods to study such questions.

The development of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) in sociology and other fields is one effort to make teaching more professional, in several senses. It focuses on making teaching public at least within the community of scholars so that it can be critiqued, improved, and ultimately validated by peer review. Making teaching public includes publishing thoughtful, annotated course syllabi online that explicate the rationale for organizing and constructing a course in a particular way, indicating what worked well and did not work as well, and suggesting ways of improving teaching in the future. Rather than being fixed, such a syllabus becomes a living, reflexive work in progress. Another direction is to encourage people to conduct systematic research on teaching and learning and to publish it in peer-reviewed journals.

While some sociologists have achieved fruitful synergies by using professional sociological concepts and perspectives to inform inquiries into teaching and learning (e.g., Benson et al. 2002; Billson 1986; Kain 2005; Rau and Heyl 1990; Wright et al. 2004), SoTL in sociology could even more
vigorously develop or apply sociological theories to teaching and learning. Many studies in *Teaching Sociology* focus on individual teaching, and sometimes learning, without always contextualizing that learning. Others have consciously discussed ways of bringing current professional sociological research into teaching (Atkinson, Czaja, and Brewster 2006; Bordt 2005; Cook 2005; Lee, Wrigley, and Dreby 2006; Purvin and Kain 2005).

It cannot only be because SoTL is an interdisciplinary field that sociological theory has not been used more, because another very interdisciplinary field, namely social gerontology, uses sociological theories (see Putney, Alley, and Bengston 2005). SoTL might incorporate more professional sociology by including issues in the political economy of education such as reductions in federal and state spending for higher education, growing state expenditures on prisons and incarceration compared to education, and how the rising costs of higher education are being passed on to families and students (Sacks 2007); by analyzing the absorption of corporate models and practices into higher education; or by studying social movements within higher education aimed at including new curricula in women’s studies, Black Studies, Asian-American Studies, or Queer Studies. Such developments could be related to learning goals, instructional practices, or student learning. Sociologists investigate colleges and universities as organizations, how environments and university managements affect new organizational contexts and forms, and how diversity in higher education affects social relationships. In my view, the scholarship of teaching and learning badly needs to stay connected with professional sociology and to engage in theoretical and methodological dialogues with it. When it does that, perhaps the total absence of citations to articles in *Teaching Sociology* in the *American Sociological Review*, noted by Purvin and Kain (2005), will change.

Some might include within the purview of critical sociology such educational works as Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*; Lisa Delpit’s “The Silenced Dialogue: Power and Pedagogy in Educating Other People’s Children”; bell hooks’s *Teaching to Transgress*; and Berenice Malka Fisher’s *No Angel in the Classroom: Teaching through Feminist Discourse*. These are powerful, emotionally, and morally moving works. How can they inspire new research about teaching and learning or about professional sociology? They might be brought into fruitful dialogue with insights from professional sociology, such as the social psychological research of Cohen and Lotan (1997) and Skvoretz, Webster, and Whitmeyer (1999) on how status and power differentials among individuals affect interactions in group tasks.

**How Might Each Form of Practice Influence the Others in Teaching?**

If critical, policy, and public sociology were brought into the teaching of professional sociology, how might it change? If critical sociology were a
stronger presence in professional sociology graduate study, would it change what was presented to students, even as examples of professional sociology? This is an interesting question that could be empirically studied if departments with strong programs in critical sociology could be found and compared with departments with weak or non-existent critical sociology programs. Are there differences in how professional sociology is taught in the two types of settings? The question of how a strong presence of critical sociology affects students’ levels of interest is more difficult to address because of possible confounding from the self-selection of students into programs with particular characteristics. However, one could investigate the question of what types of students are attracted to which kinds of programs.

Even without such empirical studies, some mix of professional sociology, with its relatively orthodox “normal” science paradigms, and critical sociology that steps out of those intellectual boxes to examine the epistemological and normative assumptions of professional sociology could very well benefit a new generation of thinkers who might make major innovations in our field and beyond. Acquainting students with professional sociology, critical sociology, policy, and public sociology may be somewhat analogous to learning different types of dance steps, for example, the Waltz and Foxtrot (although both were somewhat revolutionary in their time) which are more prescriptive and formed compared to the Monkey or other contemporary dance forms which are more open-ended. Each of these dances is relevant for different purposes and in different contexts. Would our students be better prepared if they understood and appreciated a broader range of sociologies, like the cultural omnivores identified by Peterson and Kern (1996)?

Most students need to see a broader spectrum of the social world, especially those who have grown up in communities relatively segregated by color, class, or ethnicity. To the degree that sociology students can get out of the academy to do some form of policy or public sociology, they will bring more diverse social experiences and observations to their study of professional sociology.

Some instructors make a point of not only telling their students about the existence of policy and public sociology, but provide opportunities to do them. For example, one of the peer-recognized leaders described the following project he had his students do:

We did statewide surveys in Pennsylvania with a sample of 2000 to 3000 people. Each student in the class had to interview 35–40 people, although some did as many as 75 or 80. Some students went with me to Harrisburg to present the findings to the state government. When Governor Ridge was there, he generally liked the surveys. We did questions on issues the legislature was debating. We worked with the Pennsylvania Education Association, a state
environmental group, or other state agencies to get enough support to pay the telephone bill and pay for the report. The deal we made was that we would release all our findings; they could not restrict or suppress any of them. We were doing it as a public service. We got about a 30% response rate which was helped by the students doing the calling who told people they had to do the interviews for the course. They did some pre-election surveys that predicted the winners of the national elections very closely. They never missed in their predictions. That gained credibility for their surveys. (Persell, Pfeiffer, and Syed 2008)

By doing this, students were able to learn a great deal about the concrete, pragmatic, and potentially effective nature of one type of policy sociology, namely opinion research on current issues. They dealt with clients (or sponsors) and learned something about how instrumental knowledge generated by sociological methods could enter the public arena and be viewed as legitimate because it was accurate.

Another professor had students in a research methods course do a qualitative and quantitative study about student satisfaction on campus, based on a random sample of students. Together the entire class of about 25 students wrote the final report, which included tables and qualitative interview results. The report was sent to the department chair and undergraduate dean on the campus. While technically in that case the dean was not the “client,” the students did feel that they were doing something real that might have an impact on college policy and practice in the future. They also learned a lot about how to do surveys and interviews. The way these projects were structured avoided the potential pathology of policy sociology, namely of being “captured by clients who impose strict contractual obligations on their funding” (Burawoy 2005:17).

Other professors have students do public sociology. Several leaders encourage students to work with one or more local grassroots social movements. While not the same as public sociology, many sociology programs have instituted service learning as either a requirement or an option within the major. Service learning gets students out of the classroom into a variety of public settings, where they can begin to talk with and hopefully understand the perspectives of a wider range of people than they have previously met. Others, for example, Edna Bonacich (2005:113) involve students in multi-faceted projects that have clear research and action implications. She says she tries to “inject a ‘Marxist’ understanding into research and discussions.” By this she means considering such questions as: “What are the underlying power relations? What are the major economic interests? How does the capitalist system shape social policy? How are people and communities, especially racialized groups, hurt by these policies? What community organizations have formed to combat them, and how can we help them?” (Bonacich 2005:113).
Within classrooms there are many opportunities for students (and instructors) to practice developing communicative knowledge and consensus building. Many instructors have used collaborative and cooperative research projects with the express goal of helping students to understand they can learn from the knowledge of others and to see how knowledge is built by moving toward consensus about values, warranted methods of obtaining information, and provisional understandings.

In my own teaching, when I ask students to point out what they don’t understand in a reading, I learn from them. For example, I wrote in a scholarly paper that several research studies have found that when you control for seven socioeconomic factors, the black-white gap in test scores disappears. When questioned by my students I learned the importance of adding “statistically control for” to indicate that there was not yet a situation (or a program) that I know of in the United States where the gap has disappeared, since the control factors (including wealth, birth weight, age of mother at birth, parental education, occupation, and income) are all correlated with race.

Dialogue with more broadly defined publics may also be built into certain assignments. For example, Eileen Baumann and Richard Mitchell had students conduct research on the amount of violence on TV. Besides writing up the results of their research, the students were required to write a letter to the editor of a local newspaper and to a television network president reporting on the results of their research and indicating how they felt about those results. Graduate courses on writing sociology and the American Sociological Association’s recently inaugurated award for “Excellence in the Reporting of Social Issues” also illustrate efforts to improve the communication of professional sociology’s insights.

How might professional, policy, and public sociology influence the teaching of critical sociology? Professional sociology might ask sociology of knowledge research questions about critical sociology, such as under what social conditions is critical sociology more or less likely, more or less isolated, or more or less likely to fall prey to pathologies? Public and policy sociology might press to include examples from their work in the teaching of critical sociology, to illustrate the kinds of critical concerns that could be raised. Each of these three forms of practice might ask of critical sociology, “what difference does it make for what we do?” For example, do values change the research questions we ask, how we conduct research, or teaching practices? How do we keep our values from biasing how we do research?

Professional, critical, and public sociology might also interrogate policy sociology. Are policies or policy makers taking too narrow a view of the issues at hand? Are there relevant theories that might illuminate the phenomenon? Can theoretical questions be addressed by a particular policy study? Are the research methods flawed or biased? Are key constituencies
being ignored? Will a given policy benefit some publics more than others? When policy is taught, perspectives from other forms of practice need to be included. For example, when military sociologists help the U.S. Army accomplish military goals, professional sociology might ask what new knowledge could be generated here? Critical and public sociologists might question whether sociological knowledge should be used to help one group in a conflict harm members of another group. Thus, instruction could include raising a broader set of theoretical and ethical questions, as well as policy concerns.

Professional, critical, and policy practices can influence public sociology. If we take the case of teaching as a form of public sociology, we see that considerable thought has gone into bringing more professional sociology into teaching, so that students can know more about sociological research. Examples beyond those discussed above include the experimental use of issues of Contexts in teaching and the recent publication of a Contexts reader for teaching. Critical perspectives and practices might seek to elevate the value placed on teaching and the place of values in teaching. A policy perspective might call for more research on the effectiveness of various methods of teaching, and might suggest a variety of methods for assessing efficacy.

How Might Critical, Policy, and Public Sociology Influence the Teaching of Professional Sociology?

Professional sociology might ask critical sociology to bring their discussions about the good to the formulation of existing or future research questions and to the shaping of course content. Policy sociologists might press professional sociologists about the policy implications of their work, and ask that they bring such concerns into their teaching, particularly if they are teaching in a law, business, education, public policy, medical, or other professional school.

Does bringing all four forms of sociological practice into the teaching of professional sociology require curricular change? Some of the incorporations described occur within existing classes, whether in research methods, social problems, or topics courses. Others involve additional curricular components such as internships or service learning (more likely in undergraduate programs). Should there be formal courses or programs in critical sociology, policy sociology, or public sociology? In the 2007 ASA Guide to Graduate Departments of Sociology, only 11 departments (eight in the United States) indicate a specialty in Policy Analysis/Public Policy and one of these is in criminology only (according to Jeffries 2007). Some universities, for example, Columbia, have organized extracurricular seminars that bring together academics, policy makers, and community practitioners to discuss issues of common concern.
One way to begin approaching the issue of curricula might be to collect syllabi, exercises, and other teaching materials being used in existing courses and programs in critical, policy, and public sociology, and get them published by the Teaching Resources Center of the American Sociological Association. In the early years of sociology, course syllabi were published in the American Journal of Sociology in an effort to share curricular content. Before it is likely that there would be significant curricular changes in graduate departments of sociology, I think it would be important to have a critical mass of existing courses, scholarly materials, and teaching resources, as well as visible career paths for students pursuing such specialties.

CONCLUSION

Teaching may be the most frequently practiced form of public sociology. As a consequence, it behooves us to be mindful of how and what we teach and who are our publics. Michael Burawoy’s articulation of four types of sociology raises a series of questions and issues for the teaching of sociology, including what should be taught both to undergraduates and graduates and how professional, critical, policy, and public sociology might enrich each other and the teaching of sociology. If we introduce students to all four forms of sociology we are likely to reach more publics. We can enhance teaching and learning by using professional, critical, and policy perspectives to interrogate them. Doing this may suggest potential curricular changes. Continuing to explore the four forms of sociological practice discussed here has the potential to affect the future of both teaching and public sociology.

REFERENCES


IV

THE PRACTICE OF ORGANIC PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY: CASE STUDIES
From Data to Drama: Returning Research to Convicted Survivors

Elizabeth Dermody Leonard

This essay describes the sociological journey of my exploration of the links between the private troubles of women in prison for the death of their abusers and the public issues surrounding their lives and cases. The research began in the world of professional sociology, evolved into organic public sociology as well as into a form of policy sociology, while critical sociology informed its evolution. Burawoy captures this trajectory in his observation: “Not only individuals but research too can have its own moral career. Most articles published in scientific journals die a silent death, but occasionally they are picked up and develop a life of their own” (2004:1610). This professional sociological study of convicted survivors made a rare journey from data to drama, generating a play, Life without Parole.

Just as professional sociology can translate into public sociology, so too public sociology can make its way into other disciplines. For instance, a vignette from the play appears in Young Women’s Monologs from Contemporary Plays: Professional Auditions for Aspiring Actresses (Ratliff 2004). The play was central to the doctoral dissertation of a university colleague (English 2006). The study has inspired one filmmaker to begin production on a documentary about Convicted Women Against Abuse (CWAA) and its members (Klaus 2007) and another to begin filming a documentary on the research and its evolution into the play (Reynolds in production).

Michael Burawoy’s 2004 ASA presidential address (Burawoy 2005a) describes a four-part typology in the division of sociological labor—professional, policy, public, and critical sociologies—each with its own motivation and audience. Professional sociology is scientific, peer-reviewed, and knowledge-accumulating. Policy sociologists focus on identifying and/or solving problems for clients. Public sociology is the extra-academic face of
sociology, which engages various publics in a reciprocal relationship. Critical sociology is the discipline’s conscience, supplying value perspectives and critiques of the other types of sociology. Burawoy sees these four types as complementary and interdependent: “Without a professional sociology, there can be no policy or public sociology, but nor can there be a critical sociology—for there would be nothing to criticize” (2005a:15). Moreover, “In practice, any given piece of sociology can straddle these ideal types or move across them over time” (Burawoy 2005a:11).

A report by the ASA Task Force on Institutionalizing Public Sociology argues, “Sociology as a discipline has never fully developed its promise to apply the tools and knowledge of sociology beyond the academy” (2005:3). Accordingly, they recommend,

Given both the public sources of our knowledge and the potential for sociological research to address a broad array of social problems, we have an obligation to the public around us. As a discipline we need to communicate our findings beyond the walls of academia. We need to make sure that valuable knowledge does not remain locked up in academic journals read by a few hundred scholars, but rather we need to make sure that valuable knowledge gets distributed to a broad audience so it has maximum impact. (p. 29)

It had been my intention to conduct doctoral research on an issue related to child sexual abuse and to pursue my work with this population. However, a summer job as a research assistant with a team studying California’s women prisoners (Owen and Bloom 1995) completely derailed that plan, sending me on an unforeseen journey with research on battered women who kill—research that has taken on a life of its own. At this point, I had no particular interest in prison or prisoners, or in what I still labeled “women’s issues,” my focus on abused children occupying my mind and passions.

One of my tasks as a research assistant with Owen and Bloom that summer was to compile an inventory of correctional programs by conducting on-site visits to all the state prisons for women in California. It was fascinating to observe the diverse and numerous program offerings (vocational, educational, therapeutic, etc.) and interview staff and participants. On one particular June day, I sat in a prison classroom in order to acquaint myself with an institutional program designed to enhance an inmate’s life skills, personal development, and self-esteem. In one of life’s pivotal moments, the class curriculum was set aside that day to allow three “in-house” guest presenters—women who had come to teach their sister inmates about domestic violence, their own lives serving as cautionary tales. Each woman recounted a horror story—situations of severe abuse and terror at the hands of intimate partners, attempts at self-rescue and escape, botched institutional responses, and finally, the death of their abusers and the legal consequences. All three women were serving life sentences, despite what
appeared to be a mountain of mitigating circumstances. Their stories affected me deeply. Years later, the thoughts and emotions of that day are easily recalled: disbelief, outrage, confusion, sadness, and determination to learn more about the phenomenon of battered women who kill.

If these accounts were true (despite my emotional reaction, the sociologist within me could not take the stories at face value), were they anomalies or did they represent a problematic pattern? Who are these women, what might be learned from their experiences, and what do their cases mean for the criminal justice system? As Burawoy contends, “at the heart of sociology must lie a concern for society as such, the protection of those social relations through which we recognize each other as humans” (2006:1). Thus, I resolved to explore the lives and cases of convicted survivors for my doctoral research, not realizing the study and its effects would continue long past the conferral of the Ph.D. The research, then, began in the realm of professional sociology.

PROFESSIONAL SOCIOLOGY: DATA

I began the research by attending twice-monthly meetings of Convicted Women Against Abuse (CWAA), an inmate-led group for battered women at the California Institution for Women (CIW). Brenda Clubine, who serves a 15-years-to-life sentence for killing her abusive husband, founded the group at CIW in 1989 with 12 other women with similar convictions. It has since grown to a membership of nearly 50 inmates. CWAA provides a place for women to talk about their previous victimization, their legal cases, pending legislation, court rulings, and their experiences with the parole board. From the outset CWAA members expressed support for the research project. Eventually, the majority became participants and would later recruit non-members for the study as well, resulting in a purposive and snowball sample. During the first six months of group observation and listening prior to initiating interviews, I realized that many of the women skirted the deeper traumatic events; some asked for help in getting at repressed memories of events they would be compelled to discuss in future parole board hearings.

This sample is not generalizable because it was and continues to be impossible to create a random sample of incarcerated battered women who kill. No one knows for sure how many women are in prison for killing their abusers. Current estimates range from 800 to 4,500 (Leonard 2002). However, the study’s robust size of 42 subjects allows significant insight into the lives and cases of battered women who kill.

Once the interviews began, I realized, to my surprise, that this represented the first opportunity for most to talk freely about their experiences. Constructing their stories from childhood to incarceration provided many with a greater
understanding of the links among events, where previously they had not seen clear connections. Donna explains her reaction to the interview process:

It is always hard to put yourself back in time and relive the hell of the past, but it must be done. You have been a great help to me. After the interview, I realized that by telling someone you trust, it becomes easier. I understood things so much better and came away from the interview a new woman. Why should I be ashamed and embarrassed telling the truth? I wasn’t out to kill my husband. I was trying to survive and save the lives of my children. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to feel free inside and start turning my life around. I didn’t want to face up to the truth, thinking I would be ashamed. You have put this behind me and now it is definitely time for me to go forward and learn to love myself and work on freedom.

Ruth states:

When that list came around, I started to pass it along. Then I said, no, it’s about time that I let somebody else know what went on, and maybe one, just one thing that I said, one thing that I do can make somebody else get out of a relationship. If it only helps one person, that’s enough.

Defining Categories

As part of their work, sociologists define categories and sub-categories. As the women’s narrative themes emerged and a tentative profile formed, the contours of the “human category” of convicted survivors took clearer shape. Their own words illustrate recurrent themes or categories of experience that precede as well as follow the homicide.

Minimizing

Despite a great deal of self-education, support group discussion, and reflection on the events that led to incarceration, women repeatedly minimize the severity and significance of their maltreatment. When asked if the abuse continued during her pregnancies, a mother of two daughters answered in the negative. Later she comments that her husband continually hit her in the head throughout both pregnancies. How did she explain her earlier denial? “I didn’t consider it hitting because it was above the neck!”

Forgetting

Along with the defense mechanism of minimizing, a woman held hostage sometimes forgets violent events. One woman describes memory gaps filled in by her children: “My attorney . . . talked mostly to my daughters.
Most information he got, he got from them about the abuse, and incidents that had took place, because there were some that I didn’t remember.” Another woman tells of her daughter’s recollection: “She said, ‘Daddy was mad and threw the mirror and the mirror broke, and he had a knife at your throat.’ I didn’t even remember it . . . until she brought it up.”

Self-Identity

Many respondents report that, during their abusive relationships, regardless of severity, they did not consider themselves battered women. For many, the first awareness that they had been victims of domestic violence came as they attended support group meetings in prison and heard others relate nearly identical events and reactions. “My idea of myself changed through a lot of different women told the same things I was—fat, ugly, stupid, a slut, a tramp, a whore. I came to the realization that mine wasn’t unique. I could identify myself as a battered woman within about a year.” In contrast, some disavowed being a victim of domestic violence out of fear: “Because if someone asked me, even on the phone, [he] would find out. I don’t know how he would find out, but I was scared.”

Law Enforcement

In the majority of cases under examination, women sought help from law enforcement to stop their partner’s violence. While many improvements in police response have been made since many of these homicides occurred, all too often domestic violence victims are left to fend for themselves. In at least two instances, police had been at the home earlier on the day of the homicide. One woman called the police “many, many, many times. . . . He’d just tried to shoot me earlier that afternoon. I called the police. ‘What do you want us to do, lady? It’s his house. We can’t get him out.’” Another reports: “police heard him threatening to kill me. His hands were on my throat and his knee on my chest when they broke into the house and pulled him off me. He was not arrested. He was walked around the corner and taken to his parents’ house.” Not all victims call on law enforcement. “I never called the police. . . . He told me if I ever told he’d hurt me worse than I had ever been hurt in my whole life.”

Gender

Women who have been hurt and humiliated by male partners find it very difficult, perhaps impossible, to disclose to male law enforcement, male investigators, male attorneys, and male psychologists the painful physical, emotional, and/or sexual abuse that ends in homicide. A 25-to-lifer states,
“I couldn’t talk to the lawyer or the police about the rapes and the sexual abuse because they were all males. Maybe if there had been a woman to talk to.”

Medications

A recurrent criticism of the jail experience of many women during the adjudication process is the overprescription of psychotropic drugs—anti-depressants and mood-regulators, including such powerful agents as Lithium, Haldol, Stellazine, and Thorazine, often in combination with other drugs. The administration of these drugs occurs with no mental health testing, diagnosis, or history. While some women were successful in refusing jail medications, all too often the drugs negatively affect the self-presentation of defendants during trial. Serving 17-years-to-life, a woman states, “I fell asleep seven times during the trial.” A woman with a master’s degree in English observes, “I was a zombie. They said I was cold and remorseless, not showing any emotion . . . the meds made me inarticulate.”

Trials

Mitigating and exculpatory information often fails to surface during the homicide trials of abused women. The reputation of a violent man is protected at the expense of a just legal defense. Common observations include: “We couldn’t say anything about the threats. Every time we tried to get anything in, it was dismissed because [he] was the victim. And he was dead.” “[My attorney] told me I could never bring up anything about the abuse in the trial because it would give them a motive.” “During the penalty phase my attorney got a lot of people to testify on my behalf and afterwards, one of the jurors said that if she would have heard that during the trial she would have never found me guilty.” “They overlooked the abuse.” “The medical records [of the abuse] were there but the only medical records that were actually entered as evidence were the statements from the emergency room where I had signed that I didn’t want to prosecute. I didn’t sign because I was afraid.” Thus, documenting abuse provides no guarantee that judges and juries will be made aware of the woman’s victimization.

When law enforcement response appears ineffectual or women are too afraid to call 911, these victims of severe violence resign themselves to being killed or having to kill to survive. In the cases under review, officers of the court systematically decontextualize the woman’s self-defense from her partner’s ongoing violence and threats. With alarming frequency, women are denied the opportunity to present their stories along with corroborating evidence. Thus, their trials produce distorted and inaccurate pictures of homicide events and women’s motives. As a result, battered women who kill to survive and/or to protect their children’s lives receive guilty verdicts and long, harsh sentences.
As I explored interview data and interacted with convicted survivors, I came to appreciate the power of their narrative accounts. Over the years, I have communicated research findings in professional meetings, conferences, and classrooms, reporting demographic information and comparisons with other women inmates. I share recurrent themes that emerge in their accounts, integrating quotes from the interviews. Without fail, women’s narratives evoke strong, even visceral reactions among diverse audiences—sociologists, criminologists, attorneys, students, community groups, and others. To illustrate, the following excerpt provides a glimpse into the lives of convicted survivors.

Rosemary, serving life without parole, was 24 when she met her 27-year-old husband-to-be. Dating was wonderful; after the wedding, things were not so wonderful:

Direct attempts on my life? Like when he held me down and choked me, left marks on me? Or I’d wake up in the middle of the night with a gun pointed at my head. Or him sticking a gun in my mouth and threatening to pull the trigger. Digging a hole on our property, telling me it was my grave, and that he wouldn’t be guilty of murder because he wouldn’t kill me before he put me in it. Threats against my family. When I did manage to get the guts to leave him, I had $3 in my pocket. I went to the bus station and the bus station wasn’t open. I sat around outside the building, waiting for the bus to come so I could go in and get a ticket to wherever the money would take me. And the bus didn’t come. And it didn’t come. And then I heard the truck. I heard the horn honk. He knew I was there. He knew I was there. He always knew everything. He knew what I was thinking. He always knew what I was going to do before I did it. Outside the bus station he never said anything to me; he just kept honking the horn until I finally came around, and he went like this with his finger for me to come to him. He took me home and he scared me because he wasn’t screaming; he wasn’t hollering; he wasn’t throwing; and he didn’t hit me. I didn’t understand that. I understood him hitting me and screaming and yelling. But I didn’t understand the silence. We drove home and we sat in the truck and I sat there waiting. I kept hoping he would hurry up and get out so I could get out. I was not allowed to exit the truck unless he got out first. I had to have permission to leave his presence or that was insulting him; that was disrespecting him. I sat there waiting and waiting. We must have sat there 20 minutes before he ever uttered a word. He finally told me, “Next time, I will not come after you.” Very calmly, quietly. I thought to myself, “He’s going to admit that it’s over.” I said, “Can we get help? You willing to try one more time, and if it doesn’t work, you’ll let me go?” He said, “I never said I’d let you go.” I was, “But you said you wouldn’t come after me again.” He said, “Not like this. You’ll come back to me begging me on your hands and knees for me to take you back.” I looked at him and said, “whatever makes you think that if I managed to get away from you that I’d come back to you, let alone on my hands and knees?” He turned to look at me and I saw the evil. And he told
me, “Trust me, you’ll beg me.” He sat and described to me what he would do to my mother, my grandparents. He told me he would continue on with each member of my family until I came to him, begging him to stop. I knew that I would never get away. I believed he was capable of doing what he said he was going to do. I believed it without any doubts. He always did everything he said was going to do to me. The sexual abuse got worse. He started using foreign objects. He used a gun on me rectally. A loaded gun. I remember begging him to pull the trigger. So I wouldn’t have to suffer anymore. He said that was too easy. Told me it was too easy.

While each woman’s story is unique, all the stories are equally compelling. All things considered, the lives of convicted survivors are not unlike a Shakespearean tragedy, full of real-life suspense, hope, drama, and anguish. It seemed regrettable to limit their impact to the world of professional sociology—annual meetings, journal articles, textbooks, and so forth when so many others could benefit from hearing these accounts. Taking it to other publics beyond the world of professional sociology would allow incarcerated women’s voices, at least, to be free and effective and to bring the invisible into view. Making visible the invisible and moving the private into public view is fundamental to public sociology (Burawoy 2005a).

Considering the trajectory of the research on convicted survivors, I appreciate our discipline’s current attention to public sociology. Burawoy states, “Public sociology aims to enrich public debate about moral and political issues by infusing them with sociological theory and research” (2004:1); “part of our business as sociologists is to define human categories—people with AIDS, women with breast cancer . . . and if we do so with their collaboration, we create publics” (2005a:8). Further, public sociology “engages publics beyond the academy in dialogue about matters of political and moral concern. It has to be relevant to such publics without being faddish” (2004:1607). My work and its evolution shows convicted survivors to be a human category that has become one of the publics to whom the work would be returned.

Burawoy claims, “There can be neither policy nor public sociology without a professional sociology that supplies true and tested methods, accumulated bodies of knowledge, orienting questions, and conceptual frameworks” (2005a:10). This clearly holds in the case of my research on incarcerated battered women. As a professional sociologist, I wrote a dissertation, a book, several journal articles, and gave many scholarly presentations. However, this work was destined not to remain solely in the domain of professional sociology.

Clearly, the articulate and instructive voices of battered women in prison could be made more effective by sharing them with a broader audience. As
Blau and Smith observe, “There are abundant reasons why public sociologists might consider the arts as playing an important role in community projects, in the classroom, and in their own conceptual work” (2006:xix). Realizing the value and dramatic power of their stories, a playwright colleague, Professor Warren Doody, and I began to discuss the possibility of a play about convicted survivors. After reading my book (Leonard 2002), attending a CWAA meeting, and discussing it with group members, he began writing. With permission from interviewees, he integrated direct quotes into his work, reframed through composite characters to remove any identifying markers. The result is the play Life without Parole. Set in one lifer’s parole hearing, multiple stories intertwine as the characters of five inmates powerfully convey the realities of women’s pain, fear, loss, and sense of betrayal by the very social institutions expected to provide them support—family, faith communities, health providers, and the law. The links between the private troubles and public issues of convicted survivors gain clarity as the drama unfolds.

To date the play has raised funds for battered women’s shelters in several states, and British Columbia, has provided education for advocates of convicted survivors, and has been performed by several universities to raise awareness on intimate partner violence. The playwright also adapted his work into a screenplay, which won an award for best original screenplay at the 2005 Worldfest Houston Film Festival.

A New Public

According to Burawoy, “we are more than ready to embark on a systematic back-translation, taking knowledge back to those from whom it came, making public issues out of private troubles” (2005a:5). One January evening, women from my study and other CWAA members filed into CIW’s Visitor Center to hear their own words come back to them as actors on a makeshift stage presented a professional reading of Life without Parole. Here indeed is a public “outside academia.” That night, convicted survivors looked on as pieces of their own stories unfolded; they reacted with silence, tears, gasps of recognition, and even a few laughs. Non-study audience members recognized their own experiences, violence by intimate partners providing the common language. At times, an inmate would identify an incident, a phrase, a circumstance peculiar to her situation. Her eyes would find mine (I watched for reactions) and with a stricken, tearful glance she would invariably mouth an emotional “thank you!” as she turned back to the production.

With the play’s conclusion, prisoners, actors, playwright, and researcher entered into a rich dialogue about what each had just experienced. Questions and answers, comments and mutual appreciations were exchanged,
strong emotions felt and expressed by all. One woman observed, “You did my story well, and for a moment, I wasn’t ashamed of being here. . . . It hurts less now, my level of shame, and I think now that I am going to be all right” (Frith 2004).

And the story is not over. Recently, the playwright, cast, this researcher, and two documentary film crews found ourselves again at the California Institution for Women. The institution had welcomed us back to use the recently remodeled gym/auditorium to present *Life without Parole* to the general population of prisoners. The room overflowed with an animated crowd of 425 denim-clad women—chairs were filled, floor space at a premium. Silence descended as the actors took their positions and read their parts. A few women left early, weeping; others placed an arm around distressed neighbors who were remembering their own experiences; an occasional angry face turned to another to share a particular outrage; laughter erupted over familiar prison realities. Their standing ovation at the end of the play moved the actors deeply.

One goal of public sociology is to facilitate dialogue (Burawoy 2005a). Beyond the initial impact of *Life without Parole* on this particular public, I sought to understand their thoughts on the efficacy and value of the play. As engaging in dialogue with prisoners was problematic due to the constraints of correctional institutions and the logistics of this event, I utilized a four-question survey. Most audience members remained in the auditorium after the play to record their reactions. Common responses are as follows:

**Question 1:** How does this play help people to understand the truth of domestic violence and the women’s violent reaction to that abuse?

This play using words and emotions that truly express the deep-rooted feeling that many of us have from our own abusive situations. It gives a “true” representation of the scope of this issue and its consequences.

It tells it like it is—the reality, the confusion, the anger, the despair. I’ve lived through every single bit of it—and now I’m in prison. I called the police to help me and they just kept arresting me. Now I tell people—I didn’t get arrested, I got rescued!

This play allows women to know that they are not alone. There are many others unvalued in abusive relationships. It also helps women. I know there is no need to be ashamed for anything. It also allows many people to see there are many sick individuals out there.

**Question 2:** In what ways has this play affected you?

This play affected me so deeply that I couldn’t stay to the end. After seven years of incarceration it’s overwhelming to see a play that reflects my life so closely.

It has allowed me to realize I no longer have to be a victim. My life doesn’t have to be ruled by my boyfriend anymore. I am aware of red flags and my relationship and life today is at risk if I go home to the same thing.

Not only did I see myself as being abused I also realize that I’ve shown signs of being an abuser.
I’ve been in those shoes but I didn’t kill my husband/abuser. I stayed in that situation for 8½ years. After I almost lost my life—my son shot and killed him. My son was acquitted.

Question 3: Who should see this play? Why?
I think people in authority should see this; especially those who make decisions over women who are incarcerated for life due to being battered.

The cops! Because they do nothing.
The men’s prisons. It could save their lives.
Perhaps in educational settings or peer groups in the public school system. To help children and teens become more aware at an earlier age as prevention. . . . Also public television to bring more awareness and education and to supply help for those who want it. Legislature or persons involved in making or enacting laws.

Everyone! To educate people in general to remove the silence and the stigma associated with domestic violence.

My baby’s dad because he beats me and makes me feel like killing him.

Question 4: Is there anything else you would like to tell us about the play and its presentation at CIW?
I enjoyed it. It was played out exactly how it is in life. The victim of the crime suffers here and that is sad—I think everyone’s case should be looked into carefully. There’s reasons behind women being in prisons—sometimes life isn’t fair. Thank you for your time and listening to what we need to say. HELP.

Thank you for making me more aware of my predicament and my dilemma. If I allow this to continue him or I might end up dead or in prison for the rest of our lives. God bless you.

Powerful stage presentation! The “black and white” set creates clarity and focus on the emotion highlights, the variety of abuse, and it magnifies the impact of the system during incarceration, court hearings and the disgusting and disrespecting treatment of women in prison. The women who have endured many years in prison and know that what they did to protect themselves have a kind of “peace” knowing that the prison here is much better than the prison they lived in while being abused—not a reasonable trade-off but it represents a kind of “rescue” from the hell they lived in prior to their incarceration. I am not a lifer, but I see the really good women who need to go home and have a chance to experience life again, a peaceful life with their children and parents—to be forgiven and understood. This will not happen until we educate our society. There are 100s of people experiencing abuse every day—and the local police officers cannot fix the problems. It’s about empowering women to make good choices and develop inner strength to get out of bad relationships before they are driven crazy (and everything in between) and to prison.

This “public” of women prisoners reveals the impact of transforming data to drama and they provide a real litmus test for the integrity of Life without Parole. Moreover, convicted survivors, the source of my research, maintain that their lives have been validated by the process of transforming sociological research into art. They expressed the hope that their words would be heard
outside prison walls, bringing awareness and help to battered women living in the prison-like atmosphere of violent relationships. Indeed, the voices of convicted survivors are important—they are also the voices of the thousands of American women who do not survive that final violent assault.

**ORGANIC PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY**

Burawoy (2005) differentiates between two types of public sociology—traditional and organic. In brief, the traditional form includes classroom teaching and writing for public rather than academic audiences. Organic public sociology is defined as the type “in which the sociologist works in close connection with a visible, thick, active, local and often counterpublic. . . . The project of such public sociologies is to make visible the invisible, to make the private public, to validate these organic connections as part of our sociological life” (Burawoy 2005a:7, 8).

As it engages publics beyond the academy, this sociology-as-drama exemplifies organic public sociology that addresses the moral and political, revealing the link between private troubles and public issues. Former president of Ireland and former United Nations high commissioner for human rights Mary Robinson was a featured speaker at ASA’s 2004 meeting in San Francisco, where she urged sociologists to

> add to your analyses a human rights lens, and to identify human rights violations when they are such. I am not talking here about war crimes, crimes against humanity, or other international-level infractions—as important as they are to confront—but rather the things close to home: the human rights violations occurring here in the United States, as elsewhere, and to which we are all exposed daily. (Robinson 2004:10)

The research revealed and the play expresses numerous violations of convicted survivors’ human rights. This dramatic form of organic public sociology has helped to penetrate those barriers and bring convicted survivors into the public arena.

**POLICY SOCIOLOGY**

Burawoy’s “division of labor” matrix distinguishes policy sociology from public sociology, both of which depend on professional sociology for their “legitimacy and expertise” (2005a:10).

Policy sociology’s *raison d’être* is to provide solutions to problems that are presented to us, or to legitimate solutions that have already. . . . The approaches
of public and policy sociology are neither mutually exclusive nor even antagonistic. . . . Policy sociology can turn into public sociology. . . . Equally, public sociology can often turn into policy sociology. (2005a:9, 10)

While my work did not begin in the policy matrix, it has been utilized by policy makers. Here I present examples of the ways in which this research has journeyed into the policy realm and offer policy recommendations derived from study findings.

Dr. Nancy Lemon of UC Berkeley’s Boalt Hall School of Law used study findings to amend state legislation, which sought to modify parent-child visitation rights at penal institutions where a parent was serving time for a crime against the other parent—the law now allows consideration for convicted survivors. In the 1999 report *The Abuse of Women Prisoners in the US*, Amnesty International cited the research finding on the crippling misuse of psychotropic drugs on convicted survivors as their cases were being adjudicated—clearly a violation of human rights.

The State of California Legislative Committee on Prison Construction and Operations invited me to present my research findings for their hearings on women inmates. Based on that presentation, investigators from the California Board of Parole Hearings opened new investigations on the validity of abuse as context for homicide by women whose cases occurred before 1992, investigations that have become part of prisoners’ case files, including women in my study. These investigative findings have been instrumental in supporting successful writs of habeas corpus, and several women have won their freedom among whom were study participants.

While the past three decades have seen improvements in services for victims of domestic violence, the need for further changes in public policies and attitudes that act upon private lives is clear. Research findings point to a number of recommendations (see Leonard 2003), several of which I highlight below.

**Homicide Prosecution**

When women find no legal way to stop life-threatening violence, and they use their own agency to end it, the criminal justice system punishes them severely. Their lethal actions can be understood only when placed within the context of ongoing victimization and lack of outside help. Yet, repeatedly, their trials and plea bargains omit evidence of their injuries and fear as well as their partners’ violence, stalking, and threats. This produces an inaccurate picture, lacking the self-defensive motivation of women’s actions. Thus, battered women who kill are placed in the same category as drive-by shooters and other dangerous criminal offenders, although they are highly unlikely to have any history of criminal or violent behavior (Browne 1987; Leonard
When prosecutors file homicide charges, abused women’s self-protective acts become criminalized. Further, judges, juries, prosecutors, and sometimes defense attorneys do not believe women who are convinced that they took a life only to save their own lives and/or the lives of threatened loved ones. Women are found guilty even when they sustain serious injuries in the incident that led to the homicide (Leonard 2002). Prosecutors and juries display a single-minded interest in the sexist question, “Why didn’t she just leave?” When judges disallow evidence of past victimization and instruct juries in ways that give them little option but to convict, women become double victims, once again controlled and silenced, once again told that the violence they endured was insignificant.

When severe abuse precipitates deadly self-defense, prosecutors should differentiate career criminals from one-time situational offenders who pose no danger to society. If a prosecutor pushes a case forward, a manslaughter charge better fits the battered woman’s experience, rather than the widespread first- and second-degree murder indictments. All officers of the court should be required to attend in-depth, continuing education programs on domestic violence as a follow-up to mandatory law school courses on the subject. Juries need to be better educated on the dynamics and consequences of ongoing abuse through the use of expert testimony and they need to hear all available exculpatory evidence and testimony. Jury instructions must allow jurors to consider the lethality of male violence. Further, battered women held responsible for the death of abusive partners should be exempt from the death penalty.

**Pharmaceuticals**

Psychotropic drugs hinder the ability of women to contribute to and participate in their own defense and perpetuate the silence forced upon them by their batterers (see Auerhahn and Leonard 2000). Further, drug-induced flat affect leaves jurors to conclude that women who kill abusive partners are emotionally detached, indeed “cold-blooded.” Qualified jail staff must be required to administer the appropriate medical and psychological tests before prescribing drugs to women who have not been receiving such treatment. Jail detainees need to be informed of their right to refuse such medication.

**Alternatives to Jail**

Women who cannot make bail are in a disadvantaged position. Awaiting trial in custody makes everything more difficult for the battered woman defendant and leaves her vulnerable to the inappropriate use of psychotropic medications. A mother will see her children placed with her family, the
family of the deceased batterer, or in foster care. As the adult most closely bonded to her children, a battered woman’s concerns center on the well-being of her children, with whom she will have little or no contact. A battered woman defendant lacking a history of criminal or violent behavior is not a danger to the community and poses no flight risk. She makes an ideal candidate for alternatives to jail, which reduces the cost of pre-trial detention, releases space for more dangerous defendants, and allows her family to begin the healing process. Therefore, a battered woman defendant should be released on her own recognizance so that she can provide financially for herself and maintain her household throughout the adjudication process. Alternatively, she and her children could be placed in the secure therapeutic environment of a battered woman’s shelter, where they would receive counseling for what they have endured.

Post-Trial Efforts

With each unduly harsh penalty meted out to convicted survivors, patriarchal attitudes are reinforced, reminding women that their proper place is in the home where men are to hold a monopoly on power and control. Sexism in the legal system dictates that women fulfill gender role expectations or face severe consequences, the same message communicated to women by their abusive mates. The patriarchal legacy does not tolerate women’s use of force in response to male intimate violence. Institutionalized sexism as seen in sentencing and parole practices must be exposed and discontinued. The possibility of retrials or early release for women imprisoned for killing their batterers needs exploration. Women serving life sentences without the possibility of parole must be allowed the opportunity for release. All correctional institutions should permit, even encourage, convicted survivors to organize themselves in support groups for education, healing, growth, advocacy, and self-esteem. Further, advocacy groups for battered women convicted of homicide are needed to address issues of parole, resentencing, and clemency.

THE ROLE OF CRITICAL SOCIOLOGY

Burawoy states, “As a discipline sociology was born in close proximity to moral reform just as individual sociologists are often born in moral combat. . . . The moral moment, however, may be repressed or marginalized, it may be suspended or put into remission, but it never disappears. It springs back to life when and where it is least expected” (2005c:323). In my situation, the interest in cases of battered women who kill to survive sprang to life when it was least expected. Further, allowing the research to evolve into a play was
not part of the original project. However, studying their cases and analyzing their narratives stirred in me a passion for justice, which was fueled by my understanding of what sociological knowledge could accomplish.

Professional sociology taught me to be a sociologist, socializing me into the discipline with its imagination, methods, and theories. Yet, professional sociology set boundaries for the knowledge generated through the research—academic research for scholarly purposes. Policy outcomes may be legitimate products, but dramatizing the findings for general public consumption falls outside professional sociological borders. As I wrestled with this conflict, knowing many of my peers would question the legitimacy of this evolution, I thought about the women in my study whose lives had been shattered by violence and injustice; I thought about women in the free world whose abusive experiences bore striking similarities to those of convicted survivors; I thought about individuals who interact with victims and survivors of domestic violence and all too often respond out of ignorance and inflict further damage if they do discover the hidden pain; I thought about people in positions of power who would likely not read my publications and gain a new perspective and perhaps understanding of the issues raised. I felt a strong sense of responsibility to share the knowledge gained in the research and to return the ownership of convicted survivors’ voices to them. I knew that seeing the impact of their words would empower them.

**CONCLUSION**

*Knowledge for whom? Knowledge for what?* These two critical questions generate Burawoy’s four-sociology classification (Burawoy 2005a). My inner dialogue described above reflects the broader tension between instrumental (concerned with means) and reflexive knowledge (concerned with ends or value premises), between professional and critical sociology (Burawoy 2005c; O’Connor 2006). With my research, the academic knowledge that accrued for professional sociology and academia in time became infused with the moral sense that this knowledge could and should be used for public education as well as for convicted survivors and others like them. Burawoy argues, “One function of critical sociology is to show that the world does not have to be the way it is” (2004:1612). Ghamari-Tabrizi describes critical and public sociology as being a “kind of reflexive and transformative type of sociology engaged in social change” and “critical public sociologists have an agenda—they unashamedly connect the is to their own perceived ought” (2005:361). Critical sociology, according to Burawoy, “has infused moral commitments into public sociology” (2004:1609). Succinctly, “Behind [critical sociology] lies a more or less explicit vision of what can crudely be described as a ‘better world’” (O’Connor 2006:11).
Violence against women is not inevitable. Women should not be abused and controlled. Women who kill to survive should have a fair adjudication process and ought not to live out the remainder of their lives behind bars. Thus, I made the decision to move forward and allow the research its own life beyond the prescribed borders of professional sociology. In so doing, I joined the ranks of my activist predecessors in the discipline of sociology. The ASA Task Force acknowledges, “American sociologists have long been deeply engaged in the public issues of the day and with policy makers and activists of their times” (2005:3). Transforming the research into dramatic form has shown itself to be an effective means of bringing private troubles into public view and creating understanding about the many social, cultural, and legal issues surrounding the cases and lives of convicted survivors.

This chapter has presented an example of sociological research that moved across the four-part matrix of Burawoy’s framework. Of particular interest is its life in the realm of public sociology, where it is affecting multiple publics beyond the academy. I conclude with the words of Michael Burawoy:

Public sociology is the recognition of such a common interest in human freedom, and thus a commitment to human rights that reach beyond the university, human rights that are embedded in the standpoint of civil society. It is part of the art of public sociology to build bridges and transcend differences between otherwise disconnected worlds. (Burawoy 2005d:165)

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NOTE

1. In 1991, the California legislature recognized the need for expert testimony on the effects of battering (formerly called Battered Women’s Syndrome) in intimate partner homicide cases. The California Evidence Code was amended to allow expert testimony at trial. However, the change affected only cases after 1992. In 2000, Governor Gray Davis enacted Senate Bill 799 (now Penal Code §1473.5), which allows convicted survivors whose cases occurred prior to 1992 to file a writ of habeas corpus if the absence of BWS expert testimony prejudiced their cases (Gutierrez and Leal 2002).
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In his 2004 presidential address, Michael Burawoy proposed four types of sociologies, namely professional sociology, policy sociology, critical sociology, and public sociology. As elaborated by Burawoy,

Professional sociology supplies true and tested methods, accumulated bodies of knowledge, orienting questions, and conceptual frameworks for sociology; policy sociology is sociology in the service of a goal defined by a client that provides solutions to problems that are presented to us, or to legitimate solutions that have already been reached; critical sociology examines the foundations of professional sociology and provides moral stances and critiques of sociology as a whole while public sociology strikes up a dialogic relation between sociologists and public in which the agenda of each is brought to the table, in which each adjusts to the other. (Burawoy 2005a:9)

The “flourishing of each type of sociology is a condition for the flourishing of all” (Burawoy 2005a:4), and in practice, “any given piece of sociology can straddle these ideal types or move across them over time” (Burawoy 2005a:11).

This chapter embraces Burawoy’s typology of our discipline, and validates it with a research project that not only neatly fits in the four categories of sociology, but also promotes the integration of the four sociologies. It is a project emerging out of a series of research efforts in Baigou (let’s simply call it the “Baigou Project”). It has a life cycle from professional sociology to policy sociology, reaching its culmination as public sociology, which was also constantly inspired and modified along the lines of critical sociology.
Baigou is a township affiliated to Gaobeidian City, Hebei Province, China. It is located at the triangle hinterland of Beijing, Tianjin, and Baoding cities. It has 33 village streets, taking up an area of 54.5 square kilometers, with a town district of 13 square kilometers. Baigou is famous for its bag industry formed in the 1980s. After 30 years of growth, it has become the largest bag production base in northern China. The center of the regional bag manufacturing industry is based in Baigou Township, but bag production extends beyond Baigou Township to involve 4 adjacent counties, a total of 56 towns and over 3,000 villages that absorbed over 100,000 people working in the industry. In 2005, Baigou Township’s production value reached 2.2 billion RMB (300 million dollars) and its bag products (including suitcases, school bags, women’s bags, purses and wallets, etc.) sell not only to 13 provinces in China, but also export to South Africa, Russia, and South America.

The earliest research interest in Baigou stems from the pure and classic academic question: Where do markets come from (the same question as proposed by Harrison White in 1981)? That is, how could such a huge bag industry and market be created within a rural region like Baigou, a township that is far away from urban areas and possesses no advantages in population, raw material, technology, industry, or transportation (Shen 2007)? From the perspective of economic sociology, and through the combination of historical document analysis and in-depth interviews, Shen’s analysis concludes that the market in Baigou was developed as a “social structure” that contains all non-economic elements including cultural tradition, social forces, and the distribution of power. It was via the continuous and active interaction between three groups of social actors, namely the traditional merchants, collective peasants, and local cadres that the market was created and in constant expansion (Shen 2007).

Another academic problem immediately follows: who produces for the grand market and how? This leads to a careful examination of the production system in Baigou. By analyzing official data and carrying out participant observation in real factories, we discovered that the factory regime and the workers in Baigou are very special.

In Baigou Township alone, there are 2,250 factories with approximately 40,000 migrant workers from 11 provinces in China engaged in the bag industry. These migrant workers constitute half of the whole population in Baigou Township. There are two different types of bag factories in Baigou, the family factory and the standard factory. Family factories are prevalent and are of greater importance in Baigou Township. In Baigou and in the larger Huabei region, industrial practices and networks of family factories are rooted in traditional village-style social relationships that result in the special factory regime that has the following five important features.
Personalized Labor Market

Baigou has never established any formal labor market. Instead, each spring, the factory employer will ask his more senior employees to take him to their hometown and employ new workers (mostly young women and sometimes children under 16 years old). Usually, there is a consensus between the factory employer and the parents of newly hired workers that the factory employer should hold workers' salary (the minimum wage or even below) during the working year and send their children and a whole year's salary back together before the spring festival. This kind of interpersonal employment circumvents the procedure of signing a contract, avoids paying monthly salary, and sometimes intentionally hires child labor.

Overlapping Work and Living Spaces

Factories are embedded in the family life and their layout follows that of the typical, northern Chinese style rural home. Typically, these compounds include a main entry gate on the southern side of the compound, a central courtyard, and a “U”-shaped building arrangement lining the north, east, and west walls of the compound. To meet the needs of the family factory, the row of rooms facing north are used as the living quarters for both employers and employees. The rooms facing west are the factory workshops, usually divided into a clipping workshop and sewing workshop, with necessary tools (e.g., sewing machines) for production. The rooms facing east are the kitchen and storeroom. The gate into the compound is on the south wall. In this way, the layout blurs production space and living space, public space and private space. Most of the time, workers work about 13 hours a day, enjoying no weekends or holidays at all except the spring festival that lasts 15 days.

Labor Process under the Guise of Extended Familial Relations

Day-to-day labor relations are difficult to distinguish between interpersonal, even familial, social relationships. First, factory employers are often directly involved in production (in the past 20 years, many of these employers were farmers themselves who still choose to engage in the work of the home). Second, factory employers eat, drink, and live with their employees. So the workers never call their factory employers “factory employer,” instead, they call them “uncle” or “aunt.” These extended family relations conceal the essence of a labor process which is also the process of exploitation, obscuring the structural differences between the employer and employee as opposed classes, and depriving the workers of their rights to raise issues about their working condition and rights as workers (according
to national labor law of China, workers should enjoy rights of signing contracts, getting monthly wages, working under safe conditions, and rights to rest, etc.) in a patriarchal tradition (these are most important for migrant workers).

Separation of Workers Based on Ethnicity

The workers are separated according to their ethnicity so that in the labor process, one group of workers who come from the same place are often in competition with other groups of workers who come from different regions. It greatly inhibits the chance for workers to develop a unified class consciousness which enables factory employers to rule them better (Tong 2005). As Dipesh Chakrabarty (1989) skillfully unravels, the resilience of traditional social features explain the fragility of class identity and the salience of identities along lines of religion, language, race, or place of birth, even at dramatic moments of conflicts between labor and capital.

Repeated Laborious Work and Dangerous Working Conditions

Bag production is organized on an assembly line, including such operations as clipping, sewing, pasting, and so forth, that every worker has to repeat over and over through the long working hours, leading to a lot of occupational diseases. Moreover, many of the machines are dangerous to operate, especially as most of the factories lack appropriate safety precautions, so industrial injuries are common in the labor process. What is worse is that some production materials (for example, the glue) contain poisonous elements in them so that workers’ lives are endangered by just being exposed in the workshop.

The special factory regime forges special workers. On the one hand, because the labor process is covered by interpersonal relations, workers are unable to recognize the exploitation relations between the factory employers and themselves. On the other hand, because the interpersonal network of the labor market has evaded important procedures like signing a labor contract, it cuts off the workers from the protection of labor law (labor law here refers to the national labor law of China) from the beginning. This consequently cuts off the connection between workers and the state. These workers are shielded by the traditions of household and village, unable to rely on law and the social arrangements of the state to protect their legal rights. In this sense, they are not “citizens” at all. They are, actually, the most oppressed group in China today—weaker even than the migrant laborers in the city—because employment relations are veiled by traditional village and family arrangements which deprive the workers of their rights to protest (Shen 2006).
What’s even worse is that they are exposed to dangerous production materials, working for 13 hours a day under substandard working conditions and without necessary safety precautions. Their lives are at risk every single day. In fact, in winter 2002, six female migrant workers died of poisonous benzene contained in tinpot glue water in Baigou. The disastrous situation of the workers called for serious policy intervention.

EXTENDING TO POLICY SOCIOLOGY

This tragic death of six female migrant workers aroused a great deal of reporting by media and attention of publics and government officers. The responsible government officers were dismissed, and the working conditions of family factories were scrutinized. All these events provided an opportunity to break the bulwark of the village and enter into the family factories.

We were funded by the Dutch Embassy to initiate the “China-Netherlands Law Support Project” in cooperation with the “Chinese Law Development Support Corporation” to design and carry out a “Sending Medical and Legal Services to the Village and Family” project in Baigou.

In this project, we established a team consisting of teachers and students from the sociology department and law school in Tsinghua University, as well as doctors from Beijing Armed Police Unit No. 2 Hospital. We organized manpower and material resources to offer free physical examinations for migrant workers in family factories. When the migrant workers were waiting in queue for their physical examinations, we dispensed leaflets and a brochure with labor law information to the workers in the hope that they would use the “labor law” to protect themselves. We also set up a medical file to record their detailed information including their age, hometown, gender, years of work in Baigou, type of work, and their health status. Taking advantage of the direct contact with these migrant workers, we instructed them in four fundamental categories of labor law, namely contract, wage, working hours, and rights of rest. For a whole year from March 2002 to March 2003, we entered 26 village streets of the 33 village streets affiliated to Baigou Township, providing 1783 migrant workers with medical, law, and social services. With the “Sending Medical and Legal Services to Village and Family” project in Baigou, we entered many family factories and got to know more about the migrant workers’ daily life; through the dissemination of “labor law,” we helped the migrant workers begin to be aware of their rights; and moreover, we created a chance for the segregated workers from different factories to communicate with each other (Shen 2006). Later, the local government also showed great appreciation of our work, and we shared with them the records and files of the migrant workers, in hope that it might help the local government make better policy arrangements in the future.
However, the achievement of policy sociology was encouraging but not sustaining. For one thing, the local government’s finance depends mainly on the revenues generated by the family factories. As a result after the public attention on the tragic incident faded away, they loosened the scrutiny process and turned a blind eye on many factories’ violations against standards of working conditions and provisions of the labor law. For another, because of the unbalanced power relations between the researchers or doctors and migrant workers, to a great extent this project was more a material rather than mental contact with the workers. Instead of getting true knowledge about their work and life, we only set up a database for their personal traits. Furthermore, the sporadic information about labor law the workers received during the physical examination process was definitely not enough to help them develop the concept and consciousness of “rights.” Most importantly, under the collusion of market tyranny and state despotism, the workers can only rely on themselves (not the NGOs, not the foundations, not the local government, and not the researchers) as a unified class to fight for their rights. All these factors called for a more systematic project which could offer the workers a long-term education in labor law, a critical way to understand themselves, and a channel to build solidarity. That is, a project to empower the workers, which, in its nature, is an organic public sociology project.

**Evolving into Public Sociology**

With the research problems and background knowledge provided by professional sociology, along with the fruitful but limited outcome from policy sociology, the “Baigou Project” eventually evolved into an organic public sociology project whose vehicle is the “Baigou Migrant Worker Night School.”

**Breaking Two Myths, Establishing Citizen and Class Consciousness**

Today, the fast developing world along with the ideology of the highly centralized Chinese government has created two myths for all the people, especially the underclass. In an era of high-technology, if one doesn’t know how to use the computer and in an era of globalization, if one doesn’t speak English, then this person is deemed to be illiterate and useless. This is exactly how a great many people feel about themselves—an anachronism, far behind the world, the epoch, and other people, so that they are doomed to be ostracized and silenced. To raise the consciousness of the oppressed and build their self-confidence, we need to break these myths.

To help the migrant workers establish citizen and class consciousness, the foremost task would be to penetrate the seemingly harmonious social
relations which veiled the actual exploitation and class situation through
the special factory regime in Baigou. The weapon to fulfill the mission is,
of course, the labor law.

Systematic Planning

Course Design

In the night school, we offered three courses: labor law, English, and com-
puter literacy. Labor law was the core course. On the one hand, it was aimed
at penetrating the double bulwarks of village and families, thereby helping
the migrant workers establish their citizen consciousness. On the other hand,
it was aimed at exposing the cultural assumptions regarding the interpersonal
relations between employers and workers so as to help workers establish their
class consciousness. English and computer courses were offered to break the
two myths, but also they served another important function too. They were
the icing of the core course. According to our experiences, in a local society
like Baigou, only giving labor law lessons would incur the hostility of family
factory employers, and the workers themselves often wouldn’t understand.
Workers typically view labor law as something related to the “formal work-
ers” in cities, which had nothing to do with the “informal factory workers”
in a rural area like themselves. So we came up with the idea of a “sandwich
class” that arranged the labor law class between the English class and the
computer class. On the one hand, it would reduce the radicalism from the
perspective of the factory employers; on the other hand, it could add to the
interest of workers to come and study. All the classes were held every week
on Friday and Saturday nights from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Site Selection

The place of our night school was at the center of Baigou Township be-
cause many family factories were located there, and it was easy to engage
the migrant workers from neighboring villages. There were two classrooms
and one teachers’ office in the night school. One of the classrooms was
turned into a computer room, equipped with one server and 20 computers.
The other one was a regular classroom. The two classrooms could hold 50
workers for lessons at the same time.

Teachers and Teaching Materials

All the teachers were professors and students from the sociology depart-
ment, law school, or micro-electronics institute in Tsinghua University. The
teaching materials for all the courses were written and edited by students
from these departments, and were formulated according to the migrant workers’ knowledge structure and daily life.

**Observation of the Night School Operation**

The Baigou migrant worker night school launched its first class on October 7, 2005, and we have held three courses so far. Two hundred and fifty-four people participated in night school courses, out of which 224 people were migrant workers. Fifty-four percent of the worker students were female workers, only 7 percent of them went to high school while the majority just finished elementary school or middle school; 3 percent of them were under the age of 16, and 21 percent were between 16 and 18 years old (according to law, 16 years old is the minimum age for a person to be employed in China while adulthood is set at 18 years of age, when people need to be responsible for their criminal deeds).

**Building Workers’ Communication Platform**

Because these migrant workers came from different regions, ethnicities, and factories, one of the fundamental objectives of the night school was to establish a channel for them to communicate with each other. For example, early in the computer class, we asked each student to introduce themselves to others, including their names, place of birth, factory, type of work, and interests. And they all had to type their names on the big computer screen in order that all teachers and students could know and remember them easier and quicker. When students got proficient in typing, we asked them to write whatever they would like to write about on the computer. Then we saw letters to their families, reflections on their work, experiences of working in Baigou, protest against factory employers, essays and poems, and even love confessions, which gave insights for all the students to know each other well. It also enabled us to understand more about the workers’ true life and feelings.

In the English class, most lessons offered very typical life scenes as well as a good chance for the students to know their classmates. For instance, there was a unit about “Meeting People.” I told the students that “I would like two students to perform the situation, and those who raise their hands first get to choose their own partner.” A moment of silence occurred, and students began to look around the class. Several seconds later, a boy shyly raised his hand and walked toward a beautiful girl at the front seat, “Hello, my name is Li Jun. I am a worker from Liangdian factory. Nice to meet you!” The girl blushed and stood up slowly, “I am Chen Hong from Starlink factory. Nice to meet you too!” Suddenly the boy added something to everyone’s surprise, “Shall we go to a movie together sometime?” All
at once a blast of laughter broke out among the students. Role playing in class promoted the students’ English skills, enhancing their ability to create situations and act in them. More importantly, it helped them express their ideas and learn about their fellow workers.

**Implanting Consciousness of Rights**

In the labor law class, there were many occasions in which we needed to carefully select topics and create special situations in order to lead workers to see the real exploitative relationship between their factory employers and workers, to learn about their rights, and to use the weapon of labor law to protect themselves. For instance, there was once a debate on contract law in the probation period. Usually when a new worker came to work in a factory, the factory employer would not sign any contract with the worker until he worked there diligently for at least a month. Many worker students in the classroom complained that they were often underpaid for this month and unemployed after the probation period was over. What was even worse was that novices were very likely to get hurt and the factory employer would take no responsibility for sending them to the hospital for treatment. The factory employers would maintain they did this because they needed to know whether this worker was worth hiring and training. They would further maintain that some of the new workers were considerably unstable in that they ran off to other factories or went back home during the probation period. This was a dramatic moment for both factory employers and workers. By listening to the argument, the workers had the opportunity to understand the standpoint of the factory employers, which was often obscured by interpersonal relationship. They were then in opposition to the factory employers collectively, regardless of their factories and origins. And it was exactly what we were looking for, a situation created for making evident the conflict and cultural stakes. Our teacher also participated in the dispute and then explained the whole issue in the light of law, mostly supporting the workers.

**Engaging Multiple Publics**

Migrant workers in Baigou were largely cut off from the outside world. This was so because they worked so many hours a day that they didn’t have extra time or energy to engage with the outside world. Another factor contributing to this was that their work and life was so limited within the factory realm that they had little access to the outside world. Moreover, their factory employers imposed very strict rules on their wages and personal relations. As a result, they couldn’t afford or had no avenues to get information from the outside world.
To change this situation, and to provide an opportunity for enriching the workers’ knowledge and encouraging their spontaneous communication, we set up a small library in our night school. Through the effort of many volunteers, we collected thousands of books and magazines from teachers and students in Tsinghua University. These books and magazines covered a wide range of areas, including sociology, law, history, literature, fiction, natural sciences, and entertainment, to name just a few. We even had a collection of Shakespeare! The library was open on every Friday and Saturday, and all migrant workers were welcome to borrow the books they liked for free. The most frequently borrowed books and magazines were news magazines, entertainment magazines, readers’ digests, philosophy of life, and novels. As time went by, more and more migrant workers who heard about our night school and library from their fellow workers or friends came to the library to borrow books and study in the night school. Most of the time, the library was crowded with a great many workers from different factories, talking and laughing, and building a bridge between migrant workers from diverse backgrounds. Besides the workers, many volunteers, students, teachers, government officials, and local residents were also actively involved in it. Indeed, “public sociology brings sociology into a conversation with publics, understood as people who are themselves involved in conversation. It entails, therefore, a double conversation” (Burawoy 2005a:7).

INSPIRATIONS FROM CRITICAL SOCIOLOGY

Critical sociology is present throughout the “Baigou” project. It reinforced the moral stance of the sociologists, which propelled the transition from one type of sociology to another under proper conditions; it examined the context and meaning as well as the unique means (the night school) of the public sociology project; it proffered important principles for empowerment of the oppressed groups; and it provided a critical lens for evaluating the entire project.

Transformation of Society, Sociology, and Sociologists

Critical sociology is the moral commitment to and critique of sociology as a whole. It is exactly the moral responsibility of our researchers that pushed the original academic question “formation of Baigou market” and the “special factory regime” from professional sociology to the “Sending Medical and Legal Services to Village and Family” of policy sociology, and finally to the public sociology of “Baigou Migrant Worker Night School.” What underlies the transformation of sociology is the larger economic and political context that shaped both the transformation of society and transformation of the moral stances of sociologists.
China is now at the intersection of three waves of marketization in Burawoy’s terms. Its labor, money, land, and environment are being commodified all together in such a fast pace that the migrant workers are in a miserable situation—being extremely poor in economic terms, being marginalized in political terms, and being threatened by hazardous working conditions in violation of their labor rights, social rights, and human rights. It is the historical moment for sociologists to address the real cause of the devastating transformation, to make a critical turn to public sociologies, “to make visible the invisible, to make the private public, to validate these organic connections as part of our sociological life” (Burawoy 2005a:9).

The public sociology project we are undertaking should be seen both as a counter-movement to the rapacious three waves of marketization and an opportunity to reconstruct the society. The project does this by enhancing the capacity of publics to make their private issues public, and to struggle for a better world.

Night School as a Case of Strong Intervention

As mentioned earlier, to help the migrant workers establish citizen and class consciousness, the foremost task would be to penetrate the seemingly harmonious social relations which veiled the actual exploitation and class situation in the factory regime in Baigou. Here enters Alain Touraine, who assumed that sociology’s main method should be to make possible the direct observation and analysis of social relations masked by order and domination (Touraine 1988). This then “presupposes the active intervention of the sociologist whose task is to bring out these social relations concealed behind a mesh of approved and organized practices. Intervention helps the actor to shake free of the constraints by which he is surrounded, to extend his field of analysis and become more capable of action” (Touraine 1981:139). The way to carry out intervention is for sociologists to create a situation (for example, meetings) to highlight the core of conflict involved where oppositional groups confront each other and conduct self-analysis. Meanwhile sociologists keep an objective role in the process. He proposed an important method for detecting the real domination behind the harmonious social relations; however, his version of sociological intervention must be modified in several ways in order to apply to China.

First, what Touraine dealt with were social actors engaged in various social movements (he studied movements in Eastern Europe and Latin America as well as Western Europe) that had already achieved a great degree of self-organization and self-consciousness. They were capable of conducting self-analysis and thereby enhancing their ability of action. In contrast, we faced people who were marginalized and oppressed without the least degree of self-organization and self-consciousness. This situation therefore called for stronger sociological intervention, from design to operation.
Second, Touraine emphasized that sociologists should take an objective role in the sociological intervention process. His adaptation of the objective role came from his experience in the study of the 1968 French student movement, in which, as a professor, “objective distance” would help him get a better interaction position in the intervention process (because students generally didn’t trust their professors then). However, in the third world, the sociologist as outsider and objective researcher is unacceptable in face of the suffering populace. Liberation sociology insists that as researchers we must take sides with the oppressed people, make their daily life and experiences a source of knowledge, and reveal the underlying social structural causes of inequality (Feagin and Vera 2001).

Third, about the intervention procedure, “meetings” suggested by Touraine were definitely infeasible, in the presence of such an unequal power relation. Paulo Freire advocated “popular education” in such a situation. The oppressed groups were not only taught basic knowledge but also taught to develop a critical perspective about themselves and the world they live in. However, given that the oppressed groups are usually shy and lacking self-confidence, a superior approach is Hsiao-Chuan Hsia’s praxis-oriented research applying the techniques of the “theatre of the oppressed” and transformed traditional research methods to empower marginalized groups (Hsiao-Chuan Hsia 2003).

Taking all these methods into consideration, we transformed Touraine’s sociological intervention into “strong sociological intervention,” in which sociologists take sides with the most oppressed groups, aiming both at creating knowledge from these groups and reconstructing the society they live in. A best form for the strong sociological intervention, we thought, might be a migrant worker night school in our case, which would help workers confront their employers in the labor law class, and to learn basic knowledge such as computer skills or English so as to break the globalization and high-tech myths. Through role playing in the class they could gain self-confidence and heightened consciousness. Moreover, it would help sociologists obtain better knowledge about workers’ life and work. It would also facilitate communication between sociologists and workers, as well as among workers themselves. In the long run these results would enhance the workers’ ability to act and transform society.

**EMPOWERING THE OPPRESSED IN A PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY PROJECT**

By carrying out the night school project for two years, with incessant reflections from critical sociology, we learned that there are important principles
for empowering oppressed groups in a public sociology project. They can be summarized as “Four Unifications”:

**Unification of Cognition and Praxis**

“Praxis” doesn’t equal “action”; it has a dimension of “social reconstruction.” “Praxis” is an important concept that refers to the purposive action aiming at reconstructing the material world and society, including human beings themselves. Taking praxis as the starting point, researchers must treat reconstructing society and empowering the oppressed as their basic task. However, the objects praxis-oriented research deals with are usually people who are oppressed by the existing political-economic structure. They appear to be incapable and silent (such as illiterate or with low education status). Hence we as researchers can’t just adopt the “objective” attitude, as Alain Touraine suggested. Instead, we have to take sides with the oppressed. Our purpose is not only to help the illiterate to read and write, but also to help them understand critically about the reality of society so as to change it (Freire 1970).

**Unification of Empowerment and Service**

Our ultimate goal is to empower the migrant workers, however, we learned that empowerment must be combined with service to gain access to the workers shielded by the bulwarks of village and family, and to obtain trust and legitimacy among various actors in the community, including government officers and factory employers. As mentioned earlier, teaching only labor law would incur the resentment from the factory employers, or even government officers, and would achieve no resonance from the workers. We need to make the workers feel that they can get concrete benefits from our project (such as physical examinations, free computer and English classes, and free books from the library) so that they are willing to participate in the project and be empowered through the long-term process. For instance, one factory employer once said, “I can’t imagine such good things as having free computer classes! That’s why I let my workers come so that I can learn it too.”

**Unification of Inculcation Education and Heuristic Education**

In disseminating law to rural industrial communities, the Baigou Project believes transformative theories are introduced to the working class from outside. People perceive the world as a series of events rather than as social structure. It is the task of researchers to present the true picture of society to the workers and endow them with weapons to understand and fight. At the same time, as Freire pointed out, though discussing macro-issues is important in raising the consciousness of the oppressed, the representation of these
issues must be closely connected to actual problems if it is to stimulate critical understanding and actions for change. Therefore, in the teaching process, we try to link their personal experience to our classes as much as possible. For example, we used examples workers brought to the labor law teacher for consultation as cases for teaching. Workers felt that “this has happened to me too” or “my co-worker had the same trouble” which increased their interest and willingness to learn and actively engage in the class discussion.

Unification of External Service and Internal Reflection

In such a public sociology project, it is important to strike a conversation both between the publics and researchers, as well as among researchers themselves. Before each class, we would first summarize the course arrangement and effects of last week, then discuss the class content for that day, outlining the keystones and expected results. Each period before classes began and after classes were over, we asked students about their feelings and suggestions so that we could adjust our courses accordingly. When the classes of Friday ended, we held another meeting, reflecting on what happened in the class and collecting feedback. Every Saturday afternoon we held a meeting to talk about details of the class that night, and after the classes were over, we still kept discussing class schedule and preparation for next week on our way back to Tsinghua University. When every seminar was finished, we held a conference in the Sociology Department, Tsinghua University, to summarize the situation, evaluate gain and loss, and discuss educational orientation and method for the next session. We also designed questionnaires for migrant workers about their opinions of the night school. It was in this process of ceaseless reflection that we integrated workers’ needs and requests with the night school’s ultimate goal, making the project more effective.

Limitations

Nevertheless, as hard as we tried, we still faced many obstacles and dilemmas. For one thing, the ability of workers to participate was difficult to sustain. This was because most factory employers were unwilling to sacrifice two hours of work time to let their workers learn things which might one day be used against them. For another, our association with the local government gave us legitimacy and, thus, facilitated our conduct of the project on the one hand. But on the other hand, our dependence on the local government for recruiting migrant workers (because workers who were controlled strictly by their employers within the factory were not simply free to attend the courses) resulted in considerable turnover of students. Moreover, what we have been doing is a collective effort to carry
out organic public sociology in the field. However, we are still at a primitive stage in our project and we do have a lot to learn about engaging the publics. As a long-term enterprise, it is hard to say to what degree we have accomplished our original goal.

Still, already we do have some tangible results. In respect to skills, through the study in night school, most migrant workers enhanced their English listening and speaking skills, got to know the basic labor law provisions for protecting their rights, and could operate the computer very well. In respect to psychology, they became more confident and ready to express themselves; in respect to social intercourse, they extended their personal relationship realm, and were ready to associate and help workers from other factories.

CONCLUSION

The foundational idea of Burawoy’s analysis of sociology is the interdependence of the forms of practice. Burawoy emphasized that

Indeed, my normative vision of the discipline of sociology is of reciprocal interdependence among our four types of sociology—an organic solidarity in which each type of sociology derives energy, meaning, and imagination from its connection to the others. Without a professional sociology, there can be no policy or public sociology because they would lack legitimacy and expertise, but nor can there be a critical sociology—for there would be nothing to criticize. Equally professional sociology depends for its vitality upon the continual challenge of public issues through the vehicle of public sociology. (Burawoy 2005a:15)

We have spent a century building professional knowledge, translating common sense into science, so that now, we are more than ready to embark on a systematic back-translation, taking knowledge back to those from whom it came, making public issues out of private troubles, and thus regenerating sociology’s moral fiber. (Burawoy 2005a:5)

In our “Baigou Project,” professional sociology plays an important role in providing the theoretical lens for identifying research problems (such as the origin of the Baigou bag market, the features of the special factory regime, and the dilemma of the migrant workers), as well as methodological tools for gathering data (for example, document analysis, in-depth interviews, participant observation, surveys, etc.). However, we must “build up professional sociology as the moral and not just the structural core of the discipline” (Burawoy 2005b:154).
In our case, a tragic incident facilitated the transition from professional sociology to policy sociology. The incident exposed the pain and troubles of the invisible migrant workers—which were hidden behind the dual rampart of village and family—to researchers and the larger society. The tragedy offered an opportunity to gain access to their work and life, and laid a basis for further empowerment of this oppressed group. However, the limitations of such policy work were all too obvious, which led to the organic public sociology project.

Throughout the project, critical sociology was present in discerning problems of domination and inequalities; infusing moral stances for sociologists; challenging normative assumptions of professional sociology, policy sociology, and public sociology; as well as offering evaluations of the whole project. It also offered hints in contriving many original strategies in running the project, for example, the selection of “the oppressed migrant workers as our publics,” the focus on “breaking the myths” to empower the “oppressed” and their relation to the courses offered, the design of the “sandwich class,” and the use of “real pertinent cases” for teaching. Other strategies derived from critical sociology were the importance and effects of the “dramatic moment” for factory employers and workers, building class and citizen consciousness and self-confidence through “encouragement and praise,” and the continuous dialogue and improved strategy enkindled by the method of reflective education.

During the operation of the night school, the systematic design and planning of the project was based on the knowledge and data generated from professional sociology. Later more information was collected within the process of teaching and conversation. That made possible further professional research on certain topics. As policy sociology helped open the door to the field, the far-reaching effects of the night school elicited much attention from the media, which reported the event to general publics; from some labor NGOs, which afterward built a cooperative relationship with the research team; and from local and higher government, which adjusted their policies to ameliorate the conditions of migrant workers and strengthen the enforcement of labor law. And most importantly, initially by engaging our targeted publics—the migrant workers—as the project proceeded, it gradually inspired multiple publics to be actively involved in the process, including doctors, lawyers, students from different disciplines, teachers, volunteers, government officials, NGOs, local residents, and so forth, pushing the whole project to a higher level.

From the trajectories of our “Baigou Project,” it is clear that it started its life in professional sociology, extended its relevance through policy sociology, was modified by critical sociology, and reached its culmination as organic public sociology. As already pointed out by Burawoy, “sociology
Integrating the Four Sociologies

can straddle these ideal types or move across them over time" (Burawoy 2005a:11), and that "the core activity of public sociology—the dialogue between sociologists and their publics—is supported (or not) by professional, critical and policy moments" (Burawoy 2005a:12), the Baigou Project shows how exciting and fruitful the integration of professional sociology, policy sociology, critical sociology, and public sociology can be, each promoting the others as it promotes itself.

NOTES

1. The "Baigou Project" is a series of research efforts carried out by the Labor School of Tsinghua University led by Professor Shen Yuan, and many of the research projects were run jointly with other departments and institutions.


3. The Theatre of the Oppressed is a method elaborated by the Brazilian director Augusto Boal, who was influenced by the work of Paulo Freire, starting from the 1960s, first in Brazil and then in Europe. This method uses theater as a means of knowledge and transformation of the individuals thinking in the social and relational field. The public becomes active, so that the “spect-actors” explore, show, analyze, and transform the reality in which they are living.

REFERENCES


In the summer of 1986 an economist named Joseph Kalt at Harvard’s John F. Kennedy School of Government called me on the phone. We’d never met, but he said he had been looking at some economic data from American Indian reservations, and he found some of it puzzling. He asked some of his students if they knew of anyone on the Harvard faculty who studied contemporary Native American issues. One of them came up with my name. Kalt wanted to know if I’d like to have lunch and talk about his data. I said sure. I was finishing a book on contemporary American Indian political activism and had been pondering what to do next. The phone call caught my interest. Especially in those days, sociologists didn’t get many calls from economists looking for advice.

Over lunch, Kalt explained that his own research involved, among other things, natural resource economics. Recently he had been looking at data on timber and wildlife management on Indian reservations, and he had come across two related American Indian nations located in the same ecosystem and sharing broadly similar economic assets and opportunities. However, their tribally owned timber operations were performing very differently. One nation was running a profitable timber company and effectively managing its forest for multiple goals including sustained timber yield, water conservation, and healthy wildlife. The other’s operations, despite apparent effort, were in difficulty. Furthermore, while the first also had other successful economic enterprises, the second had generated little in the way of business activity. In other words, while both were pursuing economic development, their outcomes were markedly different. But—at
least in Kalt’s information—there were few differences between the two situations that might explain the divergent outcomes. He wondered if social factors might be involved.

I knew a little of the histories of these two nations and was struck by the fact that the one having difficulty had suffered some of the strictest controls that late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century federal administration had ever imposed on an Indian nation. For decades, reservation administrators had systematically suppressed Indigenous leadership on that reservation and had taken other steps, usually in the name of assimilation, that thoroughly disrupted much of the social fabric of the community. Such actions were common in the treatment of American Indians at the time, but they had been extreme in this case. The more successful nation, meanwhile, had had a very different experience. While its social organization had not escaped the negative impacts of external controls, those controls had been less severe, leaving much of the Indigenous leadership structure not only intact but involved in decision-making. I could only speculate on the specific connections, but perhaps these different histories played a role—decades later—in the divergent outcomes.

We talked about this and the general pattern of economic development on Indian lands, commonly known as Indian Country. We knew that some nations were doing significantly better than others. The more we talked, the more intrigued we were by the possibility of other cases like those Kalt had found, where differences in economic assets or opportunities did a poor job of explaining variable economic performance. By the end of lunch, we had outlined a research project on Indian reservation economic development. We imagined a comparative look at a set of reservations, including some that were doing well economically and some doing less well. What explained the pattern?

In subsequent weeks, we drafted a research proposal and went searching for support. Eventually, with a grant from the Ford Foundation, we established the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development. Little did I know that more than twenty years later, we would still be working on topics traceable to that lunch in 1986, or that I would be doing what today we call public sociology.

In this chapter I briefly describe our research and its early findings. I then discuss how those findings and the response to them pushed us into public sociology, which, according to Michael Burawoy (2005a:9) in his 2004 American Sociological Association presidential address, “strikes up a dialogic relation between sociologist and public in which the agenda of each is brought to the table, in which each adjusts to the other.” Finally, I consider the relationship of this effort to the other forms of sociology—policy, critical, and professional—that Burawoy identifies.
RESEARCHING AMERICAN INDIAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Indigenous peoples of the United States form a set of nations, or tribes, that occupy a common legal and political position in the United States but carry with them distinctive histories, cultures, and contemporary circumstances. Located on lands commonly called reservations and subject ultimately to federal controls, they retain significant rights of self-determination and self-governance based on their inherent sovereignty and on treaties signed with the United States, congressional legislation, and federal court decisions. These rights include such things as setting citizenship criteria, making and enforcing laws, managing their lands and civil affairs, choosing their forms of government, and engaging in a wide array of other governance functions, from environmental regulation and business permitting to issuing bonds and creating their own educational systems.

While the majority of self-identified American Indians today reside in nonreservation, urban areas, a major portion of the Indian population chooses to remain on reservations. In the aggregate, this reservation-based population is among the poorest in the United States. In the 1970s, the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare described rural Indians as “in a class of poverty by themselves” (1974:v). Three decades later, despite significant improvement, that population remains, on average, exceedingly poor (Taylor and Kalt 2005). But it is not uniformly poor. While some of this has to do with reservation-based gaming operations, not all of it does. By the late 1980s, well before widespread gaming impacts, some Indian nations were doing much better than others (Cornell and Kalt 2000; Taylor and Kalt 2005; Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development 2007). We wanted to know why.

Our research strategy had two prongs. One used census and other quantitative data to search for causal factors in the pattern of socioeconomic change across reservations. The other used fieldwork with a sample of nations—both more “successful” and less—in search of factors that might not show up in the quantitative analysis and of insights that could help us better understand what the numbers meant.

On the quantitative side, we used census data from 1970, 1980, and eventually 1990 and 2000, as well as Bureau of Indian Affairs labor force data and Indian Health Service data, to investigate changes in economic and social indicators over time. Such data are often of poor quality, but they gave us insights into longitudinal patterns, and they helped us identify cases of particular interest where the patterns seemed unusual.

We based our field sample on three considerations: guesses at what factors might be important (size, location, natural-resource endowments, educational attainment, etc.); our identification, partly through
the quantitative analysis, of puzzles—such as the one we first discussed at lunch—where development patterns were unexpected; and our existing connections to Indian Country. This mixed bag of criteria was unorthodox but realistic. We knew we could not simply pick a random sample of nations and expect to walk in the door and do research; few tribes would allow it. We also expected that much of the research payoff would come in systematic comparisons of similarly situated nations pursuing similar goals but with different outcomes.

The result was a nearly unmanageable sample: twelve nations that we hoped to spend time with. But over the next several years, we and our colleagues, including research assistants, looked at all twelve, although we spent more time with some than others. But even this ambitious sample quickly grew. As Indian nations heard about our research, some approached us, enlarging our knowledge base as tribal councilors, program and business managers, employees, and other citizens told us their development goals and experiences. Well before the end of that first grant, we had gathered substantial information from more than two dozen nations, and the number kept rising as our research expanded in subsequent years, embracing not only American Indian nations but Canadian First Nations as well.

This project continues today through a network of researchers, partly at Harvard but increasingly—owing to my current affiliation and Harvard’s indifference to such work in Indian Country—through the Native Nations Institute for Leadership, Management, and Policy, a unit of the University of Arizona that we started in 2001 with Ford Foundation support and in cooperation with the Morris K. Udall Foundation. Our research program has expanded but remains linked to our original question about differential outcomes and to our first set of research findings. These can be summarized under three broad headings:

**Sovereignty or Jurisdiction**

We soon found evidence of a turnaround point in the economic histories of many Indian nations—variable across tribes but appearing with growing frequency after the mid-1970s—when the nation itself moved into the driver’s seat in its affairs, displacing the federal government, which for generations had been the primary decision-maker on Indian lands. As Indian nations took over substantive decision-making roles, development decisions began to reflect Indigenous knowledge and relationships and tribal priorities instead of federal ones. Most importantly, decision-makers began to experience directly the consequences of their decisions, creating an accountability missing from the federal Indian affairs decision process. This
change was not, in and of itself, sufficient to produce economic progress, but in case after case, it appeared to be a necessary condition for it.

Capable Governance

But we also saw a critical institutional component to the pattern of change. Many nations had moved aggressively in recent years to take over decision-making from the federal government, but fewer of them had backed up this assertion of rights to self-determination with adequate attention to how those rights would be exercised. Moving decision-making power into Indigenous hands appeared to produce sustained, positive effects only where there were capable and stable governing institutions that could effectively exercise that power. This meant that the nation had to establish clear, dependable rules that could deliver fairness and efficiency in administrative decisions and implementation; fairness and efficiency in the resolution of disputes; and control over internal political interference in tribal programs and business activity.

Cultural Match

The institutional finding fit other work on development at the time (e.g., North 1990, Oberschall 1990, Knack and Keefer 1995, Evans and Rauch 1999). But the solution to the institutional challenge was not simply to import Western institutions into Indigenous societies. This had been tried by federal governments in the United States and Canada, which granted Native nations limited self-governing power but only through largely imposed, dominant-society institutions that often didn’t work in Indigenous contexts. Instead, effective governance appeared to depend in part on a match between formal governing institutions and informal community understandings about how authority should be organized and exercised. We called this “cultural match.” The point was not simply to “get the institutions right,” as economists might argue, nor to “get the culture right,” as federal officials, frustrated with cultures very different from their own, might say. The point was to get the fit right between formal institutions and contemporary Indigenous political culture (e.g., Cornell and Kalt 1995, 1997b). Only then would people view their government as truly theirs and grant it the legitimacy necessary to its success.

In short, Indian nations did better at addressing economic issues when they had substantive decision-making power and backed up that power with capable governing institutions that had legitimacy with their own peoples. These results became the basis of professional publications and pointed to additional research directions that we began to follow up. But in the meantime, another dimension of the project had begun to emerge.
WHAT CAN TRIBES DO?

From day one, we had in mind something more than a research project. We received unanticipated support from our first major funder. In 1986, Norm Collins oversaw the Ford Foundation’s poverty programs. We had sent him—and people at other foundations—our proposal. It was not the recommended way to seek funding: neither of us knew Collins; we had no established relationship; our letter was the equivalent of a cold call. To our surprise, Collins called back. He asked a few questions and then suggested we come down to New York to talk it over. As we sat in his office and outlined our ideas, his interest grew. But one thing concerned him. If we support this, he said, I want it to lead to something Indian nations can use. This can’t simply be about academic publications. It has to be about what Indian nations can do to address their own poverty.

Collins knew research would be critical to that goal, that producing something Indian nations could use would require, first, making sense of the pattern of reservation poverty. His concerns coincided with our own ideas. At that original lunch, we had realized that if we could explain differential economic outcomes in Indian Country, and if the explanation involved factors over which Indian nations exercised some control, we would have something of practical value to those nations. This became a central purpose of the project: a search for insights that Indian nations could use. Furthermore, my work on Indian political activism had persuaded me that few nations would talk to us unless they saw benefit in doing so. During my field research on Indian political movements, more than one tribal citizen had said something like, “we’ve been studied to death and don’t have much to show for it. If you don’t help us, why should we help you?”

These concerns shaped the course of our research and the activities that emerged from it. But in the beginning, we had little idea of how to be useful to Indian Country. The goal was there, but the project at first took a more standard form, reflecting intellectual curiosity. It outlined a way to get answers to our core question—how to explain differences in economic performance by American Indian nations—but said little about how we might turn such explanation to tribal advantage.

Furthermore, our early encounters with Indian Country were mixed. We were cordially received on several reservations during a preliminary field trip, but in Rapid City, South Dakota, a small group of Indigenous leaders gave us something of a dressing down. They were skeptical of our commitment and afraid we might emulate some other academics: arrive in Indian Country, write career-enhancing papers, and disappear. They also worried about the impacts of our research. There’s a lot at stake here, they said. The biggest single force shaping events in Indian Country is federal
Indian policy. What if your research influences that? You won’t experience the results. We will.

Two things began to alter this skepticism and change the nature of our work. As our early research results came in, we shared them, with a focus less on academic venues than on Indigenous ones, speaking at Indian Country conferences on economic and community development and other topics. Our results had practical implications for Indian nations, and we began hearing from some of them who wanted to know more, asking us to look at their situations in light of what we had learned. We were becoming conduits for information, not only about our analyses but about what was happening where. The national scope of our project was turning us into a storehouse of information on tribal development efforts and their results—models, tools, and innovations.

Before long, in response to tribal requests, we formalized some of these conversations in an executive education program organized jointly, for a time, with Northern Arizona University. Drawing on policy- and business-school models, we organized intensive, two-day seminars for senior Native leaders. The theme of these seminars was not so much “we’ve got answers” as “here’s what we’ve learned, what do you think, and how can it be helpful to you?” The curricular content was driven by our research, but much of the interaction reflected the agendas of those who attended, adding their own perspectives and searching for solutions to their nations’ challenges.

We also had something else of practical value to offer: a distinctive labor force composed of graduate students in Harvard’s Master’s in Public Policy program, whose curriculum required a real-world policy analysis for a real-world client. We offered tribes the opportunity to propose projects for these students. Many tribal governments face difficult policy challenges but lack the resources to develop information that would help decision-makers know what to do. If a nation proposed a topic amenable to student inquiry, we looked for a graduate student to work on it. Such students were often rookies in Indian topics, but they had good analytical skills, supervision, and deadlines. Our funding allowed them to go into the field for a firsthand examination of the issue at hand, but much of their work was by telephone and internet. If the result was useless, the tribe’s cost was minimal, but if it was good, the tribe had something useful it would not otherwise have produced. We have carried out some 300 such projects over 20 years, ranging from building judicial systems to consolidating tribal lands. With permission from clients, we distributed the better reports, first in hard copy, then on the web, so that useful information could be shared with other nations.

This combination of practical assistance and Indian Country interest in our findings changed the nature of our relationships and, ultimately, of our research.
By the early 1990s, we found ourselves engaged in an ongoing—if intermittent—dialogue with Native communities about what they were doing and could do to reclaim power over their affairs and use that power to achieve their goals. In the early years, much of that dialogue was preoccupied with economic development, a critical topic for most Indian nations. Some tribes, learning that we were engaged in research on “what works” in Indian Country, came looking for sure-fire development strategies; others wanted to test their ideas against our results; some wanted to be sure we didn’t ignore their concerns or achievements.

This dialogue had quick effects. It altered our conception of success. Our interest in development and our use of available data led to an early focus on common measures of economic performance such as employment, income, and household poverty. But this drew criticism from Indian nations. While all of them treated poverty as a massive problem, none saw development in purely economic terms. To one degree or another, they measured economic impacts against at least two other aspects of community life.

One was political. Indian nations hold a distinctive position within the American polity. They have a status in some ways similar to, in some ways different from, that of states, rooted in an inherent sovereignty that, while limited by treaties, court decisions, and congressional actions, remains substantial, evident in a distinctive set of rights that have not been extinguished. The protection and expansion of those rights is a priority concern of Indian nations. This has direct effects on development strategies. For most tribes, strategies that undermine such rights are suspect, even if they promise increases in income or employment.

There was another concern as well. For most Indian nations, there are also social dimensions to “success” involving the maintenance of social relationships, cultural practice, and the physical space that constitutes “home.” Some nations pay more attention to these things than others, but for most, development strategies have to be balanced against their sociocultural effects. In short, success in tribal terms was not simply about overcoming poverty. It was about the maintenance of communities.

As this dialogue unfolded, we had to rethink what it was we were trying to understand. Instead of asking about the factors that yield rising employment and incomes in Indian Country, for example—which is where we started—we began asking about the factors that facilitate tribal success, however defined. Our concern began as Indigenous economy but then became Indigenous efficacy: the ability of Indigenous nations to effectively pursue their own goals. The original articulation was ours, but its broadening came from interactions with Indian nations. This focus on tribal efficacy, in turn, had a methodological effect, increasing our use of extended,
qualitative case inquiry, although we still used quantitative techniques where we could find adequate data.

Our growing dialogue with Indian nations also led us deeper into the topic of governance. Our research pointed to constitutions—the foundational, written or unwritten rules by which communities organize themselves to achieve their goals—as critical to community success. But Indian nations wanted more. What kinds of rules or governance strategies were likely to work where and when? They had heard that some nations were integrating Indigenous political culture into contemporary governance solutions. How were they doing it?

We began not only gathering Indigenous governance models but trying to understand their logic. A parliamentary system, for example, worked well on a reservation where the U.S. government, in the nineteenth century, had forced three nations to settle together. One nation was larger than the other two. A directly elected chief executive would mean that the larger tribe might always control that position, undermining its legitimacy with the other two tribes. So the three nations instead adopted a system in which representatives elected from each tribe to a joint council selected a councilor to serve as chair. Thus the chief executive was beholden to a multi-tribe legislature, downplaying intertribal boundaries and avoiding a winner-take-all election. Meanwhile, another nation had a governing system that, without benefit of written constitution, elections, or formal legal codes, managed a productive economy and social programs and effectively navigated complex relationships with federal and state agencies. The key to its success, we concluded, was the enormous legitimacy that this system, rooted in a theocratic political culture established over many generations, had among its own citizens. Those citizens shared a set of normative expectations that—despite the lack of formal, written prescription—specified how things would be done, provided stability in governance, and prevented leaders from using their positions to advance their interests instead of the community’s (Cornell and Kalt 1997b).

Another project responded to requests from several nations that were writing or rewriting tribal constitutions. They sought a forum for sharing ideas about constitution-building. We organized symposia—and eventually a book—where Native leaders and academics joined to discuss constitutional innovations, the role of law in Indigenous communities, and ways to smooth potentially conflicted reform processes (Lemont 2006).

This kind of cooperative and dialogic search for information and insights allowed us not only to see institutions where we hadn’t seen them before but to understand how different sets of culturally matched institutions might yield similarly positive results, and how those institutions might be created. It also meant that we ended up sharing much of our work with Native audiences before sharing it with our own peers. Those audiences
sometimes challenged us. The chief of a First Nation in British Columbia, for example, urged us to rethink our understanding of the relationship between tribal politics and tribal enterprises, particularly in small nations. It departed from his own experience, and he turned out to be right, helping us pick up nuances we had missed. Another Native leader asked us what starts some nations down the institution-building path while others can’t get going, leading us to think about institution building as collective action and the role of leadership in generating change (for a preliminary exploration, see Cornell et al. 2007).

One of the lessons here is that public sociology is sometimes better sociology. It engenders a dialogue with embedded experts: people who are living the processes we want to understand. A more complete understanding of those processes demands that we create a joint intellectual effort in which we and they are together engaged in figuring things out. That effort requires trust. But it can lead to better social science: richer insight into social phenomena.

The result is a two-way educational process. Burawoy describes this as organic public sociology, as opposed to the mass-oriented traditional kind. It involves “direct, unmediated relation to publics . . . that are local, thick (with intensive interaction among their members), [and] active” (2007:254). It moves beyond researchers asking questions and informants providing answers and becomes a cooperative endeavor: If we put our minds together and listen to each other, can we better understand the issues on the table and the possible ways to address them?

A DISAPPEARING LINE BETWEEN PUBLIC AND POLICY SOCIOLOGIES

These interactions moved us into another of the quadrants in Burawoy’s fourfold vision. I find Burawoy’s (2005a:9) conception of policy sociology—“sociology in the service of a goal defined by a client” and designed “to provide solutions to problems that are presented to us”—too restrictive: we felt we were doing policy sociology before anyone asked us for advice or solutions, in the sense that we were explicitly concerned with the implications of our research for tribal and federal policy makers. Our answer is the same as Burawoy’s to the “knowledge for whom” question: policy sociology consciously includes a non-academic audience. But it is not dependent on outside initiatives or conceptions of the issues.

However, Burawoy suggests that we imagine policy sociology itself as having four subquadrants, replicating his division of the field (personal communication). There isn’t space to adequately discuss this suggestion here, but it opens intriguing possibilities. One could say that we entered
policy sociology through its professional subquadrant, turning the research lens on current policy and its effects. Eventually, clients did play a role in this, including federal agencies (e.g., Wakeling et al. 2001), Indigenous organizations (e.g., Cornell, Jorgensen, and Kalt 2002), and Indigenous nations (e.g., Brimley et al. 2007). Our own interest was primarily in the last of these, and particularly in Indigenous governments, which constitute not only a distinctive public but also exercise significant power in both the external arena (relations with other governments) and the internal one (the lives of their communities). Our work had implications for them (e.g., Jorgensen 2007), and this gradually pushed us into the public subquadrant of policy sociology. There, the question they were asking—what can we do to achieve our nations’ goals?—and the question we were asking—what makes some nations more successful than others at such achievement?—converged.

In the conventional conception of policy sociology, policy makers’ agendas shape inquiry. In our case, as this convergence suggests, the relationship has been more reciprocal. Our work on governance as a key component in sustainable community and economic development led Native nations to ask us to examine their own governance arrangements; such examinations in turn led to joint discussions of options for change. In this public subquadrant, policy sociology replicates public sociology, becoming a conversation in which each party draws on the other’s expertise to produce policy insights and solutions. This shared provenance has not been the prevailing pattern for Indigenous peoples in North America, where outside actors—governmental, academic, and other—typically have urged or even imposed one-size-fits-all policy interventions on those peoples. Partly for that reason, those interventions have seldom worked.

We also have encountered some of the dangers of policy sociology. Burawoy, referencing Ulrich Beck, warns that when sociological knowledge enters the policy arena it can become “a servant of power” (2005b:420). Power, of course, will take its servants wherever it can find them; we need not enter the policy arena to find ourselves in that role. As with other bodies of knowledge, any sufficiently creative policy wonk can cherry-pick sociology for justificatory purposes.

We had our own experience of this when Canadian government officials embraced our argument that sustainable development in Indigenous communities required capable Indigenous governance while ignoring our finding that it also required putting substantive, jurisdictional, decision-making power in Indigenous hands. The government, using us, thus neatly found a way to hold Native nations accountable for bad outcomes (“the problem is your dysfunctional governance”) while denying those nations the power to design their own governments and policies or to control what happens to them—a classic and counter-productive formulation in Indigenous affairs.
We opposed this in subsequent presentations, underlining our self-determination findings and emphasizing that nothing we had seen justified such dismembering of our results. While we had little influence over agency actions, we tried at least to offer Indigenous nations ammunition with which to fight back.4

**POLICY SOCIOLOGY AND CRITICAL SOCIOLOGY**

In one of his discussions of policy sociology, Burawoy (2005b:421) argues that “at its core there is no dialogue about normative assumptions.” While some of our experience departs from this—almost any effort to be useful to American Indian nations soon led to a conversation about values and goals—such dialogue, in Burawoy’s scheme (2005a), is the task of critical sociology: to identify, understand, and often challenge the normative assumptions not only of policy but of stakeholders in social processes, of publics, and of professional sociology, including ourselves (see Burawoy 2005a).

In this sense, at least, critical sociology was present early in our project, if modestly so, in our expectation that there were actions Indian nations might take to address their situations, that social science could help understand what those actions might be, and that a public sociology—a sociology engaged with this particular public—could increase social science’s ability to do so. These beliefs, poorly articulated at the start, questioned the assumption that Indigenous poverty would be solved by economic progress in the society at large, that social science could do little more than be a detached, analytical observer of the process, and that the appropriate role for Indian publics was to be studied but not to join the analysis or the discussion of what could be done.

Critical sociology was present also in our eventual recognition, born out of the kind of conversation that public sociology is all about, that the appropriate metrics for understanding success in Indigenous development were not simply measures of individual economic well-being—important as those are—but less easily quantifiable measures of collective capacity, action, and achievement. This recognition not only affected our research program and methods; it also challenged assumptions underlying a great deal of federal policy toward Indigenous peoples in North America and elsewhere. Much of the governmental conversation about Indigenous development, particularly in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, has been about closing socioeconomic gaps—not between the mainstream and Indigenous nations but between the mainstream and Indigenous individuals. This removes from the discussion a critical issue for Native peoples: their survival as distinct communities. As one Canadian official put it in the early
2000s, his government was willing to talk about equality but not about difference (Cornell 2005). But for many Indigenous nations, difference is the heart of the matter.

Here, another line began to disappear. In effect, we were moving into what Burawoy calls the critical subquadrant or “moment” of policy sociology (personal communication). In our emphasis on legitimacy and the role of Indigenous political culture in building capable governing institutions, we were questioning at least two assumptions dear to the hearts of policy makers. One holds that U.S. liberal democratic institutions offer the best available path to good governance and development and should be promoted everywhere. Our evidence disputed this. The other is the fantasy of bureaucrats that—if they take Indigenous governance seriously—they can produce a single governmental model that can be implemented uniformly across Indigenous nations, simplifying their bureaucratic tasks. We argued instead that while those nations may face similar governance challenges, their diversity and the cultural match requirement mean they are likely to produce variable responses. This, we argued, “is not really a problem. On the contrary, it is a solution” (Begay et al. 2007:53).

Even in these critical moments, public sociology continued to play a part. Some Native and non-Native academics and activists have criticized us at times for not being critical enough, for paying too little attention to the historical oppression of Native peoples and its disastrous effects. But we have seldom heard this complaint from tribal leaders, most of whom have little time for polemics. Their search has been not for affirmation of past suffering but for guides to practical action. They wanted to know what to do. Under pressure from them, we struggled to discover what works. Our critical position emerged from that process.

MERGING PROFESSIONAL AND PUBLIC SOCIOLOGIES

Behind all of this lay professional sociology—or more precisely, given the interdisciplinary nature of the project, professional social science. It informed our sense of how to proceed, from a classic comparative research design (the attempt to explain differences across cases by searching for sources of variation while controlling for as much as possible) to the specific tools we have used, including field methods, regression, econometrics, and the small-sample Boolean techniques developed by Charles Ragin (1987)—an approach ideally suited to some of our inquiries (e.g., Cornell and Kalt 2000). We also have turned to professional colleagues for advice and commentary and to the existing literatures on development, governance, organizations, social movements, culture, and Indigenous studies for ideas, frameworks, and insight.
But while social science in its professional forms has been a touchstone, we were slow to engage it through publications and professional presentations. This was not a conscious decision on our part but the inadvertent result of our engagement with Native publics. In the situations we were studying, people wanted help. They had urgent, practical needs and wanted to know if we could offer anything useful. We spent more time working with and writing for Indigenous peoples about governance and development strategies that met Indigenous objectives than thinking about how our research might contribute to our own disciplines. In our case, the danger in public sociology was not that some public would capture our agenda or persuade us to bend results to suit its interests. On the contrary, public dialogue forced us to refine our agenda in intellectually productive ways, and we found tribal leadership admirably open to our sometimes critical results. As one said in introducing one of our presentations, “they may not tell us what we want to hear, but they tell us what we need to know.” Instead, the danger was that this engagement would absorb all our energy and hinder the conversation with our own professions.

Our solution was deadlines. By committing to conference presentations and book chapters, we forced ourselves to frame our work in professional terms, situate it in our fields, and invite our peers’ reactions. The benefits were new ideas, insights, and energy.

Sharon Hays (2007:84) has argued that “if we aren’t doing public sociology, we’re just talking to each other.” Talking to each other, both within and across disciplinary divides, has been extremely useful to us, but it would have been far less so if we hadn’t at the same time been talking with the people whose lives and possible futures we were trying to understand. We came to them as professionals, with theories and interview questions in hand. Many of the questions were good ones, and some of our theories found support. But much of what we learned came when we listened not just to their answers but to their views of what we were doing and of what we were missing, and to what they wanted to know. My n is one, and I admit to bias, but in my experience this sort of public engagement is far more likely to enhance sociological skills and insights than to limit them. It depends, of course, on the sort of inquiry one undertakes, but in our case, the lines have been profitably blurred: Doing good professional sociology has required doing good public sociology at the same time.

NOTES

My thanks to Michael Burawoy, Vince Jeffries, and Joe Kalt for helpful comments and suggestions on an earlier draft of this chapter.

2. These executive education sessions continue today under the auspices of the Native Nations Institute at the University of Arizona.

3. At their request, we also have testified before U.S. Senate and Canadian parliamentary committees and have met with U.S., Canadian, and Australian government officials.

4. This danger is not peculiar to federal governments. In at least one case, leaders of a Native nation tried to use some of our findings to legitimize their own grip on power.

5. Started by a sociologist and an economist, this effort has become still more interdisciplinary over time, involving participants from education, public administration, public policy, anthropology, geography, and political science.

REFERENCES


Since 2000, I have given over 75 PowerPoint lectures to a wide variety of audiences demonstrating the patterns of racial disparities in imprisonment in the United States and Wisconsin. These slides have an impact and tell a story about racial dynamics in the United States that cannot easily be conveyed in words. They show not only that there is a racial disparity, but that it increased in the last quarter of the twentieth century, that the drug war was a major source of the disparity, and that Wisconsin is even worse than the rest of the country. After seeing the presentation, audience members agree the problem is serious and that some of their ideas don’t fit the data, even as they have different ideas about solutions. My slides are posted on my website\(^1\) and have been downloaded by and distributed to people I have never met; my work is regularly cited and discussed within criminal justice circles in Wisconsin.

I have also worked with several local groups around these issues. In 2000, I joined the board of an advocacy group Money, Education, and Prisons (MEP). My visibility on the racial disparities issue led to my being asked in 2003 to join the advisory board for Dane County’s federally funded Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC) project in juvenile justice. In April of 2007, this same visibility led to my appointment to the Governor’s Commission to Reduce Racial Disparities in Criminal Justice.

In his campaign for greater recognition of the value of public sociology, Michael Burawoy offers a 2x2 typology of sociologies where the dimensions are type of knowledge and audience. In his scheme, professional sociology develops instrumental knowledge for academic audiences; critical sociology develops reflexive knowledge for academic audiences; policy sociology develops instrumental knowledge for non-academic audiences;
and public sociology develops reflexive knowledge for non-academic audiences. Burawoy acknowledges that the typology is more useful as a stimulus to reflection and discussion than as a rigid classification of types of work. In practice, sociologists often simultaneously engage two or more of the cells in Burawoy’s typology, and many of the important debates and distinctions about the relation of sociology to external groups are not encompassed in the typology.

I began my career as a public sociologist somewhat haphazardly in 1999, before hearing Burawoy’s presentation on his typology. In taking this opportunity to reflect on my work in light of it, I find that the typology provides a useful basis for organizing reflections on my work; at the same time it elides many of the important lessons I feel I have learned in the process of doing public sociology. I organize my essay as follows. First, I tell the story of how I got involved in this issue, where the important lesson is the way that one’s commitments as a person and as a sociologist are complex and cross-cutting in ways that cannot be captured by a distinction between critical and professional sociology. Then I discuss the links between doing professional and public sociology, calling attention to the often-neglected professional skills that are important in communicating with the public. Third I dig into the matter of the publics, where I stress the diversity of publics and the need to listen as well as talk. Fourth, I talk about the links between public and policy sociology as one gets involved with groups that are trying to address social problems. Here the important issues are the tensions arising from the different rhythms of professional and policy work, as well as from the much greater difficulty of solving problems relative to acting as social critic. In the conclusion I try to draw the lessons together and reflect on the question of the social impact of my work.

GETTING INVOLVED: THE CRITICAL INTERVENES IN THE PROFESSIONAL

Burawoy’s typology is focused on types of sociology. But sociologists are, of course, whole people, and we come to our concern about social issues as people not just as sociologists. Audiences often like to know how an ivory tower academic came to this issue. I do have some history of low-level activism that I had pretty much put on hold while rearing my children. My interest in activism drew me into studying it academically as a scholar of social movements and collective action, but my past activism was unrelated to sociology.

I was pulled into prison work by the organizing efforts of local community activists, not by sociology. In 1999, a local advocacy group advertised a conference entitled “Money, Education, and Prisons,” raising concerns
that money was being diverted from education into prisons and stressing that this was a double disadvantage for African Americans, who were both being incarcerated at high rates and suffering from cuts in education. I attended this conference, thinking it would be helpful for my teaching. The local group had done an impressive job in organizing. The conference had over 400 in attendance and a dozen impressive speakers. I saw some of the claims in the conference materials and wondered if they were generally true, and what the situation was in Wisconsin. In particular, I doubted that the statement that “one in three Black men is under the control of the correctional system” could possibly be true. I thought I would want to check that fact out before using it in lecture. It turned out to be true. The most recent estimate from the Bureau of Justice Statistics is 40 percent!

I was looking for more involvement in social action now that my children were older. I had attended programs on social issues sponsored by Madison Urban Ministry (MUM), a progressive group whose motto is “planting the seeds of social change.” Some people from MUM had been part of the Money, Education, and Prisons conference planning group, and MUM decided to put on a series of forums about prison issues. I volunteered to be on the planning team for that forum series. As part of that, I volunteered to acquire and present information on patterns of imprisonment. I argued that people would want to know what people were in prison for and other information about the patterns of imprisonment. Although this did not necessarily seem the most important thing to everyone else, they thought it would be an appropriate component of the forums. Thus I began as a person, a volunteer among volunteers. I offered my sociological skills the way other people offered to do publicity or to make dinner arrangements. In particular, I am not a criminologist and when I started I had very little professional sociology to offer people.

Because I am not a criminologist, my first efforts were hit and miss. I eventually found information, first summary statistics on government websites, and then individual-level data from the National Corrections Reporting Program. At that time, it was easy to find the total imprisonment rate for each state and the national imprisonment rates by race, but not the race-specific imprisonment rates for different states. Because it is primarily black people who are being incarcerated, the strongest predictor of a state’s total incarceration rate is the proportion of the population who are black. The first statistic I calculated, by dividing numbers imprisoned from Bureau of Justice Statistics websites by population figures from Census Bureau websites, showed that my state, Wisconsin, was much more disparate in its imprisonment patterns than was the nation as a whole. In fact, Wisconsin’s black/white disparity was 20 to 1, compared to about 7 to 1 nationally. This shocked me. I prepared a handout with this and other information for a presentation at the forum. It had tables with numbers. Some people noticed and expressed concern, but many ignored it. I tried to give my handout to
people at a couple of other forums on prison issues, but there did not seem to be a lot of interest. In the second year of the forum series, the issue was juvenile justice, and I did another handout and presentation for that group, with a similar weak response. I continued working on the data analysis for this project for several years before it received much public attention.

Initially, I got much more attention and support from social scientists than from activists as I attempted to develop this as a professional sociology project comparing different states’ incarceration rates and looking for the causes and consequences of these differences. Wisconsin’s Institute for Research on Poverty provided me with a research assistant for several years, and the National Science Foundation provided a small development grant. We used this funding to download and process National Corrections Reporting Program (NCRP) and arrest data; we spent a lot of time grouping and categorizing offenses to match arrest and imprisonment offenses so we could compare them. My larger more grandiose grant applications were rejected by several agencies because they were naive and ill-focused.

My work is not critical sociology. However, the fact that I entered the field with questions coming from a critical standpoint did lead me to ask different questions from mainstream criminology. I was not interested in testing different theories of social control or in explaining away racial disparities by showing they were correlated with other factors such as crime. Instead, I started from the presumption that high black imprisonment rates are bad and cause problems. But to know what to do about the problem, I wanted to know whether the problem was that blacks were committing a lot of crimes, or that blacks were being discriminated against in the system. I tried to bring my professional skills to bear on answering that question.

The data that became the core of my public work in Wisconsin fell in my lap in 2000. Someone had given a copy of my 1999 forum handout to Gwen Moore, an African American state senator from Milwaukee. She had made a short angry speech on the Senate floor that week about locking up all the black people, but nothing more was said about it. Senator Moore had filed an open records petition with the Wisconsin Department of Corrections about the race and offenses of prisoners sent out of state and the DOC responded with six floppy disks and a paper code book. Her staffer called to ask if I could help them process it to answer their question. An experienced graduate student, James Yocom, volunteered his time to do the work of keying in hundreds of lines of variable definitions and creating the dataset, which included everyone who had been in prison in Wisconsin in the years 1990–1999. We built on the work we had done with the NCRP in grouping and coding offenses, and were able to do a detailed analysis of patterns in Wisconsin by race, offense, county, and admission type. Nobody had done this analysis. The information was powerful, and presenting it had an impact. It told people things they did not know and forced people to confront the problem.
In sum, I did not start out to be a public sociologist nor a critical sociologist. Rather, my critical sensibilities as a politically aware person interacted with my professional sociological sensibilities so that when fortuitous events created an occasion that seemed to call for my abilities, I stepped in and tried to figure out what to do as I went along. The fact that I already had tenure at a major research university made it possible for me to do this work. It gave me substantial resources for the work and it gave me the job security to permit risk-taking and the diversion of efforts into an ill-defined path with no clear professional payoff.

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS FOR PUBLIC PURPOSE

Often, public sociology involves taking professional sociological research that already exists and moving it into the public forum. I knew little about prisons and crime when I first became involved in this work. Nevertheless, my training and orientation as a professional sociologist made me able to do work that non-sociologists could not do, while learning how to do the work for a public purpose has fed back into my professional skills.

Quantitative Analysis

At the time I began the project, it was difficult to find information comparing states in their racial patterns of incarceration. Today you can find websites maintained by NGOs that publish such rankings annually. It was being ranked #1 in black incarceration for 2004 and a resulting ranking as “the worst place to be black in America” by an online black magazine that finally got the attention of Wisconsin’s white politicians. More and more advocacy groups are employing social scientists to analyze data and publish scorecards as part of their social change strategies.

Many groups have asked me to help them analyze and summarize data for grant proposals and reports. I also undertook several substantial analyses of juvenile data for the juvenile justice advisory committee. There is a crying need for data and data analysis in a wide variety of non-profit and governmental agencies. Cutbacks in the public sector have led to substantial reductions in administrative staff, including data analysts. As a result, although there is a huge amount of information collected by public agencies that could be used to monitor them and hold them accountable, there is a profound shortage of analyzed information. In the racial disparities area, there is a need to collect accountability measures at every decision point. Police agencies that undertake to record the race of all drivers in traffic stops and find evidence of disproportion can then ask what steps to take to address the patterns. My analysis of juvenile arrests pointed to the
importance of missed court dates, assault charges, and arrests at schools as key sources of disparity, which led the DMC committee to develop programs to address these issues. Madison school analysts found that the subjective interactional charge of “insubordination” accounted for much of the disparity in school suspensions, leading the district to change its suspension policies. Many agencies are protective of their data and keep their reports internal and private, unless forced to disclose by very specific open records petitions. But even when there is willingness, even eagerness, to use data to address social concerns, there is a deep inability to do so in many public agencies. One role universities could play that would be of immense social benefit would be to create structures to facilitate the analysis of public data for public use.

Data analysis is part skill and part art. The ability to gather, process, and analyze quantitative data is a special skill that social scientists bring to public discourse. It takes a great deal of talent, skill, insight, and persistence to make data reveal important social patterns and to check for artifacts or omitted variables that might be influencing the results. It is what we can do that others cannot. While propagandists or journalists might grab any figure that fits a point they are trying to make, as sociologists we want to be sure that the results we are reporting are as correct as we can make them.

Presenting Information

If we are going to engage public discourse, the public has to be able to understand what we say. The turning point in my public presentations was the shift to graphical displays of information. A major stumbling block for presenting sociological information to public officials and the general public is the general lack of statistical literacy. Many people’s eyes simply glaze over when they see a table of numbers. Even for those of us who are comfortable reading tables of numbers, a graphical display can convey information that can be much more readily absorbed. Information visually displayed can “tell a story” in a way that numbers or words cannot. Consider, for example table 16.1 and figure 16.1. Both contain exactly the same information. But figure 16.1 tells the story quickly and visually in a way that table 16.1 cannot: the black/white disparity for drug offenses was initially lower than for other offenses and rose steeply in the 1980s and remained high in the 1990s, while that for other offenses was much lower and more stable. Figure 16.2 conveys the trends in prison admissions 1926–1999. Again, the graph is much more powerful than a verbal description of what it shows: black and white admissions were relatively stable until the mid-1970s, when admissions accelerated for both races but especially for blacks, so that the disparity rose substantially. Figure 16.3 is the one of the most shocking slides in my talk. It shows that drug sentences
for young people are the major source of racial disparity. This slide is linked with other slides showing that young whites use illegal drugs at higher rates than blacks and showing employment discrimination against young black men with prison records for drug sentences. Together they provide a powerful indictment of the system.

Table 16.1.  Black/White Disparity in Prison Admissions, by Offense (Source: NCRP)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Violent</th>
<th>Rob/Burg</th>
<th>Theft</th>
<th>Drug</th>
<th>Other</th>
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<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>7.5</td>
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<td>8.4</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
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<td>8.6</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>16.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>1997</td>
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<td>6.0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
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<td>8.2</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>15.3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NCRP.

Figure 16.1.  Black/White Disparity in Prison Admissions, by Offense
It takes skill, effort, and experimentation to prepare a graph so that it can be read easily. It is an intellectual task, not just clerical, although it has clerical elements. You both decide what information to present and then work to format it so that important distinctions can be visually absorbed. Different formats are best for different media. Dark backgrounds and color work best for computer slide shows, and textual elements need to be large. But color graphs are incomprehensible if printed out and photocopied in black and white. White backgrounds,
uncluttered displays and monochromatic patterns and markers are best for paper. Another pitfall for paper graphics is that photocopy machines lack the definition of printers, thus blurring distinctions that are legible in the original. Within a graph, it can be difficult to keep all important elements legible. Getting the formatting right for each particular graph so that it can be read has been difficult and time-consuming at times. Many of my slides have an amateurish and inconsistent look. Nevertheless, I could not convey half as much information without them.

Another important aspect of my work has been extensive use of the Internet. I set up and maintain my own website at the university. This has allowed me to "publish" reports and statistics quickly and to make them widely available at little cost. I have posted raw data on the Internet, and spreadsheets with data and graphs showing time trends in imprisonment by race and offense for the different states in the United States and the different counties in Wisconsin. I have also posted copies of my PowerPoint slide shows and PDF files with screen shots from the shows. The PowerPoint slides have been downloaded and incorporated into lectures all over the country, and the PDF files have been printed out, copied, and circulated widely. Early on, I generated an online slide show tutorial on these issues. It rapidly became out of date and I did not update it, but this is another medium to explore.

Finally, good public sociology requires the core skills of good writing and good public speaking: the same skills we need when we teach. We need to go to the trouble to understand and address audience background and preconceptions, to figure out how to explain complex ideas clearly so other people can understand them, and to make our writing or speaking lively and interesting without resorting to simple-minded slogans and sound bites.

ENGAGING PUBLICS: EXPERTISE, LEGITIMACY, LISTENING, DIFFERENCE

Over the years, I’ve spoken to an accelerating number of groups. As this is my advocacy work, I usually say yes to any group who asks. I have spoken to church groups, antiracism groups, community forums on race and justice, the school board, court commissioners, public defenders, interagency criminal justice task forces, and a large number of classes. I’ve talked to criminal justice professionals, elected officials, relatively apolitical middle-aged white churchgoers, and black community activists. I have listened as well as talked, and in the process, I have learned a great deal from the audiences.
It is important to think in a practical sociological way about the problem of locating oneself in a public space and communicating with others. It is very important to attempt to understand the preconceptions and concerns of the audience. You cannot influence people by insulting or attacking them. People need to believe that what you tell them is true and that you are not distorting the evidence to make a point. It is important to speak with authority and expertise where the evidence warrants and with humility and caution where the evidence is silent or ambiguous. At the same time, you do not want to bore people to death with a pompous lecture. You need to speak with passion and make the material lively and accessible. These are also politically contested and sensitive issues, and you have to consider where you locate yourself in relation to political parties and the other political actors in the field. Publicly, I avoid personalizing issues, attacking officials, or picking sides in partisan disputes. Instead, I argue that we as a public are all responsible for the political climate that created this problem and everyone needs to take responsibility for his or her part of the problem.

What makes this difficult is that there are different publics and different audiences with different preconceptions and different concerns about the implications of the information. Language and rhetoric that makes the presentation more acceptable and legitimate for one audience can be inflammatory or alienating to another. With conservative white groups or public officials, I try to be neutral and factual. Many white officials’ first response is defensiveness. Many public employees are worried that evidence of disparity is tantamount to an accusation of illegal discrimination that may cost them their jobs, or at least embarrass them. In dealing with this concern, I have found that it is very important to remind people that a “disparity” is a statistical pattern. I stress that I am presenting the patterns in the data, and that what responsible people must do is try to understand how to respond to these patterns without denial, but that honest people can disagree about solutions. I stress that discriminatory patterns can happen without discriminatory intent.

But other audiences are alienated by precisely this stance. Left-wing and black audiences often criticize me for not calling the patterns “racist.” To them I say, “of course this is racist.” But then I often give a short exegesis on “the R-word.” I have learned (I tell them) that most whites respond very defensively and even angrily to being called racist, or to having something they are involved with called racist. Most whites (and many blacks) interpret racism as an individual attitude of racial prejudice, hostility, and bigotry toward others. If they are liberals, they view prejudice as an individual failing as a human being. Thus, to call them racist is to accuse them of being defective as a human being. Nevertheless, for the left-wing and black audiences, my credibility and legitimacy depends upon shifting rhetoric, and being willing and able to use the R-word and address their concerns.
Most of my audiences are what I would call racially naive white liberals, for whom my presentation is a wake-up call, a shock, a jolt to their complacency. It calls attention to a massive problem of racial injustice that they have been ignoring. But black responses are different. Some black people, particularly those who work in the system or who are former prisoners, have praised me for being willing to add a white face to the people talking about the problem. Many appreciate the information: even though they know there is a problem, many black people often do not know its full contours. “They are locking us all up!” is one common response. But the most common black response is impatience and anger. Much more rapidly than whites, black people say: “Stop telling us about the problem, we want to know what to do about it.” Audiences that are half or more black often become militant and combative. Audience questions are more likely to bring up CIA control of the drug trade, incarceration as genocide, or challenge me to explain what I personally am doing to solve the problem. (I tell them that what I am doing is analyzing data and giving these talks, mostly to white audiences.)

As I talk to different groups, I try to listen to what they say and use their comments in talking to other audiences. I explain to challenging black audiences about how whites react to the “R-word,” and I tell white audiences the kinds of issues that black audiences are likely to raise. I explain that all the professionals agree that racial differences in drug arrests happen because of where the police concentrate their efforts, but that people disagree about whether this is fair or not. I tell everyone that there is a debate about probation and parole revocations. The data show that revocations on “technical violations” without new offenses are a large share of prison admissions. Many community people close to offenders claim that the revocations are often for trivial or trumped-up violations. Some court commissioners have told me that many probation and parole officers revoke people on trivial charges, or essentially trick them into waiving their rights. But the district attorneys and some corrections officials insist that people are revoked only for serious infractions, and that many have actually committed a new offense at the time of revocation that just has not been processed yet. I do not have the data to adjudicate these claims. I just repeat them to different audiences. On this and a wide variety of other specific points, I try to further communication and open debate across the usual lines by telling one group what sort of issues are important to another group.

FROM PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY TO POLICY SOCIOLOGY

Burawoy suggests that the difference between public and policy sociology is whether the agenda is set by the sociologist or some outside group, and
by whether the sociologist works with grassroots organizations or elite institutional actors. In my experience, these distinctions are not so neat. For all three of the groups that I have worked with, I have done specific data analyses because they asked me to. However, at the same time, I have also stood apart and pursued my own agenda within each of them. And the elite/grassroots dimension was blurred by race.

**Setting Agendas**

I got little initial support from grassroots activists for my work on racial disparities. Most black activists felt they knew there was a race problem and saw no value in getting more information about it; their main concern was to get more contracts for black and Latino service providers (rather than the larger white-dominated agencies) to serve the needs of at-risk youth. Many people, black and white, were not sure which way the race issue would cut, and feared that disparity data would just confirm racial stereotypes about black criminality and increase white support for prisons. White activists were concerned about opening of the super-max prison, the connection of the “prison industrial complex” to capitalism and imperialism, and the spiraling costs of incarceration. In fact, at one point, Money, Education, and Prisons (MEP), the most grassroots and self-consciously “radical” of the groups I worked with, actually voted against making racial disparities one of their priority issues. This occurred when its membership had become all-white after black members left to work on the social service issues; the decision was reversed a few years later. I kept working on the racial disparities issue despite this vote because that was where my heart was, regardless of the opinions of others. In this, I was acting very much as academics do: we study what seems important to us, regardless of what others think.

My position on the local DMC project advisory board and the Governor’s Commission is different. Both were explicitly formed to develop policy to address racial disparity issues and I was asked to join because I was seen as an important person who had been speaking out on and providing information about the issue. For both groups, I have done a lot of data analysis, not only to answer the questions they ask, but to answer the questions I think they should be asking, and have then explained to them what the answers mean. Policy interventions have to be tied to information and where in the system the problem is happening, and the data show that the disparities vary a lot by offense, by jurisdiction, and by steps of the process. Sometimes the results point to disparate treatment, and sometimes to patterns of offending. I repeatedly have to explain why the disparity and the black rate are not the same indicator and why this matters: you can reduce the disparity by increasing the white incarceration rate, but that does not necessarily reduce the black incarceration rate or the harm it does.
I have done dozens of ad hoc data analyses in support of these two groups, and I have been asked to do many more by other NGOs. The real problem about doing data analysis for local policy groups is not about who poses the questions, but their volume and timing. These requests are typically made on a very short deadline and fulfilling them can be very time-consuming. The people asking for help don’t understand how to formulate good questions or to be sure that the data are in a reasonable form for analysis. Even with official sponsorship and a court order, getting the data is often an organizational obstacle course. Anyone who has data and gets a reputation for being willing to do data analysis in the service of good causes for underfunded NGOs or local agencies gets asked to do a great deal more than it is possible to do unless you are willing to abandon all your other work. Eventually, no matter how committed you are to contributing to important community issues, you have to tell people “no.” You have to choose your priorities and set your limits.

Leaders of agencies and non-profits often wonder whether there are students who would like to do analysis of their data for a master’s thesis or something. The answer is generally “no.” There are several reasons for this. The timing is wrong. Agencies need answers immediately, preferably yesterday. But students and professors plan their research agendas a year in advance. Moreover, a sociological master’s thesis (or dissertation) needs to address an important theoretical question of interest to the student. Agencies usually want fast answers to practical problems that interest them. Undergraduates are interested in doing any research just for the experience, and would like to take on this kind of job. But undergraduates are untrained and require extensive supervision and instruction. It is usually faster and easier to do the work yourself than to train a novice to do it. Most of the people in agencies and non-profits lack the ability to do the analysis themselves, that’s why they have the problem. Devising a structure to involve undergraduate students in data analysis for NGOs and local agencies would be a great academic-community partnership.

Real Groups

Doing the kind of organic public sociology that puts you in ongoing interaction with real groups raises a host of issues. It is a lot easier to document a problem and the social forces causing it than to figure out how to intervene to fix it. People who volunteer their time for an issue all have their own ideas about what to do, and voluntary groups have a shifting and amorphous character that makes it hard for them to act in a concerted fashion. Much of “organic public sociology” involves sitting through meetings that often seem to accomplish little. And racial dynamics problematize easy distinctions between grassroots and elites.
The grassroots activist group Money, Education, and Prisons (MEP) focused on advocacy around prison issues. MEP met with corrections officials, ran workshops for corrections employees, put on public forums, organized protests, and networked with other organizations. Although over a hundred people attended an organizational meeting after its successful 1999 conference, membership rapidly declined. A handful of people did the core work of the organization, and its direction shifted depending upon the agendas of this core. Most MEP members had some other prison or justice advocacy work they did outside MEP, and most meetings were spent with people discussing their various projects. Although I attended meetings fairly regularly over the years, MEP had little impact on my work, and I did little work for it, except to present data at forums and to report on my work in other venues. Race was an ongoing problem. All of the black founders of MEP eventually left it because of a divergence of goals. After that, the core of MEP was a changing pool of less than a dozen white activists with one American Indian and one Latina, with the periodic participation of one or two other black activists. A venture into providing services for returning prisoners blew up in a racially charged conflict amid inadequate organizational structures and lack of financial oversight.

The DMC board and the Governor’s Commission are both dominated by people who have leadership positions in the system: police, district attorneys, public defenders, judges, court commissioners, school officials, heads of social service agencies, politicians, corrections managers. Leaders of grassroots organizations serving people of color are also present. These would appear to be more like the elite institutions that sponsor Burawoy’s policy sociology, and in some ways, they are. But along the race axis, they are different. Both are fairly evenly balanced between blacks and whites (with a sprinkling of Hispanics and the occasional Asian or American Indian). The head of the DMC project is a black assistant district attorney; the co-chairs of the Governor’s Commission are a black state senator and Madison’s black police chief. Both are appointed boards, and everyone there believes racial disparity is an important social issue. I’m the only academic.

For its first two years, the DMC board seemed to have the same meeting over and over, as a shifting group of public officials and community members attended irregularly and voiced their concerns. The hard core of regular attendees were a much smaller group that included the district attorney, the assistant police chief (who became chief during the project), school district representatives, the chief public defender, the head of the juvenile detention facility, the juvenile court commissioner, several key social services administrators, and a couple of judges. Most of these people see each other regularly in the normal course of their work lives. Even as a regular attendee, I knew them less well than they all knew each other. There was full
agreement that racial disparity problems were real and important, but there was less agreement about exactly what to do about it. Over and over, discussions danced around the question: is the disparity arising because black kids are doing more bad things, or is the disparity arising because black kids are being unfairly treated? Tension at meetings would sometimes arise when the representatives of a particular institution felt attacked by implications that discrimination in their institution was a problem, but people kept the working relationships going. Even though virtually everyone on the board agreed that both kids’ behavior and discrimination were problems, it was organizationally easier to recommend and implement programs that addressed the kids’ problems than to recommend and implement programs that addressed points of discrimination in the system.

It is too early to know how the Governor’s Commission dynamics will play out. Appointed by the governor, it is a heavily partisan group, with only one or two token Republicans. The commission has been publicly attacked as pointless by people who insist that all of the problem is that blacks commit too many crimes. Within the commission, there is no disagreement that there is a real problem—everyone on the commission gave a self-introduction explaining why they cared about the issue. But, as with the DMC board, different people have different ideas about what the core agenda should be and about what kinds of information the commission should consider. Sorting all this out is made more difficult because of shifting attendance at meetings due to the tight timetable, travel distances, and competing job commitments of the commissioners. With a substantial presence of black legal and criminal justice professionals from Milwaukee, where public political discourse has a more combative tone than in Madison, overt complaints about discrimination in the system are on the table, but there is also a deep recognition that there are real problems with Milwaukee’s recent homicide wave and the broader problems of drugs and crime and young people who seem to have no interest or stake in a legitimate lifestyle. We also had a serious debate about issues of tone, as some of us (primarily whites but some blacks) stressed the need to use language to invite whites into the solution instead of just attacking them as racist, while others (primarily black politicians) stressed the need to assure angry black communities that the reality of discrimination is admitted and that real changes are going to be made. This debate is not over yet.

While data analysis can document problems and can be a useful tool in combating discrimination within the system, I find it much harder to imagine how to undo the damage that has already been done and restore social health. It is really not possible for any one local or state-level group to solve problems that originate in the deep structures of racial inequality in the nation. People have to work together for the long haul, at the same time as they seriously try to address issues of inequality and discrimination.
in their systems. They are real human beings struggling to deal with real issues under real constraints. It is one thing to give sociology lectures and write papers that provide an analysis of the racial structure of society. It is quite another to get down into the trenches and try to figure out what can be done in your own corner of society. As a sociologist in the trenches, I find myself shifting back and forth between criticizing the limitations of the groups I work with, and sympathizing with the people who are trying to change things. I know how to analyze data and provide information, but I don’t think I know any more than they do about what might work to promote change.

CONCLUSION

Has my work had an impact? In terms of raising discussion of the issues, I think the answer is yes. Of course, I am not the only one working on this issue and it is the accumulation of voices that have impact, but my detailed public presentations about Wisconsin’s patterns are widely cited in local debates. I know that seeing my presentation had a galvanizing impact on a number of key officials. I gave an early version of the presentation to a group of Madison Democrats that included the newly elected district attorney, and was invited early on to work with the DA’s office in addressing their disparity issues. One relatively conservative white school board member told me that it completely reoriented her orientation toward the schools. Madison’s black assistant police chief (now the chief) was visibly shaken the first time he saw my presentation, which shows how Dane County’s black (but not white) rate of incarceration for drug offenses skyrocketed after Madison got a big drug enforcement grant. After somewhat justifying the policy by discussing the association of the drug trade with violence, he said to the audience assembled at the law school: “I just want to say, I’m not going to tell you that this is not racist.” I met later with him and the Hispanic head of the police drug task force to have a long frank conversation about the challenges of policing, from which I learned a great deal. They talked both about how they felt that police were often on the front lines acting almost as social workers in trying to deal with problems in troubled minority neighborhoods, and about their frustrations with the political pressures that prohibit heavy-handed responses to the disruptive drunk whites who are the major source of assaults and rapes in the community. After having debated Milwaukee’s district attorney several times in panel discussions, he finally asked to meet with me just as he was retiring, and brought along his soon-to-be-elected replacement. I showed them the PowerPoint presentation on my laptop while sitting in a coffee shop. The new Milwaukee DA is working with the Vera Institute to set up a data-based
monitoring system to address their disparity issues. So there is definitely movement. But at the same time, inequality is rising, social services are being cut, and young people who have grown up in households and neighborhoods already disrupted by incarceration have launched lives of crime. Pushing back against these social forces is very difficult. Sociologists can contribute toward pushing back, but we have to work with and listen to the others who are also trying to push back.

NOTE

This is a revision of a paper presented Monday July 24, 2006, at the XVI International Sociological Association World Congress of Sociology, Research Committee 07, “Public Sociology and the Future of Social Existence in a Globalizing World.”

1. See www.ssc.wisc.edu/%7Eoliver/home.htm; follow links to the “racial disparity” section.
Sir Patrick. Perhaps you’ve forgotten also that you undertook to cure her with Koch’s tuberculin. Ridgeon. And instead of curing her, it rotted her arm right off. Yes: I remember. Poor Jane! However, she makes a good living out of that arm now by shewing it at medical lectures. Sir Patrick. Still, that wasn’t quite what you intended, was it? Ridgeon. I took my chance of it. Sir Patrick. Jane did, you mean. Ridgeon. Well, it’s always the patient who has to take the chance when an experiment is necessary. And we can find out nothing without experiment. Sir Patrick. What did you find out from Jane’s case? Ridgeon. I found out that the inoculation that ought to cure sometimes kills.

—George Bernard Shaw, The Doctor’s Dilemma

The wanton disregard for patients was a theme of Shaw’s play *The Doctor’s Dilemma*. Shaw reached another audience after its first production in 1906 and furthered his political agenda through writing essays instrumental in pushing the British parliament to add a public member to the medical regulatory board in 1933:

But I may mention here that my demand for lay representation on the General Medical Council at last moved the Government to impose one of their best men, Sir Edward Hilton Young, on that body. . . . Until the General Medical Council is composed of hard-working representatives of the suffering public . . . we shall be decimated by the vested interest of the private side of the profession in disease. (1957[1911]:87–88)

The fictionalized exchange in *The Doctor’s Dilemma* quoted above between two physicians, based on Shaw’s conversations with a “real physician,” and
his later political commentary encouraged me to think of him as my model. His main métier, theater, and the large audiences that watch his plays, are broadened by his political writings. Moreover, he accomplished what he set out to do—reform the General Medical Council (GMC). Few think of Shaw as a lesser playwright because he wrote political commentaries. The recent calls for “public sociology,” however, have been met by criticisms that it will ruin “professional sociology,” rather than create a synergy between them. There is another reason I chose Shaw: The concern with how to rein in incompetent or unscrupulous doctors.

I have an idea what Sir Edward Hilton Young may have faced, as I too serve as an appointed public member of a state medical licensing and disciplinary board. This position demands that I participate fully in board activities. In that sense I am either fulfilling my civic responsibility or am an organic public sociologist; I use my skills both as a trained participant observer and my sociological lens to be the best public member I can be and work from the inside to try to further the public interest by tackling regulatory issues. Unlike Shaw, who had the skill and wit to write “reality based” fiction, and acted as a critic from outside the regulatory body of the GMC, I work from the inside and am a sociologist and ethnographer. I face issues when it comes to remaining an active participant, conducting “professional” research, and writing a book about medical licensing and discipline that will, hopefully, appeal to professional sociologists and the regulatory community. However, I will argue that being a public and professional sociologist is advantageous to both. First, I will describe the work of state licensing and disciplinary boards and the changes that led to the addition of public members. Then I will examine some of the limitations of Michael Burawoy’s proposals for public sociology while contesting some of the arguments against public sociology by its detractors. In the third section, I will argue that working as an ethnographer provides one bridge for a public sociologist/researcher and facilitates an integrated project. Public sociology raises new issues for professional research, the dual roles of public sociologist and researcher permit different vantage points for gathering data, being a public sociologist permits access for a researcher, and what is learned as a public sociologist provides insights for professional sociology and vice versa.

MEDICAL BOARDS ARE CHANGING ORGANIZATIONS

Medical licensing and disciplinary boards were created by state legislated medical practice acts at the end of the nineteenth century, when all physicians were required to obtain a license to practice. Although the medical regulatory practices in England and the United States have changed since
Shaw wrote his spoof and critique, they are still far from fully protecting the public from medical misconduct. Until the late 1970s, board members spent much of their time writing and grading exams despite the availability in 1916 of national exams. Many board members spend from 15 to 30 days a year on board work, now focusing on physicians reported to the boards by the public, hospitals, healthcare providers, or insurance companies who are alleged to have committed sexual misconduct, drug and alcohol offenses, negligence, incompetence, or fraud among other offenses. Some boards are located within state bureaucracies; others are autonomous from the state; some can make policy and others cannot; and some have many staff—administrators, investigators, and lawyers, while others have few. How their disciplinary cases are decided varies—who makes the decisions, what standards of evidence are used, what acts reflect a violation, and who hears or presents the case.

Despite sunshine laws that required more information to be made public and opened more board activities and meetings; sunset legislation that made boards more susceptible to legislative changes; media exposés; and public members on all but two boards, boards remain to a significant degree directly or indirectly linked to the medical profession through social relationships with state and specialty associations and the strong influence of medical language and practices. That is, regulatory boards are still largely powerful medical and somewhat private, not democratic institutions. Some are more so than others.

THE ADVANTAGE OF BEING A PUBLIC AND PROFESSIONAL SOCIOLOGIST

Michael Burawoy’s (2005) examination of “four sociologies” provides a view of what is going on in the profession and is a “call to arms” for public sociology. I thought I was doing my civic responsibility when the governor asked me to join the medical board. Later I started research while I continued as a public member. Now I think that I have been doing organic public sociology; trying to “protect the public” and developing a public audience for board activities as a critical and professional sociologist. But my experiences do raise issues with how Burawoy frames the four sociologies and with several of his critics who argue against the call for public sociology.

First, how different is public sociology from civic responsibility? I suspect some public sociology doubters (Turner 2005) who are concerned with improving the public good and volunteerism would not object if a sociologist volunteered as a concerned citizen. I may have no political warrant as a sociologist (Brint 2005), but I do have civic responsibility. If I volunteer as a concerned citizen and use my sociological and methodological skills...
as a participant observer to be a better board member and work actively to move the board toward working more in the public interest, am I, in practice, different from a public sociologist? Or must I take off my sociology hat when I am executing my role as a responsible citizen though others know I am a sociologist? I doubt that in the real world we can maintain separation between citizenship and sociologist. I don’t, in practice, see much difference between being an active citizen and a public sociologist. Don’t we as citizens have a civic responsibility to engage in the social world as responsible citizens or when we get involved do we need to turn off our sociological insights or hide that part of us from others? We do have a tradition of active involvement from various political positions. Most of us are critical to some extent.

Secondly, my work raises issues about the location where one can be an organic public sociologist. Burawoy places public sociology in the civil sphere, where it is intended to create a more just society in a dialogue with a public. Brint (2005) and Brady (2004) criticize him, as some of the groups found in the civil sphere are not movements most sociologists would consider supportive of the public good. Turner (2005) takes a different tact than Brint or Brady and argues that some of the most interesting questions concern the market and the state, which are left out of the field of “public sociology” by Burawoy. Where public sociology can happen needs to expand. My site has state authority to grant and revoke licenses to practice medicine to protect the public, but in practice it was dominated by powerful and secretive actors for more than 75 years—they helped capture the market and did little to discipline unethical and incompetent physicians. Is it outside of public sociology if I work from within to bring boards more into the public dialogue to better protect the public instead of just joining a public interest group to challenge them?

Today many organizations are hybrid, made up of state, public, and regulated players. Is my project not public sociology because I have started in a “state” organization that provides market protection for an occupation? Private groups perform many state functions, and regulatory groups have their feet in both the state and civil society. As a public member and professional sociologist, I see my work is to increase the “public” for the boards—both as an active audience watching and evaluating what boards do and insisting that they work harder to “protect the public” and as a participant in the work of boards. Can one enter a state organization that worked as an essentially private one controlled by “experts” and, as a public sociologist, help boards better protect the public and become more public? Perhaps it is necessary to expand the location of public sociology.

Thirdly, while Burawoy argues that people will probably separate their different kinds of projects in terms of career stages, this project like Donald Light’s (2005) is about the synergy—reciprocal interdependencies (Bura-
woy 2005:15)—among public, critical, and professional sociology. This chapter is about what strengthens both professional and public sociology—not what divides them (Burawoy 2005:16). My case demonstrates that it is possible to live in a delicately balanced peace unlike the argument of that impossibility (Turner 2005:43).

I take many of my cues for how simultaneously to do public and professional sociology from ethnographic projects, especially those with a pragmatist bent, as pragmatism informs my politics and sociology. Ethnographers have always been intimately involved in the worlds they study and often were either “traditional” or “organic” public sociologists. Until the late 1960s ethnographers were exhorted to remain outsiders—objective observers of what is going on and concerned with “over-rapport” while writing for a broad audience as traditional public sociologists (Vidich 1955; McCall 1969; Miller 1952). Most ethnographers now agree that the neutral observer so desired by the “scientific model” is in part a fiction, but remain “traditional public” sociologists by working to ensure that ethnographic accounts are credible both to sociology and wide public audiences (Anderson 1990, 1999; Duneier 1999; Liebow 1967; Stack 1974). Additionally, some basis for becoming organic sociologists exists in the works of ethnographers who were players in the worlds they wrote about. Howard Becker is a musician and played while writing his article, “The Professional Dance Musician and His Audience” (1951); Fred Davis was a taxi driver (1959); Ned Polsky hustled pool (1967). They were not, however, trying to change that social world though they were of it.

Some ethnographers, nevertheless, have worked as “organic public” sociologists. William Kornblum’s Blue Collar Community (1974), an ethnographic account of community ethnic groups and their varying relationships to unions and steel mill work, is an excellent piece of professional sociology, and Kornblum worked and continues to work with members of that community on union and political issues. Gerald Suttles’s Man Made City (1990) started with his appointment to the local Planning Committee of the Chicago Metropolitan Planning Council, a non-profit group; then it evolved into a professional project. Much ethnography has entwined the two; in fact, in the 1970s we were often exhorted to “give back to the community.” Although I would not consider my Honor and the American Dream (1983) organic public sociology, I participated in political demonstrations, helped young people get into college, and wrote a proposal for funding for a program that hired local young people. These ethnographies do not make sociology look bad nor are they poor sociology. They are not only public sociology but are critical.

I take Burawoy at his word that good public sociology needs good professional sociology (Burawoy 2005:10). Brint (2005), however, argues that Burawoy underplays professional sociology’s importance except with a general
statement and sees professional sociology as “only a very faint heartbeat . . . vaguely perceived, distantly nurturing parent—necessary somehow, but not very interesting” (Brint 2005:49). I will argue, as did Donald Light (2005), that professional sociology contributes to public sociology and vice versa, especially for ethnographers. We need to explore further how it is possible to combine our labors.

ADVANTAGES

This chapter concerns the advantages of being both an organic public sociologist and a professional ethnographer in the same project. It does entail a critical stance as a pragmatist. First, doing a project is a long process, for me about 15 years, facilitating the change of emphasis and allowing more than one set of questions. For me as a public member and thus, to some extent an insider, certain activities were possible and I could work for local changes and some small national projects of the national organization of boards, the Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB) such as helping to write standards for how boards should handle physician sexual misconduct or chemically dependent physicians. This work raised issues for me as researcher that the literature could not answer. I became interested in why public members were appointed as I began to spend more time with national groups, both public interest and the national organization of boards, while starting a historical investigation. Faced with the move from one state board to another, I discovered an entirely new dimension that would require a sample to truly understand and, thus, I needed a greater research emphasis. Working in the field provides insights for professional sociology; it provides questions that arise from observations and experiences and access to groups otherwise unavailable to sociologists.

Second, whether starting a project as a concerned citizen or ethnographer, a reasonable sociologist uses sociological research tools to understand what is going on in any group. Turner worries, “Critical sociology will be the rocket fuel of public sociology; and as it does today, public sociology will target both professional and policy sociology” (2005:29). But I argue that while it may be rocket fuel for some, it need not be. A good ethnographer does not jump in with both feet and mouth open, but learns to listen and think first. The good ethnographer is looking for things that they don’t expect and knows that much of what they assume about the social world is incorrect. Additionally, pragmatists don’t think they are going to change the world; most have learned that baby steps make progress as does starting in the local scene. For an ethnographer and pragmatist sociologist relationships and the need to maintain them make persuasion necessary, not fire.
Third, organic public sociology provides opportunities for research that would often not be available otherwise, especially of powerful groups with gatekeepers. I was accepted as a researcher as everyone knew me as a responsible public member. As a fellow board member they were interested in my observations as a professional sociologist.

Fourth, research provides additional insights for change. Acting as a professional sociologist and gathering data makes one a better public sociologist by improving the knowledge to understand what changes you need to argue for that are unavailable from prior research and may suggest how to make those changes.

The position, however, of university membership and researcher does present issues. Fifth, as a member of a university community I had to obtain IRB permission and the consent from other state boards to observe. How do you persuade insiders that the research is not going to be “an exposé” while wanting to be able to tell the tale about whatever you found but also wanting to remain in a fruitful dialogue? Will the writing of a book help develop the growing public for medical boards? Can I persuade a general audience that my critique is embedded in respect for my colleagues and staff on the boards, not merely my role as a critic, and my sociologist colleagues that as a member I am not an apologist and I have something to say about participatory democracy? How will both audiences accept my multi-sided role and my pragmatist vision of the social world that means writing to increase the dialogue among groups?

An Organic Public Sociologist or a Responsible Citizen? Using Ethnographic Skills and Sociological Knowledge

Was I just a concerned citizen who took my responsibilities seriously or an organic public sociologist? The governor appointed me partially and I had some acceptance by the physicians because I was a professional sociologist. Moreover, I needed to use my sociological tools to get an insider view and establish a reasonable reputation to become the best board member I could to protect the public. As a sociologist, I did not have an opinion about licensing and discipline except that I was aware of Freidson’s (1975) analysis of the failure of “peer review.” I felt lost when I joined—like any ethnographer in a new setting. Using my experience as an ethnographer, I tried to ask “dumb” questions (people like to instruct) without offending anyone until I could figure out which issues and individuals were critical. Physician authority and control over board discourse did bamboozle me and only when I learned about organizational history did I understand how to get my way on occasion. I would need to draw upon every talent I had to understand what was going on to better protect the public.
When the governor’s appointment secretary called, I didn’t know what
the board did or how much time it involved nor did the other public mem-
ber as he was new. Attending my first meeting confronted with a five-inch
stack of papers with copies of letters of complaint and lists of doctors who
were to be voted on for licensure, I tried to figure out what was going on.
Feeling that I was in a foreign territory, I joined the other board members
when they adjourned to a restaurant, where we went into executive session
while ordering dinner and drinks. Each person paid for the meal at the end
of the meeting when it finished about 11 pm.

By my third monthly meeting of the board, I thought I was beginning
to understand what was going on; however, I couldn’t find the meeting. It
occurred to me that they might have gone directly to the restaurant. There
they were. No one told me that, if there was no “public business,” go di-
rectly to the restaurant. Talk about feeling like an outsider. During dinner
we decided whether cases should go to a hearing panel and other important
business that affected lives. The chair gave me my first case to investigate
involving reading MRIs and X-rays of the spine. Someone handed me the
handwritten letter of complaint and told me about a neurologist who could
read the MRIs. The board president instructed me to call the physician un-
der investigation. I called a few days later using my title of “doctor,” but he
still slammed the phone down after telling me to call his lawyer. No one
told me that I could get a subpoena, that I was responsible for keeping the
complainant informed, and that I had to write the letter to the patient when
the case was closed several months later. The doctor was “just” obnoxious,
the board members informed me, and, thus, had not violated the medical
practice act. We couldn’t do anything.

I continued to use my ethnographic skills to penetrate jargon and a group
with a collective history run by powerful figures. I was “hoodwinked” when
the board president kept asking if I agreed with the calls to close investiga-
tions. At first I thought he was just being polite, but I discovered that some-
times when he didn’t want to contest an investigation, he pushed me to do
it. When I protested, the board members investigated further. Nevertheless,
the cases appeared again on the agenda several months later with recom-
mendations to close. The investigator (a board member) always gave what
the doctors said was a reasonable explanation for the deviation. Some that
worried me were probably unavoidable bad outcomes, but on other occa-
sions, I am not so sure the problems did not fall outside what a reasonable
physician should have done. I was never able to get a case where the doctor
appeared to be negligent or incompetent from the investigatory stage to a
hearing panel. These cases required knowledge and skills I did not have to
assess the cases independently from what the doctors said. What was going
on? At first I felt like I was successful because I stopped cases from being
closed hastily. I acted as a good public member by not letting the doctors
get away easily, I would have reported excitedly. But I was co-opted some of the time. This insight was important when I became a professional sociologist.

It was different with sexual misconduct cases. I was able to make independent assessments of sexual violation cases and persuade others, partly as a woman, to follow my lead. I sat on two disciplinary hearing panels concerning sexual misconduct soon after my appointment—one for five and another for 17 days. Panels of two doctors and a public member decided the facts but the entire board voted on the conclusions of law and the sanction. These were the first two occasions that the board charged doctors with sexual misconduct. One was dismissed before I joined but re-instituted after the press discovered the dismissal when the women initiated a civil suit. As we had no transcripts of the long proceedings, I took notes as an ethnographer and organized the materials so that I had the “facts” laid out when we met to decide the case. I did not need medical expertise to push the decision I thought the facts merited. One doctor lost his license to practice and for the second, the panel recommended revocation but the elected attorney general negotiated a settlement over which the board had no control. This doctor, some said (who lobbied the attorney general), had saved lives, but several women had been sexually molested. The patient population was divided. I, Ruth, had my own opinion but clearly I couldn’t speak for all the people, a problem for critical sociologists and for board members who must speak “for the public.” The board did, however, start to take sexual misconduct cases more seriously.

A focus on organizational culture as continuously evolving helped me to change what I saw as the rejection of skilled physicians for licensure. During several “chats” about what the board was like in the past, I learned that two foreign trained physicians, whom board members thought were qualified, were rejected because they failed to meet the state standard of 75 points on each exam component. Most states used a 75 average. Basic science, the section failed, the doctors told me, is hard to pass years after medical school. The only exemption in our state for failing to obtain 75 on each part was for practicing in “underserved areas.” “Less competent” was fine when the patients were poor, but excellence when demonstrated by other than exam scores was not. The board members were annoyed and were refusing to grant an exception for a doctor I thought was qualified. With superior credentials, excellent hospital affiliations, and licensed in another state, he received a 74.5 basic science score. I decided that we had to figure a way out. He had invented a useful surgical technique. After much heated discussion, all focused on rejection, I asked if board members would like this physician to practice locally if someone in their family needed the surgery. The answer was yes, so I argued that if the point of the board was to protect the public, we had to license him and change the rule. We did both, but the deputy attorney general who
advised the board was not pleased with my argument; it would not stand up in court should our decision have been challenged.

**Increasing Activism: Now a Public Sociologist?**

After two years of board membership, I joined a public interest group (CAC) working to improve health related regulatory boards. During their second annual meeting, I learned not only did boards do things differently, which helped me suggest changes for my board, but this group was trying to create a "public" (patients and their families) for board work beyond the medical community. Over the next several years we worked to obtain grants and develop research and programs that would improve boards. We were not trying to oust physicians from the regulatory process as some advocated, but to help public members become active participants and to figure out ways to better protect the public from unethical and unskilled physicians by focusing boards on the public's concerns.

To learn more, I attended the national annual meeting of the Federation of State Medical Boards, which created questions I wanted to investigate as a professional sociologist. As the only attendee from my board, I became the voting representative. In many states the entire board attended and one board brought their wives and had a cocktail party for everyone at the meeting (about 500 people) but had no public or female members. I couldn’t get Continuing Medical Education credits for attendance and although I was invited to some restricted parties, I suspected immediately the invitation was offered because few women attended. I felt like a complete outsider. Why were some states so hostile to public members? Why did so much of the discussion totally ignore public members? Why did the boards do things so differently? My professional sociology hat was emerging.

I began to take a more critical position and to work with others for change in how the work got done and what work should be done. I needed to do it in a way that I would remain as good a public member as possible—maintain good relationships with board members, as I had to be able to persuade them if I wanted to remain effective. Was I an organic public sociologist when I started because I used my sociological skills to figure out what was going on? As I argued, any good ethnographer tries to figure out what is going on before suggesting change. Did I become a public sociologist when I began to work for change?

As a professional sociologist I also started to read the social science literature on professions and regulation. I began to ask more questions: Could I, a non-expert in medicine, understand enough to be truly effective? Should we leave regulation to the market, as the economists argued? Or should the state become more involved in the way boards worked rather than maintaining what seemed to be a more symbolic presence? Could I as a public member remain an effective critic and maintain my ability to persuade others on my board?
Organic Public Sociology Creates Professional Sociological Questions

After several years of board work, my professional sociological curiosity got the better of me and I wanted to know more about how the medical profession had gained so much power over what appeared only nominally to be “state” organizations. I began to familiarize myself with the history of medical organizations. Who proposed public members and increased transparency for licensing boards, and why, and when? What were the medical community’s reactions to public members and the increasing calls for transparency? I began to pay attention to Dewey’s (1927:164) statement that “experts” frequently exclude those who are not. He worried that a government ruled by experts and in which the public does not have a chance to inform those experts, cannot be anything but an oligarchy. The experts have to be pushed to heed the needs of the masses (p. 208). I had to find documents and read histories and analyses of the profession to understand the origins of boards and, 75 years later, public participation.

I started to read the occupational regulation literature after meeting one of the historical figures who pushed occupational licensing boards to include public members in the 1970s. My reading and growing knowledge of different boards shifted my role as a public sociologist. I chatted about my discoveries. People began to ask my opinion about different issues. Physicians sometimes treated me as a board expert. I began to organize public member sessions at the FMSB national meetings and sent letters to all the public members to encourage attendance, but few actually did. After several years of locating us in a distant room during lunchtime, staff provided the public members with some resources. The federation appointed me to several committees. I argued a lot.

The more I played an active role, the more it raised sociological questions for me to investigate. I began to see divisions among medical organizations. My first board took a position opposed to the local medical society and used me to stand up to the medical society. At a hearing with a legislative subcommittee, I was pushed to speak for the board when a medical society member claimed “all doctors” supported a position that was opposed to that of the board. The profession in practice was fragmented, not the typical image portrayed by the American Medical Association or often discussed in the professions literature. When had the boards begun to take independent stances from the medical societies and what were their continuing links?

A New Board: New Experiences and More Research Questions

Then I moved. Members from that state board recruited me. My sociological curiosity was piqued again by the differences between the two boards. Nothing that I saw in the descriptions of the work of the board or the medical practice acts showed the differences in the way the boards worked
in practice. The structures appeared similar on paper, but the language and practices used by board members were different. My years as an experienced board member alone could not explain my new experiences.

I had begun to read the literature on public participation. I suspected that the analyses by academics who viewed boards from the outside and many of the citizen's groups were only partially correct in proposing that the lack of contribution by public members was the result of poor training, inadequate role definition, and/or poor choices by the governors. Advocacy groups argued that the work of public members could be improved through education and governors needed to make better choices. I began to see the problem of participation also as an issue of board variation—certain board discourses and practices permitted more participation than others. As a professional sociologist I was no longer satisfied with my half-finished historical account and I wanted to use my ethnographic skills to check out my observations of variation in board discourses and practices.

More of a Professional Sociologist: Choosing a Sample and Observing

To understand social processes that encourage public members to participate independently and those that lead to co-optation or capture, I needed more than my personal experiences. My experiences as a public member were neither representative nor unrepresentative of public members as I am not entirely unlike other public members; many are professionals, most are older, and more than half are women. Active in their communities, many were experienced and articulate board members; however, others were not. I heard too many say that all doctors on their board worked to protect the public, they were totally included, and there were no disagreements among board members. Besides, I had been co-opted and I consider myself reasonably astute. But, more importantly, my experiences on the second board led me to see that legal was a strong counter to medical discourse and practices and I needed to do systematic research to explore the variation in emphasis in how the work was talked about and done and how the differences might encourage greater public participation and public protection discourse.

I hypothesized that boards independent of the state would be closer to the medical societies while those boards deeply embedded in state bureaucracies would have more active state agents. This I believed would make a difference for public participation, but I was unsure how or why. Most boards existed between bureaucratic embeddedness and state autonomy. A sample had to include a largely autonomous board with good resources, one closely supervised by a state bureaucracy and well financed, and two in between. These variations appeared, according to my knowledge of sociology and my observations, to make a difference in relationships with medical societies and state workers and in how the board work got done. But I
needed the data to make such statements and I was unsure how these differences were reflected in board work. What is it about boards that created an environment in which all voices were more likely to be offered and heard? How did they do so and what served as barriers or opportunities?

I obtained access to and approval of two boards to observe and IRB approval as I am employed by a university. Boards where I was given permission to do research knew me as an experienced board member and in part gave permission to do research because they already trusted me to understand what they were doing. Although board members always knew I was a researcher, they often wanted my opinion on issues.

I learned much from observing without participating. Some disadvantages to membership in the collection of observations included doing and observing simultaneously. My primary role as member is to protect the public. That means in any situation I must first work to think about how to protect the public and to act on that basis. Sometimes it means I don’t completely observe what is going on around me as I am thinking hard about how to assess the situation and make my next move. While I am watching how others are reacting to my arguments, I am thinking about my next response, not how the overall process is evolving. The more involved, the less I can sometimes remember afterward about how the argument evolved. I often remember much more vividly the feelings I had during the process. You can’t watch people being co-opted or ask them about it, but you can experience it. Being involved gives a person one perspective.

There is also something to be said for the cooler detachment of the observer and the leisure to observe rather than the work to figure out what outcome you would like to see, listen to the arguments of others, respond to those arguments, make your own, and reshape them as the process continues. Watching others gives one a different perspective and the ability to assess the interaction. Watching an argument evolve allows you to focus on the questions raised, the responses to those questions, and arguments made by all.

On the other hand, I could not have obtained the perspective as a researcher that I had without being an active member. As a member I had access to “behind the scenes” activities that I might not have had as only a researcher. Not only did I have access at the local and national levels, where I could see some of the contradictions between what was said and done, but the experience itself gave me a different perspective on learning to be a board member and what it was like to sit facing someone who is about to lose a license to practice medicine or the frustrations of trying to argue with someone when you don’t have the requisite expertise to use but you suspect something is wrong. I also saw the ease with which I was co-opted and how hard I had to work to avoid co-optation afterward. When you are being co-opted, you don’t see it.
AN EXPERT?

But I was already an “expert” board member in the eyes of those whom I was observing. Even though I told board members over and over that I was working as a researcher, they treated me as a well-informed member who had seen how several boards operated. They asked for help and I found myself talking too much at times. I could not tell others I might have acted differently or asked other questions. On occasion I became frustrated with public members who did not take an independent stance on an issue when I thought I would have. I believed I had a reasonable idea from my experiences as a board member what public members could and could not ask. I fought the desire to jump into arguments. When the board members asked my opinion on issues, I generally tried to avoid answering, but I also sometimes had strong opinions about the issue. But as a researcher and outsider, I could talk to staff about how they worked to control board activities behind the scenes and I noticed more about how staff produced meetings. They talked to me about the qualities of effective and ineffective board members and about problems with local medical societies and doctors. I was better able to see how boards and medical societies interacted and some problems with the ways physicians impaired by alcohol or drugs were handled. These conversations and observations provided me with a clearer perception of physician and staff perspectives and insight into how the medical world permeated board work.

THE FEEDBACK LOOP

As a professional sociologist, when examining my data, I began to focus on differences in the ways members used medical, legal, and public interest discourses and practices in their disciplinary processes, the activity that takes the majority of time. Each board organizes the process differently but some frame what happens more in terms of medicine and others in terms of law. Even though all boards broadly framed disciplinary processes in terms of due process, how boards developed disciplinary processes and used law in practice varied considerably. All boards used law to outline their procedures, but the extent to which legal discourse and practices were used to frame cases in practice varied and some remained framed in the way doctors talked about patients and dealt with problematic cases in hospitals and training. This sociological insight was helpful in my work as a public sociologist.

On a recent disciplinary case for which I chaired the hearing panel—a long (ten days) and very complicated (it involved complex medical issues and judgment and many patients) case—one of the two physicians on the
panel tried to bully me and take over the role of chair. What he did not understand was that we were following legal practices and we could not reframe the entire case and procedures because he thought differently and had made up his mind how we should organize the case. First, he did not want to hear the respondent’s side, as he knew the result he wanted and thought the case was taking too long. He did not see that the doctor against whom the board brought charges had the right to the best possible defense. I explained to him about legal procedures and how his authority as a doctor only mattered to ask good questions and decide the substance, as it was a legal process. I was not totally successful, as he then wanted to vote on the outcome before the lawyers submitted briefs. When we were to discuss the facts of the case, he said he wasn’t an expert in the area and so could not help even though we had heard two experts, one on each side of the case and had been reminded many times not to use our own expertise in deciding cases, only to ask questions of the witnesses to improve the record. I explained the difference between medical and legal authority and how he had medical authority, which he used in his practice, but could not use it at a hearing except to ask questions and assess the facts. The job of the panel was to establish the facts—using the testimony we had, and decide the conclusions of law and a sanction. Here my sociological analysis of my data helped me think about how to understand our practices and to explain to someone who thought as a doctor. He appeared unconcerned with legal processes.

On other occasions at meetings, I use my observations to help other public members develop their roles as public members and I provide them with some of the history and analysis of public participation. My data and analysis helps them to understand what their role might be and questions they can ask.

My analysis of the development of impaired physicians programs helped my argument for a new look at the guidelines for dealing with impaired physicians. In the mid-1990s the federation committee developed guidelines for boards to handle cases of physicians’ chemical dependencies and mental illness but we had not included what the boards’ relationships should be with the impaired physicians committees (often run by medical societies). Later in my professional analysis, I saw the impaired physicians programs as hiding some of the problem physicians from the regulatory boards. These committees were started when boards were shifting from licensure to discipline and many of those disciplined had drug and alcohol problems. At the same time boards were adding public members and the state actors were becoming more active. It was a way for the medical profession to take control of “sick” physicians (broadly defined) and keep them out of the public eye and the boards’ reach. I argued with the federation that they should reopen the issue and give boards more control over
the impaired physicians in the programs that use the discourse of rehabilitation, not public protection. It seems like they will go along. From the public protection perspective, impaired physicians programs are likely to err by allowing a relapsing physician to continue to practice as part of the rehabilitation process.

**WRITING AS A PROFESSIONAL AND PUBLIC SOCIOLOGIST**

Although some may argue that writing from the perspective of organic public sociology is similar to an exposé, a complete insider’s view, or a political tract, it need not be. Excellent, insider books by physicians such as Atul Gawande’s *Complications*, Jerome Groopman’s *How Doctors Think*, and Pauline Chen’s *Final Exam* deal very effectively with issues such as the failure of medical school and training to teach about dying, the problems of learning on real bodies, and how the sometimes unreflective way doctors proceed leads them to making serious errors. James Stewart, a journalist, published *Blind Eye*, a detailed and measured exposé of the case of Dr. Swango, who killed many patients while the medical profession could have taken action to keep him out of medicine on any number of occasions, but did not. As a public sociologist, issues of community interest must be brought into the open to inform public deliberations about boards. Medical licensing boards are organizations dominated by the members of a profession with a stake in self-governing, and although boards and their members now typically articulate the mission of the boards as protecting the public and disciplinary actions have increased, this rhetoric sometimes obscures issues still affecting citizens as patients. But the question and analysis can and should remain sociological and critical. How have boards become more public institutions and do some of them become and should they become more public?

Combining public and professional sociology provides a more multifaceted story. Is the data convincing? The perspective that one can have a view from nowhere or one has a view from everywhere doesn’t work. We are all multiply situated with multiple identities that others or we activate in any one situation. Although in theory it may be reasonably easy to separate all these identities, it is not possible in the world when we interact with real people, doing and feeling real things. The fullest objectivity we can hope to get is to be found on the intersection of conflicting accounts available to us as researchers and public sociologists. I am committed to protecting the public as a board member and that gives me a particular perspective on the board activities. Although my participation may lead me to be overly positive about the ability of public members to increase board accountability, protecting the public is the general mission and, if public members
are being co-opted and the boards remain captive of the profession, then
the public may not be sufficiently protected. Moreover, the observations of
other boards and their members may help to balance any tendency to over-
estimate the independence and importance of public members. My role as
a public member and sociologist is the same—to protect the public. The
two vantage points permit and encourage balance in the analysis.

As a research sociologist I want to better understand how publics are created
and different publics use the state in the regulation of experts in a democracy.
In that sense my writing is theoretical and empirical. As a public sociologist
my writing requires that I communicate with the public to increase dialogue
and provide additional insights for change, for example, specify the condi-
tions under which public members have a greater voice that may promote
policy changes. In 2001 Freidson, a critic of the medical profession, argued
that professionalism worked better than markets or bureaucracies to organize
expert labor. As a critical sociologist I need to modify this position. The social
world created by experts cannot remain as isolated from the rest of the social
world as medicine accomplished in the twentieth century if the public is to
contribute to creating a better system of protecting itself.

Here I argued that an ethnographic project provides one methodology
for the four sociologies to exist within one project. Doing one’s “civic re-
ponsibility” provides a slightly different spin on what “public sociologists”
might do and includes working within organizations that are only partly
in the civil sphere. Effectively participating in a state/private organization
often means a public sociologist must tread carefully and persuade others
of needed change. This approach might allay some of the fears of some op-
ponents of public sociology. Often small steps for change and sensitivity
to what the “public interest” is are essential. Doing professional research in
order to expand understanding enables broader change than participation
alone and maintains sociological interest in the project.

NOTES

1. According to one of Shaw’s biographers, Holroyd (1989), he had frequent
conversations with a physician in preparation for writing his play A Doctor’s Di-
lemma.

2. Freedom of Information Acts in the last 15 years generally affected some of
the ways boards did their business and also required that they provide more infor-
mation to the public. Each state made its own decisions and affected the boards in
many different ways. What is public in some states is not in others.

3. In 1976 Common Cause pushed for Colorado legislation to start evaluating
regulatory boards and whether they were necessary. Over 30 states passed similar
legislation and it focuses attention on board activities and frequently leads to
changes in the Medical Practice Acts.
4. American pragmatists such as Dewey and Mead both played active public roles, writing editorials and working for social change (Shalin 1988) as did many of the early Chicago sociologists who Mattson (2007) argues were important activists but were not as good sociologists as they might have been.

5. FLEX, the Federation Licensing Exam, was a national exam used mainly by foreign trained physicians and accepted by all states after 1976. Most U.S. trained doctors took and take the USMLE (United States Medical Licensing Exam).

6. I was later appointed to the editorial board of the federation journal to help change the journal to include research and policy articles rather than speeches.

REFERENCES

Michael Burawoy’s impassioned (2005a, 2005b, 2007) calls for “public sociology” provoke strong reactions. Published responses suggest that various sociologists have been enthralled, embarrassed, redeemed, outraged, invigorated, or discouraged by Burawoy’s descriptions of sociology and his vision for its future (e.g., see Burawoy et al. 2004; Clawson et al. 2007). We add to this debate by describing some of the difficulties of doing the kind of public sociology that Burawoy envisages. Our discussion focuses on collaborative research on the Darfur genocide led by the second author of this article, Hagan (see Hagan and Palloni 2006; Hagan and Rymond-Richmond 2009; Hagan, Rymond-Richmond, and Parker 2005; Hagan, Schoenfeld, and Palloni 2006). Our orientation follows previous comments by sociologists Judith Stacey (2004) and Diane Vaughan (2006). Using their own research as case studies, they chart some of the provocative pathways of public sociology. Stacey reflects on the complications and disappointments that occurred when she spoke with various publics about her research on gay parenting, while Vaughan’s account of working with NASA on the Columbia accident suggests a more positive venture into public sociology.

In the pages that follow we briefly summarize Burawoy’s position. We then describe the situation in Darfur, the debate about the number of people who have been killed there, and Hagan and colleagues’ research on this issue. Although we are longtime collaborators in the terrain of public sociology (McCarthy and Hagan 1992; Hagan and McCarthy 1997), we experiment with new roles in this chapter: Hagan is the key informant and McCarthy the interviewer. In this discussion we focus mostly on the debate about the number of people killed in Darfur; limitations of space require
that we set aside the important issue of whether the killings constitute genocide (see Hagan and Rymond-Richmond 2009; Prunier 2005).

Our analysis of Hagan and colleagues’ experiences highlight four problems insufficiently addressed by Burawoy’s calls for and comments on public sociology. First, Burawoy assumes that public sociology will help bring consensus on moral issues. Second, he presumes that there will also be a consensus among scholars who enter the public arena. Third, although Burawoy recognizes the power of the state, he suggests that the combination of sociological voices with those of various publics will have a substantial affect on state actions. And fourth, although Burawoy acknowledges that the media have their own interests, he presumes that they will, for the most part, assist public sociologists in disseminating their contributions.

**BURAWOY’S PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY**

Burawoy’s (2005a) ideal type classification separates sociology into four quadrants—professional, public, policy, and critical—for which the borders are often overlapping, rather than sharply demarcated, and in which sociologists often work simultaneously. Our discussion concerns the first two types of sociological practice. Professional sociology is the source of orienting questions, conceptual frameworks, accumulated knowledge, and methods that define the discipline. It is the quadrant in which most academic sociologists invest most of their time. Nonetheless, public sociology engages scholars beyond the academy in various dialogues about fundamental values, and matters of political and moral concern (Burawoy 2004:1607). Burawoy envisions public sociology as the protector of civil society; he claims it arises in reaction to modernity and can elude control by states and markets.

Burawoy further divides public sociology into two approaches: traditional and organic (and perhaps further sub-types, see Burawoy 2005a, 2007; Patterson 2007). Sociologists working in the traditional mode typically have orienting questions, conceptual frameworks, methods, audiences, and publication aspirations that reflect a firm grounding in professional sociology. However, they also move beyond these groundings and address publics outside of the academy. In the organic mode, sociologists work more closely with a public or publics that are often actively involved in the formulation of research questions, the choice of methodologies, and the preparation and dissemination of findings.

Most of our own collaborative and individual research originate and are directed toward professional sociology. However, as is often the case, some of our work straddles the professional and public sociology divide. For example, our research on homeless adolescents is animated by questions
central to the concerns of sociological criminologists and our publications are directed toward this audience (e.g., see Hagan and McCarthy 1997). Yet, consistent with traditional public sociology, we also wrote abridged reports for the various social service agencies that serve the homeless and that contributed toward our studies; we also spoke with representatives from various media outlets who responded to our academic publications.

Hagan’s research on the International Court of Justice and the atrocities in the Balkans (2003) as well as his studies of Americans who resisted the Vietnam War and immigrated to Canada (2001) also involved several public sociology components. Most recently, his work included public advocacy in Canada with Vietnam era war resisters who are calling for refugee status for a new generation of military resisters to the Iraq war. Notwithstanding these public elements, Hagan’s research was mostly motivated by professional sociology and was addressed to an academic audience.

In their current research on Darfur, Hagan and colleagues chose a more visible and issue-oriented approach that answers Burawoy’s (2005a, 2005b:419) challenge to professional sociologists to break “out of the bubble” and engage various publics. Although issues central to sociology, criminology, and legal studies initially attracted Hagan and colleagues to the crisis in Darfur, they decided to expand their focus and reach out to broader publics.

THE CRISIS IN DARFUR

Sudan is the largest country in Africa, with a population estimated at about 40 million. According to the United Nations, Sudan is one of the least developed countries on the continent, ranking 139 on the UN’s Human Development Index (2005). The Sudanese government is dominated by Arab military figures and politicians who receive support from neighboring Arab states. Darfur is located in the western region of Sudan and includes three states: North, West, and South Darfur. Over 80 tribes and ethnic groups live there. Most of the African tribes are involved in subsistence farming, while the nomadic Arabs are mostly cattle herders. Although there are important differences between the cultivators and herdsmen, most are Islamic. In the past, these groups often intermarried and resolved disputes in traditional legal forums. However in recent years, water and land shortages, as well as activities by the Sudanese government, have provoked increasing civil conflict and human rights violations, often involving ethnic and tribal disputes. The conflict in Darfur is also indirectly related to a longer-term insurgency in the south of Sudan, where oil discoveries have fueled a ten-year armed insurrection.
The current crisis in Darfur began in 2003. The Sudanese government increasingly imposed its political power through local Arab authorities and by attempting to increase their control over farming and grazing areas. A variety of rebel groups—including the Justice and Equality Movement and the Sudanese Liberation Army—composed mostly of black Africans from non-nomadic tribes charge that the government used an Arab militia, the Janjaweed to attack farmers and villagers who resisted government attempts to take control of their land. The government argued that the rebels attacked them first. What is clear however is that the government responded to the conflict with extensive aerial bombing and ground attacks supported by the Janjaweed. International NGOs and eventually the International Criminal Court charged the government-supported Janjaweed with crimes against humanity—including mass killings, burning villages, lootings, and systematic rape of the non-Arab, black population of Darfur. The conflict forced more than two million people from their homes; several hundred thousand are now living in refugee camps in neighboring Chad.

In June through August 2004, the World Health Organization (2004) investigated the conflict in Darfur. It gathered survey data from 3,140 refugees who fled to Internally Displaced Person (IDP) camps inside North and West Darfur (South Darfur was less fully surveyed). WHO conducted the surveys with the support of the Sudanese Ministry of Health (WHO/SMH survey) and focused on respondents’ and their family members’ health, nutrition, and mortality. The WHO/SMH survey adopted a population or public health research approach that focused on mortality linked to disease and nutritional problems inside the displacement camps.

In the same year, both houses of the United States Congress had unanimously passed resolutions concluding that genocide was taking place in Darfur, but had done so on little evidence. In the summer of 2004, Colin Powell and the U.S. State Department (2004) decided to gather further information on the crisis and to investigate reports of violent human rights violations. Several arms of the State Department were involved in collecting the data, including the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, and the Bureau of Intelligence and Research. Stephanie Frease of the Coalition of International Justice and Jonathan Howard of the U.S. State Department led the research. Frease had headed an investigation in the first Srebrenica genocide case tried at the International Court Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (see Hagan 2003), and Howard was a research analyst with the State Department. Together they developed a survey instrument, recruited interviewers and interpreters, planned the logistics of conducting surveys in areas unreachable by normal roads, designed a sampling plan, moved the research team in and out of the survey locations, and organized the coding and analyzing of the interviews.
In July and August of 2004, two groups of interviewers and interpreters collected data in ten camps and nine settlements across the West Darfur border in Chad. The groups included area experts, social scientists, lawyers, and police investigators. The data collection instrument, the Atrocities Documentation Survey (ADS) included closed and open-ended questions with inquiries for up to twenty incidents of violence. A systematic random sample was used to select participants: interviewers randomly selected a starting point in each camp or settlement and then from within this designated sector selected every tenth dwelling unit for interview. Interviewers listed all the adults living in the unit on the survey instrument, and they chose one adult from the household for a private interview, resulting in the final 1,136 sampled households.

The ADS asked respondents about violent victimization of their immediate family at two points in time: in their villages before they fled and during their flight. It did not, however, consider deaths in the camps related to health problems such as diarrhea, cholera, or malnutrition. As a result of this information, the State Department published an eight-page report referring to the deaths, rapes, and atrocities that respondents saw or heard about before fleeing from attacks on their farms and villages. Secretary of State Colin Powell used the preliminary analyses of these data in his appearance before the UN Security Council in July and in his testimony on September 9, 2004, to the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He described to Congress the occurrence of a racially targeted and militarily unjustified Sudanese sponsored genocide in Darfur. A coordinated White House statement from President Bush concluded that “genocide has taken place in Darfur.” This was the first time an American President had rebuked a sovereign nation by invoking the Geneva Genocide Convention.

**DOCUMENTING THE DEATHS**

One of the factors that influenced Hagan and his colleagues’ professional and public sociology interest in the Darfur crisis was the variation in estimates of the deaths in the Darfur. In the fall of 2004, WHO used the WHO/SMH survey described above and estimated that 70,000 people had died in the seven months since the fighting began (i.e., 10,000 per month).

Although WHO noted that its estimate was solely for camp victims and did not “detail “deaths due to violent incidents within Darfur communities” (Nabarro 2004) many supporters of the Sudanese government used the WHO estimate as evidence that the conflict in Darfur was less extensive than commonly believed. As a result, many activists and NGOs criticized the WHO’s estimate. In its final report, the British government’s House of Commons International Development Committee (2005:11) noted that
“the only deaths which the WHO’s estimates include are those which took place in the camps for Internally Displaced Persons. . . . Cited without clear explanations of its limitations, the WHO’s estimate is extremely misleading.” In February of 2005, Jan Coebergh (a British physician) estimated approximately 300,000 deaths in the Darfur conflict (Coebergh 2005). One month later, the United Nations released a new number provided by Jan Egeland, an emergency relief coordinator. Egeland’s personal observations of the carnage in Darfur were at odds with the WHO estimate. He calculated that a death rate of 10,000 people per month had resulted in approximately 180,000 deaths, since the conflict had already lasted more than 18 months (Reuters 2005). In June of 2005, Eric Reeves (an American activist-scholar) issued a statement that projected a death toll of 400,000 (Reeves 2005).

As sociological criminologists, Hagan and colleagues also questioned the WHO estimate. With the help of Stephanie Frease, they obtained access to the ADS survey, which for the first time effectively measured deaths due to violent attacks on Darfur villages. Hagan and colleagues brought a sociology of law and criminology approach to calculating death estimates, an orientation that differed considerably from the dominant population/public health perspective and its focus on health outcomes. They noted that diarrhea accounted for most of the deaths documented in the WHO/SMH survey; deaths due to violence or injury amounted to less than 15 percent. Moreover, the most common violent death in the WHO/SMH data involved men over the age of 50, who were the least likely to be killed in violent conflicts. Many of these deaths likely involved people who were killed in and around the camps, as opposed to deaths that occurred during attacks on, or flights from the villages. The WHO data also covered only the time since people arrived at the IDP camps. The WHO estimate is further compromised by its classification of missing people as missing data; a substantial proportion of the people who are missing in a military conflict likely are dead. Additionally the WHO estimate assumed a constant death rate for the seven-month period.

Hagan and his colleagues also recognized the limitations of the State Department’s ADS data. The ADS did not collect data on deaths in the refugee camps and it does not cover the entire conflict. It also over-represents older and younger age groups, because fighting-age males are more likely to have been killed before flight to the refugee camps. As well, its use of indirect reports from refugees who made it safely to Chad could misrepresent pre-camp violence.

Hagan and colleagues concluded that a more accurate death estimate could be obtained by combining the ADS data with the data on deaths due to disease and malnutrition collected in the WHO/SMH survey. However, the State Department had not even entered all of the ADS data. As a result, Hagan and colleagues’ first task was to read through each survey and create
a data set that enumerated the number of violent deaths per nuclear family. Using the combined data, they estimated that 396,563 people may have died or disappeared during the two-year conflict in Darfur. This level of mortality is more than six times the average crude mortality rate for Africa and three times the level identified as “elevated” by the U.S. State Department. As of mid-2004, the violent attacks and ensuing health problems in Darfur resulted in approximately 15,000 deaths per month, or about 500 per day. Although this new mortality estimate could exceed the actual number of deaths, there are at least three reasons why Hagan and colleagues’ estimate may have been conservative: families in which everyone died are not included in either survey; families who fled deep into Sudan or Chad are underrepresented in the ADS; and their analysis is limited to the deaths of nuclear family members.

Consistent with their professional sociology orientation, John and colleagues wrote a scholarly article on their research and submitted it to the premier journal in criminology (Hagan, Rymond-Richmond, and Parker 2005). Acting as public sociologists, they also issued a joint press release with the NGO Coalition for International Justice in Washington, DC. The press release emphasized that the death count was an estimate, but that it was based on the best available data. It called for governments to condemn the genocide and encouraged them and the United Nations to take steps to stop the Sudanese government.

Although Hagan and colleagues’ estimate improved upon earlier counts, it was limited by the previously mentioned problems with the WHO/SMH and ADS data sets. Hagan and colleagues addressed these limitations in subsequent estimates. They first combined data from the WHO/SMH survey with data collected by the French human rights group, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF, or Doctors Without Borders). MSF surveyed 3,175 respondents between April and June 2004 in IDP camps in the state of West Darfur (see Depoortere et al. 2004). The MSF survey asked respondents about health issues, but expanded their inquiry to include questions about the numbers and causes of deaths in their household in the past six months, including the time before they fled their villages, as well as the time after they arrived at the camps. MSF reported that violence caused 68 to 93 percent of deaths respectively during these two periods.

Combining the WHO and MSF data, Hagan and colleagues calculated that between 170,000 and 255,000 deaths had occurred in Darfur over 31 months. In a further elaboration of their findings, they combined the WHO/SMH survey with the ADS and suggested a death toll of no lower than 200,000 and as high as 400,000. Hoping to increase the diversity of the publics to whom they spoke, Hagan and colleagues published their new estimate in Science (Hagan and Palloni 2006). Science’s estimated readership is one million people.
Hagan and colleagues’ initial and later estimates were notably higher than the number derived from the WHO report. They also contradicted another influential estimate: the U.S. government’s 2005 perspective on Darfur. The winds of change in U.S. policy were first evident in a press conference in Sudan given by Robert Zoellick, deputy to the Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. In the briefing in Khartoum, Zoellick rejected the mortality estimates of hundreds of thousands and instead reported a new State Department estimate of as few as 60,000 deaths and at most 146,000. Reversing Powell, Zoellick also now declined to use the term “genocide” in reference to Darfur.

The State Department was ambiguous about the origins of its new estimate but eventually it revealed details. The new estimate involved an outsourcing of primary responsibility to the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED), a research program located in the School of Public Health of the Université Catholique de Louvain in Brussels. The State Department’s new estimate drew from CRED’s reports on Darfur, reports conducted with U.S. funding and the joint participation of a State Department employee. Both drew heavily on the population health approach and the WHO/SMH data, and ignored the ADS.

PROBLEMS AND PITFALLS OF PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY

A review of various publics’ response to Hagan and colleagues’ estimates on Darfur deaths highlight one of the many difficulties that Burawoy underestimates in his call for public sociology. Burawoy assumes an objective truth is attainable through a Gramscian-informed process that involves working with various publics. Thus, he argues (2005b:429) that “truth can only be elaborated in dialogue with agents themselves who are endowed with ‘good sense’ within their common sense.” Burawoy (2005b:431) realizes the “dangers of romanticizing civil society,” yet he maintains that publics’ insights provide roadmaps for public sociologists who will help “excavate and elaborate” them. Burawoy emphasizes that public sociologists also bring useful information and ways of knowing to their relationships with publics. He recognizes that the ideas of public sociologists may contrast with those championed by a public or publics, but he envisions a willingness of both sides to participate in a conversation of “communicative action” in which each learns from the other, negotiates and moves toward a consensual view: according to Burawoy (2005a:16), “with public sociology, knowledge is based on consensus between sociologists and their publics.”

The diversity in various publics’ reactions to Hagan and colleagues’ original estimate is testimony to the multiplicity of publics and their power to interpret the contributions of public sociologists. Several prominent commentators on Darfur responded positively to the estimate, including Nicho-
las Kristof, author of several *New York Times* articles that chastised Western governments for ignoring Darfur. Save Darfur, an alliance of over 180 faith-based, advocacy, and humanitarian organizations, also praised the estimate and used it extensively in advertisements in the U.S. and British press and in television spots. As well, many media sources stopped reporting the earlier WHO and shifted their death estimate from tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands.

Other commentators took an opposite view. Alex de Waal, another frequent commentator on the Darfur situation (and fellow of the Global Equity Initiative at Harvard University and program director at the Social Science Research Council), said the initial estimate was too high (de Waal 2007). David Hoile (a research professor at the University of Nyal a in Darfur and head of the Sudanese government funded European-Sudanese Public Affairs Council) and Sam Dealey (in a *New York Times* Op-Ed piece) dismissed the estimates as “exaggerations” (BBC 2007), while Deborati Guha-Sapir (director, Centre for Research on Epidemiology of Disasters, University of Louvain School of Public Health) described Hagan et al.’s first estimate as “sensational” (Guha-Sapir 2005). Although Eric Reeves applauded Hagan and colleagues’ initial estimate, he chastised them for the lower “floor estimate” they reported in *Science*. Reeves (2006) argued that “Hagan and Palloni have failed, despite their professed goal of alerting the world to a severe under-reporting of human mortality in Darfur.”

The responses to Hagan and colleagues’ estimates underscore several sociologists concerns about Burawoy’s calls for public sociology. Richard Ericson (2005:371) notes that Burawoy’s position ignores the common experience that “a public constituency will [often] only accept sociological analysis that accords with its own criteria of what the world looks like.” Charles Tittle (2004:1643) echoes this sentiment: “publics rarely want to find the ‘truth’ in the sense of looking at the full array of positive and negative evidence.”

Ericson also argues (2005:366) that the consensus that Burawoy envisions often occurs only when sociologists are willing to compromise their research. Tittle (2004:1640) makes a similar point: “Advocates seem to think that what is “socially just” is clear and easily agreed upon among people with good will or sociological training. Actually, almost every social issue involves moral dilemmas, not moral clarity.” Furthermore, there is no a priori justification for assuming that any consensus reached by sociologists and a public or publics necessarily reflects the discovery of the “truth” that is supposed to animate public sociology (Holmwood 2007; Calhoun 2005). Indeed, Lynn Smith-Lovin (2007:129) worries that “[t]o the public sociologist, truth value is not empirical . . . but is established through the consensus that is formed as a result of a dialogue with a public.”
Burawoy’s calls for public sociology also provide few directions on how to achieve consensus even among social scientists. He clearly recognizes power differences and divisions both between and within the disciplines (e.g., economics’ and political science’s domination over sociology and professional sociology’s position atop the sociological hierarchy). Nonetheless, he suggests that sociology’s grounding in civil society, and the greater access to “truth” that it bestows, will provide sociology with a power-base in its interactions with scholars from other disciplines who are also participating in the conversation with a public or publics.

Yet Burawoy does not provide any compelling evidence of other disciplines’ newfound respect for sociology, and he does not offer any concrete suggestions on how to convince them that sociological insights should be elevated above those provided by their practitioners. Instead, Burawoy appears to agree with Lauder, Brown, and Halsey’s (2004) thesis that sociological contributions will become influential because of their relevance, the strength of their evidence, the architecture of their theories, and their ability to connect structure and agency.

In the Darfur case, Hagan and colleagues’ sociological criminology perspective clashed with other orientations and it did not achieve the ascendancy that Burawoy presumes is due sociology. The conflict between orientations is reflected in the opinions expressed in a 2006 United States Government Accountability Office (USGAO) report on the deaths in Darfur. The USGAO wanted to make a definitive statement on the number of deaths. It chose to review and analyze six mortality estimates, including those prepared by Hagan and colleagues, and it consulted with 14 experts in “epidemiology, demography, and statistics.” According to the report, the experts had the highest overall confidence in the lower mortality estimates provided by the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED) and had a slightly lower level of confidence in Robert Zoellick’s estimate, which was based on research conducted by the State’s Bureau of Intelligence and Research (SBIR).

There are, however, less obvious conclusions suggested by the report. A careful read suggests important qualifications about the high level of agreement and the rejection of Hagan and colleagues’ original estimate. The experts’ high degree of confidence in the CRED and SBIR estimates occurred even though neither group clearly identified the surveys they used in calculating their estimates. Indeed, the USGAO (2006:2) reports that the SBIR “declined to speak with us or provide additional information, limiting the experts’ ability to fully understand [the] State’s methods of analysis.”
Furthermore, the USGAO (2006:3) reports that it could not replicate the SBIR estimate.

Although the USGAO consulted with 14 experts, only 10 agreed that Hagan and colleagues’ initial estimate was high. A footnote in the report reveals that one expert actually insisted on the plausibility of the initial estimate. Although Hagan and Palloni’s “floor estimate” in *Science* appeared several months before the publication of the GAO report, it is not included in the review. As well, Hagan and colleagues met several times with representatives of the State Department to explain their origin and later estimates. None of this material was included in the USGAO report; instead, it focused on estimates that were made available on the internet and which were not vetted by professional peers.

The two studies viewed most favorably by the report both adopt a public health approach and make extensive use of health and nutrition surveys. Meanwhile, the panel of experts was dominated if not exclusively populated by professionals in the public health and nutrition traditions. Thus, the experts consulted by the USGAO were not convinced of the validity of conclusions from Hagan and colleagues’ research and its use of an orientation that challenged the one with which they were more familiar; indeed, three of the experts believe that the lower mortality estimates were all too high. This disciplinary entrenchment seriously curtailed the efficacy of Hagan and colleagues’ foray into public sociology.

Hagan and colleagues’ experiences suggest that Burawoy’s presumption of a consensus among scholars who do public sociology under-theorizes the politics of knowledge production (Holmwood 2007). As Vaughan (2006:355) notes, “[l]ocalism—the pattern of relations among and between academic disciplines and universities—is central to understanding the formulation and dissemination of ideas.” Stacey (2004) highlights one area of contestation in her comments on public sociology. She argues that acceptance of sociologists’ contributions is not a function of the merits of their arguments; instead, sociological contributions are often valued only when they can be transformed into frameworks that are consistent with those of more powerful interests. As a result, sociological contributions are often used to support rather than challenge dominant orientations. As Craig Calhoun (2005) notes, Burawoy clearly appreciates Bourdieu’s arguments about scholarly fields, but he underemphasizes how field dynamics make it difficult for sociologists to achieve agreement, let alone reach a consensus with scholars from other disciplines.

Collins (2007) makes a related point in her discussion of Burawoy’s four-cell typology for sociology. Although Burawoy underscores that it is an ideal-type framework, his writings suggest the possibility of equality between the four types. Yet, creating a bigger more equitable space for a hitherto underemphasized orientation—such as public sociology—typically
requires the other, historically dominant orientations cede some of their power and authority. Burawoy underestimates the willingness of scholars to relinquish their privileged positions. In his comment on public sociology, Nielsen (2004) reminds us that sociologists have often tried to silence, marginalize, or discredit the research of other sociologists with whom they disagree (also see Best 2003). Likewise, Tittle (2004:1642) charges that sociologists are often just as guilty as other academics of “trying to promote our ideas (a form of ideology) in the guise of superior knowledge.” Thus, it is not surprising that scholars from other disciplines would do the same. As Bourdieu’s analysis suggests, intellectuals form a strong group whose ideas often dictate how the group perceives an issue. These divisions are not easily put aside, regardless of each group’s desire to pursue moral issues.

Although Burawoy recognizes the threats, he suggests that awareness will help overcome them. Yet, widely divergent orientations, assumptions, ways of knowing and seeing, as well as the structure of the academy and the desire to protect ones’ scholarly terrain undermine the consensus that Burawoy imagines. In her reflections on public sociology, Juliet Schor (Burawoy et al. 2004:123) provides a personal example of attacks on her research on over-worked Americans. In their reports to the media, several academics claimed that Schor’s results were “illegitimate” and that she “cooked” her analysis. Schor quickly realized that her “professional credibility” had little currency in the media or among various publics who welcomed the claims of her critics when they coincided with their own beliefs (also see Stacey 2004).

THE POWER OF THE STATE

The U.S. government’s response to Darfur reflects a third complication in doing public sociology. As noted earlier, the U.S. State Department under the direction of Colin Powell initiated the Atrocities Documentation Survey (ADS) that served as the backbone of Hagan and colleagues’ estimates of the number of deaths in Darfur. It was also the basis for Colin Powell’s and President Bush’s 2004 pronouncements that genocide was taking place in Sudan. Yet, Robert Zoellick’s lower estimate in 2005 confirmed that the administration had abandoned the ADS and mortality estimates based upon it. Instead it supported a much lower outsourced estimate that focused on disease and malnutrition rather than violence.

Several people have speculated about the reasons for the change in the State Department’s position on Darfur. The Los Angeles Times reported that, prior to the new estimate, the CIA flew to Washington the Sudanese government intelligence chief, Major General Salah Abdallah Gosh. Major General Gosh reported that Sudan had “a strong partnership with the CIA”
even though in 2004 Congress cited Gosh as a key agent in the killings in Darfur (Silverstein 2005). As well, Gosh was rumored to be among the top Sudanese officials on a UN list of people responsible for allowing the attacks in Darfur. Shortly after Gosh’s visit, the State Department issued a report stating that Sudan is a “strong partner in the war on terror.” Secretary Rice also met with Sudan’s foreign minister and promised to review her government’s position on economic sanctions. The Sudanese government simultaneously established a public relations contract with a Washington-based lobbying firm, a direct violation of an Executive Order (#13067) that prohibits U.S. companies from doing business with Sudan. (The U.S. Congress forced an end to this deal in February 2006.)

The U.S. government’s “flip-flop” on the Darfur crisis, and its rejection of the findings from a study it initiated, underscores its limited interest in sociology’s contributions; it also highlights its capacity to ignore voices that are inconsistent with its objectives. Tittle (2004) draws attention to this problem in his comment on public sociology. He cites as an example legislators’ dismissal of social science evidence on the ineffectiveness of the death penalty as a deterrent, before casting their vote to reinstate capital punishment. He notes (2004:1642), “The record is clear in showing that the legislators did not regard sociologists or criminologists as scientists, did not believe their research, and most of all, did not trust their motives in interpreting accumulated research and setting forth its implications.”

Wallerstein (2007:169) reminds us about the difficulties in working with governments in his comment on public sociology: “[p]olitical authorities are never happy if intellectuals offer them reasoned resistance and are seldom happy if intellectuals decline to support them in what they consider fundamental issues of value and policy.” In the Darfur crisis, the State Department’s final position was to attack research that documented a reality that differed from the one it preferred in its pursuit of a global war on terror.

THE UNCERTAINTY OF THE MEDIA

Burawoy clearly recognizes states’ power to reinterpret and reject sociological contributions that contradict their agendas; yet he implies that political influence operates less powerfully when sociologists interact with various publics. In his response to Stacey’s (2004) claim that it is difficult for public sociology to escape from dominant, more powerful voices, Burawoy (2004:1610) argues that this problem applies “less to public sociology than to policy sociology in which the sociologist cedes the discursive terrain to her client.” Yet, as Ericson (2005:365) notes, “Sociology does not translate easily into the discourses and practices of other institutions. . . . Sociological
communication in these other public arenas may sometimes be impossible. When it is possible, there is often loss of sociological autonomy and influence as the analysis translates into the criteria of relevance and communication logic of the institution concerned.” Ulrich Beck (2005) makes a similar point and notes that many of his forays into public sociology resulted in sociological knowledge being transformed beyond recognition. He writes: “I am not sure about the implications of Burawoy’s ideas about a public sociology. But any realistic effort along these lines should be aware of the fact that there is no direct correspondence between public sociology and the public uses of public sociology.”

Nonetheless, Burawoy (2005b) draws inspiration from Beck’s comment that various publics—from governments to the general population—indifference or resistance to sociological findings often crumble when findings are published in the media. Burawoy also seems buoyed by public sociologists’ positive experiences with the media, even though they often occur in conjunction with more negative ones. For example, in her thoughts on doing public sociology, Judith Stacey (2004) recounts how legislators, lawyers, reporters, and others selectively used her work to support their perspectives and condemn others. However, she was heartened by a New York Times reporter who had the interest, time, skills, and responsibility to discuss Stacey’s research with her in some depth and write a reasoned summary of it.

Yet, as Hagan and colleagues’ experiences demonstrate, the media is more inconsistent than Burawoy probably wishes. As noted earlier, several “publics” responded favorably to Hagan and colleagues’ estimation efforts. Many media outlets favorably reported on them, and several reporters contacted Hagan to gather more information about the estimate. The positive reviews of these writers appeared in an array of publications including the New York Times and Washington Post (e.g., see Lacey 2005; Gettleman 2006). Yet, many mainstream news services, including Reuters, United Press International, and the British Broadcasting Service, abandoned the higher assessment when the State Department issued its lower estimate.

On August 12, 2007, the New York Times published an Op-Ed piece by Sam Dealey in its “Week in Review” section. Dealey wrote about a case brought to the British Advertising Standards Authority (BASA) by the European Sudanese Public Affairs Council (ESPAC), a business group allied with the Sudanese government. The ESPAC argued that Save Darfur breached BASA’s codes by placing full-page advertisements that included Hagan and colleagues’ estimate of approximately 400,000 dead or missing in Darfur. Dealey wrote that the BASA found that Save Darfur “breached standards of truthfulness” in reprinting the 400,000 death estimate. Dealey also drew on the 2006 AGAO report and repeated claims that Hagan and colleagues’
data were unsound, their assumptions “unreasonable,” their extrapolations “inappropriate,” and their estimates unsupportable.

Yet, Dealey misrepresented the BASA’s decision: BASA explicitly dismissed the claim that Save Darfur had breached standards of truthfulness. As well, Dealey’s summary of the AGAO report misrepresents some of its conclusions and ignores the issues we discussed above. Hagan contacted the New York Times on the day Dealey’s Op-Ed piece appeared and detailed the errors in the report. Five days later the copy editor wrote back and dismissed Hagan’s corrections as unfounded. Hagan replied with a second, more detailed statement of the facts, but it was ten days after Dealey’s report that the Times finally published a correction. It admitted Dealey’s misreporting and explicitly indicated that Dealey’s characterization of Save Darfur as breaching standards of truthfulness was false. Save Darfur responded to the decision with new full-page advocacy advertisements in the New York Times and elsewhere that replaced the statement “400,000 dead” with the observation that “as many as 400,000 are dead.”

CONCLUSION

Michael Burawoy’s call for a renewed public sociology has enlivened our field, urging us to expand the audiences and participants involved in sociological inquiries. Our goal in this chapter is to explore some of the difficulties sociologists encounter in doing public sociology. Using Hagan and colleagues’ work on the deaths in Darfur as a case study, we examined four problems that limit sociologists’ effectiveness when they engage various publics. Our analysis suggests that although laudable, Burawoy’s public sociology requires strategic rethinking.

Our analysis suggests that several groups—the media, the government, scholars from other disciplines, and other publics—easily dismiss sociological contributions. The pronouncements of public sociologists probably would be better received if sociology could improve its standing within the academy. Sociologists and sociology departments rarely command high status in U.S. universities, and it is not clear that public sociology activities will provide the impetus for an increase in prestige.

One strategy is for sociology to strengthen its professional standing by continuing to emphasize its scientific accomplishments. Our discipline needs to find ways of regularly reminding public audiences of the sophistication and rigor of its best work. We all have our favorite examples, from Merton’s theory of the self-fulfilling prophecy to the methods of sample survey research. But the public knows little of what we do and what we have accomplished. Increased academic respect will also provide sociologists
with an important resource when they compete with scholars from other disciplines for the public's attention.

The need for sociology to improve its status is not simply an issue about the discipline's standing within the academy. It underscores the costs incurred when sociologically informed contributions are dismissed because of the limited respect sociology garners. Hagan and colleagues conducted the most sophisticated analysis of the deaths in Darfur to date; they used one of the most widely read peer-reviewed scholarly journals to communicate their findings; and they provided the media, government officials, activists, and others with the details of their research. Yet, their findings have been repeatedly ignored, rejected, or attacked by many groups.

Meanwhile, the killing in Darfur continues. The Sudanese government approved a hybrid United Nations and African Union peacekeeping force in January 2008, but it then used bureaucratic delays to stall its deployment and then renewed its bombings and Janjaweed attacks (Polgreen 2008). It is impossible to know if public sociologists' pronouncements about the genocide in Darfur would have been more consequential if sociology were more highly regarded; however, sociologists' efforts to strengthen the discipline and to increase public awareness of our increasing sophistication can only enhance our effectiveness as public sociologists.

**POSTSCRIPT**

In 2007, the International Criminal Court in The Hague issued warrants for two men accused of war crimes in Darfur: Ahmad Muhammad Harun, a member of the Sudanese government and who the prosecutor says played a role in planning atrocities, and Ali Muhammad Ali Abd-al-Rahman (a.k.a., Ali Kushayb), who is accused of being a former leader of the janjaweed militia (Simons 2007). In 2009 it issued a warrant for the arrest of Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity (but not genocide). President Omar Hassan al-Bashir responded by expelling more than a dozen aid groups from Darfur (Simons and MacFarquar 2009).

**REFERENCES**


Counting the Deaths in Darfur


V

SPECIAL FIELDS AND
PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY
Inspired by the progressive social movements of the 1960s, the field of social movement (SM) scholarship began to expand rapidly in the 1970s. SM scholars have produced a wealth of theoretical insights and empirical knowledge. Despite the intellectual vibrancy of the field, however, scholars and scholarship have grown increasingly detached from engagement with activists and movements (Croteau, Hoynes, and Ryan 2005).

SM scholars have been influenced by recent initiatives to promote “public sociology” that “seeks to bring sociology to publics beyond the academy, promoting dialogue about issues that affect the fate of society” (Burawoy 2004b:105). In conferences and publications, SM scholars have examined the state of the field and discussed how to promote more public SM scholarship. In this chapter, I will address the question of how SM scholarship and activism can improve each other.

I will start with Michael Burawoy’s typology of four sociologies, two academic (professional and critical) and two engaged more directly with society (public and policy) (Burawoy 2004a, 2004b). I will revise the framework to develop more fully the category of policy sociology. The revised framework will inform my analysis of relationships between and among the four sociologies in terms of social movement scholarship. I will look first at synergies and then at tensions and strategies to manage them. The underlying question is how can social movement scholarship and activism inform and improve each other.
In this chapter I rely on both a growing body of literature about engaged social movement scholarship, and on my research on and work with community organizing (CO). I began this work as professional sociology, conducting participant-observation research on the Gamaliel Foundation and its Northeast Ohio affiliates.

Gamaliel is one of four national networks that coordinate and provide training for local groups (affiliates) that practice congregation-based community organizing (CBCO) (Hart 2001; Warren 2001; Wood 2002). CBCO is a rapidly growing, progressive movement. Affiliates consist of institutions, primarily religious congregations but also labor unions, schools, community development groups, and other organizations. Organizers (paid staff) train “leaders” (persons within member organizations who become active participants) to identify, analyze, and solve community problems. Organizers and leaders seek to build local affiliates into enduring “power organizations” that participate in creating public policies and holding officials accountable, and that can influence the practices of major private institutions.

Over time, I participated more fully at the local and network levels, after my congregation joined a local Gamaliel affiliate. I also developed several policy projects with the local group, as I will describe.

**FOUR SOCIOLOGIES**

In 2004, as president of the American Sociological Association, Michael Burawoy urged sociologists to recapture what he saw as the “moral moment” of the discipline. He argued that sociology in Europe and in the United States began with a moral commitment to help society confront inequalities, alienation, and major social problems. As it became an established academic discipline, however, sociology lost much of its moral and critical dimension and its public audience.

Burawoy’s critique has catalyzed more reflection and debate than previous efforts to re-engage sociology. This is partly because he used his institutional position to encourage and support sociologists at all levels of academia to pursue engaged scholarship. It is also because in addition to a critique, his work provides a useful framework for understanding and practicing different types of academic and engaged sociology.

**Burawoy’s Framework**

Burawoy (2004b) identifies four types of sociology: professional, critical, public, and policy. He builds this typology on two dimensions—intended
audience, and type of knowledge produced. Each dimension can take on two values, as shown in table 19.1. Audiences can be inside or outside academia. Knowledge can be instrumental or reflexive. Instrumental knowledge helps solve specific problems. Reflexive knowledge focuses on ends rather than means. It creates debates about underlying values and goals.

Professional and critical sociology address academic audiences. Professional sociology produces social theory. Critical sociology questions and poses alternatives to the assumptions, theories, and methods of mainstream professional sociology. Public and policy sociology address audiences outside academia. Policy sociology produces instrumental knowledge designed to solve social problems. Public sociology produces reflexive knowledge, enriching our dialogue about social values and visions of the future.

Burawoy makes a further distinction between two forms of public sociology. “Elite” or “traditional” public sociology addresses broad, diffuse publics, typically through the mass media. “Organic” or “grassroots” public sociology involves “carrying sociology into the trenches of civil society, where publics are more visible, thick, active, and local” (Burawoy 2004b:104).

In practice, there is a wide range of public sociologies involving a great variety of audiences or partners. Projects may combine elements of both traditional and grassroots public sociology. Ultimately, the goal of these public sociologies is to “nurture or shift people’s perspectives, by helping them grasp the context within which they operate, galvanizing their dispersed and shattered wills into collective actors inspired by insights into the conditions of their existence” (Burawoy 2004c:129). Although specific projects may blur the distinctions between elite and grassroots public sociology, it is useful to maintain the two categories as ideal-types.

Table 19.1. Types of Sociology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Audience</th>
<th>Extra-Academic Audience</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental Knowledge&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>PROFESSIONAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflexive Knowledge&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>CRITICAL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: From Burawoy 2004b:106.

<sup>a</sup> Instrumental knowledge looks to solve problems and focuses on means. Reflexive knowledge questions underlying assumptions and focuses on values and ultimate goals.

Revising the Framework

Burawoy criticizes policy sociology as work for hire in which a sociologist becomes a “servant of power” (Burawoy 2004b:105). There certainly is such work, and Burawoy may be correct in arguing that it dominated any engaged component of American sociology during its post–World War II “second wave” (Burawoy 2007). However, it would be more useful to apply
to policy sociology the same distinction Burawoy makes for public, creating the categories of grassroots and elite policy sociology (Kleidman 2006). These differ in terms of both partners and process.

Elite policy sociology does involve working with or for agencies of social control and other dominant organizations, and the outcome of this work may be to reinforce existing inequalities and power arrangements. However, many social scientists do policy work with organizations made up of or representing non-elites, including those marginalized by race, class, gender, and so forth. This work aims to reduce inequalities and create more democratic structures.

In terms of process, sociologists may be hired to do a predetermined job. However, policy work often, perhaps usually, involves a more active role in planning, conducting, and disseminating the results of projects. It can also center on empowering community members and training them in relevant skills. In fact, there are long-standing traditions of grassroots policy social science that stress empowerment, including “participatory research” (Park, Brydon-Miller, Hall, and Jackson 1991; Park 1992; Ansley and Gaventa 1997), “action research” (Argyris, Putnam, and Smith 1985), “participatory action research” (Whyte 1991), and “community-based research” (Strand et al. 2003). The public sociology movement would benefit from greater engagement with these traditions.

SYNERGIES AMONG THE FOUR SOCIAL MOVEMENT SCHOLARSHIPS

In principle, scholarship and activism are complementary. Despite tensions, Burawoy correctly maintains that the four types of sociology strengthen each other.

Professional Sociology and Engaged SM Scholarship

Professional social movement scholarship can lead to engaged work in two key ways. First, scholarship can provide the material for engaged work. Policy and public sociology draw on professional sociology’s insights. Second, for those who study contemporary movements, research and scholarship can build relationships with activists, leading to policy and public sociology. I will look at a few specific projects that illustrate this synergy.

Grassroots Policy Sociology

Social movement scholars can partner with movement activists to help them address felt needs and solve specific problems—the focus of policy
sociology. An outstanding example of this is the work of MRAP, the Media Research and Action Project at Boston College (Ryan 2004, 2005). Since 1986, Charlotte Ryan and others have worked with movement groups to improve their media strategies.

Ryan’s mandate was to “distill framing theories for popular use” (Ryan 2005:120). These theories had become influential in social movement scholarship, looking at how movements present or “frame” issues (Snow et al. 1986). Bill Gamson, a leading scholar of movements, recognized the value of such theories for engaged work and established MRAP.

For the first five years, Ryan and her colleagues ran workshops for more than two hundred organizations (Ryan 2005). They discovered that even after the workshops, activists felt that framing specific messages for intended audiences was somehow dishonest. They persisted in unsuccessful efforts to gain favorable media coverage, and blamed the media for this failure. MRAP decided to select a few groups for more extensive training. They developed long-term partnerships with ten social movement organizations. The focus of this work shifted from the content of the frames to improving activists’ understanding of larger strategic issues and the role of media strategies within them.

Perhaps the most extensive scholar-activist engagement in the social movement field in the United States is in the area of labor studies (Gapasin 1998; Juravich 1998). Like the study of community organizing, this field intellectually and institutionally overlaps substantially with social movement scholarship. Unlike CO scholars, however, labor scholars have established university-based institutes for research and education, and a separate section of the American Sociological Association. This close relationship between scholars and activists is unusual if not unique, and is not without its problems (Croteau 2005), as will be discussed. It centers on engaged work, much of which is policy sociology. Bonacich, for example, has helped several unions create organizing campaigns by researching specific industries (Bonacich 1998, 2005).

My policy work with community organizations emerged from professional sociology. As I did participant-observation research, I learned that Gamaliel was creating a network-wide focus on regional “metro-equity” organizing (Kleidman 2004). Partnering with leading urbanists including Myron Orfield, John A. Powell, and David Rusk, Gamaliel organizers and leaders moved their focus from traditional neighborhood and city-level organizing to a regional analysis, vision, and strategy. This kind of progressive regionalism emphasizes metropolitan dynamics, especially sprawl, socioeconomic polarization, and racial segregation, as root causes of urban and neighborhood problems (Rusk 1995, 1999; Orfield 1997, 2002). Metro-equity organizing seeks to build a diverse “metropolitan majority” in the declining and at-risk communities, to promote policies that slow or stop
sprawl, create reinvestment in the core, and provide transportation to and housing in affluent suburbs for some moderate-income and poor people. These policies typically require action at regional and state levels. The vision is of an environmentally sustainable region, preserving its natural and architectural heritage in a compact urban core, with increasing economic and racial integration and equality.

Working with Ameregis, Orfield’s research institute, Gamaliel affiliates had partnered with universities and other institutions to produce studies of specific metropolitan regions. Recognizing the need for such work in Northeast Ohio, I worked closely with the local Gamaliel group to gain support and funding from my university and local foundations for a regional study and report (Orfield et al. 2001) and to conduct a series of small seminars and a major regional conference. My limited background in urban sociology allowed me to lend some expertise to these projects, but more important were the urbanists at my university whom we recruited. Scholars sometimes overlook our capacity to use our institutional resources to help our community partners, although movements like service learning and public sociology are encouraging more of this work.

Grassroots Public Sociology

Public sociology uses social science theory and research to create a dialogue centered on fundamental values and the quality of social life (Burawoy 2004b). A slightly broader definition brings us to a central concept in political sociology and social movement scholarship, that of ideology. Although sometimes dismissed as rigid or mystifying thinking, a neutral definition of ideology sees it as a worldview with three key elements (Oliver and Johnston 2000). First, a vision of a future society shaped by core values. Second, a penetrating analysis of the present that puts individual problems and specific social issues in a broader critique of systems and cultures. Third, a long-term, comprehensive strategy for how to move from present systems to future visions.

For social movement scholarship, grassroots public sociology involves creating dialogues between scholars and activists around vision and values, analysis, and strategy. More so than policy sociology, it involves a critical examination of the practices and cultures of movements. Critiques can come from professional social movement scholarship, from more informal observation including the knowledge gained in policy projects, and from activists’ own reflections.

The Grassroots Policy Project (GPP) began with the critical assessment of contemporary American movements as “caught up in efforts that are short-term, fragmented and reactive” (Healey and Hinson 2005:57). Similarly, Ryan found in her work with MRAP that “While conservative movements
are often explicitly ideological, US progressive movements are not” (Ryan 2005:119). After observing a national organizing conference in which both progressive and neo-conservative speakers were warmly received, I likewise concluded that CBCO’s nebulous populism limits its transformative potential (Kleidman 2004). Each project therefore included efforts to encourage our community partners to address these problems by developing more explicit visions of the future, a deeper, more sociological analysis of the present, and more comprehensive, long-term strategies that see their efforts in the context of a larger progressive movement.

The GPP works with social movement groups to help them orient their short-term activism so that it builds toward more long-term fundamental change. Drawing on Steven Lukes’s (1974) theory of power, Healey and Hinson concluded that this meant two things—building movement capacity or infrastructure, and developing and promoting a more systematic, progressive “worldview” that can challenge dominant conservative language and frames. In their workshops, while preserving its core content, they translate Lukes’s theoretical work into a more pragmatic language.

MRAPs long-term partnerships have a very similar dual focus to help activists integrate media strategy into a larger organizing strategy. First, they seek to build movement capacity by improving activists’ analytic, visionary, and strategic skills. Second, they emphasize how “collective action framing practices create a counternarrative that forwards a counterhegemonic worldview” (Ryan 2005:133).

Lacking the institutional base of an MRAP or a GPP, I have made more modest ventures into public grassroots sociology. I have asked organizers and leaders whom I thought would be receptive to read my critiques of organizing. This has led to some interesting, mutually challenging conversations, and to some plans to create programs to deepen the political education component of leadership development.

Grassroots Policy Sociology and Grassroots Public Sociology

My engaged work and that of MRAP began as policy sociology and came to include the deeper conversations of public sociology, illustrating another synergy between forms of sociology. The two connect mainly through the relationships and knowledge developed through professional and policy sociology.

In doing participant-observation research on organizing, I found most organizers and leaders to be supportive of the work or at least tolerant. Several, however, were either uninterested or even somewhat hostile, believing that I would either waste their time or air their dirty laundry. The policy projects we did transformed these relationships. I realized that by taking seriously the felt needs of organizers and leaders, and by delivering new
resources, I had gained an important measure of trust. This trust is essential for the work of grassroots public sociology, in which scholars and activists challenge each other around our work and underlying assumptions.

In reflecting on this process of building relationships and trust, however, I realized there is a second key connection between policy and public sociology. To the extent that scholars have choices in the nature and process of policy projects, we can try to influence the work of our community partners, combining their felt needs with what our professional scholarship suggests may be their more fundamental interests. In other words, grassroots policy sociology can be a strategic intervention in the work of movements and other community partners.

In terms of the four sociologies framework, this synergy illustrates the value of using a complex multidimensional concept of policy sociology. In addition, all the projects discussed show the importance of maintaining the analytic distinction between policy and public sociology. Although they overlap, public sociology contains a critical dimension that policy sociology lacks, and that can be easy to ignore in otherwise-fulfilling engaged work.

Engaged Scholarship Informs Professional Sociology

Engaged work should improve professional scholarship in terms of data, methods, and theory. At the level of data, working with activists and community groups in policy and public sociology partnerships gives us access to more information about these groups. We see more of them under more varied circumstances. Taylor and Rupp (2005), for example, drew on the traditions of participatory action research and feminist scholarship to create a research project on drag queens. They collaborated closely with their research subjects in developing the project, collecting and analyzing data, and disseminating the results. In doing so, they learned much more about their subjects than they would have through more traditional, less participatory methods. Similarly, through the policy partnerships in which I participated, I learned a great deal about the worldviews of organizers and leaders.

Engaged scholarship can improve our methodology and capacity to appreciate other worldviews. Knowing that our work will be read by those whom we study encourages us to be more accurate in observations and notes, and to produce accounts that are authentic. It can also challenge our worldviews. Working more closely with organizers and leaders helped me recognize a somewhat elitist attitude that I think is partly based in academic training and culture. This attitude helps us critique the long-term impact of our community partners, but may lead us to overlook or dismiss the challenges and rewards of their everyday work. A more balanced attitude can produce better scholarship, I think.
A final synergy involves improving movement theory by applying it. Ryan’s work with movement groups helped her understand not just how to translate framing theory for popular use, but also how to improve it at the level of theory. Through MRAP’s workshops and partnerships, Ryan developed a more sophisticated framing theory as she observed the process of movement activists learning, adapting, and using the theory (Ryan 2005).

Engaged Scholarship Informs Critical Sociology

Engaged work contributes to critical sociology. For social movement scholars, it confronts us with the question of why our partners and audiences outside academia rarely look to social movement scholarship for guidance. It leads us to critical sociology, a critique of current theory and research, as a step toward developing more useful scholarship. I will take up some current critiques of movement theory as part of a larger discussion of tensions and strategies.

TENSIONS AMONG THE FOUR SOCIAL MOVEMENT SCHOLARSHIPS AND STRATEGIES TO MANAGE THEM

Professional, critical, public, and policy sociology can be synergistic. However, there are tensions among and between them, some inherent and some based in contingent arrangements. I will look at three areas of tension and some strategies to manage them: institutional arrangements and cultures in movements and academia, the nature of professional social movement scholarship, and relationships between scholars and activists.

Institutional Arrangements and Cultures—Social Movements

Richard Healey and Sandra Hinson see parallel problems in the cultures and institutional arrangements of scholars and activists. Both encourage fragmentation—academia in terms of specialization, activism in terms of single-issue work. Both are reactive and focused on the short-term. Scholars tend to follow the latest trends in theory, while activists look to respond to immediate threats.

However, just as public sociology and other initiatives may be changing parts of academic culture and institutions, so too are progressive movements changing, partly out of frustration with continued setbacks. In 1998, Randy Stoecker and I worked with two funders to convene a meeting of community organizers, scholars, and funders, as part of a CBSM theory workshop (Kleidman and Stoecker 1998). We found that many organizers
want academics to help them understand the changing global and national environment in which they work. In their work, Healey and Hinson have found that “some activists relish opportunities to engage in critical analysis and to be challenged to move beyond their usual approaches” (Healey and Hinson 2005:57).

Engaged scholars and activists can help each other change our respective institutional cultures to encourage more collaborative work. There needs to be a material base to these projects. Just as scholars lack time for collaborative work, activists lack time for reading, reflection, and writing. Creating institutional space and finding funds for sabbaticals for activists would be one important way in which scholars could further truly collaborative work.

**Institutional Arrangements and Cultures—The Academy**

For sociologists in most academic settings, faculty roles and rewards center on professional sociology. Policy and public sociology are seen primarily as community service. Sociologists are discouraged from spending much time on them. This problem is particularly acute for those who wish to develop strong relationships with community partners, a process that usually requires a substantial investment of time. Collaborations, especially when more than one partner is involved, may pay off only slowly or not at all in terms of publications (Ryan 2004). As a result, note Healey and Hinson (2005), most social movement scholars tend to react more to trends in research and theory than to developments in the actual practice of social movements.

Brady (2004) supports the public sociology movement, but he fears it may fail partly because there has been little discussion of creating professional incentives for engaged work. The movement would be stronger if it connected more consistently with major initiatives from outside sociology that focus on precisely this issue. The most important of these has been from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Ernest Boyer, its president, led a task force to examine the relationship of academia to society.

In *Scholarship Reconsidered* (1990) he reported that the task force found institutions of higher education to be far too removed from the rest of society. To redress this problem, he called for an expanded notion of scholarship. In addition to the traditional scholarship of discovery, we should recognize and reward the scholarships of integration, teaching, and what he later called engagement (Boyer 1996).

Since the book’s publication, Carnegie and other organizations have sponsored conferences, workshops, publications, and other means to promote engaged work ranging from service learning to community-based
research. The American Association of Higher Education (AAHE) Forum on Faculty Roles and Rewards sponsored a series of important conferences in the 1990s, leading to several valuable publications (Driscoll and Lynton 1999; Lynton 1995; Rice 1996; Glassick, Huber, and Maeroff 1997). Some of this work addresses individual scholars, providing guidance and models for treating engaged work as scholarship that can be published in peer-reviewed journals. Other work looks to institutional changes. With hands-on help from AAHE and other institutions, several colleges and universities have revised their tenure and promotion rules to recognize engaged work.

The call for public sociology has catalyzed a strong response within the discipline. There has been a spate of publications, including three edited volumes (Blau and Smith 2006; Barlow 2007; Clawson et al. 2007). Burawoy’s term as ASA president also saw the establishment of the Task Force on the Institutionalization of Public Sociology. Within the ASA, the section on Collective Behavior and Social Movements (CBSM) has also responded to the public sociology initiative, devoting substantial time at recent meetings to workshops and presentations on public social movement scholarship (Ryan, Kleidman, and Maney 2007). An important volume on engaged social movement scholarship (Croteau et al. 2005) includes many excellent chapters, some of which I have drawn on substantially for this essay.

Despite these promising developments, it is too early to tell whether there will be any lasting efforts to help scholars manage the tensions between the roles and rewards of professional sociology and those of engaged work. Discussions within sociology still tend to ignore the wider initiatives cited above. This increases the chances of the discipline marginalizing engaged work. Some division of labor is necessary and may be good, as Burawoy and others argue. However, identifying and applauding a few scholars who do engaged work is no substitute for critically examining the system of roles and rewards that limits its practice. Such marginalization, moreover, leaves professional sociology relatively unexamined and unchanged. For engaged work to be more common and effective, however, we must look critically at the kinds of theory being produced by professional sociology.

Professional Social Movement Scholarship

The content of scholarship may create obstacles to engagement. The public sociology movement has reenergized a critical sociology that questions key aspects of sociological theory. Burawoy (2004b, 2008) reminds us that C. Wright Mills’s (1959) critiques of “grand theory” and “abstracted empiricism” in mainstream sociological theory are still relevant, although the current “third wave” (Burawoy 2007) in sociology incorporates a more public dimension.
As social movement scholarship has grown, some scholars have argued that much of it has become highly abstract and ahistorical (Darnovsky, Epstein, and Flacks 1994; Buechler 2000; Flacks 2004, 2005). Their concern is not just that such theory is hard for activists to understand or connect to their circumstances, although it is. The deeper critique is that ahistorical abstraction is not the path to good theory, an argument that goes back at least as far as the works of Karl Marx, and within academic sociology at least to Mills, Barrington Moore (1958), and other historical sociologists.

The work of MRAP and the GPP shows that some kinds of abstract theory can be used to inform engagement, if scholars work to make it relevant to activists. Similarly, Meyer (2005) suggests ways in which political opportunity theory, another important strand in social movement scholarship, may be made more relevant for activists. However, Flacks and other critics may be right that some directions in social movement scholarship may be questionable in terms of both theoretical value and relevance. A fuller discussion of this issue is beyond the scope of this chapter, but it is important to use engagement to help us examine more critically the nature of our work, how we present it (see chapter 9 in this volume), and where we publish or use it.

Tensions run in the other direction also. Engagement can create obstacles to good professional scholarship. In grassroots policy and public sociology, relationships with community partners are enriching and energizing. However, these relationships can challenge scholars’ ability and desire to maintain a critical distance and some measure of “objectivity” in studying these groups.

The desire to maintain these relationships, into which so much has been invested, also challenges our ability to be critical in print, in public conversations, and sometimes even in private. We do not want to lose access. As in more traditional participant-observation, some scholars contend that even full participants can maintain a critical intellectual distance from the group or culture they study (Adler and Adler 1987). This may be true, but engagement does put this to a tougher test.

Scholar-Activist Relationships

Relationships between scholars and activists are complex and take time to negotiate and develop. One key point of possible tension involves both intellectual and interpersonal leadership in engaged work. Top-down models privilege abstract knowledge and professional credentials of scholars. Even if we do not consciously embrace this model, scholars often find ourselves reproducing it. Bottom-up models privilege the felt needs of community partners.
There is a middle position in which partners seek a shared leadership role. Ferree, Sperling, and Risman (2005) talk about the feminist movement’s emphasis on developing a “culture of conversation” in contrast to the top-down “culture of lecture.” In working with activists, a culture of conversation avoids both extremes—those of imposing our views, and those of deferring completely to those of our partners. We should develop relationships that allow us to take an active role toward community partners, using social movement theory and research to provide a critical analysis of their work. However, we should present our ideas as hypotheses and suggestions, and seek and listen to responses that can also be challenging.

Community organizers call such relationships “agitational”—supportive but constructively critical, seeking to bring out the full potential of the person and the work. Grassroots public social movement scholarship is, ultimately, the creation of relationships, cultures, and institutions that support a culture of agitational conversation between scholars and activists.

CONCLUSION

Engaged social movement scholarship improves sociology and activism. While there are tensions between and among the different sociologies, there is a growing body of knowledge about how to manage the tensions and create synergies. Scholars are questioning more about our theories, institutional arrangements, and cultures, and seeking to create alternatives more compatible with engaged work. We are working with activists to accomplish similar goals in their realms. As we continue in this direction, it is important to continue to be reflective about this process, and to expand both the practice and the theory of engaged social movement scholarship.

NOTE

1. Local affiliates of the four networks increased by almost 50 percent from 1995 to 2000, and included a combined base of 4,000 member organizations, comprising between one and three million people (Hart 2001; Warren and Wood, 2001). Although they avoid labels, the major CBCO networks pursue progressive policies. They focus on economic issues and avoid social issues that might divide their base, which is diverse in terms of class, race, gender, and religious affiliation.

REFERENCES


In this chapter, I consider Michael Burawoy’s (2005a:11) four categories of sociology; namely, professional, critical, policy, and public, from my point of view as a scholar of international human rights, originally trained in political sociology. I take issue with Burawoy’s idiosyncratic definition of human rights, and with his implicit equation of critical and public sociology with his own avowedly Marxist perspective. I also take issue with his implication that in the current era of globalization, markets are more likely than states to violate human rights. International human rights provide a common standard of achievement that transcends ideological debates, and that makes no prior assumptions about the relative likelihood that states, markets, or civil societies will protect or violate human rights. I am a Canadian sociologist, and I ground my discussion of human rights in international law. My work on human rights over the past 30 years has been heavily interdisciplinary, as there is no explicit sociology of human rights.

DEFINITION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights are rights that all human beings are entitled to, merely by virtue of being human. They are individual rights, not tied to group, communal, national, or any other membership. Human rights do not have to be earned, nor are they dependent on any particular social status.

This is an explicitly liberal view of human rights, originating in the West and enshrined in the United Nation’s (UN) International Bill of Rights, which consists of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
Rights (UDHR), the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) (Brownlie and Goodwin-Gill:23–28, 348–374). Civil and political rights include, for example, protection against torture, the right to a fair trial, and the right to vote. Economic, social, and cultural rights include the right to work, the right to form trade unions, and the rights to education, social security, an adequate standard of living, and the highest attainable standard of health. There are also so-called collective rights, such as to peace, development, and a clean environment.

To assert that human rights originated in the West is not to assert that only the West has a moral system of justice. Rather, the philosophical and legal conceptions of universal, individual human rights emerged there, as philosophers and political activists reacted against the overarching power of monarchs and the state. Incipient principles of human rights can be found in the religious and philosophical systems of other parts of the world, as in some aspects of Hindu thought (Sen 2000:33–38), or in indigenous African political systems (Wiredu 1996:155–190), but they were first articulated in a systematic fashion in the West.

Many “non-Western” critics of human rights believe that the UDHR was written only by Westerners. But although the UN was dominated by Western and Soviet-Bloc countries in 1948, there were also non-Western member countries, among whom Chile, China, Egypt, India, Iran, Lebanon, Panama, the Philippines, and Uruguay participated in drafting the UDHR (Samnøy 1993:142). Some critics also believe that economic, social, and cultural rights were included in the UDHR only because of Soviet Bloc and “third world” influence. However, Westerners were instrumental in introducing economic rights into the UDHR (Donnelly 2007:37–55).

Eleanor Roosevelt, who chaired the UN committee that drafted the UDHR, was no stranger to economic rights. Her husband, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, president of the United States, had included freedom from want as one of the four freedoms he enunciated in his State of the Union Address on January 6, 1941 (the others were freedom of speech and expression, freedom of worship, and freedom from fear) (Howard-Hassmann and Welch 2006:211). President Roosevelt went even further in his State of the Union Address three years later, on January 11, 1944, advocating the right to a job; the right to earn enough for adequate food, clothing, and recreation; the right of every family to a decent home; the right to adequate medical care and good health; the right to protection from “the economic fears of old age, sickness, accident and unemployment”; and the right to a good education (Howard-Hassmann and Welch 2006:213–214). John Humphrey, a Canadian, worked with Eleanor Roosevelt to write the first draft of the UDHR, and introduced economic and social rights into that
draft over the objections of the Canadian government and Canadian business community (Hobbins 1998:325–342).

The principle of human rights is one to which many non-liberal and/or non-Western states now adhere, at least formally with regard to their obligations under international law and their constitutional obligations to their citizens. This does not, of course, mean that the elites or ruling classes of all these countries actually believe in human rights. But neither does it mean that, although the concept is originally Western and liberal, their publics don’t believe in human rights—or that they would reject human rights, if they were to be informed of them.

In this context, Burawoy’s definition of human rights (2005b:158) as “the rights of human beings to survive in community with one another” is idiosyncratic. This is a partial definition, bearing very little relation to international law. The law does protect the right of human beings to survive, and it protects their right to survive in community with one another. It also, however, protects the rights of individuals against their community, as in the case of women, children, gays and lesbians, or members of other marginalized groups. The law also does far more than protect survival rights; it aims to provide the conditions under which human beings can live a good life.

Of interest to Burawoy, given his avowed Marxist perspective, ought to be the law’s focus on economic rights. However, the international law of human rights does not condemn market economies, as Burawoy does. Market economies are not necessarily more likely to result in violations of international human rights than non-market economies.

While Burawoy is well aware of the human rights abuses perpetrated by real, existing market economies and states, he minimizes the tremendous abuses of human rights perpetrated by real, existing Marxist states (Courtois et al. 1999). It is not enough to dismiss these abuses by simply stating that “when Marxism rules it petrifies” (Burawoy 2005b:160). The UN’s principles of human rights were designed to protect the individual against any state, whether capitalist, Marxist, or other. Gross human rights violations such as extra-judicial execution, arbitrary arrest, and torture are usually committed by the state. Civil rights such as due process, a fair trial, and habeas corpus are necessary to protect citizens against these abuses. So also are political rights such as freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, trade union rights, and the right to vote. The ubiquity of the state makes necessary a universal human rights standard, regardless of the type of political regime.

PROFESSIONAL SOCIOLOGY

The field of international human rights will not contribute to any fundamental changes in professional sociology, but professional sociologists can
contribute to the study of human rights. Some scholars of human rights now use the rigorous methodologies of professional, quantitative, and qualitative analysis in their own work. There is a large scholarly body of quantitative work measuring achievement of human rights, mostly, however, by political scientists rather than sociologists (Landman 2005).

From the point of view of professional sociology, human rights are usually a dependent variable. Questions that sociologists could address are how human rights are achieved and protected (Fein 2007), how citizens view human rights (Howard-Hassmann 2003), and how marginalized social groups gain their human rights. These macro-questions require understanding of historical sociology (Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens 1992), theories of social change, and social movement theory (Keck and Sikkink 1998), among other aspects of sociology.

As an example, professional sociologists could pay more attention to genocide. The world’s leading scholar of comparative genocide studies is Helen Fein, a sociologist, whose work has influenced all students of comparative genocide, regardless of their discipline, and who employs rigorous quantitative and qualitative methods in her research: her *Accounting for Genocide* won the American Sociological Association’s Sorokin Award in 1979 (Fein 1979). Sadly, genocide is a common event, which can be analyzed by sociologists, who moreover could involve themselves in the international project to predict and prevent genocide.

Sociology can also contribute to understanding of how human rights are realized, rather than violated. Sociological studies of social movements have shown the importance of the right to organize. Human rights networking across lines that previously divided individuals, such as across ideological or geographical lines, has increased dramatically over the last 25 years. Human rights networking helped bring down the governments of the Soviet Bloc, for example. Network sociologists can study these human rights groupings as part of their professional obligations, just as sociologists of social movements can study international human rights advocacy.

Professional sociology, then, has much to offer the academic study of human rights, presently dominated by the fields of law, philosophy, and international relations. These fields do not possess the theoretical or methodological tools to explain the circumstances under which individuals will enjoy, or not enjoy, their human rights. The classic Weberian themes of class, status, and power are still weakly integrated into the human rights literature. Yet without understanding the nature of status, we cannot analyze the situation of the Dalits in India, or of traditional slavery in African countries such as Mauritania. Without analysis of class society, the violations of the economic rights of the poor in capitalist countries such as the United States and Canada will escape us (Howard-Hassmann and Welch 2006). Without analysis of power, states remain suspended in an intellec-
tual vacuum in which they are legally mandated to promote, protect, and fulfill their citizens’ rights, but frequently do the opposite.

Professional sociology, as amended by the last three decades’ work on gender, ethnicity, and race, also helps human rights scholars understand how and why society and the family, as well as the state, can violate human rights. Individuals must be able to claim rights against society, as, for example, women, gays, blacks, and minority groups do in Canada and the United States. Under international human rights law, the family is no longer a protected, private realm. The law undermines men’s authority over women, and parents’ authority over children. There are separate international conventions governing both women’s (1979) and children’s (1989) rights (Brownlie and Goodwin-Gill: 388–399, 429–447). The sociology of the family helps to understand the relationship of rights to the family. Drawing on the sociology of marriage, for example, I have argued that gay marriage is easier in societies in which the purpose of marriage is companionship, rather than merely reproduction (Howard-Hassmann 2001:73–95).

Rights for women, children, and homosexuals raise the question of ethnocentrism. Some would argue that when Westerners advocate universal human rights, especially rights for previously subordinated social groups, they are cultural imperialists. Cultural relativists claim that human rights undermine local, non-Western states’ or communities’ ideas of the good life. Professional sociology helps to answer this criticism by providing tools to look carefully at what culture means, who defines and interprets it, and who enforces it. Sociologists interrogate the notion that culture is a static, homogeneous entity (Howard 1993:315–338); they apply the classic categories of class, status, and power to culture, as to any other social phenomenon. Sociologists can also investigate how cultures can change to support human rights, and how norms such as egalitarianism, or a belief in religious tolerance, that support human rights emerge and are sustained in some national cultures.

Thus, from the point of view of professional sociology, human rights are an object of study. The theories, concepts, and methods of professional sociology help legal scholars and practitioners understand why and how human rights are protected or violated by the state, community, and family. With regard to critical, policy, or public sociologies, however, human rights are more than an object of study. They contribute independently to sociological debate, as principles to be defended and policies to be implemented.

**CRITICAL SOCIOLOGY**

There is some confusion, in Burawoy’s writings, as to whether the function of critical sociology is merely to debate foundational principles within the
discipline, or whether it is to provide a critical stance on the wider society: Burawoy (2005a:16) seems to favor the first approach, stating “critical sociology is committed to opening up debate within our discipline.” It is certainly necessary for sociologists to continually interrogate themselves, but it is also necessary for sociologists to critically interrogate the relations of class, status, and power that permeate the wider societies in which they live.

The international law of human rights provides a common standard of achievement on the basis of which sociologists, like all other actors, can be critical of the societies in which they live, whether local, national, or global. Burawoy boxes himself in by focusing only on criticism within the profession, and moreover by pronouncing himself a Marxist. The common standard of human rights applies to all political regimes, including Marxist, socialist, fascist, liberal, and social democratic. In the twenty-first century, to box critical sociology into the functionalist/Marxist disagreement is to engage in sterile debate that will be of little interest to the millions of human rights actors all over the world. These human rights actors are a significant part of the civil society that Burawoy (2005b:152–165) claims ought to be the principal object of attention of, and the principal social unit to be defended by, “third-wave” sociology. One does not have to accept his ideal-type description of first, second, and third-wave sociology’s focus on/defense of the state, market, and civil society respectively, to recognize the importance of human rights to civil society actors all over the world, including those who rejected Marxism completely in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Bloc, or who struggle to overcome the human rights abuses of allegedly Marxist regimes in China, Cuba, or North Korea today.

The common human rights standard of achievement does, however, apply as much to capitalist as to other societies. The principle of economic rights fills a gap in (North) American conceptions of social justice. Nevertheless, until recently the international human rights movement did not pay as much attention to economic as to civil and political rights. This is in part because economic rights do not enjoy the same high standards of immediate implementation as civil and political rights: rather, states are mandated to progressively implement economic rights, to the maximum of their available resources (ICESCR, Article 2 [1]). Yet universal human rights entail the creation of a society in which all human rights are respected. This, in effect, means a social democracy, laying equal stress on civil and political, and economic, social, and cultural rights.

We are now living in the era of globalization: that is, the worldwide spread of capitalism. Both socialism and various forms of national “self-reliance” have failed abysmally as economic policies, in the former Soviet Bloc and China and in the underdeveloped world. Burawoy (2005b:157) views globalization, or, in his words, “third-wave marketization,” as a
human rights disaster, yet there is no substitute for market economies. Moreover, countries in which there is no foreign investment are much poorer than countries in which there is foreign investment; witness African poverty. There is also much evidence that in the long run, societies that become wealthier through capitalist investment are likely to democratize and provide more complete protection for human rights, although such a development is by no means inevitable (Howard-Hassmann 2005:1–40).

This is little comfort in the short run, however, for those who suffer from structural adjustment policies, high debt loads (often accumulated by dictatorial, anti-capitalist governments), lack of rights in export processing zones, and the dislocations caused when peasant societies give way to market economies. How can the rights of these billions of people be protected? There is no easy answer to this question. Markets must be regulated, and the rights of workers fully protected. Public policies to protect economic human rights must be carefully delineated, with the input of all relevant professionals. This must include the expertise of professional economists, whose “neo-liberal” agenda may be based not on ideology, but on analysis of the failures of past communist, proto-socialist, and protectionist economies.

Burawoy’s easy dismissal of the discipline of economics does a disservice to the promotion and protection of human rights. One way for Burawoy to be a more self-critical sociologist would be to take seriously the reasoning of economists, rather than simply praising “Post-Autistic Economics” (Burawoy 2005a:24; for the origins of this term, see Hayes 2007). In order to promote and protect economic rights, sociologists must work with, not against, economists, and take seriously their theories about growth, market mechanisms, and economic decision-making. It is disciplinary arrogance to suggest that sociology “defends the interests of humanity” (Burawoy 2005a:24), as if philosophy, law, political science, and economics do not also do so.

POLICY SOCIOLOGY

There are many debates about human rights to which sociologists can contribute, by using their professional standards to research policy questions, by contributing to policy-based research, and by addressing the relevant publics.

Political sociologists and sociologists of law might consider whether economic rights should be justiciable; that is, whether citizens should have the right to sue their government, when it does not protect or provide their economic rights. Canadians, unlike Americans, enjoy universal state-supplied medical care, but the actual system is plagued by shortages, line-ups, and
decisions by provincial authorities to reduce coverage. The Supreme Court of Canada ruled in 2005 that since the Province of Quebec was unable to always provide public health care in a timely manner, thus endangering citizens’ rights under Canada’s 1982 Charter of Rights and Freedoms (section 7) to life, liberty, and security, the province was obliged to legalize private health care (Chaoulli v. Quebec 2005). Is it useful to rely on individual or class action suits to protect economic rights such as the right to health care, or should the level of protection always be left to political decision-makers? What is the effect on a democratic system, if courts have a strong say in allocation of scarce resources? This is a subject of much debate in Canada, some commentators arguing that the Canadian political landscape is too much dominated by Court decisions based on the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Morton and Knopff 2000).

Sociological theorists could also contribute to human rights policy. They might consider the relationship between minimum standards of wellbeing, as mandated by the international law of economic rights, and equality, both of opportunity and of outcomes. Commentators often confuse minimum standards with equality of access. Under what conditions, if any, is inequality of access so severe as to be degrading to an individual’s self-respect and dignity, even if, in a wealthy society, that individual enjoys minimum access to food, shelter, education, and health care? The term “human dignity” is the underpinning concept in the UDHR, which begins with the phrase, “Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.” Yet the meaning of human dignity is amorphous and undefined. Sociological theorists can provide useful input on the meaning of human dignity, based on empirical observations of what individuals value, and on their theories about the meanings individuals attribute to social life (Moore 1978).

The continued existence of degrading inequalities, even in the wealthy Western world, forces the sociologist to confront the relationship between capitalism and economic rights. Burawoy seems to believe that capitalism is the worst violator of economic rights, and that the spread of capitalist market relations to the rest of the world, in the process of globalization, will have more detrimental than positive effects. Yet in general, capitalist countries that are also democracies are the best protectors of economic rights. In part, this is because markets are never actually “free,” or completely unregulated, in the manner that some critics of capitalism suggest; they are always regulated to protect commerce and trade. To protect the entire range of human rights, though, markets must also be regulated to ensure that citizens will have access to their economic rights. The goal is social democracy, not a completely free market economy, yet there is little information available about how, if at all, poor countries can institute so-
cial democracy (Sandbrook et al. 2007). Instead of indulging in outmoded proclamations that Marxism is a good alternative to capitalism, sociologists could investigate the conditions under which economic growth is coupled with economic rights.

Yet this is a perspective that many left-wing sociologists reject, preferring to blame “the West” for all the economic ills of the underdeveloped world. Sociologists adhering to the development-of-underdevelopment perspective might wish to know whether international human rights law mandates any obligations by Western states to aid less developed countries. In 1986 the UN General Assembly (UNGA) passed a Declaration on the Right to Development, article 3 (3), of which notes that “States have the duty to cooperate with each other in ensuring development and eliminating obstacles to development” (Brownlie and Goodwin-Gill:86). “Duty” is a strong word, implying that development assistance is not a choice, to be bestowed or withdrawn by wealthy states as they wish, but rather a positive obligation. Nevertheless, at present there is no serious legal obligation, even in “soft” (non-enforceable) international law, for states to assist each other’s development. In order to discuss whether there should be such an enforceable law, sociologists of development should first consider the vast literature which focuses on internal, not external, causes of poverty, especially causes rooted in corruption, poor governance, and lack of democracy and the rule of law (Easterly 2006).

The relationship between economic and civil/political rights is a very serious policy question, which could interest political sociologists and sociological theorists. Some critics argue that the stress on civil/political rights in much of the earlier advocacy for human rights, for example by Amnesty International, was mere Western bias. Yet without democracy; the rule of law; freedom of speech, association, and assembly; and protection from torture, citizens are mere subjects, possibly enjoying the substance of economic rights should their rulers so decide, but unable to enforce their rights. Governments make many mistakes when they try to organize economies, and some governing elites run entire national economies in their own private interests. The rights to freedom of speech, press, and association allow critics of governments to speak out and correct these policies.

Burawoy (2005b:157–158) correctly stresses the importance of trade union rights, a focus for sociologists of labor. Trade unions are the most reliable route by which workers can express their needs and interests. However, it is also very important to develop the institutional capacity of less developed states, and to end elite corruption. In this respect, Buroway’s easy dismissal (2005a:7) of “neoinstitutionalists” who spread what he calls “American” institutional forms does a disservice to underdeveloped countries. In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, lack of institutional capacity is a major stumbling block to reform, even in countries that have adopted
democracy. If Burawoy were less centered on the United States, he might consider the variety of institutional forms that can promote democracy, the rule of law, and human rights. The United States, with its unusual provisos such as popular elections of judges, presidential vetoes over the will of Congress, and appointment of non-elected individuals to the Cabinet, is not institutionalists’ only model.

Critical sociologists often object to the power of multinational corporations (MNCs), whom they rightly see as agents of globalization. Yet they have a hard task ahead of them, if they are interested in formulating serious public policies for underdeveloped countries, rather than merely denouncing MNCs’ very existence. There is no “hard” international human rights law regulating the conduct of MNCs, although there is a developing normative law, in part based on the many voluntary codes of conduct for corporations that have emerged over the last 30 years (Steinhardt 2005:177–226).

Supplementing these voluntary codes, in 1988 the International Labor Organization (ILO) issued a modest Declaration of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work: these rights include freedom of association, the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining, the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labor, the effective abolition of child labor, and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment (Brownlie and Goodwin-Gill 2006:571). In 1999 the UN formulated a Global Compact, to which corporations could voluntarily adhere. Businesses were asked to agree that they would respect international human rights, and “make sure that they are not complicit in human rights abuses.” They were also asked to uphold the ILO Fundamental Principles (UN 2005). In 2003, the UN Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights drafted some “Norms on the Responsibilities of Transnational Corporations and Other Business Enterprises with Regard to Human Rights” (Brownlie and Goodwin-Gill 2006:268–274). These principles and norms provide policy guidelines to which sociologists can refer.

So far, radical sociologists and sociologists of underdevelopment might find that the principles of economic rights support their analyses. But modernization theory, roughly called, has not disappeared from the world development agenda, even if Burawoy is correct that it has been superseded in our discipline by the sociology of underdevelopment. One aspect of modernization is protection of the right to own property. This is a much contested right, so much so that it was included in the UDHR Article 17 (1) (Brownlie and Goodwin-Gill 2006:26), yet disappeared from the ICCPR and the ICESCR.

The principle of private property is generally anathema to the political left, which associates it with the power of MNCs. Yet many relatively powerless people need protection of their private property. The powerless include indigenous peoples, who need their collective property protected;
peasants, who need their right to land protected from state, military, or private capitalist expropriation; women, who need their rights to use land and sell their own products protected from male family and village elites; and ethnic minorities, who are often targets for expropriation, as scapegoats for economic chaos. The right to private property is also fundamental to successful economic development. Without property to use as collateral, entrepreneurs cannot borrow funds for investment. Entrepreneurial freedom, combined with secure property rights, is one of the bases of Canadian and American prosperity, and is increasingly recognized to be the basis of prosperity in less developed regions. Even the poorest owners need legal guarantees of their right to property in shacks, vehicles, and small businesses (De Soto 2000). Here again, radical sociologists might do well to cast aside their ideological blinkers, and reconsider whether Marx was correct in his condemnation of private property.

Another preoccupation of those who make development policy is world inequality. Burawoy (2005a:4) states confidently that “Unfettered capitalism fuels . . . untold inequities on a global scale.” Here, Burawoy might do well to check economists’ evidence, rather than dismiss the entire discipline. Bhagwati argues that the common belief that world inequality is increasing is based on one 2001 study by the World Bank, which found that “a small increase in inequality had occurred between the late 1980s and the early 1990s—an astonishingly small period to work with” (Bhagwati 2004:67). Other studies, according to Bhagwati, show that “global inequality declined substantially during the last two decades” (Bhagwati 2004:67). Moreover, some economists believe that even if world inequality is increasing, the rate of absolute poverty in some countries, such as China and Vietnam, is decreasing (Wells-Dang 2002:180). The relationship among globalization, foreign investment, domestic economic policy, economic growth, inequality, and poverty reduction is extremely complex, and cannot be reduced to blanket formulas by sociologists about paths to social justice.

In any case, there is no human right to equality in material conditions or wealth; rather, the rights are to basic material minima. Even if one argues that world inequality is a proxy measure of the inability of some nations to provide the economic rights of their citizens, one is treading on dangerous empirical ground. Moreover, the right to absolute equality of condition is a Marxist, if not a Stalinist, ideal. Ideological adherence to this ideal by Marxist sociologists may fetter their understanding of the development process; indeed, when imposed in practice, as in the Soviet Union, Cambodia, or Cuba, this ideal results in de-development, along with extreme violations of civil and political rights. The professional research skills so central to all types of sociology should be used to inquire if absolute material equality is indeed the best path to economic rights, without prior assumption that it is.
Finally, some sociologists might be interested in human rights monitoring policy. The U.S. Department of State produces annual reports on the human rights performance of every country in the world (except itself); the U.S. government conditions its foreign aid partially on whether recipients are good human rights performers. Sociologists, with their sophisticated quantitative and surveying skills, are well placed to act as policy advisers to the U.S. government in this endeavor. But activist sociologists, sensitive to perceptions of hypocrisy among non-Western publics, might also wish to suggest that the U.S. government monitor its own human rights performance, to check how American economic policy, trade, consumer preferences, or tourism might contribute to human rights abuses elsewhere. It is a salutary exercise, for example, to read the counter-report on human rights in the United States, produced periodically by the Government of China (China 2007). The United States, Canada, and all other Western states that link foreign policy or aid to human rights, should be subject to human rights scrutiny by scholars from other societies. American sociologists could assist scholars from other countries to engage in such a project, by sharing their methodological skills.

**PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY**

Burawoy (2005a:20) notes that American sociologists tend to assume that theirs is a universal sociology, and that it would be wise, instead, to view it as provincial. McLaughlin, Kowalchuck, and Turcotte, all Canadian scholars, agree with him and point out how Canadian—and other—national groups of sociologists differ from American (McLaughlin, Kowalchuck, and Turcotte 2005:147). Nevertheless, from the point of view of human rights, it is worthwhile to focus on the American public. Americans do not know their rights under international law: they are especially ignorant of the principle of economic rights. Yet indicators of economic rights in the United States are usually much worse than those of other Western countries, with Canada closer to the lower U.S. end than to its Western European counterparts, for example with regard to public social expenditure as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development 2007:193).

Some obvious differences between the United States and Canada are that the United States lacks universal health care, with 46.6 million people without health insurance as of 2005 (U.S. Census Bureau 2006:22); and that the United States lacks a policy of universal paid parental leave. U.S. labor law also provides much poorer protection for workers than does Canadian (Atleson 2006:137–148). The differences between the United States and other Western countries regarding economic rights are in part caused
by the strong racial divide in the United States. They are also caused by the absence of a social democratic or communist presence in the United States, these two political tendencies having endured severe political repression throughout U.S. history (Goldstein 1987:430–436).

The United States has ratified the ICCPR. The only other international human rights treaties it has ratified are the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD); and the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Weissbrodt 2006:45). It has also ratified, but not entered into force, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (UN 2007). Of particular importance, regarding Burawoy’s Marxist critique of market economies, is the United States’ failure to ratify the ICSECR, although it signed it in 1977.

Burawoy (2005a:7) speaks of there being many different types of publics, in whose service public sociologists might act. One public in dire need of information about international human rights is African Americans. Knowledge both of the international laws that the United States has ratified, and of the many laws it has not, might assist African Americans to mobilize in defense of their rights. Affected as they are by a racially differentiated regime of capital punishment, African Americans might like to know that the consensus of international law is moving toward capital punishment’s abolition; for example, the International Criminal Court cannot impose capital punishment. African Americans might also be interested to know that the CERD (Article 1, 4) permits special measures such as affirmative action, as long as such measures are “not . . . continued after the objectives for which they were taken have been achieved.” CERD (Article 4, a and b) also outlaws hate speech and organizations that promote racial hatred, both permitted under U.S. freedom of speech laws (Brownlie and Goodwin-Gill 2006:338, 339).

African Americans might also be interested in their right to the highest attainable standard of health care. In 2005, 19.6 percent of African Americans were without health insurance (U.S. Census Bureau 2006:21). They might like to know—as, for that matter, might all other Americans—that the UDHR (Article 25, 3) mandates special attention to motherhood and childhood (Brownlie and Goodwin-Gill 2006:27). African Americans, and all other Americans, might also like to know that they have a right to decent housing, to social security, and to work; in short, to those rights that President Roosevelt advocated in his 1944 State of the Union Address.

Such rights are not mere statements of principle: they are often mobilizing tools. While the Marxism that Burawoy professes has little resonance in the United States, universal principles of human dignity and human rights, if made known to the American public, might have far more. But discussion
of international human rights in the United States, with its various pub-
lies, would undoubtedly stir up controversy. Burawoy assumes that public
sociology would be consensual, stating “with public sociology knowledge
is based on consensus between sociologists and their publics” (2005a:16);
thus, there would be no disagreement between public sociologists and the
various publics they serve. Here, he appears to confuse policy and public
sociology. Whether the sociologists in question favor the political right or
the political left, if they assume at the outset that they will have no disagree-
ments with their clients or their publics, they are not doing their jobs as
disinterested professional scholars.

Public stakeholders in sociological research may have different interests
than professional sociologists, and adhere to different analyses of the same
problems, and the former may not like what the latter, as professional
scholars, have to say. In such a case, the sociologist who constrains herself
from stating her own viewpoint, if it differs from that of the stakeholder,
is acting as a policy sociologist, not a public one. Burawoy’s conflation of
Marxist, public, and consensual sociology is a recipe for self-censorship.
Indeed, he seems to recognize this danger himself, noting that “Public so-
ciology . . . can be held hostage to outside forces. In pursuit of popularity
public sociology is tempted to pander to and flatter its publics” (Burawoy
2005a:17).

**SOCIOLIGISTS AND INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS**

As I noted above, the United States is a world human rights outlaw. As
Burawoy (2005b:158) states, moreover, the United States uses human
rights rhetoric as a cover for its imperialist interests. The hypocritical use
of human rights language by various American administrations should
not, however, deter sociologists from learning about, and using, interna-
tional human rights law. This law exists independent of the United States.
Members of civil society all over the world refer to it as their law, one that
protects their interests.

Sociologists ought to engage in the analysis, promotion, and protection
of universal human rights. These international principles provide much
room for theoretical, empirical, and socially engaged research. Moreover,
the current preoccupations of human rights researchers intersect nicely with
many sociologists’ interests. Economic rights are a central concern, as are
the emerging human rights obligations of private enterprises. The relation-
ship between market economies, democracy, and human rights is still not
completely understood. The rights of socially marginal groups, especially
children, the disabled, and homosexuals, are still not fully developed or
protected. Social psychologists and theorists can also address the more fun-
damental questions underlying all inquiry about human rights; how and why do people do each other good rather than harm; what are the limits of each individual’s sense of community and obligation; is there any way that public policy can promote altruism (Jeffries 2005)?

Universal human rights provide a standard to which sociologists in pursuit of a better world can adhere. They permit sociologists to use their professional tools as a basis for policy advice, and for engagement with the public. Reflection not only about why universal human rights are not protected, but also about what ought to be human rights, and what it means to be human, is fodder for the critical sociologist.

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This chapter focuses on the intersection of altruism, apology, forgiveness, and reconciliation and its relationship with public sociology. Reconciliation is the ending of conflict or renewing of a friendly relationship between disputing people or groups. Altruism is a voluntary act for which the helper/altruist does not expect any external reward. I divide altruism into two types: heroic altruism, which is voluntary and involves high risk to the helper, and conventional altruism, which is voluntary but does not involve high risk to the helper. For the purposes of this chapter I will be focusing on how conventional altruism, an independent variable, is positively associated with intergroup and interpersonal apology, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Individuals and groups who are hurt carry with them a burden, and often a desire for retribution. The positive outcomes from apology, forgiveness, and reconciliation can quell the desire for vengeance. Such outcomes should become an important component for public sociologists to advocate. Communities need to witness the potential benefits of reconciliation, which public sociologists can facilitate by stimulating a dialogic relationship with the public.

Despite considerable research on interpersonal forgiveness, as well as recent interest by psychologists in the subject of intergroup forgiveness, sociologists have not been active in studying this topic and the relationship between altruism, apology, and reconciliation. The potential of sociological perspective here is particularly important in terms of the developing study of intergroup apology and forgiveness. Many scholars, such as Enright (1998), Schimmel (2002), Tavuchis (1991), Post (2007), Ornish (1998), Smedes (1996), Koenig (2001), Worthington (1998), Luskin (2001), and
Lazare (2004), have pointed out the relevance of altruism, love, apology, and forgiveness for improving and stabilizing fractured human relations.

The connection between altruism, apology, forgiveness, and reconciliation helps explain why offended groups and individuals would want to forgive those that have hurt them. Genuine forgiveness is the willingness to abandon resentment, negative judgment, and indifferent behavior toward one who has unjustly injured others, while fostering the qualities of compassion, generosity, and even love toward the offender (Enright 1998). Altruistic behavior is a primary independent variable in the apology, forgiveness, and reconciliation process. In order to see the error of destructive acts such as genocide or slavery from the wrongdoer’s perspective one must take the role of the other and act in an unselfish, compassionate manner. If there is confidence in academic research on apology and forgiveness that helps heal society, then the role of public sociologists should be to disseminate important findings and relevance from which social relations can benefit.

The following scholars have contributed to the understanding of altruism, apology, forgiveness, and reconciliation: McCullough, Worthington, and Rachal (1997); Bazemore (1998) [restorative justice]; Sullivan and Tifft (2001); Galaway and Hudson (1996) [alternative dispute resolution]; Hauss 2003 [apology and forgiveness]; Bloomfield, Barnes, and Huyse (2003) [reconciliation]; Hewstone et al. (2006) [intergroup forgiveness]; Allport (1954) [co-operation between conflicting groups, problem solving]; Kohlberg (1984) [moral development]; Post (2007); Sorokin (1954) [philosophy and sociology of love, altruism, and compassion]; and finally Tavuchis (1991) [the importance of different types of apology]. Public sociology can significantly contribute to this study by integrating these perspectives into a comprehensive model for dialogic purposes.

PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY

Michael Burawoy, 2004 ASA president, defines public sociology as “bringing sociology into a conversation with publics, understood as people who are themselves involved in conversation” (2005:7). The concept of public sociology has brought with it a debate about both the role of sociology and of the sociologist within society. Does social science need to stay confined to the university? Burawoy invited all sociologists to be involved dialogically with the public in his presidential address. The discourse over public sociology is growing and there are several promising avenues for the field. It would be productive to make the public aware of the positive outcomes of current research about intergroup apology, forgiveness, and reconciliation through what Burawoy calls “organic public sociology.” This implies active participation on the part of the sociologist to help resolve social problems
for the welfare of society. The traditional public sociologist, on the other hand, is not actively and directly involved in the participation of the resolving of social issues.

Practicing public sociology is the use of research for the solution of practical problems via the dissemination of knowledge, and through hands-on, direct interaction with the public. This audience includes not only the general public, but also the media and other academics as well. Burawoy recalls some academics in sociology that make a “vehicle” of their research for the public domain’s discussion, researchers who instigate debates between publics. The sociologist therefore has an active involvement within academia and beyond the “ivory tower.”

Burawoy (2004), states that “Academics are living in a fool’s paradise, if they think they can hold on to their ivory tower, fashioned for another era, another world.” He continues, saying that “for too long, far too many of us have been hiding under the blanket of academic freedom and university autonomy—all in the name of truth” (1). At this point, the public is not interested in subsidizing the kinds of academic pursuits outlined by Burawoy because they perceive them as having little significance in their everyday lives, and research simply collects dust on shelves. If the public were to see the potential of apology individually and at the group level, perhaps more interest could fuel this area of research into including it on a national and international agenda.

Through the inclusion of the process of apology and forgiveness within school curricula, the media, business training, public relations, and non-government organizations, the educational importance and emphasis of reconciliation may be reproduced for future generations including students, employees, clients, and the general public. This is a marriage between the different sociological practices Burawoy bases his ideas upon: public, professional, critical, and policy sociology. Balancing the justified norms of professional sociology with the effectiveness of policy sociology along with the relevance inherent in public sociology and the moral vision of critical sociology, we can see how to merge these four distinct types of sociological knowledge into a useful model to implement apology, forgiveness, and reconciliation at a greater scale. Working together, the four types of sociology discussed below are the foundational basis for the sociological study of apology and forgiveness and could lead to a more caring society.

*Professional sociology* is concerned mainly with the quantitative and qualitative evidence gathered about apology and reconciliation. The advantages, successes, and applicability toward society coincide with the expectations of social scientists who primarily judge validity upon the methodical process of hypotheses and conclusion. There is evidence that where apology, forgiveness, and reconciliation have taken place, better relations are evident
between parties. Over 90 percent of our sample (Oliner and Zylicz 2008) found apology to be necessary for their well-being.

Policy sociology then is the implementation of the professional findings. With enough substantiated evidence, governments, schools, and businesses may incorporate the usefulness of apology and forgiveness in pro-social education and training into their organizations.

Critical Sociology provides the moral vision to demonstrate the usefulness of apology and forgiveness on a grand scale. Vincent Jeffries (2005) sees a relationship between Burawoy’s four forms of public sociology and Sorokin’s system of integral sociology. “Because his integral sociology is systemic and comprehensive it makes major contributions to each of the interdependent forms of sociology delineated by Burawoy” (84).

The four models in public sociology have a systemic connection that should not be overlooked; the strength of the models working together provides a context in which sociologists may use their knowledge and research comprehensively.

**ALTRUISM, RELIGION/SPirituality, AND EMPATHY: ATTRIBUTES OF APOLOGY AND FORGIVENESS**

Important variables for the healing of pain for groups and individuals are empathy, spirituality/religiosity, and love. The intersection of the above components creates a fertile environment and is associated with the apology, forgiveness, and reconciliation process. Acting altruistically out of a sense of empathy for another can lead a person or group to become aware of wrongdoing to others. Scholars maintain that altruism, apology, and forgiveness are an essential part of the survival of society.

In a recent book edited by Stephen Post (2007), the researchers noted a strong positive correlation between altruistic behavior and both physical and mental health. For this chapter we administered the altruism scale developed by Rushton, Chrisjohn, and Fekken (1981). Of the total sample of 519, the U.S. respondents scored 87 percent, and the Polish respondents 91 percent. Altruistic behavior is found in most cultures and belief systems and works to create a more just, friendly, and caring world, while contributing to social solidarity.

Sorokin (1954), Post (2007), Koenig (2002), McCullough, Pargament, and Thoresen (2000), and Ornish (1998) all express in different ways that altruism and love are life-giving forces. It has been well established that when genuine processes such as love, compassion, and empathy are a part of apology, they lead to forgiveness (Worthington 1998). This process then leads to unloading burdens and feelings of hurt both for the harmed and the harm-doer, which ultimately may lead to reconciliation and the recog-
ition of the humanity in the offender. It is a powerful emotional release and a clear acceptance of compassion. If the apology is genuine, it helps to extinguish the rage and need for revenge, as well as helping to end the cycle of violence.

Oliner and Oliner (1988) found that people who exhibited altruistic behavior during the rescue of Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe were fundamentally empathic; they felt others’ pain. Generally altruists tend to come from loving homes who witnessed caring by role models. During their upbringing, instead of being physically disciplined, they were spoken to about right and wrong by their family. Rescuers of Jews in Nazi occupied Europe were generally attached in a healthy, emotional, and psychological way to their families. They internalized the ethics of justice and compassion for others, as well as a universal sense of spirituality, which is tolerant of other faiths and moral traditions. Our research (Oliner and Zylicz 2008) concludes that there is a positive association between altruism and spirituality/religiosity. On religiosity/spirituality, the U.S. respondents scored 89 percent, and the Polish sample scored 81 percent. Those individuals who exhibit altruistic traits show the power and necessity of apology and forgiveness as the means to restoring broken relationships.

Apology

Nicholas Tavuchis, in his book (1991), maintains that apology has four different configurations. The first is interpersonal apology from one individual to another or ONE-TO-ONE; for example, a father apologizing to a daughter for sexual abuse. A second configuration is apology from an individual to a collectivity, or ONE-TO-MANY; for example, a Klansman apologizing to African Americans for racism and violence. The third is an apology from a group to an individual, or MANY-TO-ONE, such as when people stood by as Kitty Genovese was murdered in Queens, New York, and then later, community leaders apologized to Kitty’s family. The fourth configuration of apology is from one group to another, or MANY-TO-MANY; for example, a nation represented by leaders, such as Germany, apologized to the world for committing genocide. More recently several U.S. states, including Virginia, have apologized to African Americans for slavery. There are some important similarities between interpersonal and intergroup apologies. In the case of interpersonal apology it implies that an individual who has harmed another genuinely apologizes and asks for forgiveness. While in the case of a group or nation harming another group or nation, the leaders of the harming group publicly apologize to the group that they have harmed historically or contemporaneously and ask for forgiveness. The desire for healing and reconciliation is shown in both cases.
Apology reflects an interest and a capability on the part of the offender to show respect and rehumanize the other. The ability to apologize shows that the victimizer cares about the feelings of others, and is an indication of empathy. By apologizing, one disarms the other person or group and they no longer perceive the harm-doer as a threat.

When the moral order has been ruptured or when values and norms have been violated within families or communities, survival is threatened. Human survival is based upon the need for group interaction and solidarity; forgiveness, apologies, and social norms serve to facilitate the maintenance and integrity of these groups (Gold and Davis 2005). Through genuine apology and forgiveness, harmony may be restored.

**Intergroup Apology**

Effective apology and forgiveness, then, requires that we recognize the existence of a problem and its seriousness. It is only then that those who were harmed may abandon vengeance and even begin to empathize with the victimizer. This central aspect of forgiveness aims to mend and renew relations that are otherwise fractured. Over the last 30 years there have been at least two dozen “truth-telling” commissions established in various parts of the world, including Africa, Latin America, and Eastern Europe. One aspect of these truth commissions is simply to tell the truth about what happened, in order to help heal the victim. In East Germany for example the Stasi (secret police) files showed how they had oppressed people.

Intergroup apology is an important component of this new understanding of forgiveness and reconciliation, which is responsible for the substantial number of political, religious, and other group leaders who apologize to those they have harmed historically or recently.

In our research (Oliner and Zylicz 2008), we found that approximately 87 percent of our sample felt that apology played an important role in healing the respondents’ pain as well as both individuals and groups. One respondent said: “An apology may soften the heart of the offending party. This opens up further conversation which leads to better understanding between the two parties and may lead to mutual forgiveness” (Respondent 105).

**Interpersonal Apology**

Interpersonal apology most often takes place between individuals in close relationships; however it can also take place between strangers and it is possible to forgive without receiving apology. An example of interpersonal forgiveness without apology is that of Eva Moses Kor, a survivor of Auschwitz and the experiments of Joseph Mengele. She has since forgiven Mengele for his torturous experiments on her and her twin sister in the documentary
“Forgiving Dr. Mengele.” For Eva Moses Kor, forgiving Mengele is a way of healing her pain. It appears that there is a need for apology throughout the world. People harm and offend one another every day, which causes them to feel alienated. People carry burdens of shame as they hold on to resentments from being offended and guilt from offending others. Some hurts may cause us to consider vengeance, even against the ones we love. This is frequently found with couples. The harmony of the relationship is broken, and there is recrimination. Marriage counselors find it important to open the process of taking responsibility for actions and beginning the process of apology as a means of reconciling between partners. Fincham, Stanley, and Beach (2007) maintain that forgiveness is a transformative process that leads to positive motivation and transaction between marital partners.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is an essential step toward reconciliation and mending a relationship. The importance of forgiveness cannot be underestimated, and, indeed, a body of work has grown up around the concept.

The teachings of all world religions are filled with persuasive suggestions that apology and forgiveness lead to both emotional and spiritual growth, healing, and peace. Many argue that they ought to be implemented in our educational systems because scientific evidence indicates that it does make a difference in people’s lives (Koenig 2001, 2002; Worthington 1998; Smedes 1996), helping to reconcile transgressors or evildoers with those who have been victimized. We should perhaps take encouragement from the wide spectrum of research being conducted into the benefits of the forgiveness process in both interpersonal and intergroup relations. These studies are being conducted in evolutionary biology, and neuroscience, and are beginning to appear in social sciences.

Some victims have found a great burden lifted from them when the forgiveness process begins. For instance Sidney Finkel (a friend of the author), a Holocaust survivor who went through hell in various concentration and extermination camps, has since forgiven the Nazis for the trauma he experienced. Speaking of his forgiveness he stated, “I began the unthinkable process of forgiving the German people and it has released me.” Kim Phuc, the young girl portrayed nude running away from a napalm attack, in the famous photo taken during the Vietnam War, has since forgiven those responsible for her pain and lasting scars from the war. “I forgave the men who coordinated the bombing of Trang Bang. Now my mission is to spread the message of love, hope, and forgiveness because it is not easy to deal with this sort of pain.” Another example are the survivors of the My Lai massacre in 1968 during the Vietnam War, who have recently forgiven the perpetrators of the massacre.
It is particularly crucial that a perpetrator acknowledges the truth and is willing to apologize when a relationship has been damaged. Bishop Desmond Tutu (1999) notes that many white South Africans tried to find refuge in claims of ignorance as to the horrors of apartheid. It is clear, however, that such claims are more the result of not having the strength to acknowledge what happened. “Acknowledgement of the truth and of having wronged someone is important in getting to the root of the breach” (270).

Forgiveness is eminently practical, as provided by Nelson Mandela’s implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in post-apartheid South Africa. The first step to forgiveness is speaking honestly about what has happened and taking responsibility for doing wrong. Forgiveness requires honesty about the victimizer, and it weighs future possibilities if one forgives or remains angry.

Forgiveness involves an attempt to understand the perpetrator and having empathy—standing in their shoes and appreciating the pressures and influences that might have conditioned them. Once again we find the wisdom of Desmond Tutu (1999) instructional on this matter: “Forgiving means abandoning your right to pay back the perpetrator in his own coin” (272). In an act of forgiveness people are declaring faith in the future of a relationship, and the capacity of the wrongdoer to make a new beginning from the course that he or she was on which caused the harm.

Reconciliation

Reconciliation has many meanings. Though most authors agree that it is a process intended to end animosity between parties in conflict, essentially it is the cessation of violence and polarization. Reconciliation implies a restoration of conditions prior to the rupture in a relationship.

When a rupture occurs on an interpersonal level, the consequences generally entail material or psychological loss and a feeling of betrayal, victimization, and loss of trust. The needs of the victim and offender often can be resolved in a process with positive consequences for both.

On an intergroup level, the ideas and concepts are similar. In contentious historical relationships between groups, the ultimate goal of the apology and forgiveness process is reconciliation. If a group apologizes and the victim or offended group does not forgive, the process is one-sided and ineffective. No successful reconciliation can take place on that basis.

Reconciliation is a slow process and cannot be dictated, although some governments, and lately even international NGOs, feel they can introduce the processes of reconciliation. The Rwandan government has established community courts titled Gacaca, whose mission is to listen to perpetrators from the massacre of the Tutsi and judge whether reconciliation between victim and offender is possible. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) process in South Africa was instituted by the government. The people
came before the commissions and told the truth about their suffering, allowing aggrieved people to start the process of understanding and forgiveness and perpetrators to take responsibility for their actions. However, sometimes reconciliation introduced from the top down may be resented by the victims as a smoke screen that prevents real healing.

Bloomfield, Barnes, and Huyse (2003) claim that there are four main ingredients to the reconciliation process. Healing the wounds of survivors is a central need of the victimized group (1); as is justice (2), either “restorative” or “retributive.” Restorative justice is a broad term, which encompasses a growing social movement to institutionalize peaceful approaches to harm, problem solving, and violations of legal and human rights, while retributive justice maintains that proportionate punishment is a morally acceptable response to crime. Although retributive justice often plays a part in the reconciliation process, restorative justice embodies the concepts necessary to repair a broken relationship (McNamara and Dhami 2003). Another key ingredient is the historical truth-telling commissions and airing of grievances (3). Finally, compensation for physical and psychological damages inflicted upon the victims is made (4).

EXAMPLES OF APOLOGY, FORGIVENESS, AND RECONCILIATION

Research into intergroup forgiveness is in its nascent stage and there is evidence of positive outcomes in some countries where apology and forgiveness have been manifested. While there is a significant amount of scientific knowledge about interpersonal apology and forgiveness, intergroup apology is an important and relatively open field for sociologists to study. Several governments and communities have undertaken the intergroup apology and reconciliation process in the recent past: The U.S. government apologized in 1997 to African Americans for the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa implemented a program of healing after apartheid in 1995. In 1993 the U.S. government apologized for overthrowing the Kingdom of Hawaii in the nineteenth century and George H. W. Bush apologized to Japanese Americans for their treatment during World War II (internment camps). Lech Walesa, the first president of post-Communist Poland, apologized in Israel before the Knesset (parliament) for Polish anti-Semitism.

Mutual Apologies between Ukraine and Poland

A recent example that exhibited positive outcomes of mutual apology is the case of Poland and Ukraine: In 2003 Ukraine and Poland commemorated the sixtieth anniversary of the massacre of Poles and Ukrainians by
their respective rightist underground armies in the region of Volhynia in South Eastern Poland. Historically, that region, now incorporated into Ukraine, had been a part of Poland, even though ethnic Poles were a minority there. For generations, Ukrainians blamed Polish expansionism and imperialism for the oppression of their people and felt that they were relegated to second-class citizenship.

The massacres took place over the years 1941–1944, during the Nazi occupation. The Ukrainian motivation was to drive out the Polish citizens from that area. The Ukrainian underground (known as the Ukrainian Insurgent Army or UPA) killed between 50,000 and 60,000 Polish men, women, and children. Estimates vary, and Poles claim a much higher figure. The actual numbers may never be known. Retaliating for these killings, the Polish Underground Army (known as the Armija Krajowa or AK) took part in the slaughter of approximately 15,000–17,000 ethnic Ukrainians. Toward the end of the war, another tragedy occurred. In March 1945, in retaliation for Ukrainian massacre of Poles, a detachment of Polish anti-Nazi guerrillas killed hundreds of Ukrainian inhabitants of Pawlokoma. The Ukrainians were herded into a local Greek Catholic church, interrogated and tortured, and then executed in a local cemetery.

The sixtieth anniversary of the events at Volhynia was a turning point in the relations between the two countries. Former president Kwasniewski of Poland and President Kuchma of Ukraine, encouraged by Pope John Paul II and with the approval of their respective parliaments, met in the region where the tragedies took place to commemorate them and offer apologies to one another, hoping to lay the groundwork for reconciliation. Both presidents admitted that their people had committed unspeakable crimes against the other.

Relations between Ukraine and Poland have greatly improved. Travel between the countries is easier, and tourism is increasing. Cultural exchange is taking place, including festivals celebrating each other’s cultures, and there is increased cross-border commerce and education. This is a good sign that the seeds of reconciliation have taken root. In most recent polls, mutual trust and good feelings between the peoples of the two countries have developed significantly over the past several years (CBOS 2005).

**CONNECTION TO PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY**

In concert with the current revival of some of the practical spirit of those pioneers in American sociology who felt that studying a problem was the prelude to solving it, social theory and research can and should be applied directly to the problems of our world. The idea of “public sociology” (Burawoy 2005) is particularly appropriate, considering that the problems
societies face are complex and the consequences of not solving them are severe. It is possible to materially improve the world by inculcating and disseminating the practice of true apology and forgiveness, and building processes that allow for reconciliation and restorative justice. There is evidence that healing of past hurts is possible. The key to this healing lies in the human capacity for empathy, or taking the role of the other. Altruistic behavior and genuine apology are the basis for forgiveness. If we have confidence in social research outcomes which can help to heal society, then the role of public sociology should be to publicize the important findings and relevance from which society can benefit in less jargonized language that the general public and policy makers will understand.

How do we disseminate the positive outcomes of forgiveness and reconciliation directly to the public? There are several promising avenues suggested by sociologists. William J. Wilson states,

If the goal is to engage the public in sociological dialogue through the media, my experiences suggest the following principles: First, focus on issues of national concern, issues that are high on the public agenda. Second, develop creative and thoughtful arguments that are clearly presented and devoid of technical language and academic jargon. And, third present the big picture whereby arguments are organized and presented so that readers can see how the various parts are interrelated. (1998:438)

Wilson outlines media venues that are important to access, such as press releases and Op-Ed articles. Other venues such as talk shows, relevant bloggers, TV programs, and documentaries are useful as well. Utilizing the “Participatory Action Research” (1999) of Ernest Stringer, sociology can become reflexive and the researcher can become a facilitator in the collaborative process for social change. The collaborative aspect of participatory action research is to inform and empower the collective group in order for social change to take place. If the world community is empowered by the process of forgiveness and reconciliation through social research, perhaps intergroup forgiveness could gain more progress to help establish a more empathetic society.

Through a public dialogue between professionals, communities, and academics, it can be presupposed that a clearer understanding of the healthful and relational benefits of altruistic apology and forgiveness will create an interest among the general public. With a clearer understanding of apology and reconciliation, and its benefits, there will be more engagement in practicing it. The apology process can then be included by various groups that are concerned with physical and mental health; a mind and heart unburdened by guilt, pain, regret, resentment, and stress may enjoy the benefits of a longer, more healthy and peaceful life.
Sample

The data for this chapter consists of three sources: (1) the published literature on altruism, apology, and forgiveness in the healing of past transgressions; (2) data from a published article (Oliner 2005) that supplements our findings; and (3) a non-random sample of 519 drawn from 435 respondents in the United States and 84 from Poland (Oliner and Zylicz 2008). The same open-ended questionnaire and scales were used in both countries and in their respective languages. We were interested in respondent’s attitudes and their behavior regarding altruism, spirituality/religiosity, apology, forgiveness, reconciliation and specifically if the respondents hurt someone, apologized, and asked for forgiveness. The narratives from this sample help shed light on the association between altruism, apology, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

We asked respondents: “How important is apology?” Ninety-four percent of the U.S sample and 90 percent of the Polish sample responded apology is important (Oliner and Zylicz 2008). The following represents typical statements from our respondents. “People will not be able to live in nurturing, sustaining, and trusting relationships without an avenue for apology and forgiveness” (Respondent 207). Responding to the question of “How is reconciliation possible between conflicting groups?” A respondent stated: “Apology is crucial between groups and individuals. [It] is demonstrated that attitude change and broken relations can repair” (R 112). Another said: “I think it is the one thing that fosters a good relationship and it is the healing ointment that can mend wounded relationships. It is the antidote to division” (R 63).

To the question “What effects do forgiveness have on fractured human relations?” 70 percent of the U.S. sample and 86 percent of the Polish sample answered that forgiving has positive effects. A respondent said: “When I forgive someone who hurt me this helps to free me from pain” (R 101). Another respondent said, “People who apologize and truly want reconciliation should be forgiven by those they have hurt, be it a person or group” (R 97).

To support the findings for this chapter that correlate apology, forgiveness, and reconciliation, a sample of 194 from a previous study (Oliner 2005) was used to find the statistical significance of correlates reported in the table below. This data is used to give a better understanding of the concepts presented in this chapter. Scales were administered to respondents to find and compare variables. These are: mean altruism with mean forgiveness scores, the importance of apology with mean forgiveness, the importance of apology with mean daily spiritual experience, and mean for-
Altruism, Apology, Forgiveness, and Reconciliation as Public Sociology

Table 21.1. Significant Correlations

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Correlation</th>
<th>Significance</th>
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<tr>
<td>Importance of apology—mean forgiveness</td>
<td>.380</td>
<td>&lt;.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean forgiveness—mean agape</td>
<td>.169</td>
<td>.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of apology—mean DSE</td>
<td>.218</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean forgiveness—mean restorative justice</td>
<td>.298</td>
<td>&lt;.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean agape—mean restorative justice</td>
<td>.290</td>
<td>&lt;.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean altruism—mean forgiveness</td>
<td>.334</td>
<td>.013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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giveness with mean restorative justice. We found that all these correlations were statistically significant below the .05 level; some of the correlations were strong (below the .02 level) (see table 21.1).

**CONCLUSION**

A study with a larger random sample would be helpful to test our results. Nevertheless, the findings indicate positive associations between altruism, apology, forgiveness, and the likelihood of reconciliation. The Polish and American samples were homogeneous enough to be compared. The open-ended questionnaires translated into Polish were the same in each case and applied to similar sample populations. Altruism was found to be positively associated with forgiveness, restorative justice, love, and apology. Future research should focus on the outcomes where apologies and forgiveness have succeeded, but also where they have failed and why. In some cultures where apology is perceived to be a sign of weakness or admission of guilt, new methods need to be found and used in those cases where it was unsuccessful. It would be useful to emulate those cultures where apology, forgiveness, and reconciliation succeeded. This kind of effort should be an important area for sociology to implement in the stimulation of dialogue between groups.

People are beginning to recognize that one’s nation or group may not always be on the side of angels, but rather on the side of harm-doers as well. This appears to be liberating, as individuals and groups are becoming more empathetic toward the suffering of their fellow human beings caused by other nations or groups. Many victims are forgiving, as can be seen by their desire to unload their burdens and mend the rift between themselves and those who have either hurt them or been hurt by them. The virtue of forgiveness and the nurturance of humanity can be taught using age appropriate pedagogy. Caring, love, and forgiveness are timely and necessary areas of study because people in many places around the world recognize that they suffer from humiliation, anger, and a desire for vengeance. It is
possible to encourage conflicting groups to re-humanize victimizers, heal the pain, and acknowledge the need for fairness, justice, and love. Because it is possible sociologists must help it to become a reality.

NOTES

4. The scales used were: (1) Altruistic Personality Scale (developed by J. Phillippe Rushton, R. D. Chrisjohn, and G. Fekken, 1981); (2) Daily Spiritual Experience Scale (DSE) (developed by Lynn G. Underwood, 1999); (3) the Traits of Forgiveness Scale (developed by Jack W. Berry and Everett Worthington, 2001); (4) Agape Scale (developed by Clyde Hendrick and Susan Hendrick); and (5) Restorative Justice and Earned Redemption scale as suggested by the research of Gordon Bazmore (1998), Umbreit (1995), and McNamara and Dhami (2003).

REFERENCES


Burawoy’s “For Public Sociology” (2005) traces the many diverse ways in which our discipline can encompass public sociologies. Burawoy insists that there are many diverse publics all welcome to the task he calls for. He argues that it is necessary to recognize and accommodate the fact of many different norms and aspirations, and that while we may disagree with many of these, we cannot and do not want to suppress them, no matter how distasteful some might seem. He organizes his argument in eleven theses which together constitute an intelligent and generous map of the project of developing public sociology.1

And yet, strengthening and developing public sociology may well entail going beyond the fact of a multiplicity of different publics and different public sociologies. Thus in the field where I do research, globalization, it is critical to reject some of the most developed and strongest positions in the public imaginary if we intend to produce an alternative narrative—one that enables those who now seem utterly powerless confronted with the new global actors. In this context, the project of a public sociology entails the work of developing such an alternative narrative, and this work entails destroying some of the core propositions of the dominant public narrative. It is not a matter of additions and corrections and welcoming a pluralism of opinions, but rather a frontal attack on that dominant public perspective.

Here I will examine one particular aspect of this larger project. It is that national states and citizens, both still largely confined to the nation-state for most of their powers and rights, can be significant actors in an increasingly global world, and that they can be so through the use of national instruments. Critical here is that neither states nor citizens depend on the existence of some putative global state to become such global actors, nor
are they limited to work through the existing formal international system to do global politics. They can use national instruments. But it will take making, including the making of new kinds of statework and of new types of global jurisdictions.

There are two critical facts underlying these possibilities, and they are often overlooked, blinded as commentators become when confronted with the massive resources and unfettered power of global firms. One is that global firms are far more dependent on national states and national territory than the typical arguments of the most familiar commentators as well as the globalization literature allow for. I argue that states have had to do much more international work than nationalist speeches might indicate. This in turn has produced a particular type of state authority and power, one geared to global projects. The challenge then becomes to reorient this new internationalism of national states away from the corporate global economy and toward other global agendas—in the case of this author, preferably such causes as human rights, the environment, and a more socially just economic development. The second fact is that already now multiple individuals and civil society organizations are intensely involved in global politics, even when they are mostly immobile. There is also a whole new, emergent move to use existing national laws in regular national courts to make novel global jurisdictions and fight corporations of many different countries, not just home countries, for their abuses worldwide. But these are all fairly invisible histories and generally unknown by those who would become such actors if they only knew. I return to these issues later in this chapter.

Public sociology can remap these invisible histories and make them public. And it can remap the discussion and interpretations that dominate current commentary about the power of global firms and the powerlessness of national states and citizens. These remappings open a window to the possibility of novel types of public imaginaries and new possibilities for the making of the political. The larger theoretico-political project that gives this examination its substantive rationality is an exploration of the limits of power and the complexities of powerlessness. Both power and powerlessness are made, and hence variable. Elsewhere (Sassen 2006) I have examined the work of making the condition we call power, and thereby emphasized the variability of its meaning—the variability of its success and effectiveness and of the durability of its results. Also powerlessness is constructed, made, and hence variable rather than fixed; it is not simply the absence of power or mere victimhood. From there, then, comes the possibility that while at one end of that variable powerlessness can be elementary, at the other end, it can be complex. This variability does not simply depend on the characteristics of individuals: the settings also matter. For instance, the powerlessness of a specific undocumented immigrant will
be quite elementary in the context of a California commercial farm but can become complex in a city like New York or Los Angeles. In that complexity of powerlessness lies the possibility of a politics.

I begin with a brief introduction of the larger conceptual landscape within which the specifics of this chapter need to be situated. Then I examine the participation by the state in the implementation of a global corporate economy in order to show that certain parts of the national state gain power because of globalization; the aim here is to indicate that this gain in international power can be used for a broader range of political aims than supporting global firms, as it is today. To show this growth of power I focus on the growing alignment of the executive branch of government with global, mostly corporate economic logics. The final section examines some of the conditions giving national actors options for global action.

MAPPING A NEW CONCEPTUAL LANDSCAPE

A first proposition in this argument is that the partial yet epochal transformation we call globalization gets shaped inside the national to a far larger extent than is usually recognized. There is an as yet small but growing scholarship that is beginning to research globalization through the lens of national settings (Aman 1998; Ferguson and Jones 2002; Mittelman 1996; Brenner 1999; Payne 2006; Harvey 2007; Datz 2007). But by far the most common focus in the globalization literature continues to be on self-evidently global institutions and processes, notably the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and so on. This first proposition also goes against the common assumption in the globalization literature that the global and the national are mutually exclusive. Even if many components of both the national and the global are separate and mutually exclusive, I argue that this still leaves a specific set of conditions or components that does de-border this dualism.

Two consequences of this proposition matter for the argument in this chapter. One is that actors confined to national settings can engage in global politics. The other is that an adequate understanding of what globalization entails for people requires that we decode some of what continues to be experienced as national but may well be part of a global condition. The effort to recover the national in the larger discussion about globalization is to establish that the national can give us one platform for global action. It is not to defend the national state per se; historically, national states have mostly pursued politics that have benefited a limited number of their people. It is rather that (a) the recognition of this limitation of national states
by citizenries worldwide in combination with (b) the unsettlements brought about by globalization, can generate a new type of politics aimed at larger common needs. But this possibility is severely undermined by the common notion that the national matters less and less in a global world and that the national state is a severely weakened if not disappearing actor. It thus becomes important to recover how the state is an active shaper of the current condition and hence could, if governed accordingly, reorient its aims to a more enlightened state agenda and a new kind of internationalism.

Some of the most complex meanings of the global are being constituted inside the national, whether national territories and institutions or national states. A good part of globalization consists of an enormous variety of subnational micro-processes that begin to denationalize what had been constructed as national—whether policies, laws, capital, political subjectivities, urban spaces, temporal frames, or any other of a variety of dynamics and domains. This argument can perhaps be developed most persuasively at this time through an examination of the critical role of national states in setting up the basic conditions, including governance structures, for the implementation of a global economy (e.g., Aman 1998; Datz 2007; Harvey 2007; Sassen 2006: chs. 1 and 2; Rajagopal 2003). Ministries of finance, central banks, legislatures, and many other government sectors have done the state-work necessary to secure a global capital market, a global trading system, the needed competition policies, and so on.

This participation of the state in the implementation of a corporate global economy engenders a particular type of authority for the state. But for now the deployment of this authority has largely been confined to supporting private corporate interests. This raises a number of issues. What type of state authority is this mix of public and private components? Does the weight of private, often foreign, interests in this specific work of the state become constitutive of that authority and indeed produce a hybrid that is neither fully private nor fully public? My argument is that, indeed, we are seeing the incipient formation of a type of authority and state practice that entail a partial denationalizing of what had been constructed historically as national. This denationalizing consists of several specific processes, including importantly, the reorienting of national agendas toward global ones, and the circulation inside the state of private global agendas dressed as national public policy.

Such a conceptualization introduces a twist in the analysis of the state and corporate economic globalization because it seeks to detect the actual presence of private agendas inside the state, rather than the more common focus in the globalization literature on the shift of state functions to the private sector and the growth of private authority (e.g., Cutler 2002). Further, it differs from an older scholarly tradition on the captured state, which focused on co-optation of states by private actors (e.g., Cox 1987; Panitch 1996). In my own research I emphasize the privatization of norm-making
capacities and the enactment inside the state of corporate private logics dressed as public norms (Sassen 2006: chs. 4 and 5, 1996: ch. 2).

One critical question for the purposes of this chapter is whether this participation by the state in global processes and the consequent partial, often highly specialized or at least particularized, denationalization can also take place in domains other than that of economic globalization. Among these are recent developments in the human rights regime that make it possible to sue foreign firms and foreign dictators in national (rather than international) courts. Can denationalization be extended to aims other than those of global corporate actors—including an attempt to develop a global economy with broader social justice aims, and aims other than economic ones (e.g., Beneria 2003; Kirsch 2006; Tunstall 2006; Lucas 2005; Ribas-Mateos 2005; Nashashibi 2007)? Elsewhere (Sassen 2006: chs. 8 and 9) I have argued yes. Like globalization, denationalization can, thus, be multivalent: it can include the endogenizing into the national of the global agendas of diverse actors, not only corporate firms and financial markets, but also human rights and environmental agendas. The existence of a dynamic and growing transnational sphere (e.g., Khagram, Riker, and Sikkink 2002; Moghadam 2005; Naples and Desai 2002) becomes critical at this juncture as it can sustain this entry by national actors using national instruments into global struggles (Sassen 2006: ch. 6). Sometimes these processes of denationalization allow, enable, or push the construction of new types of global scalings; other times they continue to inhabit the realm of what is still largely national.

Except for the most superficial and self-evident instances (e.g., globalized consumer markets), this constituting and shaping of global dynamics inside the national generally gets coded, represented, formulated, or experienced through the vocabularies and institutional instruments of the national as historically constructed. This is to be expected insofar as nation-states and national states are enormously complex organizations, with often very long histories of developing the needed capabilities. In contrast, the current phase of global institutions and processes is young and constitutes an as yet thin reality. Part of the research task is then decoding, and, more generally, discovering and detecting the global inside the national (Sassen 2006).

Can the embeddedness of the global in the national and the resulting possibility of a distinctive type of state authority enable citizens to engage in global politics? After all, citizens are still largely confined to the national for the full exercise of their rights and powers. In brief, can citizens use their national state institutions as a bridge into global politics? Critical to my analysis is whether this specific type of authority can in fact extend to global domains beyond the global corporate economy—such as the environment, human rights, and socially just economic development—and be used to contain rather than promote the powers of global economic corporate actors.
This would require moving toward new types of joint international action by national states—coalitions of the willing focused not on war but on environmental and social justice projects.

These and other denationalizing dynamics (e.g., the insertion of human rights into national judiciary decisions) have additional consequences. They begin to disassemble bits and pieces of the nation-state and the state apparatus itself as containers. This disassembling is one dynamic feeding the multiplication of partial, often highly specialized, cross-border assemblages of bits of territory, authority, and rights once lodged inside the national. Many of these are beginning to function as formal or informal entities for both operational and governance tasks in a growing range of global processes.

At one end of the range these particularized assemblages include private arrangements such as the *lex constructionis*—a private “law” developed by the major engineering companies in the world to establish a common response to the strengthening of environmental standards in the 100 plus countries where they are building. At the other end of the range, we find the International Criminal Court, the first ever global public court, and TRIPS law, the first global law. Beyond the fact of the diversity of these systems, there is the increasingly weighty fact of their numbers—over 125 according to the best recent count. This type of analysis has the effect of disassembling particular components of the nation-state and the national state apparatus from the inside, but in this process also possibly generating novel enablements for national and local actors insofar as they can enter these partial, often highly specialized spaces. I return to this in the last section of this chapter.

To the usual global components, we can add denationalizing dynamics and the multiplication of cross-border assemblages of bits and pieces of national territory, authority, and rights dislodged from the national container. Seen this way, the kingpins of the globalization literature—particularly WTO, IMF, and NAFTA—may well turn out to be bridging events for the formation of a new order, rather than being the new order itself, as is so often assumed or proclaimed. These institutions should rather be conceived of as powerful capabilities for the making of a new order—they are instruments, not the new order itself.

Neither the proliferation of these partial assemblages nor the denationalizing of key components of state work entail the end of national states. But they do dislodge bits and pieces of national and inter-state governance out of their traditional institutional settings (whether national or international) and shift them to novel settings. Both developments are examined here in order to sketch out the particular substance and conditionality of what I argue is a new mode of state authority that remains insufficiently recog-
nized and theorized, and, secondly an opening up of the domain of global politics to nation-based actors such as citizens.

GROWING ALIGNMENTS BETWEEN THE EXECUTIVE AND GLOBAL CORPORATE LOGICS

One typically overlooked feature of the current transformation is that the state’s work in the implementing of a global corporate economy strengthens the power of particular components of the national state (Sassen 2006: ch. 4; 1996: ch. 1). These components are mostly located in the executive branch of liberal democracies and in multiple agencies of the public administration, a body increasingly under the control of the executive branch. The body that loses the most in the current alignment is the legislature (or parliament, depending on state organization). In this unsettlement, the judiciary branch tends to gain strategic functions.

Thus a more precise way of capturing these dynamics rather than the usual notion of a declining state is to argue that the executive branch of government evinces a growing alignment with global corporate logics. In the larger research project on which this is based (Sassen 2006) I identify at least the following five trends in the global economy feeding executive power.

A first trend is that certain parts of the administration (the Treasury, the Federal Reserve, the office of the Trade Representative, and so on) have been critical in this work of the state. They have become stronger over the last two decades because of globalization, thereby feeding the power of the administration. To illustrate briefly, ministries of finance (or the U.S. Treasury) can impose certain kinds of fiscal policies as part of the new conditionalities of economic globalization. These have tended to include a push toward what we have come to call “small government,” mostly applied to the components of the social wage—rather than, for instance, defense expenditures.

With economic globalization it has become increasingly common for rules originated by private global actors, either directly or indirectly (through the global regulators) to be eventually enacted by governments. This has been the case with some of the WTO rules, financial and accounting rules, and capital requirement rules, even when each member country processes the incorporation of the rules into its national law and institutional frame. One incentive for this type of process of inserting global rules into national regulations is that it can overcome the lack of collaboration among governments if they remained as global regimes. When we use terms such as deregulation, financial and trade liberalization, and privatization to
describe this specific work of states, we only capture the withdrawal of the state from regulating its economy and, further, we overlook the new functions this has brought to the executive branch and the administration.

A second trend that began in the 1980s was the marketizing and privatizing of what were once public functions. The privatizing of prisons and the outsourcing of particular welfare functions to private providers are probably two of the more familiar aspects. Today we can add the outsourcing of soldiering to private contractors even in war theaters, as is the case in Iraq. Economic globalization has been one push-factor in the marketizing of a growing range of public functions. The shift to markets and market authority is a far more complex dynamic than terms such as “deregulation” suggest. The formation of new public-private arrangements can blur particular components of the public-private divide. One example of this blurring is the difficulty the U.S. Supreme Court had in establishing whether guards in privatized prisons have the same federal rights as those in government-run prisons. The foundational change lies in the details.

What matters here is that this type of privatization and marketization has reduced the oversight role of Congress but added to the role of the executive through the setting up of specialized commissions. This is perhaps most clear in the extent to which the executive branch is handling the growth of contractors in the Iraq war, with little oversight by Congress. The degree of secrecy is high, to the point that deaths among contracted soldiers are not reported even though they number more now than regular soldiers. The shift to markets also raises questions as to the effects on citizens’ rights. Some public services involve rights; when such services are marketized, citizens’ rights may get lost. Are rights subject to markets still rights?

The deregulation of the economy and the privatization and marketization of public functions not only expand the private sphere but also remove economic activity from public scrutiny and accountability. This matters because privatized and marketized public functions often retain public aspects. It is further accentuated by the fact, sharply illustrated by the United States, that where there are specialized regulatory commissions these are mostly within the executive branch of government and escape routine public oversight by the legislature. Increasingly the private sphere functions outside the scope of most forms of public accountability and scrutiny beyond basic compliance with the law.

A third development that fed the power of the executive and weakened congressional oversight functions was the decision by the executive branch to give the Departments of Health, Environment, and Agriculture the authority to classify their documents, a first in their history. More important than whatever the national security component in these departments is the fact that departments once thought to be largely involved with domestic issues have assumed a whole new meaning in the context of intellectual property
rights (e.g., for the large pharmaceuticals), a global trading regime such as WTO, and global warming. Further, insofar as the executive seeks to control the public administration, granting these departments classification rights weakens congressional oversight, and strengthens executive authority.

A fourth source of executive power is that the major global regulators, notably the IMF and WTO, as well as many lesser known ones, only negotiate with the executive branch. As the global corporate economy and the supranational system have expanded and continue to expand, executive power grows as well, and so does the disadvantage of Congress. The executive branch is increasingly aligned with a number of global actors and processes that are critical to the global corporate economy. While the other branches of government are beginning to develop novel international relations (House Speaker Pelosi’s visit to Syria; the Supreme Court’s emergent consideration of foreign law in its deliberations), this type of novel development does not necessarily feed their power within the state. The development of an institutional apparatus geared toward the global war on terror, with its growing cross-border collaborations, involves largely the executive branch and particular agencies of the public administration. Further, the globalizing of criminal networks for the trafficking of drugs, arms, and people, also feeds into the development of inter-governmental collaborations largely centered in the executive branch. To some extent this is inevitable. The concern here is with detecting the extent to which globalizing dynamics feed executive power rather than simply weakening “the” state.

Inter-governmental networks centered largely in the executive have grown well beyond concerns with global security and criminality. The participation by the state in the implementation of a global economic system has engendered a whole range of new types of cross-border collaborations among specialized government agencies focused on the globalization of capital markets, international standards of all sorts, and the new trade order. These often build on long-standing networks and older international organizations, and involve the national ministries or agencies charged with the particular issue area. Increasingly we see a growing number of such networks that function outside a formal international institution and outside a formal treaty, with the Basel Committee of the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) one of the more distinguished and influential examples. As globalization has expanded there has been a proliferation of agreements among domestic regulatory agencies of two or more countries, a kind of low-level but often very powerful network, one not dependent on a treaty. They can produce agreements that can be implemented by the regulators themselves, without requiring legislative approval. These have grown far more than traditional treaty negotiations.

A final bundle of issues makes visible this alignment of the executive with global logics in a range of very particular domains. One way of captur-
ing what I am trying to convey is to focus on some of the current debates between Congress and the executive. The case of Dubai Ports, a corporation from a Muslim country, which was meant to acquire control over U.S. port security was supported, strongly, by Bush. This indicated a sense of a global economy that becomes, inevitably, partly denationalized, even as the War on Terror against Muslim countries raged. More recently, and not as positive as the Dubai Ports case, was Bush's insistence on not attaching environmental and labor standards in the new free trade agreements. The Democratic controlled Congress succeeded in adding several measures opposed by Bush. Besides enforceable labor and environmental standards, these trade pacts will scale back on intellectual property protections of pharmaceutical companies when it comes to generic medicines, to give the poor in poor countries access to life-saving medicines. Another such instance was the House passing legislation requiring certain conditions before the Bush administration could proceed with a plan to allow long-haul Mexican trucks access to U.S. highways, a plan that would have "opened the border with minimum public notice and at a threat to safety." In both of these cases, the trade pacts and the Mexican truckers provision, Bush showed an inclination to align with global corporate interests.

**CROSS-BORDER ASSEMBLAGES OF TERRITORY, AUTHORITY, AND RIGHTS: NOVEL SPACES FOR POLITICS**

The second critical feature of today's transformation is the multiplication of partial, often highly specialized, cross-border spaces and arrangements that begin to de-border national institutional confinements even when they take place in national territories. This can bring with it a potential for global political action on the part of those confined to the national or the local. That multiplication of arrangements disassembles from the inside particular components of the nation-state and of the formal state apparatus. In this process we can also find the elements for generating novel enablements for national actors, including the national state itself, in global spaces. Let me illustrate by selecting four types of assemblages (for further developments of this subject see Sassen 2006: ch. 8).

A first type of instance can be found in the development of new jurisdictional geographies. Among the more formalized cases are a variety of national legal actions that, notwithstanding their transnational geographies, can today be launched from national courts. A good example are the lawsuits launched by the Washington, DC–based Center for Constitutional Rights in a national court against nine multinational corporations, both American and foreign, for abuses of workers' rights in their offshore industrial operations. In other words, this is a three-sited jurisdiction,
with several locations in at least two of those sites—the locations of the headquarters (both the United States and other countries), the locations for the offshore factories (several countries), and the court in Washington. Even if these lawsuits do not quite achieve their full goal, they signal it is possible to use the national judiciary for suing U.S. and foreign firms for questionable practices in their operations outside their home countries. Thus, besides the much noted new courts and instruments (e.g., the new International Criminal Court, the European Court of Human Rights), what this example shows is that components of the national rule of law that once served to build the strength of the national state, are today contributing to the formation of transnational jurisdictions. Again, signaling the multivalence of so many of these processes, another instance is the U.S. practice of “exporting” prisoners to third countries (rendition) to facilitate their torture. Diverse jurisdictional geographies can also be used to manipulate temporal dimensions. Reinserting a conflict in the national legal system may ensure a slower progression than in the private jurisdiction of international commercial arbitration (Sassen 2006: ch. 5).

A second type of specialized assemblage that is contributing to a novel type of territoriality is the work of national states across the globe to construct a standardized global space for the operations of firms and markets. What this means is that components of legal frameworks for rights and guarantees, and more generally the rule of law, largely developed in the process of national state formation, can now strengthen non-national organizing logics. As these components become part of new types of transnational systems they alter (rather than destroy) the valence of older national state capabilities. Where the rule of law once built the strength of the national state and national corporations, key components of that rule of law are now contributing to the partial, often highly specialized, disaggregating of particular national state orders. For instance, corporate actors operating globally have pushed hard for the development of new types of formal instruments, notably intellectual property rights and standardized (i.e., Anglo-American) accounting principles, for which they need the support of each individual state where they operate. In their aggregate this and other emergent orderings contribute to produce an operational space that is partly embedded in particular components of national legal systems which have been subjected to specialized denationalizations (Sassen 2006: chs. 4 and 5); thereby they become capabilities of an organizing logic that is not part of the national state. Further, in so doing, they often go against the interests of national capital. This is a very different way of representing economic globalization than the common notion of the withdrawal of the state at the hands of the global system. Indeed, to a large extent it is the executive branch of government that is getting aligned with global corporate capital (Sassen 2006: ch. 4). A key implication here is that national states
could collaborate to develop global arrangements concerning the environment, human rights, social justice, and fair trade.

A third type of specialized assemblage can be detected in the formation of a global network of financial centers. We can conceive of financial centers that are part of global financial markets as constituting a distinct kind of territoriality, simultaneously pulled in by the larger networks and functioning as localized micro-infrastructures for those networks. These centers inhabit national territories, but they cannot be seen as simply national in the historical sense of the term, nor can they be reduced to the administrative unit encompassing the actual terrain (e.g., a city), one that is part of a nation-state. In their aggregate they house significant components of the global, partly electronic market for capital. As localities they are denationalized in specific and partial ways. In this sense they can be seen as constituting the elements of a novel type of multi-sited territory, one that diverges sharply from the territoriality of the historic nation-state.

A fourth type of assemblage can be seen in the global networks of local activists and, more generally, in the concrete infrastructure of global civil society. Global civil society is enabled by global digital networks and the associated imaginaries. But this does not preclude that localized actors, organizations, and causes are key building blocks of global civil society as it is shaping up today. The localized involvements of activists are critical no matter how universal and planetary the aims of the various struggles—in their aggregate these localized involvements are constitutive. Global electronic networks actually push the possibility of this local-global dynamic further. Elsewhere I have examined (Sassen 2006: ch. 7) the possibility for even resource-poor and immobile organizations to become part of a type of horizontal globality centered on localities. When supplied with the key capabilities of the new technologies—decentralized access, interconnectivity, and simultaneity of transactions—localized, immobilized individuals and organizations can be part of a global public space, one that is partly a subjective condition, but only partly because it is rooted in the concrete struggles of localities. In principle we can posit that those who are immobile might be more likely to experience their globality through this (abstract) space than individuals and organizations that have the resources and the options to travel across the globe. Sometimes these globalities can assume complex forms, as is the case with First Nation peoples demanding direct representation in international forums, bypassing national state authority—a long-standing cause that has been significantly enabled by global electronic networking. Other times they are more elementary, as is the case with various Forest Watch activists in rain forests around the world. We can see here at work a particular type of interaction between placeless digital networks and deeply localized actors/users. One common pattern is the formation of triangular cross-border jurisdictions for political action.
that once would have been confined to the national. Local activists often use global campaigns and international organizations to secure rights and guarantees from their national states; they now have the option to incorporate a non-national or global site in their national struggles. These instances point to the emergence of a particular type of territoriality in the context of the imbrications of digital and nondigital conditions. This territory partly inhabits specific subnational spaces and partly gets constituted as a variety of somewhat specialized or partial global publics.

Although these four types of emergent assemblages are diverse, they all share certain features. First, they are not exclusively national or global but are assemblages of elements of each. Second, in this assembling they bring together what are often different spatio-temporal orders, that is, different velocities and different scopes. Third, this can produce an eventful engagement with the national state, including contestations, and what we might think of as a “frontier zone” effect—a space that makes possible kinds of engagements for which there are no clear rules. The resolution of these encounters can become the occasion for playing out conflicts that cannot easily be engaged in other spaces. Fourth, novel types of actors can emerge in the processes through which these assemblages are constituted. These novel actors will tend to be able to access cross-border domains once exclusive to older established actors, notably national states. These emergent assemblages begin to unbundle the traditional territoriality of the national, though they do so in partial and often highly specialized ways.

CONCLUSION

The encounter of a global actor such as a firm or a market with one or another instantiation of the national can be thought of as a new frontier zone where two very different types of actors intersect and can constitute a novel condition. That encounter does not merely mark a dividing line between the national and the global. It is a zone of politico-economic interactions that produce new institutional forms and alter some of the old ones. Nor is it just a process that reduces the role of government generally; it may require more government but on different terms, which is what I find in the case of the executive branch of government. On the other side, global firms pursue their global economic projects partly in national territories; even global financial firms need to execute operations in a growing number of financial centers worldwide. In these intersections we see the formation of new economic, political, subjective dynamics and opportunities for global action among those still largely confined to the national.

One possibility arising out of these formations is that nation-based actors, notably states and citizens, are far better positioned to participate in
governing and also shaping global institutions and processes, and to engage in global politics, than is commonly assumed. We can see the constituting of a larger terrain for global action by national states, including the pursuit of social justice in its many different institutional settings and contesting the power of major economic global corporate actors. Either through their states or directly, citizens can engage in global politics even when confined to national instrumentalities.

Much of the writing on globalization has failed to recognize these types of issues and has privileged outcomes that are self-evidently global. Global formations are part of the transformation; they matter and they are consequential. Yet even global regimes often only become operative, or performative, when they enter the national domain. This entry is predicated on—and in turn further strengthens—particular forms of denationalization. This interaction between national and denationalizing processes is not an innocent event; it has multiple and variable outcomes. There is a sort of invisible history of the many moments and ways in which denationalizing tendencies failed to materialize and succumbed to the powerful (both good and bad) currents of the national, still alive and well. In other cases denationalizing processes feed nationalizing dynamics in separate though at times connected domains—for example, the denationalizing of certain components of our economy and the renationalizing in some components of our immigration policy. In brief, there is much more going on than meets the global eye—or than highly recognizable global scalings allow us to understand. The current transformation is a complex architecture with many distinct working elements, only some of which can easily be coded as globalization.

Both self-evidently global and denationalizing dynamics destabilize existing meanings and systems. This raises questions about the future of crucial frameworks through which modern societies, economies, and polities (under the rule of law) have operated: the social contract of liberal states, social democracy as we have come to understand it, modern citizenship, and the mechanisms that render certain claims legitimate and others illegitimate in liberal democracies. The future of these and other familiar frameworks is rendered dubious by the unbundling of the basic organizational and normative architectures through which we have operated, particularly over the last century. These architectures have held together complex interdependencies between rights and obligations, power and the law, wealth and poverty, allegiance and exit. I emphasize both negative and positive potentials associated with this destabilizing of existing arrangements.

These are charged processes, even though they are partial and often highly specialized and obscure. They denationalize what had been constructed as national but do not necessarily make this evident. The institutional and subjective micro-transformations denationalization produces frequently
continue to be experienced as national when they in fact entail a significant historical shift. Such transformations often need to be decoded in order to become evident. These instantiations of the global, partly or wholly structured inside the national, do not need to run through the supranational system or international treaties. Nor do they need to run through the new types of global domains that have emerged since the 1980s, such as electronic financial markets or global civil society. These transformations include particular and specific components of a broad range of entities, such as the work of national legislatures and judiciaries, the worldwide operations of national firms and markets, political projects of non-state actors, translocal processes that connect poor households across borders, diasporic networks, and changes in the relationship between citizens and the state. They reorient particular components of institutions and specific practices—both public and private—toward global logics and away from historically shaped national logics (including in the latter traditional international operations, which are to be differentiated from current global ones). Understanding the epochal transformation we call globalization must include studying these processes of denationalization.

The importance of public sociology is its potential to redraw the analysis of the current transformation, making visible what is now obscured and bringing in actors who are now excluded from the analysis. Critical here is recovering the fact that powerlessness need not be elementary, that it can be complex. Through this complexity I see the possibility of a politics. In this process, public sociology can enable those who are now seen as powerless and who see themselves as powerless confronted with powerful global firms. And it can aid in discerning the different logics guiding diverse parts of the national state. The value of this remapping stems from the need to identify and shape the grounds from which a sharply different positioning of diverse actors can be achieved, so that some of the powerless are now shown to have the capacity of making the political. What a public sociology cannot do is become the actual launching pad for action; this is up to the actors, including, of course, public sociologists in their role as activists. But public sociology is here more than simply the making of any alternative narrative. It is an alternative narrative that can enable and mobilize those who have come to think of themselves as powerless.

NOTES

1. These theses range from the multiplicity of public sociologies to the notion of provincializing American sociology, the latter a project I find extremely important and one that resonates with the effort among several historians to provincialize Europe’s role in the narrating of history (Chakrabarty 2000; Duara 1997). For a full
listing and development of these theses and responses by several sociologists, see Burawoy 2005.

2. A focus on such subnationally based processes and dynamics of globalization requires methodologies and theorizations that engage not only global scalings but also subnational scalings as components of global processes, thereby destabilizing older hierarchies of scale and conceptions of nested scalings. Studying global processes and conditions that get constituted subnationally has some advantages over studies of globally scaled dynamics, but it also poses specific challenges. It does make possible the use of long-standing research techniques, from quantitative to qualitative, in the study of globalization. It also gives us a bridge for using the wealth of national and subnational data sets as well as specialized scholarships such as area studies. Both types of studies, however, need to be situated in conceptual architectures that are not quite those held by the researchers who generated these research techniques and data sets, as their efforts mostly had little to do with globalization (I develop this in Sassen 2007).

REFERENCES


Pitirim Sorokin was a sociological pioneer in many important fields, from the sociology of revolutions, to comparative theories, the dynamics of large-scale change, and the sociology of time. For the most part, and unusual for the discipline, his works have not lost their actuality for getting a perspective on our contemporary world.

I take as an example that very much has global relevance today his study originally published in Russian in 1922, and available in English only since 1975: *Hunger as a Factor in Human Affairs*. Sorokin (and his wife) had observed and experienced firsthand the terrible famine that swept Russia in the immediate post-war years following the Soviet revolution. He had gone far beyond observation to a meticulous study of historical records in peacetime and wartime to investigate comparatively the effects of hunger and famine in social relationships. The finished work is every bit as much of a reference at the close of this century’s first decade as it was nearly 80 years ago, with perhaps an even larger sphere of relevance.

The sharp rise of energy and other commodity prices, the increase of population in Africa, Latin America, and Asia, intensive ethnic conflicts, and growing social inequalities in other “emerging markets” have together made problematic much progress in human development in its basic aspects of subsistence, such as a minimum income for food and shelter, and even personal safety. Even the scourge of famine, which a generation ago seemed anachronistic in a new era of “the green revolution,” “genetically modified foods,” and the benefits of globalization, has returned with a vengeance, for example in this decade in conflict-torn and drought-ravaged Africa.
At the beginning of the new century (indeed, a new millennium), the United Nations sponsored a Millennium Summit of world leaders, from which was formulated a project to be realized by 2015 of improving world conditions in meeting eight major goals, collectively known as the Millennium Development Goals. I will indicate how this ties in with the general theme of this chapter, but let us note at present that the first goal is to “eradicate extreme hunger and poverty.” The criterion was initially set as the population living below $1 a day, but some improvement (notably in China) has “raised” the threshold level to $2 a day. Still, the United Nations Human Development Report for 2007/2008 indicates that no less than 73 countries had 10 percent or more of its population living below $2 a day, with nearly half (35) of these countries having more than half of the population with an income below this paltry amount. The most extreme instances of poverty—India, Bangladesh, Madagascar, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Zambia, Niger, Burundi, Central African Republic, Rwanda, Gambia—have no less than four-fifths of their population eking out their existence with this abysmal figure. The laconic summary statement in the 2008 Annual Report of the United Nations Development Programme: “Some 1.2 billion people around the world live on less than a dollar a day,” hardly conveys the everyday world—and its man-made and nature-made hazards—of those living in extreme poverty. It is a general powerlessness in the face of the physical and human environment which is the condition of about two-fifths of the world’s 6.7 billion inhabitants. Sadly, it is unlikely for those in Africa, South and Southeast Asia, and many in the West Indies and Latin America and other countries as well, that by themselves they can harness resources and the social and political will to emulate the example of East Asia. Free trade agreements and IMF regulations provide strictures which increase, rather than decrease, economic inequalities.

Unless globalization opens up a new cornucopia and/or unless significant structural and motivational transformations can be put in place, it looks increasingly dubious that the Millennial Project Goals will be met in whole or in part in recipient countries by the target date of 2015. The stark reality that “850 million go hungry every night” is, unfortunately, a reminder of the relevance of Sorokin’s study of “hunger as a factor in human affairs.” His 1922 study took Sorokin to look at other calamities of the human condition, and 20 years later he published a more general work in this vein. It would be a mistake, however, to view Sorokin as only a seer of the dark and debasing aspects of social life. In the last phase of his creative career, he produced pioneering studies of the warmer currents of social life, those nourished by altruism. This will be the springboard for our following in his wake to take up a consideration of global altruism.
SOROKIN AND ALTRUISM

Sorokin can well qualify as a “critical sociologist” (of the dominant “pseudo-scientific” methodology of the social sciences) and even as a “public sociologist” (as conceptualized by Michael Burawoy) in espousing progressive causes and his adamant denunciations of state policy promoting wars, including the war in Vietnam. That is not particularly distinctive since sociology has a well-established tradition of dissent that includes Thorstein Veblen, W. E. B. Du Bois, and C. Wright Mills. Sorokin, however, went beyond negativism to search for the reconstruction of society and social relationships in non-violent ways (he greatly admired Gandhi, who showed the way to non-violent resistance), essentially for a cognitive reorientation toward the “other,” what he termed “amitology”—a perspective marked by goodwill, cooperation, and love. Altruism as a variable of personality and interpersonal behavior is critical to this recasting or transformation of the social, at the micro as well as at the macro level.

Accordingly, empirical research (comparative and historical) on altruism became for Sorokin—retrieving the legacy of Comte (Post et al. 2002:9)—an important and at the time, untrodden, field of sociological inquiry. With the patronage of benefactor Eli Lilly, Sorokin—who had launched Harvard’s Department of Sociology at the start of the 1930s—set up 20 years later the Harvard Research Center in Altruistic Integration and Creativity, which in four years spawned four scholarly volumes.

Sorokin’s endeavor in this last career phase was to provide a cognitive and behavioral reframing to the marked negativism of late modernity (which he termed “the declining sensate phase of Western culture”). Both in the media and popular culture the negativism shows itself in “hair-raising murder stories, sex scandals or perversions” which constitute well over 50 percent of the topics of contemporary Western culture—thus starts Sorokin in 1950 in *Altruistic Love*. In that same opening, Sorokin raises the cry, “Our sensate culture . . . dwells mainly in the region of subsocial sewers, breathes mainly their foul air; and drags down into their turbid muck everything heroic, positive, true, good, and beautiful” (*Altruistic Love*, p. 3).

Polar to this dominating orientation is the lives of saints and “good neighbors,” and the studies of Sorokin’s center focused on the latter as a dramatic alternative to the negativism in all its forms. Since Sorokin’s death in 1968, there has been no let-up in the general cultural negativism and prurience of popular culture and the mass media. Yet the main corpus of sociology, then and now, does not seem to have responded with enlarging its sphere of attention, not only to the negativism undermining the civility of civil society, but also to the positive alternative field of altruism.

And yet, research on “altruism” outside of sociology has come under increasing attention at the micro and at the macro level. Undoubtedly an
important stimulus came from evolutionary biology and E. O. Wilson’s mammoth *Sociobiology* (1975) relating altruism to kin selection. Aside from its benign neglect in sociology, altruism has enjoyed multidisciplinary coverage (and spirited controversies as well as supportive data) in various fields such as psychology, neurobiology, biology, and theology (Post et al. 2002; Gintis et al. 2003). The irony of sociologists’ tepid take of a field opened up by Sorokin half a century ago is shown by the 2008 annual meeting of the American Sociological Association not having in its Final Program a single session on altruism (although the general meeting theme of “Worlds at Work” could certainly have provided the occasion for research papers relating altruism to work).

More in keeping with Sorokin’s ASA presidential exhortation of 1965 that our discipline should seek higher ground in new syntheses, let us consider how altruism takes on important new forms that were not part of the original research of Sorokin’s research center, but which are promising and relevant for a broader perspective on both globalization and altruism. While my considerations are not a “synthesis,” they are intended to be heuristic for expanding the sociological awareness of altruism in the contemporary world.

**GLOBAL ALTRUISM: FROM THE GROUND UP**

However fuzzy “globalization” suggests as a playing field of advanced modernity (the latter, to be sure, itself a murky and ambiguous notion), it has become a widely used multidisciplinary referent. A referent of what? Of various processes that interlink materially and virtually all the regions of the world, with a loose economic, political, cultural, and technological integration of vaster scope than any previous state. The need for the social sciences, particularly sociology and political science, to expand their horizon beyond the nation-state as the traditional unit of analysis, has been cogently made (Albrow 1996). Even if the conceptualization and articulation of the parameters of the new age lack consensus, it warrants viewing the playing field for altruistic behavior as becoming globalized, beyond neighborhoods, regions, or even national borders. I take “global” and its related “globalization” to indicate the whole human world as the interactive unit of analysis, and “global system” as an emergent or dynamic entity which interrelates regions, albeit at different rhythms of change and development.

Sudden as well as chronic degradations in the physical and human environments, conditions that debase the existence of those living at the edge, forcible evictions from traditional habitats (due to demands of agribusiness, foreign invaders, or from paramilitaries who are nominally subjects of the same state), the repression and near-extinction of civil society in
blatant violation of human rights—all are part of the same global age as
the one of mediated glamour, luxury, and opulence that global capitalism
has provided.

Much of the turmoil of the past two decades or so since "globalization"
has become recognized has both socioeconomic and sociopolitical dimen-
sions, making the global system not a simple "new world order" but one
highly complex and contested.12 On the constructive side are new bases
of peaceful yet complex intraregional integration (such as the European
Union). On the negative side, an unanticipated upsurge in violent move-
ments of nationalism, fundamentalism, ethnic repression, and global acts
of terrorism, together with degrading and massive human trafficking.13

It is in this broad frame, that Sorokin would have readily recognized as
an extrapolation from his studies of the late sensate age, that I will discuss
global forms of altruism. The need for ameliorative efforts to go beyond
the state or country level is imperative. Particularly as most of the states
with the greatest needs for altruistic behavior lack the competence, orga-
nizations, or even, in some instances, the desire to alleviate economic and
political misery, including blatant violations of human rights impacting
enormous numbers.

To borrow from Frantz Fanon, the global age puts a spotlight on a vast
new “wretched of the earth.” Though not providing a solution, “global
altruism” is a set of practices seeking to alleviate some of the negative
consequences of globalization on “the economic and political wretched
of the earth.” The practices, undertaken by different agents at different levels,
open a beam of light and an alternative model B to the market-based model
A of efficiency and “rational choice” which is at heart based on premises
(at the individual and state level) of egoism or self-interest.14 Tacitly, global
altruism is a cognitive and normative orientation that gives primacy to
improving the condition of the most unfortunate members of the global
community. Its presupposition is that accepting the economic, political,
and cultural welfare of the global community depends, not accidentally but
intrinsically, upon the welfare of those marginalized by processes of glo-
balization. Globalization can be transformed by the voluntaristic actions
of forms of altruism, so that global altruism itself becomes an important
vector of globalization.15 Ultimately, a common denominator in various
forms of global altruism is being conducive for its recipients to gain a sense
of active participation in their own improvement and development, and
not just being “a charity case.”16

I begin at the micro level, “from the ground up” with three individuals,
then consider at the meso level two INGOs (international non-govern-
mental organizations), lastly at the macro level I will consider countries’
performance on altruism in terms of the Millennium Development Project
with which I started this chapter.
GLOBAL ALTRUISM: THE MICRO LEVEL

Sorokin’s initial volume on altruism, *Altruistic Love* (1950) focuses on two readily discernable and publicly recognized groups of altruists: “good neighbors” and “saints,” the former recognized by their peer group, the latter recognized by Roman Catholic and Russian Orthodox churches. Modifying this to a globalized context beyond the borders of the nation-state, I will discuss three levels of agents of altruism: individuals, organizations, and states. There are different modes of peer group recognition, and some organizations—such as religious ones—have normative principles of service and giving to others that favor global altruistic activity. How extensive this commitment is will vary so that there is not a one-to-one correlation between “religious” and “secular” individuals and organizations, and their level of altruistic commitment and activity.

At this micro level, the exemplars are three persons who have shown sustained commitment to global altruism toward broad segments of the human community, in particular to those living in misery, for the most part homeless and without minimal state support and assistance. What makes these individuals particularly appropriate for our discussion is that each started and/or is associated with a humanitarian movement with a global reach. Two of them have won international recognition for their “good deeds” with a gold standard of international recognition: the Nobel Peace Prize.

Mother Teresa (Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu, 1910–1997) has become an iconic figure of devotion to “the poorest of the poor.” While her presence is associated with Calcutta, she was also active at the international level after establishing her own religious order, Missionaries of Charity. The basic mission was to provide love and care for those bypassed by their own societal community, and the global range of her organization—which grew to over 600 missions in more than 100 countries—involved setting up hospices and homes for victims of HIV/AIDS, leprosy, and tuberculosis, not only in India, but in various other settings, including victims of radiation in Chernobyl, of earthquakes in Armenia, and of starvation in Ethiopia. She and the houses her order set up with volunteers did not discriminate between political regimes, taking missions to Communist as well as non-Communist countries during the Cold War period. Her basic priority for her relief work was to carry it out among the “poorest of the poor” in practically all the continents where relief work had urgent need in instances of floods, epidemics, and man-made disasters.

Her exemplary life of dedication to others and her exhortation to bring a modicum of comfort to the “poorest of the poor” (for example, in her address to the United Nations in 1985) was recognized internationally by both secular and religious organizations. Thus, in 1979 she was the re-
recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize and posthumously on October 19, 2003 (appropriately, World Mission Sunday), she was beatified in the Roman Catholic Church, an important step to becoming a saint, with Pope John Paul II himself pronouncing the homily.

Mother Teresa’s altruism and asceticism are beyond question, but her commitment to the poor also drew some criticism in her strong and repeated stance against abortion, and some negative voices also questioned her alleged baptisms of the dying. It is in this respect that she appears as an activist, though her paramount activism lay in establishing missions bringing succor to those powerless to get succor from established authorities.

No less saintly in his work for the poor than Mother Teresa, and in fact considered a saint by many he impacted, was the Abbé Pierre (Henri Antoine Grouès, 1912–2007), an activist priest on behalf of the homeless, in France and abroad. In keeping with a certain tradition of noblesse oblige, he renounced his wealthy inheritance to provide charities with his possessions. Although before and during World War II he already engaged in numerous acts of altruism, including shielding Jews from Nazi persecution, it was after the war that his activism took a vigorous upturn, both during a brief political career in the French National Assembly and afterward.

Politics was a natural arena for a person like him given to challenging authority and hierarchy. The rhetoric he used on behalf of the poor reflected a French democratic socialist tradition that extends back to the progressive clergy of the French Revolution, like the Abbé Grégoire and the “Red Priest” Jacques Roux. Words and deed were shown initially in his public protest against the eviction of impoverished tenants and the homeless who had to sleep outdoors during freezing weather in 1954. His emotional appeal for immediate relief was termed by the media as an “uprising of kindness” (insurrection de la bonté) and the popular response, both in Paris and in other parts of France, led to his organizing a new secular organization of Emmaus communities (from Emmaus, the community in the Gospel of Luke, where Jesus is shown hospitality after his resurrection by disciples who do not initially recognize him). A cardinal principle of Emmaus has been to take in anyone willing to work in the community at helping others, regardless of the person’s past—a social welfare organization the mirror image of the equally fabled Foreign Legion. The Abbé Pierre’s endeavor for Emmaus communities was, plainly stated, to restore the dignity of the homeless by offering them to labor in a community setting.

The Abbé Pierre (and the Emmaus movement) undertook throughout his strenuous career both humanitarian work administering aid and shelter to the homeless and disfranchised—those who are “excluded.” Recognized as “a saint” by his constituents, including squatters facing eviction and vagrants earning their livelihood from trash cans and garbage, he ranked in public opinion polls as one of the most popular figures in France for
many years. He championed various unpopular causes, from stout defense of Italian left-wing activists to decolonization to vigorous upholding of Palestinian rights. This led to his incurring the wrath of various organizations, including the Church hierarchy.

The third individual as an agent of global altruism has had two careers, the first a political one that ended in 1981, and a very active second career that may be said to have started in 1982 and is still going strong as of this writing. This is Jimmy Carter (1924–), who served one term as president of the United States (1977–1981). While in office, Carter made the promotion of human rights an important aspect of American foreign policy, and his administration sought to broker a viable peace in the Middle East by bringing together the Israeli prime minister (Menachem Begin) and the Egyptian president (Anwar Sadat) to sign the epoch-making Camp David Peace Accords.

If his presidency faltered due to an economic crisis of inflation and perhaps politically more from the quagmire of the Iranian crisis, Jimmy Carter since leaving office has made his mark on global altruism more than any previous former president, perhaps more than any former head of state. He has engaged in an almost frenetic pace of activity, organizing the Carter Center in partnership with Emory University in Atlanta. The bipartisan center engages in multiple programs involved in the control of diseases in the United States and overseas (particularly infectious diseases in Africa), in sending delegations of observers in contested elections in countries with a weak civil society and lack of protection for minorities, in conflict resolution where the distrust between contending forces necessitates a third party viewed by the foes as disinterested. Carter himself and his staff members have acted as observers in a variety of elections where their presence has preserved the autonomy of the electoral process.23 Jimmy Carter’s commitment to peace and humanitarian causes without seeking personal remuneration earned him the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992 (he turned over the prize money to further the work of the Carter Center). This is perhaps the ultimate accolade of the international community for a career in global altruism—or in Carter’s case, a second public career.

“From the ground up” as a qualifier of the global altruists just discussed applies not only to Mother Teresa tending to the poor in the streets and back alleys of Calcutta, or the Abbé Pierre to the homeless in Paris and overseas, but equally to Jimmy Carter, who at age 84 was recently in southern Sudan to personally evaluate progress on the elimination of the devastating Guinea worm (Jack 2008). In addition to the multi-faceted work of his own Carter Center, Carter has also brought the center in close working relation with Habitat for Humanity, a not-for-profit “ecumenical Christian housing ministry” that, since being founded the year Carter was elected president, has built a quarter of a million homes in the United States and overseas.24
As in the case of the Emmaus movement, Habitat for Humanity depends on volunteer labor and contributions, and requires new homeowners to contribute their own labor (“sweat equity”) in the construction of their house and that of others. Carter, himself a master craftsman, has and continues to put in many hours a year in the construction of Habitat homes, “from the ground up,” inside and outside the United States.

Before going to the next level, it might be pointed out that despite the Nobel Peace Prize award, Carter—like the other two individuals discussed—has incurred criticisms for his activities, particularly in the present decade for his opposition to the Iraq war, for meeting with third world individuals who are considered as dangerous foes if not as “terrorists,” and for his unequivocal opposition to a bellicose foreign policy. As a person who has used his impressive expert knowledge of influential figures and factual materials to be at the forefront of activities seeking human development, irrespective of personal aggrandizement or political acclaim at home, Jimmy Carter well embodies being a “public global altruist.”

GLOBAL ALTRUISM: THE MESO LEVEL

There are many organizations which in part or in whole spend considerable time, energy, and resources on helping less fortunate individuals and groups overseas. That, of course is not new, if we consider secular and religious organizations undertaking charitable or humanitarian works overseas in the nineteenth century (such as the Anti-Slavery Society founded in 1823). One of the oldest organizations providing health care to victims of diseases, disasters, and violence is the International Red Cross, the brain child of a Swiss entrepreneur, Henri Dunant. He had witnessed the plight of uncared for badly wounded soldiers on the battlefield of Solferino (July 12, 1859) during the Crimean War, and had the vision for a non-belligerent organization to provide emergency humanitarian assistance to reduce suffering and protect prisoners and the wounded. Enlisting the commitment of other Swiss citizens, what became the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was launched in 1863, and a hundred years later the ICRC was the recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize (as had been Dunant as the first recipient of Nobel’s largesse in 1901).

The continuous activity of the ICRC and its country affiliates has expanded since its beginning to provide more than battlefield emergency health treatment, but also to protect prisoners of war and civilians from harsh treatment such as torture: one of its early endeavors in this respect resulted in the Geneva Convention. Basically, one might say the convention (which has evolved into four treaties dealing with the wounded, non-combatants or civilians, and prisoners of war), ratified by nearly 200 countries, seeks to
have “the others” viewed with compassion as fellow human beings in need of assistance, not as commodities to be disposed of at will.

Many other organizations have sprung up in the past century whose basic mission relates to actualizing global altruism, and as catalysts for this, global warfare or its threat, violence, economic globalization, and global warming and climate change have contributed to severe crises in the human condition of advanced modernity (Collier 2007). Consciousness of the interrelated set of concrete problems of the human condition has greatly expanded since the nineteenth century, even more since the end of World War II. Here one can cite as a global prise de conscience, under the UN’s prompting, the coming together at the start of this decade of countries committed to a collective effort within a 15-year time frame of eradicating the worst obstacles to development. These range from eradicating extreme poverty and hunger to promoting gender equality and global partnership for sustained development. At the 2008 midpoint of the Millennium Project, there has been progress in aid given to important areas of health (the treatment of AIDS/HIV, malaria, and tuberculosis in particular) and public education, but as table 23.1 shows, there is still a significant discrepancy between aid needed and aid provided. Moreover, what the figures do not show is how efficiently the donated aid is actually used for its intended purpose, since duplication of services, corruption, and lack of medical and trained personnel can reduce the impact of global altruism.

Nonetheless, there are non-governmental organizations (NGOs, or at the international level, INGOs) that have trained personnel and have been on the whole successful in carrying out their mission, despite a variety of hazards such as warfare and severe conflicts, on the one hand, or, on the other, by the lack of cooperation (if not outright hostility) by governments where aid is intended (as was seen in May 2008 by the unwillingness of the Myanmar government to allow U.S. military missions to fly in humanitarian aid to regions devastated by Cyclone Nargis). For the sake of brevity, I will discuss only two INGOs, but one could easily enlarge the list with such important non-profit, non-sectarian non-governmental organizations as the American Refugee Committee, the American Friends Service Com-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>$ Billion</th>
<th>Current</th>
<th>Needed</th>
<th>Missing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health and HIV and AIDS</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water and sanitation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

mittee, and International Oxfam. These are long-time altruists seeking to promote human rights, assist refugees, and promote health and other conditions “from the ground up.”

In the sphere of intervening globally on behalf of human rights and against inhumane treatment of “prisoners of conscience” who are denied “voice,” Amnesty International, begun by a British lawyer in 1961, has won a recognized place in the international community. Dependent upon private donations and volunteers, it gathers facts regarding country violations of human rights, such as torture and “rendition” of prisoners, seeks to make contacts with victims of abuses, and actively opposes the death penalty. Although as an NGO it lacks the means of enforcing sanctions on country violators, its annual report is an important document of global conscience that plays no favorites. Thus, its current report is equally adamant for China to live up to its human rights promises, for the United States to close Guantanamo and secret detention centers, and for Russia to cease human rights abuses in Chechnya. It provides an accessible “scorecard” of which countries have signed on and which have not, and who has abided by the basic 1948 International Human Rights Treaty and subsequent specific international and regional treaties pertaining to human rights. It signals current “flashpoints” that demand prompt action to forestall further human misery—in such places as Darfur, Zimbabwe, Gaza, Iraq, and Myanmar.27

Amnesty International thus functions, as briefly indicated above, as a non-governmental voice of global conscience, a voice for the otherwise voiceless. Its presence is made necessary, at least until such times as when states will have a greater conscience of their responsibilities to meeting rights of their subjects or under their command, rights which the international community recognizes and has codified for the past 60 years as human rights.28 It was the recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1977 for its campaign against torture, which unfortunately is still a state instrument 30 years later.

Complementing the humanitarian activities of Amnesty International are those engaged in by Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders (MSF), started in 1971 by a group of post–May 1968 French “hippie doctors.” They saw the need to provide emergency humanitarian assistance to civilian victims in situations of violent ethnic conflicts, as in the case of Biafra in Africa, and continue to do so in crisis and disaster situations without waiting for a government invitation. The initial group of volunteer health workers (doctors and nurses) has greatly expanded in multi-nation missions that carry on in decentralized fashion various projects of various time duration. It remains dependent on non-government donations and on a volunteer workforce, often operating in extremely hazardous zones where its workers have been killed and assassinated in the performance of humanitarian assistance.
In 2007 MSF had two-thirds of its projects taking place in Africa, one-fifth in Asia, and the rest in Latin America and Europe; the main group of causes that triggered intervention were violent armed conflict making victims of civilians (43 percent), epidemics (such as cholera) and endemic diseases (such as tuberculosis, measles, and malaria), social violence and healthcare exclusion, and natural disasters (floods, droughts, and others). Their humanitarian work includes promoting and doing research on common diseases in third world areas that major pharmaceutical companies may neglect (Drugs for Neglected Diseases Initiative), moving disaster victims to sites where they can receive medical assistance, distributing ready-to-use foods in districts of acute malnutrition, administering post-traumatic treatment at disaster sites, and promoting awareness of sexual violence against women and children. In fact, it is hard to think of an aspect of medical assistance, or an area of the world where it is needed, that is not covered by MSF (Bortolotti 2006).

Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders, like Amnesty International, actualizes well a “Model B” of globalization activism. It vigorously pursues global altruism, stepping into the gates of nature-made or man-made hell to provide a variety of medical assistance and humanitarian relief, with or without state support. The near “post-modern” quality of an organization that defies state borders and established channels to promote human betterment has de facto made it an attractive Model B for newer organizations. Thus, for the administration of health to populations lacking health care, Remote Area Medical (RAM), started by Amazon explorer Stan Brock in 1985, complements MSF in a number of ways. RAM also depends on a volunteer corps, of doctors, ophthalmologists, dentists, and even veterinarians, who undertake missions to remote areas where there are no health care facilities. Perhaps surprising is that most of their missions (or “expeditions”) are to remote places in the United States, the majority being in Appalachia (Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee), where a three-day clinic at a yearly visit is the only occasion for thousands of rural Americans to get a modicum of medical, dental, and ocular attention.

A further case in point outside the public health sector is “Sociologists without Borders”/Sociólogos sin Fronteras (SSF), founded in 2001, which, like “public sociology,” seeks to promote in its domestic and overseas chapters human rights, participatory democracy, equitable economies, peace, and sustainable ecosystems.

Like Amnesty International, MSF is a recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, won in 1999 for “pioneering humanitarian work on several continents.” And like Amnesty International and the individual altruists we have previously discussed, MSF has also received criticism for many of its initiatives which go outside borders and conventional pathways of humanitarian aid—sometimes because these pathways do not or no longer exist in crisis situations.
GLOBAL ALTRUISM: THE MACRO LEVEL

The most global actor in global altruism in terms of a comprehensive sweep of the world’s countries and its bureaucratic complexity is undeniably the United Nations, arising after the holocaust of World War II to maintain international peace and security. In bare fashion we can note that, despite many forces making for tensions within this large bureaucratic behemoth, there are important core agreements that peace (and the curtailment of interstate conflicts) and security are contingent on non-military factors. Consequently, although the UN has had provision since 1948 for a “peacekeeping” force that can provide military, policy, and observer personnel in situations where violent conflicts can engulf civilian populations, it has limited resources for direct military intervention in interstate or intrastate conflict. And the resources are even more severely constrained if one of the belligerents is a powerful country and the “other” is a region or a minority ethnic nation, especially if the more powerful denies the UN peacekeeping force the right to entry or to be an observer. Hence, the peacekeeping force of the UN has tended to be an after-the-fact agent monitoring peace or truce, after the violence has run most of its course.

A more efficacious arm of the United Nations has been the World Health Organization (WHO), headquartered in Geneva with six regional offices. WHO has taken a broad definition of health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being” and as an evolving aspect of its mission it is viewing and raising consciousness that public health is closely related to multiple other factors. Thus in 2007 WHO sponsored the World Health Day, which emphasized “international health security” needing cross-border cooperation and collaboration to forestall emerging diseases, humanitarian emergencies, and environmental degradation. And since 1995 WHO publishes yearly reports assessing from its vast set of databanks and networks emergent threats to public health security, a sort of “advance warning system.” Presently WHO is giving major emphasis to women’s health and to public health issues in Africa, the latter reflecting that for the period September 2003–September 2006, 44 percent of verified events of potential risk to international public health took place in that region.

Perhaps because public health has become recognized as a universally desirable condition of globalization (for the free movement of goods and people across borders and regions), perhaps because it is out of the public limelight, WHO has not drawn the criticism for its global activism that other agents previously discussed or that its parent the UN has.

The United Nations has promoted international public health as not only desirable in itself but also as conducive and essential for economic development of the world’s poorest countries. It is the latter theme we now turn to, linking it to the start of this essay with the UN formulation in 2000 of Millennium Development Goals: ending poverty and hunger, universal
education, gender equality, child and maternal health, combatting HIV/AIDS, environmental sustainability, and global partnership. In the fall of 2008, a UN summit meeting will have taken place to evaluate how these goals are being met in what countries with what projects. In terms of the evaluation of a similar Summit Meeting of major global leaders that took place in 2005, it is probable that progress has been realized albeit unevenly for some targets and, in some countries, but the overall targets will fall short. This is due to many factors including that many countries have not met their pledges and that new disasters, man-made and nature-made, have taken place that had not been counted on in 2000.

The macro level of global altruism is more than the activities of a single multidimensional entity which is the United Nations. It is also the activities of another set of macro actors, states. States carry out their cross-border and global activities with a mixture of domestic and foreign interests, with altruism in the form of providing aid or assistance to less fortunate countries (if not to less fortunate citizens at home) receiving secondary consideration in relation to other expenditures.

Two complementary tables provide an indication of global altruism by states. Table 23.2 indicates Official Development Assistance (ODA) by

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Aid Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>21,197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>11,048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>8,918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>8,839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>7,824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>5,621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>5,103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>3,853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>3,585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>3,509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>3,349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>2,302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>2,145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>1,756</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>1,613</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>1,596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>1,068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>446</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

country in 2007. What the figures do not show is the extent to which donor countries and amounts involve restrictions, which may range from determining how the money received is to be spent by the recipient and whether it be spent on goods and personnel furnished by the donor country to what health or education projects may not be financed, and so forth. When these and other restrictive factors are taken into account, altruism may not be as detached or disinterested as might be desirable.35

One last table on global altruism and individual states, table 23.3, presents the percentage of a country’s gross national income (GNI) that goes to Official Development Assistance (ODA), bearing in mind a commitment made at the UN General Assembly in 1970 of donor governments to spend 0.7 percent of GNI on ODA. What the table indicates is that 30 years later, only five of the wealthiest countries of the world (including three in Scandinavia) are carrying out the original target, or even the recently revised downward target of 0.56 percent of GNI accepted as a commitment to uplift those still mired in extremes of poverty and its hazards for health. The United States, while contributing the most in total dollars (keeping in mind that this includes a large portion of “phantom aid”) is lowest in giving as a percentage of GNI.

Table 23.3. Net ODA in 2007 as Percent of GNI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Aid Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>0.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>0.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>0.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In conclusion, this chapter has sought to be an introduction to global altruism as a set of practices undertaken by various groups of actors. This has been done more at an empirical, descriptive level than at a more comparative or even normative level. A more comparative level would examine forms of global altruism outside the frames discussed here based tacitly on Western agency (for example, in Buddhism and Islam). Extending the analysis to the normative is necessary, not logically but existentially, very much in keeping with “public sociology,” with which it has affinity. It is not a need for benign charity that is required but rather a need to instill awareness from the top down and from the ground up that global altruism is not only the highest activity of globalization but also that the “other” is an integral part of the global community, that our being-in-the-world is contingent on the other’s well-being in the world with us. Ultimately, it is a question of resetting the priorities of globalization, from the micro to the macro level, mobilizing both the private and the public sector, and increasing public awareness, and appreciation of global altruists as models of global activists.

That is a task to pursue with global altruism, an extension of the program proposed by Jeffries et al. (2006) in light of the pioneering studies of Sorokin.

NOTES


3. A tragic instance in point is Ethiopia, where millions of its rural inhabitants face famine due to a population that has doubled in 20 years, crop failures due to drought, and soaring global food and fertilizer prices; the “man-made” aspect of the Ethiopian disaster is the government’s steep increase in its military budget to fight border warfare with Eritrea and U.S.-backed military expeditions in Somalia. See www.usatoday.com/news/world/2008-08-17-ethiopia_N.htm and http://english.aljazeera.net/news/africa/2008/06/20086150858597530.html.


5. Anecdotally, at a recent community meeting in North Carolina sponsored by the NGO Witness for Peace, we heard a report that in conflict-devastated Colombia
a significant segment of the Bogota population lives in below “extreme poverty”
levels, in what is simply called “misery.”

6. Among others, see Joseph Stieglitz, Globalization and Its Discontents (New
York: W.W. Norton, 2002).

7. Pitirim A. Sorokin, Man and Society in Calamity: The Effects of War, Revolution,
Famine, Pestilence upon Human Mind, Behavior, Social Organization and Cultural Life

8. Michael Burawoy, “Public Sociologies: Contradictions, Dilemmas, and Poss-

9. Barry V. Johnston, Pitirim A. Sorokin: An Intellectual Biography (Lawrence: Uni-

10. Two of the four were single-authored by Sorokin: Altruistic Love (Boston:
Beacon Press, 1950) and The Ways and Power of Love: Types, Factors, and Techniques of
Moral Transformation (Boston: Beacon Press, 1954); two were symposia organized by
Sorokin: Explorations in Altruistic Love and Behavior (Boston: Beacon Press, 1950) and

It is beside the point to explicate Sorokin’s own explorations of love and altruism,
and how these concerns relate to broader dimensions of his oeuvre, such as civiliza-
tional analysis. There are several works that provide the reader with such overviews,
besides the essential text of Johnston, notably Ford, Richard, and Talbutt (1996),


in a Divided World (London & New York: Routledge, 2004); David Held, Global
Covenant: The Social Democratic Alternative to the Washington Consensus (Cambridge,

13. See U.S. Department of State, Trafficking in Persons Report 2008, which es-
timates about 800,000 cases of cross-border trafficking yearly (the great majority
being women) and much more in the aggregate of intra-state trafficking for sexual
exploitation or forced labor (tantamount to and often including slavery). www.
.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2008/105376.htm.

14. Even in the case of the World Bank and the IMF, which seek to promote eco-
nomic growth and development for the less fortunate countries, the strictures on
economic assistance, resulting in cutbacks in welfare measures, make their actions
less than bona fide global altruistic agencies. It is tempting to contrast these two
models thusly: for Model A, what is good for me and my country is good for the
world; for Model B, what is good for the world, is good for me and my country.

15. For a parallel perspective, see DeChaine (2005).

16. In this respect, a very important complement to the agencies of global al-
truism discussed in this chapter is that generated by the micro-credit movement
launched in Bangladesh by economist Muhammad Yunus with his Grameen Bank
Project. It has demonstrated the capacity “from the ground up” of people at the
grassroots level being able with minimal capital to transform their economic condi-
tion. He and the Grameen movement were recipients of the Nobel Peace Prize in
2005, having provided credit to over 5,000,000 people worldwide.
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18. I take “societal community” as that broad inclusive category formulated by Talcott Parsons and explicated by Gerhardt (2001).

19. She set up the first house for AIDS patients in New York City in 1985.

20. Started in 1901 from a bequest of Alfred Nobel, inventor of TNT, the Peace Prize is awarded, among basic criteria, for “best work for fraternity between nations,” which would readily apply to Sorokin’s notion of “amitology.” I take the Nobel Peace Prize as a global recognition of altruistic behavior done by individuals or organizations to promote the peace process. Individual recipients have included Albert Schweitzer, Martin Luther King Jr., and the Buddhist activist Aung San Suu Kyi. For criticisms of the selection process producing commissions as well as omissions, see the section “Controversy” in en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nobel_Peace_Prize.

21. While a member of the French Assembly, he donated his salary to the relief work of the destitute.

22. For glimpses of the Abbé Pierre’s “rag pickers” (chiffonniers) at the first Emmaus community, see Simon (1955).

23. For an overview of the major activities, see Carter (2007).


25. “I have expressed strong opposition to the recent adoption of preemptive war as a policy that departs radically from that of previous administrations,” Carter (2007:252).


27. For Amnesty International Report 08, see thereport.amnesty.org/eng.report-08-at-a-glance.

28. In December 1948 the UN General Assembly passed Resolution 217A (III), whose 30 articles constituted the International Declaration of Human Rights. It has subsequently been expanded with additional legislation, conventions, and treaties. For specific rights, see www.un.org/overview/rights.html.


30. As of June 2008, RAM with 36,675 volunteers had met 357,368 patients, provided over 70,000 eyeglasses, and extracted 109,000 teeth, in addition to evacuating by air over 1,000 emergency patients in Amerindian villages (ramusa.org/learn/accomplishments.htm); for additional materials on the history and mission of RAM, see the 2008 interview in Newsweek, www.newsweek.com/id/150847?tid=relatedcl.

31. sociologistswithoutborders.org.

32. In the past five years, WHO has verified more than 1,100 epidemics worldwide, and documented that we have seen in this decade 40 diseases that were unknown a generation ago: www.who.int/whr/2007/en/index/html.


35. For details on “phantom aid” versus “real aid,” and how countries rank on their share of phantom aid, see Anup Shah, “US and Foreign Aid Assistance,” www.globalissues.org/article/35/us-and-foreign-aid-assistance. It is estimated that between 25–40 percent of the value of aid is dissipated by restrictions or “tied aid” (28).

36. I am indebted to Dr. Tomihide Kashioka for this suggestion.
REFERENCES

“Walter Benjamin’s angel of history is facing towards the past and surveying the chaos of the present wrought by stormy historical events. Progress propels him towards the future to which his back is turned.” Thus starts Michael Burawoy’s 2004 presidential address. The angel, however, is not alone in taking this standpoint. It is also the temporal position from which scientific investigations are conducted and evidence is established. The angel’s position and perspective can thus serve as a metaphor for sociological practice. This positioning points to a gap between our future-oriented and future-producing subject matter and disciplinary practice that has yet to be addressed across the four knowledge practices of professional, critical, policy, and public sociology as delineated in Michael Burawoy’s address. Evidence-based science gathers facts from the temporal domains of past and present and, where appropriate, projects these forward into the future. Our daily lives, however, are conducted projectively, surrounded by the open and fluid horizon of past and future. We move in this temporal domain with great agility, pirouetting and swiveling to face both past and future, twisting and turning in the knowledge realms of perception, memory, and anticipation. We operate with equal confidence in the action domains of planning and future making, alternating perspective between anticipated future presents and enacted present futures without giving much thought to the matter.

Futures are made continuously, across the world, every second of the day. They are produced by the breadth of social institutions: politics, law and the economy, science, medicine and technology, education, and religion. They are constituted at the level of the individual, the family, social groups, companies, and nations. These created futures extend temporally from the very
short to the extremely long term, spatially from the local to the regional, national, international, and global, and materially from the surface to the core of the quantum. Moreover, much of today’s social world encompasses not just social relations, institutions, and social structures but also the natural environment. In its futurity much of this socio-environmental world is not material and thus not factual in the conventional sense but marked by latency and immanence. It is a world of actions and deeds under way: not yet materialized as symptoms, not yet congealed into matter. It is the process future of chemical, nuclear, biological, genetic, and fiscal activity, set in motion by socio-political, legal, scientific, technological, economic, and everyday enacting practices. The actions and processes associated with this “future in the making” are ongoing, producing layers and layers upon layers of past and present futures as well as future presents and pasts.

Much of this futurity and future making escapes the angel of history and is bracketed in the scientific mode of inquiry which continues to focus primarily on our social relations’ spatial and material extension, thus those aspects that can be measured and counted. The implicit understanding prevails that the study of society is conducted on the basis of “hindsight” in a historically extended, spatially and materially constituted now. This sociological neglect of the social future as subject matter has created a black hole of knowledge that permeates the four modes of sociological inquiry in different ways. Recognizing and understanding the disjuncture between the temporal standpoint of sociology and the world we study, I want to argue, is a precondition to achieving Burawoy’s ambitious vision for the discipline.

The task, however, is not an easy one. By definition “futures” have not yet emerged as (present) phenomena and symptoms. As the “not yet” futures lack reality status and are not amenable to empirical study. But does this necessarily place them outside the domain of sociological competence? Does their potentiality make the creation of socio-cultural and socio-environmental futures an exclusively political problem or is social futurity also a central subject for sociological inquiry in general and public sociology in particular? What might be involved in social investigations that are temporally extended into the future? Is sociology equipped conceptually and methodologically to deal with a temporal extension into the future? What might be the particular barriers to be overcome and tasks to be achieved by the different forms of sociological practice?

These are some of the questions I want to begin to consider in this contribution to the handbook on public sociology. Accordingly, I look at the way sociologists have approached the social future and with broad brush-strokes paint a picture that takes us from early beginnings of the discipline to the present. Turning our attention to the future, I am particularly interested to focus discussion on some of the central tensions and difficulties that arise
for sociological and social engagement with the “not yet” in order to begin to open up the issues for collaborative consideration and debate.

**SOCILOGICAL APPROACHES TO THE FUTURE: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW**

Concern with the future is to be found at the very beginning of the social science enterprise and of sociology as an independent academic discipline. This early social science interest in the future was closely tied to industrialization and the periods of intense political turmoil between the middle of the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. With the rise of scientific knowledge and the socio-economic capacity to apply a rational calculus to ever widening spheres of social life, the future was no longer a mere continuation of the past but became increasingly a consequence of actions in the present, as detailed by John Bury (1955[1932]), Jacques Le Goff (1980) and in my own work (Adam 2004, 2006a, and 2006b; Adam and Groves 2007). This was nowhere more apparent than in France during this historical period. Accordingly it was the key social thinkers of France that spearheaded a form of social science that, it was hoped, would help to bring about the desired new world.

In his book *The Prophets of Paris* historian Frank E. Manuel (1962) describes Anne Robert Jacques Turgot; Marie Jean Caritat, Marquis de Condorcet; Claude Henri de Rouvroy, Comte de Saint-Simon; Francois Charles Fourier; and Auguste Comte as thinkers and commentators with a social mission. All, he suggests, were concerned not just to “unveil” the future but also to steer it in a particular direction. All sought to contribute to the cumulative effects of innovation, to aid progress and to help facilitate a climate of openness for novelty and change. They put their faith not in revolution but in the perfectibility of human beings, the power of reason, tolerance, love, and brotherhood. Most importantly, they saw themselves as moral agents for change, laboring for posterity and a better future. None of them saw a contradiction between their commitment to science as the path to truth and their normative engagement in the active production of futures they prophesied. At that point in the discipline’s history the four domains of sociological practice were still unified.

From a different thought tradition and political context Karl Marx too sought not merely to interpret but to change the world. As he insisted in his *Theses XI on Feuerbach*, “philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it” (Marx and Engels 1969:13–15). Thus, like the French social thinkers before him, Karl Marx provided visions of how the world could (and should) be different from its present alienated form and identified paths that would lead to the utopian ideal he constructed.
Whether or not it was explicitly argued in those terms, in Karl Marx’s work, like that of the Prophets of Paris detailed by Frank E. Manuel (1962), social theory was indissolubly tied to practice, interpretation to normative conduct, science to politics, and prophecy to product. What early French social thinkers and Karl Marx held in common, therefore, was a commitment to make the world a better place. They were the original public sociologists who wanted to identify and shape their history in the making. All viewed themselves as future makers, placing their faith in the power of reason and in science as means to achieve their desired visions.

This explicitly activist, future oriented approach to social analysis came to an end with the normative science of Karl Marx and was replaced by the more objectivist social science of Emile Durkheim and his followers on the one hand and the interpretive emphasis in the work of Max Weber and the Symbolic Interactionists on the other. The sociological approach to the future is deeply implicated in this fundamental change which permeated both these otherwise opposing conceptual and methodological traditions. While the objectivist mode of sociological investigation prohibited the normative stance and thus militated against promotion of specific futures, the interpretative perspective prioritized the past and present as sources of understanding and the creation of meaning. Alternatively, interpretative investigations were conducted in a de-temporalized, synchronic realm of meaning and social rules. A notable example of this would be Peter Winch’s (1958) influential The Idea of a Social Science. Thus, with the focus on “function,” “structure,” and “meaning,” concern with shaping the future went out of sociological favor and professional standards, which bracketed the future, were instituted and maintained. As Michael Burawoy (2005:5) notes, “if our predecessors set out to change the world we have too often ended up conserving it.”

It was not until the 1960s that a renewed interest in the future began to flourish. In Western sociological circles there re-emerged an explicit and intense engagement with the future, appropriate to the pervasive post–World War II feeling of optimism, sense of progress, and trust in technological promise. In the United States this turned into a serious commitment to post-Parsonian sociology that extended over a period of twenty years and more. In the UK and continental Europe scientists from across the full range of social sciences received funding from their respective research councils to think about the future and to establish the social sciences’ contribution to this central aspect of social existence. Examples of this work would be Daniel Bell (1974), Arthur C. Clarke (1964), Rene Dumont (1974), Christopher Freeman and Marie Jahoda, eds. (1978) and Michael Young, ed. (1968) for the UK, and the edited volume by Robert Jungk and Johan Galtung (1969) for northern European approaches. While much of the UK’s social scientists’ work on the future was primarily concerned with the production of
better forecasts and methods for foresight, that is, with improving ways of looking into the future, a number of their U.S. counterparts sought to make the engagement with the future central to the sociological enterprise, that is, to adjust its focus and method to a social world for which the orientation to the future was at the core of social activity. In this chapter I will concentrate my efforts primarily on approaches that looked not into but at the future.2

The U.S. social context for this re-emergence of sociological concern with the future was the Vietnam War and the technological promise of space travel, computers, and nuclear power. The emergent “Sociology of the Future,” associated prominently with an edited book of that title by Wendell Bell and James A. Mau (1971b), as well as the work of Wilbert E. Moore (1966) and Alvin Toffler (1970), provided a fresh sociologically integrated approach to analyzing social reality and directing social processes. It was focused on the study of probable, possible, and preferable futures of which the latter included values and responsibility. It entailed an action orientation that combined description, analysis, critique, and a normative stance. As such, it involved efforts to create a better world and required from social scientists visions, images, and utopias of the “good life.” It explicitly accepted the constitutive nature of knowledge thus produced, and saw sociologists as part of (rather than external to) the reality they studied. Crucially, proponents of the sociology of the future recognized that the capacity to create and control futures comes attached with the burden of responsibility. Like their French predecessors, they conceived of themselves as “future makers” and saw the task of sociology as engagement with purposes, planning and policy, in other words, with social engineering. Since, however, this approach was inaugurated as a response to the sterile and inappropriate past and present orientation of the professionalized discipline these sociologists of the future could no longer take the naïve unified position of the founders of social science. Instead, they had to defend their position and theorize their stance.

Thus, in agreement with George Herbert Mead’s (1980[1932]) analysis of the reality status of the social future, Wendell Bell and James A. Mau (1971a:9) considered the future to be real only in the present and thus conceived of both past and future as the ideational spheres of memory and anticipation. This meant that the study of the “not yet” could only be approached from the standpoint of the present. To research the prospective and projective realm (both designated ideational aspects of social life) required investigations of images on the one hand and the production of predictions of the possible on the other. For the study of images (individual and collective), visions were conceived as orientations to action in the present and considered to be facts that could be tested against future events. Investigations of predictions of the possible, in contrast, were seen as the search for real possibilities that were amenable to planning, projection, and activation in the present.
Regrettably, the sociologists of the future did not achieve a level of acceptance that would allow their approach to alter the dominant position. With renewed socio-political emphasis on evidence-based science, this mid-twentieth-century wave of sociological interest in the projective realm of our subject matter could not be maintained, and for another two decades the future ceased to be a legitimate topic for sociology across all its forms and expressions. Funding for sociological research reverted to topics and investigations that were considered to be grounded in “fact” and deemed to be socially useful in and for the present. Thus, with this next objectivist wave, the future as empirically problematic realm of the “not yet” once more lost its attractiveness to sociology as both object of study and potential subject for normative intervention. With the revitalized commitment to positivist social science, responsibility for the study of this social domain had been abdicated to futurologists and foresight experts in business. Until recently, therefore, the discipline charged to explain our social world had fallen silent once more on this key aspect of social life. It bracketed this part of social existence and relegated it to the shadow realm of the disattended. Across the world, sociologists who have continued to pursue the social future as the subject matter of their choice, such as Eleonora Masini (Italy), Wendell Bell (United States), and Richard Slaughter (Australia), thus found themselves drawn to futurist networks as their intellectual homes and outlets for their publications.

We can discern here a scissor movement analogous to the one Michael Burawoy (2005:6) identifies in his first thesis. We find that the more futures are made over ever longer periods the harder it becomes for sociologists to engage with this subject matter. That is to say, professional sociologists find it ever more difficult to investigate these processes, policy sociologists to identify paths to desired ends, and public sociologists to offer critical interventions and open the subject for public debate. This leaves critical sociologists with the urgent task to scrutinize our disciplinary assumptions, approaches, and knowledge practices for their appropriateness to the contemporary context in which futures are produced for millennia hence.

CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT WITH ASSUMPTIONS

Critical sociological attention to futurity at the level of theory shows that some of our discipline’s most basic distinctions act as barriers to serious engagement with our subject matter’s social relations of the future and demonstrates that our key assumptions shape and frame our world in a particular way. Thus, for example, it became obvious that the ways we understand facts, materiality, and the ideational realm are deeply implicated
in the difficulty. It is thus the task of critical theorists to identify the problems, make barriers visible, and explore alternatives.

Michel Serres (1999[1982]), for example, shows that “facts” are tied to specific ways of knowing, that is, to object thinking and an emphasis on the spatial and material. Object thinking brackets and thus conceals the temporal and invisible, the immaterial and unbounded in the subject matter. It negates processuality, temporal becoming, futurity, and creativity, which are key characteristics of both life and social activity, allowing “observers” to see only time slices, know facts as freeze-frames, and experience moments frozen in time. Social facts can be facts only after they have been de-temporalized, that is, abstracted from the ongoing temporality of being-becoming and detached from their inherent temporal extension. Clearly, social facts are not bounded in and of themselves: we make them so in order to render accessible and manageable the infinite, transient, contingent, and future-oriented complexity of social life. To this end we infuse the temporal complexity with simplicity and clarity. This a-temporal stance on temporally extended social “facts,” therefore, facilitates not only counting, measurement, and classification but also the illusion of control on the one hand and of “objectivity” and “ethical neutrality” on the other. It is therefore important to remain cognizant of the fundamental temporality and futurity of any de-temporalized facts under investigation.

Furthermore, in our principle classifications the world of ideas is separated from the sphere of facts, the realm of mind from that of matter. Enacted ideas, however, have socio-physical consequences, whence they become facts. Some enacted ideas may take on material form quite quickly, while others, such as effects from smoking, hormone-disrupting chemicals, or low-level radiation may not materialize as symptoms for a very long time. Where impacts penetrate matter and are stretched across space and time these socio-environmental “futures in the making” need to be recognized as both material reality and latent process-world of an encoded, invisible kind beyond the reach of our senses. By associating the future and futurity with the ideational sphere, that is, the mind world of desire and design, projection and planning, sociology relegates this central domain of social life to the realm of the immaterial and thus renders it unreal. With this move, any potential, latent, immanent, and thus invisible impact is considered immaterial because it is no longer recognized as an empirical “fact,” thus of “no material consequence” until it materializes as symptom. To restrict human futurity and the creation of future presents to the ideational domain of human purpose, therefore, means that we lose sight of the other side of cultural futures: that we create process futures and thus produce future presents that are de facto the domain of sociological inquiry, irrespective of and despite the empirical and theoretical difficulties involved.
To re-center the temporal and to make futurity explicit through critical analysis, therefore, is to emphasize not merely the present domain of expectation and the empirically accessible realm of social products but, equally, to stress the importance of an immanent process reality beyond empirical access. Against the assertion of sociologists of the future that argue that “there are no future facts” (Brumbaugh 1966:649; Bell and Mau 1971a:9; Jouvenel 1967) we need to consider that there is a future present in progress whose process reality is material despite not being accessible by conventional empirical means. Sociological engagement with such future presents requires a new sense of “facticity,” one that undermines conventional dualisms of facts and ideas. It necessitates finding ways that can encompass this cultural future not just as the realm of predictable knowledge based on past experience (ours and that of science) or as known or reported goals and values but, equally, as created process futures in the making: expected and unexpected, intended and unintended, material and latent, unknown and unknowable. Dualistic categories of mind and matter, ideas and facts are clearly inappropriate to that task. Only when the temporal silences begin to get expressed and the invisible is given form, will the reality expressed through our sociological theories begin to resonate with the immanent process-world beyond empirical accessibility. Only then will veracity and “the real” cease to be associated exclusively with the visual and material. Only then will facts and values take on a temporal hue.

Clearly, taking these issues seriously is not easy for any of the forms of sociological inquiry. It demands first identification and then implementation of changes at the very foundational center of professional sociology. Importantly, it requires critique to be both sociological and social. For public sociologists it means absorbing the critique, taking on board the foundational changes, understanding how engagement with future-making changes the scientific method, grasping the implications of this for the full range of social institutions, identifying openings for socio-political change and helping to translate these implications into potential action across the domains of social practice. More than ever before, therefore, public sociology needs to build bridges between academia and public life and provide a common frame of reference for sociological and public approaches to future making. Taking on this task public sociologists will find themselves on fertile ground.

In the late twentieth century public interest in the future has been rising on a number of fronts. It became important for socio-environmental work on sustainability and pertinent for understanding and guiding socio-political engagements with environmental problems such as ozone depletion, global warming, and climate change. These developments in turn focused sociological attention on socio-technical innovations whose often unpredictable effects penetrated matter and extended across vast spatial
and temporal distances, as shown in the work of Ulrich Beck (1992, 1999), Brian Wynne (2005) and my (1998a) *Timescapes of Modernity*. Moreover, they opened for sociological investigation the difficult subject of ignorance and/or non-knowledge as products of scientific control, political rationality, and economic calculation (Adam and Groves 2007; Beck and May 2001; Böschen and Wehling 2004; Ravetz 1987; and Wynne 2005). This focus on uncertainty and non-knowledge brought into sharp relief the problematic nature not just of sociology’s but also of contemporary society’s key assumptions and thus required critical engagement with taken-for-granted presuppositions and categories in both the professional and public domain. In my own work, which straddles critical and public sociology, I have mapped both these temporal domains with respect to action, knowledge, and ethics and identified deeply embedded and institutionalized structures of irresponsibility (Adam 1998a; Adam and Groves 2007). This work consciously addresses multiple publics. It speaks to sociologists as both professionals and citizens and to citizens in both their public and private roles. As such it seeks to keep together what our professional division of labor allowed to drift apart and to recover the moral and political ethos that all too easily gets displaced in the quest for scientific recognition and academic credentials.

### PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY, FUTURE MAKING, AND RESPONSIBILITY

As public sociologists we are charged to explain social processes and interdependencies, show historical differences and continuities, point to problems and inequalities, and, where possible, identify openings for social change. When we investigate contemporary actions whose effects permeate matter and stretch across time and space, the first thing to note is that both legally and morally we feel exonerated from responsibility when outcomes could not be foreseen at the time of action. The nuclear industry can serve as an example to illustrate this point. The people who counseled governments on whether or not to establish a nuclear capability, and who happened not to include in their considerations associated problems of safety, were and still are not being held legally responsible for either the resulting health hazards or the economic burden of the billions of dollars required for the decommissioning of power plants and the management of radioactive waste. We find, moreover, that installations are covered by limited liability only, which means that society is expected to foot any bill that might arise with accidents or leakages. This explicit recognition of the (non)knowledge-responsibility link is even enshrined in law. In the United States, for example, the Price-Anderson Act was introduced in 1957 specifically to limit the liability of
nuclear power plant operators in the event of an accident (Shrader-Frechette 1993). It has been renewed several times since, and now limits the amount of liability for each site to $300 million.

Whether formally or informally, non-knowledge as well as unintended and unforeseen consequences absolve us from personal and public responsibility. Yet, for some socio-technological unforeseen effects the tide is turning. Thalidomide, asbestosis, smoking-related diseases, and similar technologically produced hazards are cases in point where companies are being held responsible for the unforeseen harm produced by their products. Thus far, however, such apportioning of responsibility for effects that are stretched across time, space, and matter applies predominantly to cases where causal chains can be established over the lifetimes of individuals. As yet, it has not been clarified, either legally or politically, what happens to responsibility in contemporary situations where effects do not or may not materialize as symptoms for hundreds and even thousand of years.

Clarification on such matters is difficult to achieve because our implicit moral codes are no longer appropriate to their contemporary context. In his seminal *The Imperative of Responsibility*, Hans Jonas (1984[1976]) suggests that our contemporary models of morality have their roots in Greek antiquity where responsibility was thought to apply between living individuals in the present and was guided by eternal principles related to goodness and beauty, truth and justice. This meant that moral action and matters of ethics were defined by close proximity, thus limited in time and space. The long-term future in contrast was associated with fate, providence, and destiny. It was the realm of gods and thus not subject to human planning, debate, and moral action. As such it was outside the sphere of human responsibility. Today, however, we find ourselves in a new moral context of obligation toward a technologically produced, long-term future. This contemporary condition is tied first to the socio-scientific capacity to create futures that outlast their originators, second to the potential to threaten not just individual existences but the continuity of our species and life as we know it, and third to the pursuit of progress which destabilizes eternal values and renders them historical. This means that today the foundations for responsibility have shifted from an exclusively individual to a collective base, from a predominantly local to a global scale of effects and from primarily present impacts to actions that may not materialize as symptoms for a very long time. The commonsense ethical assumptions, which we have inherited from the Greeks, therefore, are no longer appropriate for the contemporary condition.

First, while the future has always been uncertain, humans were not called upon to take responsibility for what was considered the realm of gods or God. They were merely required to act responsibly in and toward the realm that did not belong to them. In a secular social world, which is un-
derstood to be (to a large extent at least) the outcome of human action, in contrast, the unknown and unknowable futures of our making do become our responsibility. That is to say, uncertainty of potential outcomes cannot absolve producers of long-term, open-ended impacts from responsibility to those affected in remote times and places. The difficulty is that innovation increases the indeterminacy of unbounded effects. This in turn makes exclusive reliance on scientific prediction and economic risk calculation inappropriate since both are established on known pasts. Where past-based prediction and calculation fail we are confronted instead with questions about justice, rights, and possible harm to future beings that require our urgent attention.

Second, the effects of today’s socio-technical, socio-economic, and political processes, such as nuclear technology, for example, are no longer spatially or temporally bounded. Radiation (although most dangerous in the immediate vicinity of any leakage or accident) permeates outward in space, spreads inward in matter, organisms, and bodies, and extends temporally into the long-term future. Moral principles grounded in the immediacy of the here and now, therefore, need to be adjusted to both the footprint and the timeprint of potential outcomes (Adam and Groves 2007). Such expansion of responsibility to the potential reach of actions places us in a different position with respect to what can and can’t be known, done, and controlled. This means that responsibility can no longer be exclusively routed via knowledge. In contexts of extensive uncertainty therefore, a direct link has to be established between action and ethics, ethics and action.

Third, through the ages responsibility had been associated with individuals and their deeds. While this still holds good today, especially in the application of our laws, technological innovations such as nuclear power, for example, have the potential to affect the living conditions of all people now and in the future. In recognition of the trans-boundary nature of this innovative technology (and others that share these features), the ethical project of modernity has to be expanded beyond individual responsibility to encompass collectives at the national and international level. Moreover, since liability for associated costs continues to be increasingly externalized to society at large, it is society who needs to come to decisions about the nuclear present and future. Not politicians whose mandate expires after their period of office, not scientists who build and maintain the installations, not insurance companies who cover limited liability but society carries the responsibility and thus will have to debate trans-boundary policies with the potential to effect others in space and time—somewhere, some time.

Finally, the transformative power of humans has always been extensive. In the industrial age, however, this capacity has reached undreamed of heights and fundamentally changed our relationship to nature. Today, nature is no longer the mere backdrop to human action but is subject to
scientific intervention and invention. As such, nature in all its facets has become ethically significant. In light of the mismatch between ethical assumptions and the reach of socio-technical effects we are charged to rethink our traditional anthropocentric responses and produce principles more appropriate for our ecological footprint and timeprint. This requires opening up ethical concern beyond the interests of humanity to encompass, as our responsibility, the material, spatial, and temporal sphere of impact, which extends beyond the human social to all of nature and the physical bases of our existence.

Thus, we can see that although moral issues have long ceased to be a central domain for sociological inquiry and comment they take on renewed significance in socio-environmental contexts, where our action potential extends into an open future. To take a position on the ethics of contemporary technological and socio-political action, however, is a political act that perforates and blinds boundaries between professional and citizen. It allows the original ethos of sociology to rise to the surface and (re)invigorate the profession as a “moral and political force,” to quote Michael Burawoy (2005:6). Once we take that step toward public engagement, we quickly discover that here too the future is an extremely difficult territory. It is troubling at the level of both assumptions and institutions.

We find, for example, that the system of liberal democratic politics has developed primarily a politics of space and matter. Its sphere of responsibility extends to a nation’s territory, its resources, and its wealth distribution. It is in charge of things that can be measured and counted: territories, people, institutions, traffic, crime, budgets, and Gross National Products. With political debates on climate change, the management of nuclear power and its waste products, the regulation of chemicals, strategies about genetic engineering, and approaches to nano-technology, however, politics has entered the future worlds of tens, hundreds, and even thousands of generations hence. This means that decisions made and policies established by today’s liberal democracies operate outside the spatial and material framework for which they had largely been established. That is to say, when risks and hazards, created within the jurisdictional time-space of a particular liberal democracy, transcend the boundaries of its legitimate authority, their impacts and costs are in effect externalized: to other nations and/or to successor generations. The problems are shunted along, moved outside the sphere of responsibility.

From a spatial and materialist perspective, hazards externalized across time are no longer recognized in principle as the concern of the offending nation’s representative government in office. The long-term policies routinely pursued by contemporary liberal democracies, therefore, transgress the temporal boundaries of their political mandates and realms of jurisdiction. Moreover, since elected representatives are responsible to their
electorate only, and since it is this electorate that bestows legitimacy on a government, the rights of people distant in time who cannot enact that power relation are discounted. To put it differently, the politics of space and matter operate with impunity in the temporal domain of the future in which all of us are trespassers. Incredibly, we have no political structures in place that address this problem. We have no guardians of the long-term future, no political body with the task to represent the unborn, no legal system geared to the long-term effects of future making. This, however, is a problem not of science, not of economics, not even of law and politics. It is a problem for contemporary society which needs to be addressed by contemporary society. It is to be handled through discussion about what is right and what is just. As public sociologists we need to facilitate and as citizens we need to hold those debates in the full knowledge that our decisions and actions with their effects make us trespassers in the future of others, that we are inescapably illegal immigrants in their worlds and that they have not given their consent.

As members of liberal democracies we need to acknowledge that our collusion with the policies produced by political representatives makes us responsible for the techno-futures set in motion: yesterday, today, and tomorrow. We are charged therefore as citizens, professionals, and private individuals not just to understand the contemporary bracketing of futurity but also to seek openings for conceptual and institutional change. We can achieve such a shift in concern and approach only if we reconnect the social spheres of action, knowledge, and ethics. Moreover, given that certainty of knowledge is not available for the contemporary process-world of futures in the making, we need to approach the ethical domain not as the last dependent element of this relation but as the first one. In other words, where knowledge is patchy or not available, we need to establish a direct connection between action and ethics and stop making responsibility for effects of our deeds dependent on knowledge of the outcomes of such actions. Knowledge needs to be utilized instead as helpful but subordinate (re)source to responsible action. To take our responsibility seriously, therefore, requires change at the deep structural level of implicit assumptions, scientific method, politics, law, and organizational structure. As such the future is our most challenging domain of social inquiry and practice.

The task for public sociology is therefore complex and encompasses many strands. It entails critical engagement with social practice, identifying problematic assumptions, inappropriate knowledge, and/or the lack of relevant institutions. It necessitates comment on issues of justice, ethics, and responsibility. And it requires constructive input such as exploring and identifying openings for change and help with mapping out possible options for alternative practices. In each of these strands of engagement public sociologists are future makers. With the division of labor it is possible for
public sociologists to take on this role which defined the beginnings of our discipline in the secure knowledge that others will guard the professional standard, serve the policy field and act as the conscience of the discipline.

CONCLUSION

The work of sociologists who engaged with social futures has opened up different paths, each with relevance for the contemporary situation. Early French thinkers infused their respective approaches with a sense of moral duty to assist their contemporaries on the way to a better future. Karl Marx identified roots of the social ills of his time and produced a utopian vision that inspired generations. Sociologists of the future sought and are still seeking to bring the social future into the fold of mainstream sociology. Each of these efforts to encompass the future was and is concerned to make social science practice appropriate to the contemporary condition. What remains to be achieved, as I sought to show in this chapter, are foundational changes at both the conceptual and the institutional level.

Sociologists are “future makers”—that was the assertion and the vision presented by the founders of the social sciences and by the sociologists of the future. As future makers we need to render the invisible visible, make future presents tangible, give form to the “not yet,” provide analyses that take the future seriously as supreme realm of social practice and transaction, and acknowledge our inescapable constitutive involvement. The angel of history’s perspective is inappropriate for this task. From the angel’s perspective we can only survey the damage but cannot understand the processes that created it together with our implication. We can map the resulting social ills of predecessors’ future making but have no means to prevent potential future disasters of our making. We can amass evidence but have no tools to intervene, no power to change the course of history. We are observers and onlookers rather than active participants and change agents. This surely is not the ethos of sociology, not the reason why students join the profession. To use our sociological imagination for the good of society requires moral commitment together with a thorough-going futures perspective. To achieve the latter we have to remember and reactivate our everyday skills of agile movement and conduct in the temporal domain. We have to embark on what Michael Burawoy (2005:5) calls “systematic back translation” and (re)gain competence in the dance of time, the pirouetting and swiveling that enables us to encompass both past and future while keeping us grounded in space and matter. To take on this challenge will not be easy and it will change sociology to the core and across all its branches. But it will be worth it. It will revitalize the discipline and ensure its relevance for the century ahead.
FUTURE
FUTURITY
SOCIOLOGY
Future
Futurities
Future presents
Challenge to sociology
Future makers are we
Our desires & expectations
Hopes & fears, projections & plans
All implicated in our knowledge practices
The study of futurity is focus on shadows
The shadows beckon to be illuminated
Illusions of detachment disintegrate
Implicated we are contributors
Contributors are responsible
The future their subject & duty
Present futures amenable to science
Future presents realm of values & morals
We study futurity as present future
With tools from a by-gone age
Finding answers in the past
We seek the unknowable
Challenge to sociology
Future presents
Futurities
Future

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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NOTES

1. The theses on Feuerbach were first written in 1845 in “German Ideology,” but not published in complete form until 1932.
2. I am indebted for that distinction to Nick Brown, Brian Rappert, and Andrew Webster (2000).
3. For a more detailed account of these dualistic distinctions and their socio-environmental implications for contemporary social science, see Adam (1998b:385–402).
4. This term has been developed in my most recent work as a temporal equivalent to the ecological concept of *footprint*, which focuses on space and matter thus bracketing the temporal aspects of socio-environmental impacts of innovative future making. See Barbara Adam and Chris Groves (2007), especially the entry in the glossary of key terms.

**REFERENCES**

VI

FUTURE DIRECTIONS
Reading the rich and varied chapters of this handbook one can only be convinced of the importance of public sociology both for the world and for our discipline. Whether we are talking of Steve Cornell’s engagement with the political organization of Native American tribes, Lina Hu’s involvement with migrant workers in China, Elizabeth Leonard’s work with the convicted survivors of male violence, Bill McCarthy and John Hagan’s chapter on publicizing deaths in Darfur, Robert Kleidman’s collaboration with community organizations, Pamela Oliver’s presentations on racial disparities of imprisonment, Rhoda Howard-Hassmann’s critical dissection of human rights, or Ruth Horowitz’s dual role on medical licensing boards, whether it be the chapters by Caroline Persell and Michael DeCesare on teaching sociology, or Lawrence Nichols, Vincent Jeffries, and Edward Tiryakian’s different accounts of the extraordinary life of Pitirim Sorokin, the overwhelming impression is that the four sociologies—professional, policy, public, and critical—do indeed feed one another, expand and flourish on the basis of their antagonistic interdependence.

This is not to say that the fourfold scheme underlying this handbook is without flaws. Indeed, the flaws and limitations have given energy to an intense debate and discussion and have driven the scheme’s revision and reconstruction. We see this in the chapters by Damon Mayrl and Laurel Westbrook, who stress the importance of accountability to publics; by Frank Furedi, who urges us to bring the sociological imagination into dialogue with publics; by Norval Glenn, who interrogates the standards of evaluating public sociology; and by Raymond Morrow, who deepens the scheme in a number of directions. They all point to lacunae, narrowness, and contradictions in the fourfold scheme, yet in each case they do so not
with the purpose of jettisoning it but with the purpose of advancing it, and
the allied project of public sociology. With the exception of the chapter by
Joe Feagin, Sean Elias, and Jennifer Mueller, who consider professional-
policy sociology beyond redemption, all the contributions to the handbook
appear to be on board the fourfold ship.

One may be surprised, therefore, to learn of the hostilities aroused by
public sociology and, specifically, the fourfold scheme—hostilities from
fellow sociologists, fueled by fears that public sociology undermines our
discipline and endangers the world. For many communicating our ideas to
wider publics puts sociology at risk, threatens its integrity, and jeopardizes
its credibility. Astonished by these attacks, others respond by asking why
we would even bother to be sociologists, if public sociology is a danger-
ous pipe dream, if sociology is to become an irrelevant sinecure. Some go
further and declare war on professional sociology itself, as encumbering,
compromising, and even antithetical to the project of public engagement.
For them professional sociology traps its practitioners in a devotion to
an inaccessible science, in the trivial obsessions of methodology, mind-
less rituals of self-referentiality. The “public sociology,” formulated in the
fourfold scheme, is denounced as a public relations venture to legitimate
and conserve “mainstream” sociology. So here, ironically, we have the
joining of extremes—the radical “public sociologist” meets up with the
conservative “professional sociologist” as each denounces the other as the
anti-christ. Agreeing that they cannot both occupy the same field, they both
campaign for the abolition of the division of sociological labor. By contrast,
this volume shows how we can and, indeed, why we must all live together if
sociology is to survive—living together in tension but nonetheless recogniz-
ing the contributions of the other.

The public sociology wars are not confined to whispering campaigns or
private defamation but have come out into the open. Within a space of
four years, sociologists have penned well over 100 essays—not all hostile
by any means—in diverse symposia in such journals as Social Problems,
Social Forces, Critical Sociology, The American Sociologist, British Journal of So-
ciology, Sociology, Socio-Economic Review, Current Sociology, and Contemporary
Sociology, as well as in journals in Finland, Portugal, Italy, France, Hungary,
China, Hong Kong, Russia, Brazil, South Africa, Germany, and Iran. At the
same time several books have already appeared bringing together critical,
practical, and historical assessments as well as concrete case studies of pub-
lic sociology. They include Blau and Smith (2006), Agger (2007), Clawson
et al. (2007), Nichols (2007), Barlow (2007), Jacobsen (2008), and Haney
(2008), but also different collections in Mandarin, Portuguese, and Rus-
sian. So the flames are not confined to the United States but have spread
to other countries.
What has prompted these wars over public sociology, over the seemingly innocent proposal to take sociology’s findings, its ideas, its theories beyond the academy, that is to carry on what is effectively its mission of public education? Why all the heat, the defensiveness, the skepticism, and the animosity toward public sociology? We enter our discipline with a sense of its relevance to the pressing problems of our day, yet the rites of passage in graduate school are like an induction into a secret society. Our inspirational pioneers, whether Marx, Weber, or Durkheim, not to mention Jane Addams or W. E. B. Du Bois, must surely be wondering what they have conjured up. At a time when the world is so badly in need of rudimentary sociological insights, why would we barricade ourselves within an ever more fragile academic citadel or, on the critical side, turn against the one protection we have in the uphill struggle against social injustice, inequality, and oppression?

**DEFINING THE FIELD, CLASSIFYING THE CLASSIFIERS**

To make sense of the public sociology wars I believe we should follow Pierre Bourdieu, and examine the context, or more precisely the field, within which these wars are played out.¹ But our following of Bourdieu should be a critical one. We need to problematize what, for Bourdieu, is the relevant field, namely the scientific field, which he regards as an arena of open competition among scientists. Competition within this field necessarily leads to the concentration of scientific capital within a shrinking elite, but, for Bourdieu, concentration also guarantees the advance of science. The dynamism of science comes from “armed struggle among adversaries who possess weapons whose power and effectiveness rises with the scientific capital collectively accumulated in and by the field” (Bourdieu 2000:112–113). These struggles take place both within the elite and between the elite and its challenging successor generation. Scientific progress is a permanent revolution within the elite.

For Bourdieu, the scientific field must possess a certain autonomy from extra-scientific intervention. He is especially concerned about the dangers of encroachment by experts, journalist pretenders, intellectual dilettantes, and social reformers all trying to appropriate sociology’s mantle of science. For Bourdieu sociology, in particular, is always under threat of corruption and distortion because it delves into familiar subjects about which everyone holds strong but ill-conceived opinions and theories. It is important, therefore, that sociology break with and distance itself from common sense, and defend its scientific character by developing an esoteric vocabulary, inaccessible to lay publics.
How does this square with Bourdieu’s fame as a public sociologist, the most important and most distinguished public sociologist of our era? Bourdieu defends the autonomy of the field and the accumulation of capital within it as necessary for the development of science. The redeeming feature of this science—sprung from its autonomy, liberated from the pressures of material necessity, enabling the free play of creative capacities, the leisureed existence known as skholé—is the demystification and challenge it offers, so he claims, to the silent compulsion of symbolic domination—domination not even recognized as such. In other words, science by its very nature is subversive. But here lies the paradox: in this Bourdieu-sian world the dominant classes have no interest in hearing sociology’s subversive message and the dominated classes are unable to comprehend the message, so deeply inscribed is their habituation to domination. Apart from critical intellectuals, therefore, it is not clear whom Bourdieu considered to be his publics. Bourdieu’s theory lagged behind his practice as a public sociologist whose messages, especially later in his life, reached millions of people.

Not surprisingly, then, Bourdieu was a strong advocate of an elite band of intellectuals he dubbed as “an international of intellectuals” that would be the “organic intellectual of humanity,” standing above humanity and defending humanity’s interests. Bourdieu’s lofty stance corresponds all too well with the commanding position he held at the Collège de France within the sharply pyramidal structure of French higher education. For all his critique of Sartre, the total intellectual, he became one himself, ensconced at the apex of the intellectual field he dissected with such acuity. In Bourdieu’s conception public sociology is both the privilege and the obligation of those who have accumulated scientific capital. This “traditional” public sociology is a mediated engagement with broad, thin, passive publics and, therefore, dependent on newsprint, magazines, radio, and television. Not for nothing did Bourdieu unleash jeremiads against the media for distorting his messages, and usurping his role as scholar and scientist.

This traditional public sociology is a far cry from the organic public sociology that underlies many of the chapters in this book, and that drew only contempt from Bourdieu. For here the sociologist does not pronounce from the rafters but directly engages with publics in the trenches of society. Organic public sociologists are more modest and less visible than the traditional public sociologist. Their relations to publics—narrower but thicker and more active—are unmediated rather than mediated, not resting on a vast accumulation of academic capital. To understand their place in sociology we need to go beyond Bourdieu’s scientific field, which corresponds to what I call professional knowledge, and examine the disciplinary field that includes policy, public, and critical knowledges as well as professional knowledge.
The wars over public sociology are first struggles over the very definition of sociology, what Bourdieu would call a classification struggle. We will find that, with notable exceptions, those sociologists who inhabit lofty positions in the academic world are more likely to defend a narrow scientific conception of sociology, along the lines of Bourdieu, whereas those in less elite places are more likely to defend a broader definition of the field as a discipline that embraces critical, policy, and public sociologies as distinct knowledges. The extension of sociology from a scientific to a disciplinary field brings to the fore a set of relations of domination and exploitation and their corresponding struggles that are beyond Bourdieu’s narrow purview of the scientific field.

The scientific field is but the summit of a hierarchical disciplinary field. In the United States the scientific field rests on armies of teachers in state universities and community colleges who teach excessive amounts for modest compensation. More directly, research departments depend on legions of graduate students who not only do most of the face-to-face teaching and grading but also perform mind numbing operations of research. Together, they make possible the scientific practice of the elite. Of these exploited under-laborers we hear all too little in Bourdieu’s account, but they feed the struggles over and within the broader definition of the disciplinary field. Like Bourdieu many “professionals” want to obscure their dependence on cheap labor by confining the definition of the field to “science,” and either expel public sociology, as a relatively autonomous form of knowledge, or bring it under their control, prompting many “public sociologists,” to react, in turn, against the exclusivism of professional sociology.

Thus, my claim that the four sociologies define the elements of a potentially integrated division of labor gathers enemies on all sides, but in expressing their enmity they simultaneously underline its gravitational power, shaping struggles emanating from different locations in that division of labor. In the very modes of its rejection, I will try to show that this fourfold scheme maps the positions and accounts for the corresponding perspectives that lead to the struggles of players within the field of sociology, and, arguably, any other discipline. The power of a field manifests itself not only in determining the range of orientations to sociology, what Bourdieu would call “position-takings” and what I will call “positional perspectives,” underlining the link between position and perspective. Each actor also defines his or her positional perspective in relation to the others. That is to say, each actor works with an implicit cognitive map of the field, governing his or her strategies with regard to the adoption or critique of positional perspectives. Each is oriented to others as defined by their positions in the field.

The adoption of positional perspectives—hostility to public sociology, the defense of professional sociology, the embrace of critical sociology, and so forth—is not random, but nor is it simply founded in some abstract
rationality (as we tend to delude ourselves as intellectuals). Rather our positional perspectives are conditioned by and correspond to our interests as defined by the positions we hold within the academic field, and in particular by the distribution of field-specific capital, what I call academic capital. Just as we are skeptical of the rationalizations of the people we study, so we have to be skeptical about our own justifications, our own folk understandings, our own logics of practice. Indeed, as Bourdieu would say, our reflexivity is, or should be, precisely what marks us out as sociologists. My attempt here is only a preliminary sketch of such a field analysis. It is not intended as a cynical ploy to discredit everyone but myself, but to better comprehend the field in which we work so as to better understand the unity that underlies our disunity, the common project obscured by the public sociology wars.

**WARS OF CONSERVATION**

Let me begin by first summarizing the fourfold scheme that defines the division of sociological labor. It was designed to replace tired divisions between micro and macro, quantitative and qualitative, pure and applied, positivist and hermeneutic, theoretical and empirical work. The fourfold scheme is based on two questions: “knowledge for whom?” and “knowledge for what?” In response to the first question we have two audiences: academic and extra-academic. In response to the second question we have two types of knowledge: instrumental knowledge concerned with means to solve puzzles in our research programs (professional sociology) and to solve problems as defined by policy makers (policy sociology), and reflexive knowledge concerned with the ends of society, involving the interrogation of the foundations of research programs (critical sociology) and public discussion and dialogue about the fundamental direction of society (public sociology). These then are my four types of knowledge-practice that is to say ways of producing knowledge (see table 25.1). They exist in a matrix of antagonism and interdependence, varying over history and among countries, and through which individual sociologists move (or don’t move) as their careers unfold. Of course, sociologists may combine two or more types of sociology, and a given work of sociology may appear simultaneously in

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more than one quadrant. My task here, however, is to examine the perspectives toward our disciplinary division of labor as enunciated by different players, situated differently within it.

**Professional Sociology**

When considering the United States we must start from the domination of instrumental over reflexive knowledge, and, indeed, the supremacy of the professional over the other three types of knowledge. This domination is built into the conditions of work and the system of rewards, giving power and status to departments and individuals that have the material and symbolic resources to prioritize research. We publicly consecrate leaders whom we deem eminent in the field of research, who have had careers of outstanding publications, and we rank departments in terms of their reputation and/or their research output. The distribution of jobs, justified as a meritocratic order, operates like a system of family strategies in which graduate students are exchanged among the leading research departments.

In this way the ascendancy of professional knowledge reproduces itself silently as a form of symbolic domination, that is domination that is not recognized as such, or that is so taken for granted as not to be questioned. From the narrow perspective of a self-contained professional sociology, the challenge of public sociology is best met by silence in the hope it will simply melt away. But it wouldn’t melt away, tempting defenders of professional sociology to enter into what we might call a “war of position” against public sociology. The silent unrecognized compulsion of symbolic domination gave way to hegemonic strategies in which professional sociologists present their interests as the interests of all.

The first hegemonic strategy is to argue that sociology is not ready to go public. It is an immature science that has not produced reliable truths. Thus, Charles Tittle, a criminologist, in an essay titled “The Arrogance of Public Sociology,” says our knowledge is so primitive as to be dangerous. If released into the public sphere, we can only discredit ourselves.

At the moment, though, sociologists do not have that body of reliable knowledge and the public pretense that we do actually undermines any hope of influencing society or of obtaining the support necessary for developing such knowledge. Lay people know we have weak knowledge and in response they accord us little credibility. We, in turn, continually undermine the little respect we might otherwise have by trying to promote our ideas (a form of ideology) in the guise of superior knowledge. Most of the time we actually do not know as much as we pretend and even when there is a chance we might provide or compile useful information, people do not trust us. (Tittle 2004:1641–1642)
We can argue the “truth” of these claims but that is not my purpose here. Rather I look upon these claims as more or less successful strategies to maintain the dominance of self-referential professional sociology.

Defending the integrity of professional sociology is also at the heart of Lynn Smith-Lovin’s (2007) concern that the pursuit of public sociology could lead to divisive value conflicts within our already fragile profession. The divisions in the world would be imported back into our departments, threatening sociology’s scientific project. The dangers of public sociology are also uppermost in Steve Brint’s (2005) wide-ranging assault. Again, not only is sociology unprepared for a public role, but the public is not ready for sociology. The theory of society that undergirds my vision of public sociology—in particular its close link to civil society—is misguided. I underestimate both the problematic character of civil society and the potentiality of spaces within the state. “It is a bit distressing to see civil society treated with such gauzy romanticism, while the state is described as ‘despotic’ and the market simply a ‘tyranny.’ Here again, rhetoric is stronger than analysis” (Brint 2005:54; see also Brady 2004). Burawoy’s scheme is not only dangerous and divisive, inflating the public importance of sociology, but is itself an example of bad sociology, unduly influenced by his political orientation. The world is not ready for public sociology, so we must give “moral centrality” to professional sociology.

Andrew Abbott (2007) makes a different case for the moral centrality of professional knowledge in his advance of a humanist sociology that collapses the four sociologies into one. He does not fear the importation of values into the discipline but the pretension that we can work without values. He attacks the fourfold scheme of sociology for its separation of instrumental and reflexive knowledge, insisting on the inseparability of the cognitive and the moral dimensions. Far from being divisive, value stances are part and parcel of the scientific project. Having collapsed the reflexive into the instrumental, he expels the public-policy axis as a political project which has no place in our discipline. Craig Calhoun (2005) follows a similar strategy of collapsing dimensions, only he stresses more the dangers of extra-academic engagement—the fear that policy or public sociology, if given too much autonomy, would invade and violate the integrity of professional sociology. If there is to be a public sociology it must be strictly under the control of the professionals.

These positional perspectives of professional sociology do not vilify public sociology but are more concerned to patrol its presence within our discipline. This incorporationist strategy was more openly formulated by a panel of critics at Ohio State University. Douglas Downey, James Moodey, and Pamela Paxton argued that, while they were not opposed to public sociology—indeed Douglas Downey and James Moodey were full of examples of the dissemination of their own research findings—they feared its
autonomy. The self-regulation of our discipline by its anointed guardians was threatened by a relatively autonomous public sociology that would be accountable and not just relevant to publics.

Pamela Paxton was most explicit, attacking the scientific veracity of public sociology with an elaborate statistical analysis of the number and type of citations in public sociology articles as opposed to corresponding professional peer-reviewed articles. At least she brings some evidence to bear on the matter, but in so doing Paxton pathologizes public sociology—condemned as bad science, as violating the standards of our discipline. Paxton chooses cases that demonstrate her point rather than assessing the wide gamut of public sociologies. But, more deeply, her approach subjects public sociology to a standard of truth, a correspondence notion of truth, which professional sociology valorizes as the only notion of truth. She moves the attack on public sociology from incorporation to expulsion.

If Paxton pathologizes public sociology, Mathieu Deflem initiated a more aggressive "war of movement," demonizing public sociology as a cover for the infiltration of a perfidious Marxism. With a wry sense of humor, François Nielsen (2004) makes the same point, noting that public sociology appeared with the collapse of communism and looks like a new packaging of old Marxist ideas. “Because it promotes advocacy based on moral political values and overestimates the consensus on values, and because there are unresolved issues concerning its association with a Marxist political agenda, public sociology does not fit easily within a profession oriented to norms of scientific-scholarly objectivity” (Nielsen 2004:1626). This, of course, is an argument by innuendo and ad hominem without any attempt to seriously consider the advocacy of public sociology by myself or anyone else, reducing public sociologies to a single political project, subversive of scientific sociology, itself a taken-for-granted category. David Boyns and Jesse Fletcher (2005) take a less conspiratorial view of the supposed affiliation of Marxism and public sociology, but nonetheless argue that the association is there and is a liability that can only introduce further fragmentation into an already fragmented discipline. They conclude their measured critique that sociology has not yet achieved sufficient maturity and internal consensus to go public.

Policy Sociology

The positional perspective of policy sociology is closely allied to that of professional sociology, especially as the former depends upon the integrity and legitimacy of the latter. In a disquisition that ranges over a series of policy issues, from war to drugs, from educational achievement to birth control, Arthur Stinchcombe argues that we are so poor in our predictions that we had better stay locked up in our ivory tower working away at our
truths. “We should not be distracted by contributing to public discourse, and that what we do along that line is not likely to be much use to the public” (Stinchcombe 2007:135). Douglas Massey (2007), on the other hand, has no such hesitations, but this leads him to take a far more aggressive stance against the politicization of sociology, epitomized, for him, by official resolutions made by the American Sociological Association, such as the one against the Iraq war. He claims that sociology’s politicization is dragging down its—and, particularly, “his”—influence in Washington. We need to be more like the Population Association of America that sticks to science and refrains from taking political positions and, thus, has greater credibility on the Beltway.

Of course, as Massey knows from his own experience the space for sociology within the federal U.S. state is very limited, especially in an era of neoliberalism that does not even recognize the existence of the social. To scapegoat ASA resolutions as the source of ineffectiveness misplaces the source of the problem. Scapegoating reaches fever pitch in Jonathan Turner’s declaration of war on public sociology as the reason for sociology’s lack of wider influence. He believes that sociology, as it is now constituted, is beyond the pale, beyond reform. His angry denunciations are strangely out of sync with his commitment to a dispassionate pure science, ending with a radical proposal to expunge the virus by splitting the discipline in two:

We will penetrate the public’s consciousness and places where important decisions are made when we demonstrate again and again over a period of some decades that we possess an important body of knowledge. The only way for sociology to become more influential is to be a discipline committed to science and engineering, however you want to re-label the latter. Sadly, the years since I received my Ph.D. have seen just the opposite trend: inclusion of politicized social movements and their attendant ideology as not only subject matter (a quite legitimate activity for a scientist) but also as epistemology and as a worldview. We have critical this and critical that; many sociologists do not educate students as much as they seek to indoctrinate them into their identity politics or their moral vision of how the world should be. Of course, not all sociologists do this. I would guess that the discipline is split right down the middle between those who use the lectern as a pulpit and those who teach knowledge in an objective manner and let students decide for themselves how they will use this knowledge to frame their own beliefs. Given this even split, the best solution is to institutionalize this split into two sociologies—humanistic/activist sociology (or some such label) and scientific sociology (or some alternative label, with my preference being “social physics”). (Turner 2005:44)

Turner would turn us back to the proclamations of Auguste Comte for a positive sociology but without examining who, beyond sociology, might be interested in such sociological engineering in this era of market funda-
mentalism. Impotent in the world beyond he pursues a “war of movement” against the treacherous critical sociology.

As one surveys the strategies of containing the “danger” of public sociology, I am reminded of Foucault’s description of the leper and the plague. The first we control through expulsion and the second through detailed regulation. Broadly, these are the strategies of conservation, but they emanate, in the first place, from the successful demystification and denaturalization of the domination of professional sociology. To understand how the symbolic power of professionalism has been dislodged, we must examine the subversive strategies, the challenging perspectives of critical and public sociology.

WARS OF SUBVERSION

Just as there is a close alliance of professional and policy sociologies, so there is often a seamless transition between critical and public sociology. Critical sociology takes the offensive against professional and policy sociology in order to create a space for public sociology.

Critical Sociology

As one might expect critical sociologists take a stance that is the mirror opposite of the policy sociologists. Thus, former president of the American Sociological Association, Frances Fox Piven (2007) questions the possibility and the propriety of a policy science and condemns those who would seek out patrons in government. She calls for a public sociology that addresses “the problems of people at the lower end of the many hierarchies that define our society” (Piven 2007:163). As against policy science and even neutered public sociology, she openly advocates the politicized sociologist. Against positivist science she argues for participatory research that upholds collaboration with oppressed groups, and racial minorities.

Just as policy sociology is founded in a neutral vision of scientific research, so the critique of policy science is closely tied to the critique of professional sociology. Thus, Stanley Aronowitz (2005) indicts professional sociology for its disciplinary chauvinism, and its tacit nationalism while Behrooz Ghamari-Tabrizi (2005) goes further in condemning “the colonial core” of U.S. professional sociology. Judy Stacey (2007) formulates her criticisms in a series of utopian proposals that would make sociology a more cosmopolitan discipline, connected to the rest of the world with university exchanges; that would make sociology a more engaged and engaging discipline, by having a moratorium on academic publishing every few years, by embracing public sociology as a criterion for academic promotions, by organizing exchanges
among disciplines and between disciplines and the extra-academic world, by improving standards of academic writing. In this volume Herb Gans follows a similar line as Stacey, continuing his defense of public sociology, and pointing to institutional reforms necessary for its advance—more funding, different career incentives, and changes in graduate training. Like Stacey he believes that the advance of public sociology can only be good for the discipline.

Ben Agger (2007) adopts a far more aggressive posture, mounting a “war of movement” from below. Unmasking the rituals of academic publishing, and condemning the irrelevance of professional sociology, he does to professional sociology what Paxton does to public sociology—condemning professional sociology tout court on the basis of egregious cases of unproven typicality. If Brint, Neilson, Turner, Boyns and Fletcher, attacked public sociology for politicizing the discipline, now critical sociology returns the compliment by revealing the professional defense of value neutrality as a political project in its own right.

Critical sociology not only fires arrows at professional and policy sociology, but can also turn on public sociology itself—or, at least, the variant I have embraced rooted in the interdependence of four knowledges. Thus Agger (2007) declares war on public sociology—the one rooted in the fourfold scheme—as irredeemably contaminated by “mainstream” sociology. More specifically, Joan Acker (2005) warns about not taking feminism sufficiently seriously: “any revitalized public sociology that does not incorporate the feminist insights about the systemic nature of gender subordination will be in danger of giving support to movements that inevitably reproduce domination” (Acker 2005:328). Rose Brewer reminds us of the impact of African Studies, Ethnic Studies, Black Studies that arose precisely out of an inseparable connection of community and academy. For her sociology, and its public face, is “too enmeshed in the dominant discourses and policy practices of the day” (Brewer 2005:358). Along similar lines, Evelyn Nakano Glenn (2007) denounces the fourfold scheme of sociology as the “disembodied voice” of a white male positioned in an elite establishment—another exclusivist particularism parading as universalism.

Public Sociology

Turning, finally, to the stance of public sociology itself, we do, of course, find many who embrace the fourfold scheme as legitimating what they have been doing all their life—not as something separate from but part of their vocation as sociologists. Such upholders are less likely to be the celebrated traditional public sociologists who have achieved acclaim through national prominence, but rather the organic public sociologists who have been working tirelessly and invisibly in the trenches of civil society. This
handbook is a testimony to their commitment and an acknowledgment of their importance.

This is not to say that those who speak from the stance of public sociology view the relations among the four types of sociology as harmonious. Far from it. Charlotte Ryan (2004) describes the tensions between the rhythms and incentives of an academic career and the demands of a community based program (Media Research and Action Project or MRAP) at Boston College—tensions that inhibited collaboration across the university-community divide. William Gamson (2004), who inspired MRAP from the beginning, reflects on the difficulty of obtaining university and foundation support for such a program. A different skepticism comes from Patricia Hill Collins (2007) who interrogates the significance of labeling something as “public sociology,” whether it might not play into the hands of professional sociology, facilitating its neutralization, marginalization, and even stigmatization. In the end she declares her support for the project but not without misgivings that recognition has its costs.

For others professional sociology is a major obstacle to the successful pursuit of public sociology. Sharon Hays (2007) is passionately committed to public sociology—if sociology is not public then it might as well not exist. She would want everyone to be a public sociologist. In this project the enemy is encamped behind the ramparts of professional sociology, but an enemy suffering from false consciousness. She projects a utopia in which the fourfold division of labor is subject to the supremacy of public sociology. Charles Derber (2004), a public sociologist in both organic and traditional modes, is more explicit about the opposition faced by any such elevation of public sociology.

Professionalism is a part of an ongoing political struggle for ideological hegemony and the control of knowledge. . . . The movement toward historical emancipation might then eventually transform or abolish professional sociology and professionalism more broadly, creating a different knowledge and class structure. It would integrate what we now call sociology into a system of knowledge production and organization that would have far more public participation, accountability, and accessibility. But any such transformation, in abolishing professional sociology, would also abolish the other three sociologies as part of a reconstruction of the entire knowledge system. (Derber 2004:121)

Even he recognizes, however, that the survival of the public sociologist requires a minimal adherence to academic rules of the game, so his revolution may prove to be more partial than he lets on.

The danger of a revolutionary strategy—the strategy of frontal assault—is that it will bring down the entire field, and public sociology with it. Better to prosecute a self-limiting revolution that seeks not to overthrow professional sociology, but to use it as a shield against external enemies. Even
those who do not see the redeeming virtues of professional sociology as an end in itself, should see it as an important fortification in struggles beyond the academy, providing some protection against the hostilities any successful critical public sociologist will inevitably face. A subversive strategy, therefore, seeks not to overthrow the division of sociological labor but to rearticulate its relations of domination.

BEHIND THE WARS

Warriors for and against public sociology position themselves in relation to the perspectives of others, announcing their views with a surety that they alone are right and rational. As academics we have an interest in portraying ourselves as above interests, as without interests. To attack others as motivated by interests other than truth is a violation of the rules of the scientific game, although of course they are violated all the time.

We know a war is being waged when academics publicly discredit their opponents by “unmasking” interests behind their supposed “rationality,” when professionals point to critical sociologists as “interested” in destroying the discipline while critical sociologists accuse professionals as only “interested” in consolidating their disciplinary domination. The widespread discrediting of the perspectives of others calls for a systematic account of the interests at work within the sociological field. Academic fields, no less than others, are a terrain of clashing interests.

Following Bourdieu, one seeks out the field-specific capital that governs the strategies of its actors. I will define the field-specific capital in the disciplinary field as academic capital, which can be estimated from an individual sociologist’s *curriculum vitae*. It includes the number of articles and books published and by whom, it includes citation counts, it includes the number and size of research grants, and it includes the recognition given to a sociologist by peers in the form of awards and prizes. Of course, the very definition of academic capital is subject to contestation so that, for example, for some successful teaching adds to academic capital while for others it is irrelevant.

For the purposes of this chapter and as a first approximation I assess academic capital by the standing of the department to which a person belongs on the broad supposition that competitive entry into departments is based on the accumulation of academic capital. I define the top 16 departments, as ranked by *U.S. News and World Report* in 2005, as elite and the remainder non-elite. This ranking is a reputational ranking conducted by heads of departments and graduate advisors so it has all sorts of biases—not least, one that favors departments that produce the most Ph.D.s—but this is a
totally preliminary venture, exploring what direction such an analysis of the sociological field might take.

I have categorized the 35 U.S. contributions to 5 symposia (Social Forces, Social Problems, The American Sociologist, Critical Sociology, and the collection Public Sociology: Fifteen Eminent Sociologists Debate Politics and the Profession in the Twenty-First Century) by the present department of their authors and by the positional perspective they hold. Attaching a definitive positional perspective to each contributor, based on these articles, is very difficult so I have sometimes invoked other information. Especially difficult is the separation of professional from policy perspectives, and public from critical perspectives as sociologists often circulate between these—an interesting observation in itself. I have, nonetheless, attempted it, giving more weight to deep extra-academic commitment since that is more costly in a world where the disciplinary culture is so strong. That is to say, if an author expresses a commitment to policy sociology as well as professional sociology, I have categorized them as having a policy perspective, if they express a commitment to public sociology as well as critical sociology or professional sociology I have categorized them as having a public sociology perspective. Finally, I make no claim that the contributors to the symposia are representative of the wider discipline, since they were largely chosen by editors and/or organizers for the perspectives they might be expected to defend. Still, the point here is not to map the whole field, but to point to what such a mapping would entail and to see if already in this set there is a linkage between academic capital, crudely defined, and positional perspective.

The first finding is that the critical and public sociologists are, as one would expect, concentrated overwhelmingly in non-elite departments. Only 2 out of 25 are to be found in elite departments and interestingly enough are William Julius Wilson and Orlando Patterson, both black sociologists at Harvard University, and both with a very high public profile.

At the same time, as table 25.2 shows, there is no such simple correlation of professional and policy sociology with membership of elite departments, since 4 out of 10 professional-policy sociologists are to be found in non-elite departments.

Table 25.2. Perspectives by Department of Employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elite = 5 (1), Non-Elite = 3 (0)</td>
<td>Elite = 1 (0), Non-Elite = 1 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elite = 0 (0), Non-Elite = 8 (5)</td>
<td>Elite = 2 (0), Non-Elite = 15 (7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Figures in parentheses refer to number of women.
departments. We also see that women are overwhelming concentrated in non-elite departments where they practice some form of critical-public sociology, although again this distribution is less a reflection of our discipline as a whole than of the way women contributors were chosen, namely on the basis of their feminist or critical race orientations.

In order to better capture the interests driving the different perspectives I included a second dimension of academic capital, the department where sociologists were trained. Is it elite or non-elite? The argument is that department of origin, the ranking of the Ph.D. degree, is as determining of academic capital as the department of employment. Table 25.3 presents this dimension by itself, and it shows that all but one of the professional and policy sociologists are trained in elite departments, but the critical and public sociologists are trained in both elite and non-elite departments. This, too, is not surprising since elite departments produce many more graduate students than can be accommodated in their faculty ranks, so there is bound to be a considerable movement from elite to non-elite departments. In other words, professional-policy orientations are shaped heavily by training whereas critical-public orientations are more shaped by department of employment.

If we combine department of training with department of employment, and switch the table around to ask how academic trajectory shapes orientation we discover in table 25.4 that those who are trained in an elite department and end up in an elite department are very likely to adopt a professional-policy perspective whereas those who spend their whole lives in a non-elite environment are very likely to possess a critical-public orientation. There are very few who manage to move from non-elite to elite departments. In fact, they are again the two black scholars at Harvard.

The most interesting category is made up of those who move from elite to non-elite caught as they are between two worlds. Within our small and selected population three hold on to a professional-policy orientation, whereas the rest (11) assume a critical-public orientation. The divisions within our disciplines are often the most acutely felt within this group. Here we find the most outspoken critics as well as the shock troops of professionalism, here, in other words, we find dissidents and technocrats side-by-side. Indeed, the non-elite department, full of active sociologists trained in elite departments, is often the theater of civil war between technocrats and dissidents. Such departments may be also collectively mobilized along the lines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 25.3. Perspectives by Department of Training</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PROFESSIONAL</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elite = 7, Non-Elite = 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRITICAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elite = 3, Non-Elite = 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
of public sociology; they may become a niche department that prides itself in teaching and public engagement. More likely, they undertake a project of collective “upward mobility,” like the Sanskritization of caste, seeking to ascend the rankings by “mainstreaming,” by accentuating the commitment to publications in the *American Journal of Sociology*, the *American Sociological Review*, placing graduate students in elite departments, celebrating recognitions by the American Sociological Association, and so forth.

In the end no research department, elite or non-elite, can escape these tensions, but nor can the American Sociological Association itself. From its inception in 1905, the ASA has been a battleground between professionals seeking to centralize control in their hands and countervailing critical voices, calling for internal democracy and stronger public engagement. Thus, the inter-war struggles led to the creation of the Sociological Research Association in 1937, a self-selected elite who would act as guardians of the profession, while the breakaway Society for the Study of Social Problems created in 1951 was an attempt to wrest control from the professionals and to engage more directly with questions of social justice. The recent struggles for public sociology continue this tradition. They began as a reaction to oligarchic tendencies that were concentrating control within the executive council, a reaction that came to a head in a struggle over the editorship of the *American Sociological Review* (1999–2000). Since then the professional elite has had to relinquish its influence over key positions such as ASA president, and thus over the program at its annual meeting, over the multiplying sections that conduct their business with a considerable measure of autonomy, and over the formulation of political resolutions. The move away from oligarchic control, together with the discussion of public issues, brought in new members and record attendances at the annual meetings. The association is no longer so firmly controlled by a priesthood of aging white males from the elite departments.

Table 25.4. The Effect of Academic Trajectory on Perspective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department of Training</th>
<th>Department of Employment</th>
<th>Elite</th>
<th>Non-Elite</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elite</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Critical</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Critical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Elite</td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Critical</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Critical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We are now in a better position to understand the public sociology wars. Symbolic domination—domination without overt resistance because domination is not recognized as such—is secured through the legitimation of academic capital, awarded for objective scientific research and consecrated in the leaders of our field. Competition for recognition and for research funds keeps the field alive, and concentrates resources in the hands of the few, while obscuring the conditions of their existence, namely the armies of teachers who have few if any opportunities to gain admission to the inner sanctum. In this realm of professional sociology, there are struggles but they are largely confined to the tenure of individual sociologists, the mobility of departments up the rankings, the succession of leaders, the editorial boards of major journals, and so forth.

The struggle for public sociology threatens the equilibrium of our discipline, demystifying the invisible domination of professional sociology, compelling it to come out into the open and defend its interests as the interests of all. So now professional sociologists defend their hegemony vis-à-vis public and critical sociology either by declaring sociology as not mature enough to enter the public realm, or arguing the opposite, declaring themselves to be public sociologists, but insinuating a distinction between their authentic and the other’s inauthentic public sociology. We can call these hegemonic strategies, in which the professionals position themselves as representing the interests of all, a war of position. A more aggressive strategy, that is a war of movement, is to condemn public sociology as self-defeating, as discrediting the entire sociological enterprise, or alternatively, a hopeless enterprise because no one is listening to us. At the extreme public sociology is demonized as “political orientation in non-partisan clothing” (Brint 2005), which justifies infantilizing and sanctioning its supporters, expelling them if necessary.

One war of movement begets another. Critical sociologists attack professional sociology for its self-referentiality, disciplinary chauvinism, and a latent political project of its own, denouncing policy sociologists as the servants of power. Behind the shock troops of critical sociology, however, lie alternative visions of sociology, valorizing not academic capital but what we might call an extra-academic or temporal capital—capital valorized through forms of public recognition. Public sociologies march to the tune of dialogic engagement rather than empirical-theoretical knowledge, a consensus rather than a correspondence view of truth, norms of relevance rather than norms of science, accountable to publics rather than peers. This is a war of position from below—a project centered around temporal capital that potentially challenges the supremacy of academic capital, constituting an alternative but always subjugated hegemony.

In considering this subjugated hegemony a distinction should be made between two types of public sociology. On the one hand there is traditional
public sociology, which uses academic capital to accumulate temporal capital. Here I am referring to the way professional leaders command authority in the public realm for the scientific expertise they vaunt. This is the public sociology of David Riesman, William Julius Wilson, Robert Bellah, Arlie Hochschild—public sociologists who see no clash between the two forms of capital. To the contrary each fosters the accumulation of the other. So the defenders of traditional public sociology will campaign for the recognition of temporal capital in professional publications, such as the new sociology magazine, Contexts, in professional appointments and promotions. We can call this the incorporation of public sociology.

On the other hand, far more threatening but institutionally much weaker, is an organic public sociology that offers an alternative vision of sociology, demystifying and censuring the domination of academic capital, calling for a new science of public engagement. Here we find varieties of participatory action research as well as certain feminist methodologies which pose the question of “whose knowledge?” From Paulo Freire to Dorothy Smith they problematize conventional sociological methods as furthering elite domination, and develop alternative techniques of collaborative research. Such organic public sociologists oppose positivist science as inauthentic. They champion their own participatory methods as the basis for an alternative and more authentic science. Organic public sociology—sociologists working with local communities, neighborhood associations, churches, labor movements, and so forth—is far more widespread but also less visible than traditional public sociology. As the public face of professional sociology, traditional public sociology can be deployed to stifle the more radical challenge of an organic public sociology—neutralizing the war of position from below. Alternatively, the two can work in concert with traditional public sociology acting as an umbrella and protection for a grassroots movement of organic public sociologies, but in turn being inspired by that movement.

**BEYOND THE WARS**

What, then, are these disciplinary struggles about? Why are they so intense? Are they more intense in sociology than in other disciplines? If so, why? Is it because sociologists are more reflexive about who they are and what they do, as Bourdieu might say? Is it because sociologists write and research matters about which everyone has an opinion, continually threatening the boundary between sociology and common sense? Is it because sociologists are so insecure about the scientific status of their discipline? What, in the final analysis, defines the specificity of sociology that might account for these wars but also lead beyond the wars? It is to these questions that I now turn, albeit in a brief manner.
Appearances notwithstanding, the intensity of the public sociology wars do betray an underlying commitment to the field of sociology, understood not as an elite scientific field (Bourdieu) but as a broader disciplinary field. Whether the strategies are conservative or subversive, accommodating or revolutionary, the object and terrain of struggle is the shared disciplinary field of sociology and perspectives adopted broadly reflect location within the division of sociological labor, which in turn reflect positions within the system of higher education. Following Bourdieu, one can say that it is through such struggles that the unity of the field and its boundaries are constituted. I have depicted the struggles organized around the antagonism between the four sociologies, while the chapters of this book underline their fructifying interdependence. What is the unity that these chapters portend, and how can we bring it to the fore?

Our shared commitments come into focus, once we attend to our origins, and the fate of sociology in different societies. Sociology grew up with the rise of civil society at the end of the nineteenth century—those associations, movements, and publics that are neither part of the state nor of the economy. Sociology disappears or goes underground with civil society as we see in Hitler’s Germany, Salazar’s Portugal, Stalin’s Soviet Union, Mao’s China, and Pinochet’s Chile. Sociology thrives when civil society flourishes, as we saw in the twilight of apartheid, the Soviet Union, post-revolutionary Portugal, the civil rights era in the United States. Looking at matters historically and geographically, we find strong links between the vibrancy of sociology and the strength of civil society.

Civil society is not simply the object of knowledge for sociology—we examine much more—but rather the standpoint from which we study the world. That is to say we study the economy in terms of its effects upon civil society (atomizing relations, creating inequality, generating social movements) or civil society’s contribution to the existence of the economy (supporting the non-contractual elements of contract, the networks that make markets possible, etc.). Equally, we study the state from the standpoint of its effects on civil society (the application of violence, the generation of social policy, the justification of domination) and vice versa the effects of civil society on the state (generating or absorbing conflicts, stabilizing democracy, etc.).

Civil society is not a homogeneous entity. It is no more homogeneous, no less at war with itself, than sociology. It is riven with conflicts, hierarchies, and exclusions, many of them deriving from the invasion or colonization by market and state. More generally, as a relatively autonomous realm civil society is Janus-faced. On the one side it serves to reproduce existing patterns of domination through the organization of consent; on the other side, it is the terrain for burgeoning conflicts that challenge patterns of domination. So sociology, too, is Janus-faced, on the one side conservatizing interests to
preserve an autonomous profession and on the other side subversive struggles that reflect public engagement. The two-sided character of sociology is no epiphenomenon or mirror reflection of the two-sided character of civil society, but nonetheless there is a correspondence between the two.

That having been said, civil society does also have an underlying integrity, an underlying resilience that repels the assault of markets and states, an underlying telos that imagines institutions of self-regulation. It is one function of public sociology to establish the grounds of that integrity, to make that integrity the subject of interrogation, which is why there cannot and should not be a single public sociology, but there has to be a multiplicity of public sociologies, catering to different segments of civil society. The multiplication of public sociologies, while generating conflict within sociology, nonetheless reflects a higher unity, a thickening of civil society, and a more effective defense against markets and states. We do share a common perspective, despite our differences, in and through our differences. The chapters of this handbook, starting with Vince Jeffries’s integrative sociology, are testimony to that common project. Once we focus on specific problems of public concern—domestic violence, child labor, professionalism, human rights, civil war, community organizing, incarceration, and so forth—from whatever quadrant of our discipline many of our internal differences miraculously evaporate.

Here then lies the specificity of sociology as compared to other disciplines. It takes the standpoint of civil society and valorizes the social, as opposed to economics that takes the standpoint of the economy and valorizes the market, and political science that takes the standpoint of the state and valorizes political order. This is not to say that these disciplines are homogeneous since they too are fields with dominant and dominated perspectives. Within economics there are growing tendencies toward institutional analysis and there is even an oppositional organization called post-autistic economics. Political science’s embrace of economic models generated the “perestroika” counter-movement. So sociologists can find allies within these two disciplines. At the same time, sociology is not impervious to the influence of the dominant paradigms within economics (the rational choice tendency) and within political science (the fascination with the state per se), but these have always been weak and subjugated tendencies within our discipline. Turning elsewhere within the academy, we do share the standpoint of civil society with large fractions of other disciplines, such as anthropology, human geography, and social history, not to mention the inter-disciplines of women’s studies, race and ethnic studies, and environmental studies all of which have historical roots in particular publics.

As sociologists we do share interests—interests at odds with those of political science and economics, whose theories have stood in as ideologies that have justified the colonization of civil society, and specifically the
corporatization of the university, privatization of research, and the commodification of student learning. In our era of market fundamentalism, when civil society is under threat, sociology takes up a defensive posture in the face of the more powerful disciplines of political science and economics. In this era, to defend a single social science is to endorse the supremacy of economics. It would turn sociology into a minor moment of economics, which is, indeed, where we began more than a century ago. This is not to deny the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration and alliance, especially now, but simply to hold on to sociology’s differentia specifica.

The era of market fundamentalism is not eternal. There have been at least two previous waves of marketization, one in the nineteenth century and another in the early part of the twentieth century, beginning after World War I. Both gave rise to counter-movements—the first to a vibrant civil society and the second to a welfare state—and both would produce a vibrant and self-confident sociology. Today we see the exhaustion of third-wave marketization that began in the 1970s. Indeed, it is entering a deep economic crisis that has already produced a counter-movement from the U.S. state—a state that had hitherto pioneered deregulation. Counter-movements can be found all over the world in local struggles against land and water expropriations, in leftist governments in Latin America, and perhaps in Islamic states in the Middle East and at the global level from international agencies such as the IMF and World Bank. The era of counter-movement introduces enormous uncertainty as to its form and direction. It is an era in which the range of possibilities expands, possibilities that portend repressive dangers no less than democratic openings. We close our eyes to such dangers and openings at our peril—we can assert our presence in society, joining the switch men and women of history, or, possibly for the last time, be condemned to irrelevance.

NOTES

I should like to thank Vince Jeffries and Steve Lopez for their comments on a draft of this chapter.


2. Each field has its own specific capital which, in the Bourdieusian scheme, can be converted from or can be converted into more generalized economic and cultural capital. Calhoun (2005:35) misses this point in proposing that the sociological field itself is organized by economic and cultural capital.

3. This chapter follows that of the handbook itself in largely concentrating on the field of U.S. sociology. If it was initially applied to the United States, the fourfold scheme was conceived of as a universal template that would cast light on the disciplinary field of other nations and also at the global level. Elsewhere I have explored how other national divisions of labor give rise to distinctive struggles and alliances, and even how the disciplinary field in one country depends on or influences the
disciplinary field in another. In these comparative analyses we learn just how pecu-
liar U.S. sociology is, and thereby broaden our imagination of what it could be. But
here I confine myself to sociology in the United States.

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About the Contributors

Barbara Adam received her Ph.D. and D.Sc.Econ. from Cardiff University, where she is professor of sociology. She is founding editor of the journal *Time & Society* and has published extensively on the social and socio-environmental relations of time and the future. The most recent monographs of the award-winning author are *Time* (2004) and *Future Matters: Action, Knowledge, Ethics* (co-authored with Chris Groves, 2007).

Wendell Bell received his Ph.D. from the University of California, Los Angeles (1952), and is professor emeritus of sociology at Yale University. He is the author or co-author of more than 200 articles and nine books, including *Social Area Analysis, Jamaican Leaders*, and *Foundations of Future Studies* (which the Association of Professional Futurists selected in 2008 as being among the ten most important futures books of all time). In 2005 the World Futures Studies Federation awarded him a Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of his contributions to futures studies.

Michael Burawoy received his Ph.D. at the University of Chicago, and teaches at the University of California, Berkeley. He is interested in the sociology of work and the work of sociology.

Stephen Cornell is professor of sociology and director of the Udall Center for Studies in Public Policy at the University of Arizona. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. Much of his work focuses on self-determination, governance, and economic development among indigenous peoples in North America and elsewhere.
Michael DeCesare received his Ph.D. from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. He is assistant professor of sociology at Merrimack College. He is the author of *A Discipline Divided: Sociology in American High Schools* (2007). His articles have appeared in *The American Sociologist, Teaching Sociology, Social Biology,* and other journals. Currently, he is working on a book about Dr. Jack Kevorkian’s role in the U.S. right-to-die movement.

Sean Elias teaches at Southern Methodist University and is completing his dissertation, “Black and White Sociology: The Segregation of American Sociology,” at Texas A&M University. He studies how race (ideas about race, racial group relations, and racist practices) shapes U.S. society and the social sciences.

Joe Feagin, Ella C. McFadden Professor at Texas A&M University, acquired his Ph.D. in sociology at Harvard University in 1966. Feagin has served as the scholar-in-residence at the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and written 55 scholarly books in his research areas, one of which (*Ghetto Revolts*) was nominated for a Pulitzer. He is the 2006 recipient of a Harvard Alumni Association lifetime award and was the 2000 president of the American Sociological Association.

Frank Furedi is a professor of sociology at the University of Kent in Canterbury, England. In recent years his work was devoted to an exploration of the workings of the culture of fear. Since publishing *The Culture of Fear* (1997) he has written several books on the subject, the latest being *Invitation to Terror: The Expanding Empire of the Unknown* (2007). He is now engaged in a study of the relations between changing ideas of authority and the meaning of education. His *The End of Education* will be published in October 2009.

Herbert J. Gans is Robert S. Lynd Professor Emeritus of Sociology at Columbia University. He is the author of 13 books, most recently *Imagining America in 2033* (2008), was the 1988 president of the American Sociological Association, and received the association’s Career of Distinguished Scholarship Award in 2006.

Norval D. Glenn received his Ph.D. from the University of Texas at Austin, where he is now Ashbel Smith Professor in Sociology and Stiles Professor in American Studies. His research and scholarly interests include various topics concerning family relations and aging and the life course and, recently, the dissemination of social science findings to the lay public.

John Hagan received his Ph.D. from the University of Alberta. He is John D. MacArthur Professor of Sociology at Northwestern University, professor at
Northwestern University School of Law, and co-director of the Center on Law and Globalization at the American Bar Foundation. His book (with Bill McCarthy) *Mean Streets: Youth Crime and Homelessness* received the Michael Hindelang Award from the American Society of Criminology and the C. Wright Mills Award from the Society for the Study of Social Problems. He has been awarded the 2009 Stockholm Prize in Criminology for his pioneering application of advanced crime measurement techniques to the analysis of genocide in Darfur and in the Balkans, and for his earlier study of the development of the International Criminal Tribunal published in his book *Justice in the Balkans*.

**Ruth Horowitz**, professor at New York University, received her Ph.D. at the University of Chicago. Her earlier work includes *Honor and the American Dream: Culture and Identity in a Chicago Community* (1983) which received the C. Wright Mills Award, Honorable Mention, and *Teen Mothers, Citizens or Dependents?* (1994), which won the C. H. Cooley Award.

**Rhoda E. Howard-Hassmann** is Canada Research Chair in International Human Rights at Wilfrid Laurier University, Canada. She received her Ph.D. (1976) from McGill University, and is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada. She is the author most recently of *Reparations to Africa* (2008) and *The Second Great Transformation: Human Rights Leapfrogging in the Era of Globalization* (under review).

**Lina Hu** is currently a doctoral candidate at the University of California, Berkeley. She received Master of Arts degrees in sociology from Tsinghua University, China, in 2007, and from the University of California, Berkeley, in 2009.

**Vincent Jeffries** received his Ph.D. from the University of California, Los Angeles. He is professor of sociology at California State University, Northridge. He is the author (with H. Edward Ransford) of *Social Stratification: A Multiple Hierarchy Approach*. In recent years his scholarly work has focused on developing Pitirim A. Sorokin’s integral theory, and on research regarding the virtues and marriage and family relationships.

**Robert Kleidman** is associate professor of sociology at Cleveland State University. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. His research interests include community organizing, engaged scholarship, and social movements. He is author of *Organizing for Peace: Neutrality, the Test Ban, and the Freeze* (1993).

**Elizabeth Dermody Leonard** is professor of sociology at Vanguard University of Southern California. She received her Ph.D. from the University
of California, Riverside, in 1997. Dr. Leonard’s main areas of research, teaching, and scholarship are intimate partner violence, women prisoners, and child sexual abuse. She has been a visiting professor at the University of Limerick, Ireland, and is the author of *Convicted Survivors: The Imprisonment of Battered Woman Who Kill* (2002). Her research has been used by legislators, law professors, advocates for convicted battered women, and documentary filmmakers, and has provided the basis for the play by Warren Doody, *Life without Parole*.

**Damon Mayrl** is a doctoral candidate in sociology at the University of California, Berkeley. His areas of interest include political sociology, the sociology of religion, and comparative and historical methods. His dissertation examines how and why secularization produces dissimilar institutional effects in similar countries.

**Bill McCarthy** received his Ph.D. from the University of Toronto (1990). He studies crime. His current research on teenage romantic relationships and offending has recently appeared in the *American Sociological Review*. His and John Hagan’s book, *Mean Streets: Youth Crime and Homelessness* (1997), received the Michael Hindelang Award from the American Society of Criminology and the C. Wright Mills Award from the Society for the Study of Social Problems.

**Raymond A. Morrow** is professor of sociology at the University of Alberta, Edmonton. His *Critical Theory and Methodology* (1994) received a Choice Magazine Academic Book of the Year Award, and his most recent book (with C. A. Torres) is *Reading Freire and Habermas: Critical Pedagogy and Transformative Change* (2002).

**Jennifer Mueller** is a doctoral candidate in sociology at Texas A&M University. Her research interests include racial and ethnic relations, structures of privilege, and media/popular culture. She is currently investigating the intergenerational transmission of wealth and “racial” capital among U.S. families; how this process is influenced by the structural/institutional context; and how this has served as a primary means for the social reproduction of racial inequality.

**Lawrence T. Nichols** is professor of sociology at West Virginia University, and also serves as editor of *The American Sociologist*. Dr. Nichols has published widely in the fields of criminology, social problems theory, and the history of sociology, where he has focused especially on the career and writings of Pitirim A. Sorokinin.
Samuel P. Oliner received his Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley. He is Emeritus Professor of Sociology at Humboldt State University and founder and director of the Altruistic Personality and Prosocial Behavior Institute. He is the author and co-author of several dozen publications on the Holocaust, altruism, prosocial behavior, and national and international race relations. His latest book is titled *Altruism, Intergroup Apology, Forgiveness, and Reconciliation* (2008).

Pamela Oliver received her Ph.D. from the University of North Carolina. Her longtime research interest is collective action and social movements; she has been working slowly on a book linking repression theory to black incarceration patterns. In 2007–2008 she was the only academic appointed to the Wisconsin governor’s special commission on racial disparities and currently serves on a local task force on racial disparities.

Caroline Hodges Persell earned her Ph.D. from Columbia University and is professor of sociology at New York University. A past vice president of the American Sociological Association, her books include *How Sampling Works* (with Richard Maisel); *Preparing for Power: America’s Elite Boarding Schools* (with Peter W. Cookson Jr.); and *Education and Inequality*. She has received teaching awards from the American Sociological Association and New York University. She is currently conducting research on racial variations in educational achievement.

Saskia Sassen is the Robert S. Lynd Professor of Sociology and a member of the Committee on Global Thought, Columbia University (www.columbia.edu/~sjs2/). Her recent books are *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages* (2008), and *A Sociology of Globalization* (2007). She has completed for UNESCO a five-year project on sustainable human settlement based on a network of researchers and activists in over 30 countries: it is published as one of the volumes of the *Encyclopedia of Life Support Systems* (EOLSS) [www.eolss.net]. Her books are translated into nineteen languages. She has written for the *Guardian*, the *New York Times*, OpenDemocracy.net, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, the *International Herald Tribune*, *Newsweek International*, the *Financial Times*, and Huffington.com, among others.

Edward A. Tiryakian is professor emeritus of sociology at Duke University. He received his B.A. from Princeton University and his Ph.D. from Harvard University. He is the past president of the American Society for the Study of Religion and of the International Association of French Speaking Sociologists. Recent publications include “Introduction” to Pitirim Sorokin *The United States and Russia* (2007) and *For Durkheim: Essays in Historical and Cultural*
Sociology, forthcoming. He is currently doing research for a book-length study to be entitled America as the First Protestant Nation.

Laurel Westbrook received her Ph.D. in sociology from the University of California, Berkeley, and is an assistant professor of sociology at Grand Valley State University. Her research interests include gender, sexuality, violence, post-structuralist theory, social movements, and, of course, public sociology. Her other recent publications include “Vulnerable Subjecthood: The Risks and Benefits of the Struggle for Hate Crime Legislation,” in the 2008 volume of the Berkeley Journal of Sociology, and “Becoming Knowably Gendered: The Production of Transgender Possibilities and Constraints in the Mass and Alternative Press from 1990 to 2005 in the United States,” forthcoming in Transgender Identities: Towards a Social Analysis of Gender Diversity, edited by Sally Hines and Tam Sanger.