



The More American Sociology Seeks to Become a Politically-Relevant Discipline, the More Irrelevant it Becomes to Solving Societal Problems

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Abstract

The long-standing divide between sociology as an activist discipline vs. sociology as a science is examined in light of the current trend for American sociology focus on a limited set of justice issues resulting from inequalities and discrimination against certain categories of persons. Increasingly, this trend is pushing sociology toward become an activist discipline and, as a result, an ideologically-oriented discipline in its teaching and research activities. The outcome of this trend is the growing marginalization of those committed to sociology as a science in departments and academic meetings, resulting in demoralization of sociology's scientists and their escalating concern over their fate in a discipline increasingly mimicking a social movement organization. Even more damaging to sociology will be a loss of respect inside academia and a loss of relevance among publics not sharing American sociology's political biases. Furthermore, the chance for sociology to use its vast store of knowledge to help clients of all types solve their organizational problems will be lost if sociology is defined as a political rather than scientific enterprise. Sociology will thus willingly leave the vast resource niche for applications of social science knowledge to disciplines that know little about social organization (i.e., economics and psychology). Sociology will endure, of course, but it will not realize its enormous potential for reshaping societies.

Keywords Activism · Justice · Inequality · Science · Sociology's Future · Social Engineering

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Since the very beginnings of sociology as a self-conscious discipline of study, there has always existed a conflict between visions of what sociology can and should be. Should it be an activist discipline devoted to the direct engagement of social problems or a scientific discipline committed to producing verified knowledge? Over the last two decades, however, this conflict has become more intense with a clear bias toward sociology as an activist discipline. Some seemingly would prefer that sociological associations become quasi-social movement organizations, mobilizing students and publics to pursue greater equality and social justice for victims of long-term discrimination in American society. Indeed, recent themes of ASA meetings¹ have focused on inequality, injustice, and overcoming discrimination—themes that have also been evident in regional associations in the United States.

There is no necessary conflict between the practice of science and using this knowledge in applied situations, but conflict inevitably emerges when the search for knowledge and the presentation of this knowledge also requires a critical and ideologically-loaded analysis of chronic social injustices. Indeed, sociologists who do not directly address inequalities and the issues of injustice in their work can feel marginalized at academic meetings; and not surprisingly, they may become disillusioned with sociology.

In this paper, I review the history of this sometimes repressed, but often intense, debate between activist and scientific sociology. In so doing, I try to make a case that a “hard science of society” is the best strategy for making sociology relevant to chronic social problems at all levels of large, complex societies. If sociology continues on its current course and, indeed, begins to reorganize ASA and regional sociological associations into de facto social movement organizations, few outside of sociology will see sociology’s knowledge as useful. Indeed, sociologists will be stigmatized as just another left-wing advocacy group inside academia and outside in the public domain.

The result: scientific sociology’s understanding of the dynamics of social universe, painstakingly developed over the past 50-plus years, will remain under-utilized by potential clients outside academia who need expertise on how to address their organizational problems. Only knowledge that fits the biases and goals of social movement organizations, perhaps only as a legitimating ideology, will be evident the public domain. And increasingly, sociology will become a minor political actor in a universe filled with activists and media talking heads of all stripes. Sociology will no longer be considered a science worthy of much attention inside and outside of academia, except by students hungry for a critical approach to the study of society. Such would be an enormous tragedy; and if the current trends in sociology continue, I argue that those committed to science will continue to leave the current discipline and will seek to create a new type of sociologically oriented discipline committed to the epistemology of science. The current situation in academia, where intra-department

¹ For example, here are the themes for some recent meetings: “Power, Inequality, and Resistance at Work” (2020), “Engaging social justice for a better social world” (2019), “Feeling race: an invitation to explore racialized emotions” (2018), “Culture, inequalities, and social inclusion across the globe” (2017); “Sexualities in the social world” (2015); “Hard times: the impact of inequality on families and individuals” (2014); “Interrogating Inequality: Linking Micro and Macro” (2013). For one meeting, any one of these themes would be interesting, but these represent a recent pattern over the last decade or so to focus on inequality, although the 2010, 2009, and 2005 meetings had more generic titles and were not focused on inequalities. Still, the trend is clear.

conflicts revolving around very different views of what sociology can and should be, cannot be sustained very far into the future.

A Brief History of the Conflict between Activist-Sociology and Scientific-Sociology

Auguste Comte's "Naïve" Advocacy for a Science of Sociology

Sociologists today pay little attention to Auguste Comte, but perhaps they should if they want to understand the roots of conflict now confronting the discipline. In Comte's great work, *Course in Positive Philosophy* (1830–1832 [1854]), he outlined a program for sociology as a science and, at the same time, for a discipline that could discover solutions to problematic social conditions.

Comte felt that as sociology developed scientific laws, but at the same time, the knowledge reflected in these laws *could be used to remake societies into more benign and liberating forms of social organization*. Comte argued that sociologists could be like physicians discovering "pathologies." Yet, Comte ignored some immediate problems with this line of advocacy: Who gets to decide what a "pathology" is and, moreover, who would apply the laws of sociology to "cure" societies of these pathologies? Comte's answer to these types of questions was quite naïve: social physicists, or sociologists, were to be the "doctors" of the body social. Such an answer, of course, ignores the politics and morality of defining what is problematic and what should be done about the problematic conditions. The argument sounded great in the abstract, but glossed over the fact that a science devoted restructuring societies *will always subject to contention* and, in the end, will become politicized by contenders with varying ideological commitments.

In Comte's case, his mental decline during the middle decades of the nineteenth Century increasingly made him a marginalized academic figure, just as present-day sociology's ideological turn may make the discipline a marginal political player in the contentious world of politics. And sadly, as Comte's dementia increased, he began to portray himself as "The Founder of Universal Religion," proclaiming that he was "The Great Priest of Humanity." He lectured to rag-tag groups of laypersons, sending decrees to his disciples and even missives to the Pope in Rome. He saw "love" as the unifying force of humanity and sought to counsel political leaders in the manner of a theologian. His solution to pathologies of society was thus a quasi-religious appeal, which was ignored by almost everyone—often the fate of overly moral persons, as well as over-moralistic disciplines. In many ways, Comte's biography might be seen as a precursor to what would happen in the history of American sociology, as science was abandoned increasingly in favor of a quasi-religious zeal which Christian Smith labeled, *The Sacred Project of American Sociology* (2014; see Table 1 in subsequent text). Whether the ideology is political and/or religious, it is a moral belief system requiring views and actions that cannot be easily reconciled to opposing views; such a state of mind makes it difficult—whether in Comte's time or today—for individuals to strive for objectivity in the analysis of social phenomena. Theories, data, analyses, and other ideas that do not conform to the moral path demanded by an ideology will be ignored, and even worse, rejected, often leading not only to conflict but active discrimination against

those who do not mouth the party line—a tragic contradiction to a morality devoted to the elimination of discrimination and injustice. Knowledge accumulated by a scientific discipline can be lost or, at least, ignored by those committed to realizing the goals articulated by an ideology. The consequences for sociology as a discipline would potentially be even more catastrophic as it loses respect inside academia and outside the academy among not only the general public but also among the large pool of potential clients trying to solve organizational problems.

The Emergence of American Sociology, 1860s to 1920

Before the Civil War in the United States, one or two University courses with names such as “the Philosophy of Social Relations” were taught (Morgan 1982: 27). After 1865 more such courses began to find their way into colleges and universities, but there was no systematic regulation of their content. What connected them was a common theme, the “problem of social reform.” Social reform movements provided the subject matter and ideological basis for these quasi-sociology courses; and while the literature on reformism far outstripped reform-oriented courses in sociology within academia, the first founders of American sociology—Lester Ward, William Graham Sumner, Franklin H. Giddings, and Albion Small—were not trained in sociology and, thus, were highly receptive to the idea of sociology becoming involved in social reform, even as they also sought to make sociology a science. Ward was the only founder trained in science (paleontology), whereas Sumner and Small were theologically trained, and Giddings was a journalist. Each of these scholars, who instrumental in founding the American Sociological Society in the early twentieth Century, thus also carried forth earlier impulses of abolitionists in the pre-Civil War period which had been housed in various organizations that resembled social movement organizations. It should also be mentioned that Jane Adams was also involved in the formation of ASS, and that her larger circle of activist women, such as Florence Kelly and Charlotte Perkins, also contributed to the view of sociology as “useful” discipline, and even more so after Adams won the Nobel Peace prize.

It is thus easy to see how early sociologists and especially those male founders (women were under-represented) in academia seeking a resource base for courses became interested in such activities as vice, divorce, drunkenness, unemployment, child abuse, and other “pathologies” of individuals and society. Indeed, it was Adams at Hull house that focused on even larger and, in many ways, more significant problems like the plight of immigrants. Yet, both inside and outside of academia, just how to reconcile these value commitments with science was to prove problematic, especially since three of the four male founders of early American sociology had no training in science, even as they tried to emphasize that, *a la* Comte, sociology could be a science.

After the Civil War, however, there was a new understanding that these kinds of problems were related to urbanization and industrialization and that, moreover, they could be overcome through crusades of *edification*, *legislation*, and *regulation*. These reformist sentiments were thus widespread across the American population; and the causes of these problems and pathologies was

thought to be “obvious.” And similarly, the solution was clear and often involved paying more attention to the Social Gospel devoted to applying Protestant ethics to social problems, or to heading such simplistic bromides as more Christian piety and behavior.

The emergence of the social sciences in American colleges and universities, however, was to create tensions between reformists, who were guided by religious impulses, and those who were not and who were interested in more careful examination of causes of, and solutions to, social problems. Increasingly, commentary on problems shifted to a “higher journalism” with some of this lively debate considered to be “sociological.” And thus, the founders of sociology who became academics were still, in the end, dependent on reformers who would support sociology as a intellectual activity and who, thereby, constituted an essential resource base in the recruitment of students and in reaching larger public audiences. Early American sociology was a kind of “public sociology” (Burawoy 2004a, b, c, 2005). The proto-sociologists who were to become the first generation of academic sociologists in the U.S. were dependent for their funding, students, and legitimacy on their willingness to address what the public saw as problematic conditions. Today, American sociology now seems to embrace focus on new and perhaps more fundamental problems without full consideration of the longer-term consequences of a discipline that increasingly becomes ideological.

Thus, early American sociology was very much like today in its orientation to larger social problems, although the problems were much different and, early on, focused on such issues as “the labor problem” (i.e., protests against exploitation of labor²). It is in this context that early sociology tried to be more “scientific” by initiating the American tradition of social surveys, initially around the accumulation of labor statistics and later around community surveys; and eventually, surveys became the dominant methodology for almost any subject matter. These early surveys were not, however, “objective” because they were oriented to making a case in favor of a particular political position (much like testimony in a court trial³). Thus, various bureaus of labor statistics collected data and offered “balanced reports” on labor conditions, although these reports were highly biased toward goals for enhancing the position of labor, and in a few cases, just the opposite. But, this common pattern of sociological inquiry led to the use of statistics to discover social facts and, eventually, to make sociology as a “science” more “objective,” although most early sociologists had very little training in science or statistics (although this would soon change). Later reports focused on immigration, and the problems associated with discrimination—a focus that persists to the present day.

The sociologists who formed the American Sociological Society in 1905 were thus the products of social reform movements that had proliferated in the aftermath of the Civil War; and in many ways this orientation lasted beyond the first World War up through the second World War. Yet, in the early decades of the twentieth century, efforts were made to make sociology a more rigorous “science,” even if those arguing for this goal were themselves not trained in science. It is perhaps hard to believe that this early period involved invoking Auguste Comte’s *Positive Philosophy* (1830–1842 [1854]

² An issue that is at the core of the 2019 and 2020 ASA meetings and, thus, is still very much a part of sociology.

³ Sociological research has often been used this way, as was evident in the landmark Supreme Court decision on school segregation and up to the present where sociological data can be used to document inequalities for those seeking justice in courts.

early work and Herbert Spencer's *The Principles of Sociology* (1874–1894 [1898]) where an emphasis on discovering first principles and the laws of sociology. This emphasis was to offer an aura of academic respectability to sociology, even as the resource base of the discipline consisted of patrons and students interested in social reform. And, much like the post-World War II era, the potential conflict between activism and science was papered over. Sociologists at least gave lip service to making sociology a true science through the inter-war period, and well into the present era.

Theoretical sociology at the beginning of the twentieth century was characterized by a very macro-level analysis of institutional systems—much in the image of Spencer's sociology—but increasingly, a more micro orientation emerged, personified by Charles Horton Cooley (1902) and the philosopher, Mead (1934). And this micro-macro split represented an early intellectual divide among sociologists, but far more significant in the long run, was the divide between science and activism. And, as the evolutionary theorizing of the 19th and early 20th centuries was banished from sociology by the end of the 1920s (because of its perceived ethnocentric biases and conflation of Social Darwinism with Spencerian sociology), the more macro approach of Spencer and Comte also disappeared from sociology, creating a theoretical vacuum during the interwar years. As a consequence, sociology became even more dependent upon a combination of (a) surveys that were statistically analyzed in a “scientific manner” for clients and (b) reform-oriented students filling classroom seats (Turner and Turner 1990).

Thus, sociology in the early decades of the twentieth Century had trouble gaining a firm resource base beyond students interested in reform. But the superficial mantra of scientific theorizing and, increasingly, of scientific and “metrical” statistical analysis of data pushed by Franklin Giddings, slowly gave sociology a certain surface legitimacy inside academia and, eventually, outside of academia in surveys for diverse clients. The uniquely American obsession with the use of textbooks in sociology classes also gave sociology a surface intellectual coherence rivaling that of the hard sciences,⁴ but the core resource base for sociology was students interested in reform.

Yet, as sociology entered this realm of instruction, it had to compete for decades with theological training that had long been the path to working in philanthropic organizations. This conflict emerged especially in graduate education, but nonetheless, sociology departments, and even the first elite sociology departments at Chicago and Columbia, were successful in recruiting new faculty to meet student demand for courses oriented to amelioration and reform. There was still an effort to channel these reform orientations into scientific sociology, with heavy doses of theory and statistics—a pattern that would exist for the rest of the twentieth century. The community survey was born in this effort, as departments and students began to collect systematic data on subpopulations in various locations and analyze these with statistics (the days before multiple regressions on “variables” representing attitudes of people were made easy by computers instead of a room filled with people doing calculations manually).

⁴ Some of the titles of these textbooks of early founders reveal the surface appeal to Comte's and Spencer's views of sociology as a science: *Principles of Sociology* (Ross), *Social Change* (Ogburn), *The Science of Society* (Sumner and Keller), *Social Processes* (Cooley), *Introduction to the Science of Sociology* (Park and Burgess).

Sociology during the Decades of the Mid-Century, 1920's to 1960

The years between the two world wars involved a concerted effort to secure a new resource base for sociology from the broader social survey movement (Turner and Turner 1990). It is during this period that foundations created by early American industrialists began to fund social science research. John D. Rockefeller, Jr.'s sponsorship of surveys on churches and their memberships initiated a new era in sociology where faculty and students within academia could secure funding for staffs (of as many as 45 persons) to conduct research and analyze data. Yet, this level of support of non-academic staffs also represented a threat to academics, although some of American sociology's early survey research resulted in classics on communities such as *Middletown*. At the University of Chicago, the famous Chicago School emerged with academics and their students using the city of Chicago as a research laboratory, thus producing early classic ethnographies and, later, ever-more statistic analyses of sub-populations in Chicago with the arrival of William F. Ogburn at Chicago in 1928.

Philanthropic foundations as well as agencies like the Social Science Research Council (the SSRC was funded largely by Rockefeller) continued to fund research, especially in an effort to demonstrate the utility of social science research to boards of directors of corporations and members of state legislatures. The SSRC early on funded efforts of scholars to define the nature of social science by sponsoring conferences of scholars to discuss the issues involved in making social science a "true" science. Those at Dartmouth College became the conferences that created the Sociological Research Association that, today, represents a selective pool of academics committed to scientific sociology and, perhaps implicitly, a base in case scientists in the discipline decide to form additional sociological associations outside of ASA—as is evident by the formation of the Scientific Sociology association.

In this context of potential fragmentation, the discipline of sociology by 1930 was still dominated by two departments, Chicago and Columbia, even as new departments were being created (e.g., Harvard and Duke) while some older departments maintained their prominence (e.g., North Carolina, Minnesota, Yale). New departments were being created even during the Great Depression, sucking up what was feared to be an over-production of PhDs. Thus, the thought that non-academic employment in government and private corporations for new PhDs would increasingly be a career path was put on hold—much as it is today. At the same time, tensions in ASS were building over the dominance of Chicago and Columbia, while having the ASS use of Chicago's *The American Journal of Sociology* as its flagship journal was increasingly seen as biasing the field toward the agendas of Chicago and Columbia. New, emerging departments could sustain a resource base from students interested in social reform, and thereby, were increasingly frustrated by the structure of ASS. One response was the founding in the 1930s of the regional associations, Pacific Sociological Association (1930–31) Southern Sociological Association (1936), Southwestern Association (1937), Ohio Valley Sociological Association (1936), and Midwestern Sociological Association (1936) with their own journals and regional meetings providing an alternative to ASS in the 1930s. Thus, the new academics had alternative resource bases—their reform-oriented students, new journal outlets for their intellectual work, and more localized networks provided by the regional associations. In the end, the ASS would abandon the *American Journal of Sociology*, create a new association—the American Sociological Association—and begin to promote integration of the discipline by coordinating their actions with regional associations and by at least

giving lip service to a discipline that was scientific. Yet, the scientific side of sociology had become heavily skewed toward more descriptive goals, using statistics from surveys oriented to “practical questions”; and it is for this reason that the theoretical side of science remained conspicuously underdeveloped in the inter-war years.

During the 1930s and through the 1940s, sociologists were thus still trying to symbolically unify the discipline around methods and theory—which is not surprising because such is what unifies any scientific discipline. Yet, it proved difficult to bring about unification because there was little consensus over, or even lip service to, common methods and theory evident in the ASS’s and then ASA’s formative periods. There did eventually emerge a plurality preference for attitude surveys supported by grants from such figures as John D. Rockefeller, Henry Ford, and Andrew Carnegie, and the SSRC; and these efforts intensified in the 1950s and early 1960s as computers would allow easier statistical computations of variables, often with the presumption that what people say about their locations in social structures is actually a measure of social structures themselves as they affect attitudes and preferences for certain stated behaviors. This plurality had, by the 1960s, surpassed ethnographic and experimental methods, seemingly giving sociology a consensus that, again, was more surface perception than real consensus. Indeed, those doing ethnographic research were often quite hostile to surveys that, in Christian Smith’s words, “sliced and diced” humans into pieces of attitudes, while ignoring the whole person (Smith 2010). Robert Merton’s (1947 [1968]: 39–72) appeal for “theories of the middle range” allowed survey researchers constructing path models to believe that these models were highly theoretical; this Mertonian solution perpetuated, once again, the belief that survey research and middle range theory could build a new consensus over theory and methods that were highly “scientific.” But, theorizing *per se* did not achieve such consensus. For this reason, the interwar period seemed to be a time of little theory development. And, when theory began to re-emerge in the 1950s, it was split between, on the one side, Merton’s advocacy for theories of the middle range which, in most cases, were empirical generalizations dressed up to look more abstract than they actually were and, on the other side, grand theorizing of Talcott Parsons and the short-lived revival of functional theory (from 1949 to 1970).

During World War II and shortly thereafter, two large sociological works were commissioned, one by the Carnegie Foundation and another by the Social Science Research Council in cooperation with the Defense Department. *An American Dilemma* (1944) might be considered a model for what is now termed “public sociology” where the basic dilemma of how a society valuing freedom and equality of opportunity could systematically engage in such discriminatory action against African Americans. It was a long multivolume research on the origins and nature of the problem, and it had a large effect on the general public and, eventually, on the courts and governmental agencies. The fact that a Swedish sociologist/economist was the head of the project attests to the Foundation’s concern that only an outsider could present an “objective” examination of this topic—something that current sociologists should think about quite seriously. The other large research project summarized in the two-volume *The American Soldier* led by Samuel Stouffer (1949) and a large team of social scientists. These volumes demonstrated the power of social psychological analysis of soldiers during war, and from these volumes came not only rich descriptions and surveys of military personnel’s attitudes and feelings but also some interesting theoretical explanations for the data—theories that are still at the core of sociology today. This team effort demonstrated the power of sociological analysis when it addressed practical

problems of organizing military life. And along with *An American Dilemma*, *The American Soldier* demonstrated the value of applied sociology. These works helped legitimate sociology as a science and, indeed, in the case of *The American Soldier* led to considerable funding by branches of the military of social science research, much of it by sociologists, through the twentieth century and right up to the present. This research also allowed sociologists to mask disagreements over science vs. more applied applications of science, thus staving off the inevitable conflict for at least two decades.

In fact, 1950s and 1960s were the beginnings of a renaissance in sociology. I would argue that the period from the 1960s to the present saw the *greatest accumulation of new knowledge than all other periods combined in the history of sociology*. Sociology has more explanatory power by a factor of perhaps 5 in the last six decades over all previous periods of sociologically-oriented inquiry. Indeed, the 1960s saw not only a revival of Marxist theorizing that had been dormant during the McCarthy era (but alive in Europe) as well as an intense revival of micro-level theorizing from Mead and Cooley but also Durkheim as well. New ecological theories, utilitarian and behaviorist theories, structural theories, network theories, and cultural theories followed. Moreover, theorizing was increasingly directed at forces that had been under-emphasized in the history of sociology—e.g., emotions, social movements, conversations and talk, meaning formation, world systems analysis, group and organizational dynamics, environment, stratification, and of course, gender, ethnicity and sexualities. Institutional analysis resurfaced again, with sociologies of family, education, medicine and health, economy, politics, law, religion, sport all proliferating, and at the same time, more general analysis of institutions and their organizational basis proliferated. Demography and ecology prospered so much as to become distinctive fields outside of sociology and, yet, still tied to sociology, as did criminology. New stage models of societal-level evolution emerged as did a general expansion of ecology to societal level evolution; and increasingly, ecological theories also became a part of world systems analysis. Indeed, just reading the 50-plus sections of ASA sections that have emerged out of the original core attests to the diversity of sociologies being generated, almost to the point of over-differentiation. Moreover, experimental research and insightful ethnographies dramatically increased, as did historical analyses often generating new theories. Moreover, new methodologies, particularly for statistical analysis of data, proliferated beginning in 1960s, and eventually new methods borrowed from the natural sciences were being applied to the social sciences by the beginning of the twenty-first century. And, even a robust re-emergence of evolutionary theories beyond stage models and ecology began to emerge in the 1970s to the present, thus bringing evolutionary analysis full back into sociology. Sociology became a discipline whose range of coverage of the social universe had become vast—extending from the study of the biology of humans to the dynamics of the world system, and just about everything in between. Thus, the last sixty years has seen a dramatic expansion both theoretical and methodological across the full range of substantive areas of sociological inquiry from the dynamics of inter-societal systems through the dynamics of societies through their institutional systems (economy, kinship, polity, law, education, science, religion, etc.), and stratifications system (by class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity/race) to their corporate units (groups, communities, and organizations) down to the interpersonal, behavioral, and biological bases.

And yet, even as sociology has grown to be so diverse and comprehensive, it appears that this vast reservoir of knowledge has yet to filter out to larger publics and clients, primarily because of the concerns with justice and activism have begun to dominate the field and, perhaps even more importantly, because sociology has failed to institutionalize a hard-science that, for want of a better term, involved *engineering applications of the new knowledge being accumulated*—a topic to which I will return shortly. And increasingly, as sociological meetings focus their themes on issues of justice in relation to race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality, this incredible achievement of sociology could potentially be lost. This may seem impossible, given the magnitude of the accumulated knowledge, but it is possible because sociology have never been able to gain a full foothold in those areas where its knowledge can be useful to different streams of policy makers, diverse publics, governmental agencies, and private clients (persons, corporations, NGOs), all seeking solutions to organizational problems. Moreover, sociology is still held with some suspicion by academics, especially as calls for activist mobilization on campus and elsewhere mount and, even more, as internal conflicts over activism vs. science escalate in sociology departments.

The current conflicts within departments and the discipline have been part of sociology from its very beginnings. But they began to be fueled by the dramatic growth and differentiation of sociology in American during the 1960s, at the very time that a series of powerful social movements were about to take hold: the final thrust on the long-enduring Civil Rights movement, the rise of the feminist movement, and then in more recent times, the LBTQIA+ movements, followed by a needed revival of the feminist movement as #Me Too Movement. And all of these movements, but especially the most recent, are accelerated in time and space by access to world-level social media.

It should not be surprising that the power of these should overwhelm a discipline like sociology that has never been able to integrate itself fully around science, methods, or theory. The splits and divisions only become more pronounced as calls for justice mobilize large numbers of sociologists, especially as younger sociologists from previously under-represented social categories by gender, ethnicity/race, and sexuality—have entered the discipline. This shifting demography among sociologists has the potential to revitalize the discipline but, thus far, it has often added yet another point of contention to what had already been a potentially volatile mix of differences that had, perhaps for too long, been papered over without definitive resolution of how sociology should be constituted and operate.

What to do with Sociology?

Science or Sacred Project?

Let me lay out in clear the differences between (a) the current direction that much sociology has taken as a more value-laden “sacred project” directed primarily at issues of social justice and (b) the original vision of sociology as a value-neutral, hard science of human social organization that could still be mobilized to address problems of social organization in societies. These are outlined in stark and perhaps over-extreme contrasts in Table 1.

Table 1 Sociology as a for moral project or as a hard science discipline

American Sociology as a Justice/Emancipation Project

The value-laden activity of exposing, protesting, and ending through social movements and governmental programs all inequality, oppression, exploitation, suffering, injustice, poverty, discrimination, exclusion, hierarchy, constraint and domination of, by, or over humans (and perhaps other animals and the environment). (Smith 2014: 7)

Therefore, American sociology is a collective enterprise committed to the visionary project of realizing the emancipation, equality, and moral affirmation of all human beings as autonomous, self-directing agents (who should be) out to live their lives as they personally so desire, by constructing their own favored identities, entering and exiting relationships as the choose, and equally enjoying the gratification of experiential, material, and bodily pleasures (Smith 2014; 7–8).

American Sociology as a Science Project

The value-neutral search for, and analysis of, the fundamental and generic properties of the social universe with the goal of (a) developing and testing theories of their operative dynamics and (b) using the knowledge thereby attained in applied applications to real-world empirical conditions.

Therefore, American sociology is a collective and professional enterprise committed to developing and cumulating knowledge for its own sake as well as for its use and applications to organizational problems of actors in the social universe (Turner 2001).

The portrayal of sociology as a moral project is draw from Christian Smith’s much more detailed analysis in his *The Sacred Project of American Sociology* (2014), which I recommend to every sociologist interested in the long-term prospects of sociology. From my fifty-plus years in the discipline, I have seen a dramatic shift in the preferences of sociologists toward the moral project over the hard-science project alternatives. Of course, many sociologists straddle the two projects, but the growing gulf between the two founding images of the discipline make this an ever-more difficult stance to take. As I have emphasized, the two directions of sociology have always existed since the founding of sociology, particularly in the United States, but it is clear that the discipline is becoming increasingly activist, with growing intolerance for those who wish to remain value-neutral and engage in scientific research and theorizing.⁵ In place of science at meetings are panels on various “critical theorizies,” which in essence are political ideologies, and sessions on more activist goals in teaching and even empirical research.

The seeming armistice between activism and science has been broken, and the questions remain thus: Can both an activist and scientific approach to sociological analysis continue to co-exist in the profession and in academic departments? Or, alternatively, should those committed to science leave the discipline and begin to organize a new discipline committed to scientific inquiry alone? When presidents of ASA and, to a lesser extent, regional associations are committed to a more

⁵ The intolerance is actually more pervasive because sociology does not like other disciplines, such as history and economics, have conservatives and liberal wings. Conservatives hardly exist in American sociology departments; and while more may exist than is known, these conservatives have learned to keep quiet. Thus, there is high dogmatism among sociologists, even those who are hard scientists, historical sociologists, and other areas of inquiry where conservative and liberal debates are part of the discipline. Such is not the case in sociology, which is an irony given the push for “inclusiveness” within the discipline. But this inclusiveness is high conditional.

activist discipline and when the themes of meeting bias programs to the moral project side of the big divide among sociologists, can those who are committed to value-neutral science find a home? Just the costs—financial and emotional—of coming to a national meeting (especially for those on the west coast, since meetings are disproportionately biased to the east coast locations) can be questioned. Quite frankly, I find the cost of coming to meetings where sessions are biased by the presidential themes focusing primarily on social justice issues rather than on question of what new knowledge has been generated to be not worth the price of admission, even though I can easily afford it. For those just beginning with more limited means or those who have simply become disillusioned with ASA and the profession more generally (and I know many who are just that), being a member of sociological organizations and coming to meetings is not worth the time, effort, or money. There may be many reasons for the drop in ASA membership, but feeling excluded by the turn to an activist discipline has led many younger scholars to feel alienated and often rather depressed about why they wasted a decade or two of their lives in a discipline that is becoming, often rather openly, increasingly anti-science. I certainly feel this way, and if I were younger it would give me thought about choosing another line of work (I had a choice to pursue biology or sociology in graduate school, and chose sociology because I had such hope for a true “science of society”; and perhaps, this may be why I have retreated into biology and neurology over the last decade).

And so, the discipline of sociology needs to come to terms with this growing divide, and individuals in the discipline need to decide whether their differences can be reconciled, or not. If not, then it is time for the two sets of practitioners of sociology to go their separate ways, as I will comment upon in more detail later.

Social Movements and Changing Demography of Sociology

It has taken some time for the more activist side of sociology to become what is now perhaps a majority of professional sociologists. Perhaps it was only possible for this shift to occur after sociology had achieved some legitimacy within academia; and once this institutional base was on a solid footing, the more activist side of the discipline could re-emerge, fueled by a succession of social movements in the second half of the twentieth Century and early decades of the twenty-first Century. This ideological ferment has led to a significant change in the demographic profile of the discipline over the last five decades, as new categories of future scholars, who had historically been the victims of discrimination and injustices, pursued graduate studies in sociology. In particular, women, members of minorities, and members of LGBTQIA+ subpopulations would find sociology—the most liberal of the social sciences—to be a relevant and interesting undergraduate major and, then, a career path to becoming a PhD sociologists. Coupled with the more general recruiting of American universities, particularly state-funded universities (but still colleges and universities more generally as well), and departments of sociology in particular, as well as the professional associations of the discipline, the demography of the discipline has changed rather rapidly—from early beginnings in the 1960s accelerating through each subsequent decade. Understandably, these new members of the discipline have been interested in

their individual and collective plight as representatives of subpopulations subject to, at times, extreme discrimination, and as sociologists responded to these student preferences (just as they had at the very beginnings of American sociology) and, then, as these students went on to become themselves academics, the curriculum of sociology departments changed rapidly, thus attracting more students who had been victims of discrimination. Coupled with the already large number of sociologists studying inequalities, the intellectual profile of sociology changed. And change was increasingly easy because of the ready markets for research and teaching on race/ethnic, gender, and sexual inequalities and because sociology itself has been differentiating into many diverse subspecialties, without any clear unifying or integrating force, except the weak force that methodology and theory exerted on the discipline and on the organization of graduate programs. Thus, critical theories became prominent—the most abstract (and often obtuse) from Europe but also home-grown American critical theories spawned by feminist sociology and, to a lesser extent, race/ethnic and LGBTQIA+ cohorts of sociologists. Many of these more critical theories were, in many respects, personifications of Merton's theories of the middle range because they represented abstractions from the real experiences of scholars who had been victims of discrimination. The result was more research, teaching, publications, and professional presentations on the dynamics and empirical details of inequalities generated by discrimination. And much of this intellectual ferment involved pulling the ideologies of social movements into sociology, in particular, but also academia more generally. Starting with the civil rights movement followed by the shortcomings of this movement for not only ethnic/racial minorities (e.g, critical race “theory”) and continued patterns of discrimination against women and LGBTQIA+ populations, academia has become more infused with ideologically-driven fields of research and teaching, and such has been particularly evident in sociology.

And this influx of more activist-orient sociologists occurred during a period sustained growth in sociology majors from a low of just over 10,000 bachelor degrees awarded in 1984–85 to a new peak of 35,000 bachelor degrees awarded in 2012–2013. This steady rise in new students created job opportunities, especially in recent years as the large influx of faculty to university sociology departments in the 1960s and 1970s have to retired, or died, thereby creating vacancy chains for the new sociologists from more diverse backgrounds. However, as the collapse in student enrollments and majors beginning in 1972 documents (from 36,000 B.A. degrees in 1972 sociology to just over 10,000 twelve years later), this same kind of decline can occur again, although ironically the incompetence, racism, sexism, and conservatism of the Trump Presidency has done much to stoke more liberal fires among those entering college, which may help sustain sociology enrollments for a time, although they began to decline in 2013–2014. A rapid decline would create, once again as it did in the 1970s and early 1980s, an oversupply of new sociology PhDs at over 700 per year in 2014, just as the 700-plus PhDs in the early 1970s did for the last dramatic collapse in sociology majors and enrollments. Indeed, PhDs awarded has already begun to decline somewhat, although it is difficult to know if this is a trend. The real issue is thus two-fold: (1) Are these new PhDs replacing the cohorts of professors starting their careers in the 1960s and early 1970s going to continue biasing the distribution of sociology professors

toward justice issues? And (2), what will happen to the current over-production of PhDs if sociology enrollments take even a modest tumble? As I will argue, an all-in commitment to sociology as an activist discipline will dramatically reduce alternative lines of employment for sociology PhDs outside of academia, whereas the proposals that I will offer involves an effort to increase such opportunities, which will only become available to sociologists committed to the science side of the big divide in sociology.

Another force accelerating the introduction of new subfields and topics into sociology was the dramatic increase in journal outlets for sociological work, coupled with the equally dramatic expansion of digital outlets for scholarly work. Indeed, beginning in the 1970s, even as the student population taking sociology courses declined dramatically from what it had been in the 1960s, the number of sociology journals went from a handful to many hundreds in North America (Turner and Turner 1990) to many thousands world-wide. It was now possible to find outlets beyond the mainstays of the field in the 1950s and 1960s—AJS, ASR, regional journals (SQ, PSR/SP, SF), Sociometry (now SPQ), SP (Social Problems), SI (Sociological Inquiry), and specialty journals in fields like criminology, demography, medical sociology, law, and a few others. Thus, differentiation of specialties was fueled by the proliferation of journals, and vice versa, in a cycle that does not seem to be ending. Thus, the more traditional criteria of early sociology journals—over methodological rigor and theoretical relevance—was broken, and alternative criteria emerged and allowed entirely new forms of scholarship, which is not bad, per se, but becomes problematic when it becomes anti-science. In so doing, the last hold of science in the field was broken, with those *not* committed to science having many new outlets for their work, whereas those committed to science proportionately fewer outlets for their work beyond the original core of the discipline as it stood in 1970.

These demographic shifts coupled with opportunities for employment and publishing were enough to change the structure and culture of sociology departments within universities and, slowly at first and then at an increasing rate, the structure and culture of professional associations, particularly ASA but also the regional associations, began to change. But, perhaps equally, if not more important, was the ideologies from outside academia that were brought into the discipline and carried into the classroom and, then, into scholarship. The activist scholars found new outlets for their work, even when the older tradition and prestige-giving outlets would not initially accept their work; and so, they were able to prosper. And over time, the older outlets began to publish ever-more research and theory focused on inequalities.

The Power of the Moral

Many sociologists have had moral agendas since the very founding of the discipline. Awareness and understandings of the wrongs associated with early capitalism and labor, the discriminatory treatment of minorities and, to a much lesser extent until recent decades, the pervasive discrimination against women and sexual communities of all kinds are part of the culture of sociology. And many sociologists became part of movements to eliminate these problematic conditions. Since social movement require framing of a set of moral beliefs about injustices and about what to do about these injustices, they became part of the world view of those who began to enter the

discipline and were, quite naturally to them, to be part of their scholarly work. Since most sociologists have always been sympathetic to the tenets of liberating ideologies, there was not a high degree of resistance to many new academics interested in studying themselves and their fellow victims of discrimination. Even as some members of sociology departments worried about biasing effects of scholarship fueled by a moral passion and personal experiences of new colleagues whose goal was to change societies, the general sympathy of virtually all sociologists to these goals was shared, even if these traditional sympathizers did not themselves study these more ideologically loaded social movements. Again, the topic of injustices and discrimination had always been part of early American sociology, and thus it was not a big leap to meet the needs of reform-oriented students and their new professors, even as it may have conflicted with views about “value-neutral” science.

And, as part of the demographic shift in sociology, older male scholars who may have worried about the effects of ideology on the discipline began to retire in large numbers, even those such as I who received their PhD near the end of the tumultuous 1960s and had remained active in their departments long after normal retirement age. As a general rule, moral beliefs and, particularly, moral beliefs about injustices and inequalities have great emotional power as they spread. And since many of the new sociologists—women, minorities, and members sexual communities—had directly experienced discrimination, these moral beliefs reflected their reality and their deep anger about the injustices experienced. As result, value-neutral science—often seen rather unfairly as “white male sociology”—could at times be seen as the enemy of the morality of the new students and, soon to be, new professors of the discipline. When a professional outlook is “moralized” in this way, it tends to spread because those who organized their careers around such a moral project are uncompromising and fueled by a sense of injustice, seeing no reason to support those who are engaged in value-neutral science. Indeed, science itself now can be seen by those with moral passion as a conservative force legitimating the *status quo*—an obviously unfair and inflammatory charge.

Many American sociologists found themselves caught in an unusual position. We were and still are highly sympathetic to eradicating the conditions—discrimination and inequality—that have fueled the social movements revolving around eradicating injustices. And many, such as I, have been participants in such movements, even to the point of placing themselves in danger, as I did in the American south in the early years of the 1960s. Yet, during the two decades of writing often ideologically loaded work on inequalities, especially ethnic and class inequalities, I was always writing less ideologically-loaded works on scientific theorizing, primarily on theories of generic social forces. Eventually, I realized that my *value-neutrality was being biased by what I hoped would occur in society* from what has occurred and from what I, in my theoretical work, saw as some intractable forces that are always at play in highly differentiated human societies.

As a consequence of my growing concern by the effect of my ideological bias, I stopped communicating my ideological position to students, both undergraduate and graduate. Indeed, I would not even tell them when they explicitly asked. As a result, I became a sitting duck for changes from some of my colleagues who had been mollified by my explicit ideological biases but, now that I would not make these explicit, who were now mortified by my “conservative turn,” which was hardly the actual case back in the 1980s or now. What became more visible, however, was my push for a hard-

science view of sociology as the most important intellectual enterprise for sociologists. I could only offer to students and the profession summaries of empirical findings and rather abstract theoretical arguments explaining the data, even in courses like social problems, ethnic relations in America, and American society. For the new sociologists, this was a deadly sin of seeming value-neutrality, even as I continued to give substantial sums of money to social movement organizations in my private life. Like other scientists, despite a high rate of scholarly productivity, my type of research was viewed as irrelevant to the moral project of activists and, hence, as not very useful. This kind of derision, of course, did nothing but generate tension in my department, as has been the case in virtually all departments where hard scientists and activists must coexist.

Under these conditions, the scientists will lose out over the long run. They tire of the fight over value-infused vs. value-neutral activity, and move to more compatible environments, withdraw from department politics, and retire from departments and even the discipline. The end result is that departments become increasingly dominated by what are often derisively labelled “justice warriors” and, over time, the same is true of the profession as a whole. Such is clearly the trend in American sociology today.

Yet, even with their retreat, some of the most respected and prestigious sociologists can still be objects of discrimination by their own colleges inside their departments and outside in the profession at large. Despite this unfortunate turn of events, these scholars are often the ones that brought respectability to sociology in what was often a hostile university environment for much of the twentieth Century; they are often the most productive in publishing; and they generally bring in the lions-share of research moneys to a department and university; and they are the sociologists most favored by administrators. And, at the level of the whole profession, their numbers are still rather high in absolute numbers, but they are inevitably going to continue to decline as a proportion of American sociologists, especially if early to mid-career sociologists begin to leave the field and accelerate the loss of those engaged in a hard-science approach to sociology. And if such becomes the case, sociology will increasingly be seen within academia as a left-wing, activist discipline—which is already the case on most college and university campuses. But, more damaging for the future of sociology is that sociologists will be not seen as useful in solving all the organizational problems—large and small—that face a vast myriad of potential clients in American society. The doubly tragic consequence is that social science disciplines that are intellectually incapable of dealing with most organizational problems—economics, anthropology, psychology, and even political science—will enter this market for knowledge about how to deal with problems of social organization, although economics and psychology will probably be the dominant players, just as they are now.

If sociology cannot reverse course and become a less-heated “big tent” where different kinds of sociologies can prosper without recriminations, then I think that sociology will decline. Conversely, practicing what Massey (2005) has termed “soft politics,” sociology will become ever-more irrelevant to solving public and potential clients’ organizational problems. Those filled with more passion should recognize that social movement come and go; ideological passions rise and subside, with those riding the latest social movement or preaching the latest ideology potentially become as obsolete as more intellectual movements preaching against hard-science sociology. For example, if I look at the more intellectual fads that have come and gone in

sociology during my time in the profession, I can ask: Where are the postmodernist, structuralist, and phenomenologists who were so critical of hard-science? These intellectual movements did not have “legs” because they were dogmatic and hyper-critical. The same could be the consequence of current intellectual movements, although many the ideologies of today are relevant to some very fundamental and enduring problems in human societies. But, being an ideologue—dressed in academic clothing—is not, I think, a secure long-term strategy for the discipline because it does not present useful knowledge to those who are not part of the social movement or those who have organizational problems not connected to broader social movements. Our goal should be to change the views of much broader and diverse audiences about the utility of sociology as a science for solving real-world problems.

Can “Public Sociology” Save Sociology?

In the early 2000s, Burawoy (2004a, b, c, 2005) began to advocate for a “public sociology” with a paradigm that seemed to reserve a place for all types of sociologists within a big tent. This was a laudable effort and certainly represents the best effort to deal with sociology’s long-running problems of integration across the value-neutral vs. value-relevant divide in the discipline. In the end, however, I have concluded that this strategy will not work (Turner 2006) and, if anything, will accelerate sociology’s embrace of a more activist orientation. Let me first briefly summarize Burawoy’s argument, and then, comment on why this approach probably will not work to resolve or even patch over sociology’s big divide.

Burawoy argues that there are four sociologies: (1) *professional sociology* where methods of science are used to collect data and theorize about the social world and where peer review of scholarship by the criteria of adequate science are critical to publication; (2) *policy sociology* where sociologists use their expertise to address problems of, and propose solutions for, clients; (3) *critical sociology* that questions the moral vision and fundamental assumptions of all other types of sociology as well as other political-moral voices; and (4) *public sociology* which engages diverse publics (both the general public and local publics) over present-day problems, questions and issues. Each of these sociologies has a potential pathology: for professional sociology, self-referentiality; for policy sociology, servility to demands of clients; for critical sociology, dogmatism; and for public sociology, faddishness. For each of these pathologies, the other three types provide a corrective.

While this vision sounds highly inclusive and reasonable, it is clear that these types of sociology have not been compatible for the long history of the discipline, despite lip-service in American sociology to the contrary. And in recent years, particularly the last decade, it is clear that critical sociology and professional sociology are highly incompatible, as Table 1 underscores. Part of the incompatibility stems the fact that public sociology will tend to be fueled by critical sociology, which will make much of the engagement of sociologists with publics an exercise in moralizing. Such is potentially the case with policy sociology as well, since the various approaches to this kind of sociology—e.g., sociological practice, applied sociology, and clinical sociology—are not completely of one mind. Each is influenced by professional sociology, to be sure, but equally often moral evaluations can become part of the diagnosis of a client’s problems and proposed solutions. While science provides a certain discipline to sociological analysis, it is also possible that moralizing can enter professional

sociology, particularly in the problems that scientists chose to study and, perhaps in the findings they report.

Still, in general professional sociology and policy sociology stand on one side of a divide, with critical sociology and public sociology on another side. And so, while Burawoy's typology provides a surface reconciliation among the four sociologies, the reality is that sociology still will still polarize around a critical-public and professional-policy divide. And, over time, the critical-moral-public side will come to dominate the discipline, as is currently the case. My view is that this divide is irreconcilable, because it has been a point of tension in American sociology from its very beginnings and still generates tensions at all levels of the discipline. And, at the department level of the profession, the tensions can become unbearable and cause individuals on both sides of the divide to leave their department, and perhaps even the discipline. And, increasingly, the tensions among the faculty over the big divide now occur among graduate students who, at this early stage of their careers, should not be drawn into such polarizing alternatives (it is a time for them to make up their own minds rather than have their mentor's views imposed on fellow graduate students).

All types of sociology can, of course, still be practiced but it is difficult for such to be the case *in one department* with the present big divide in the discipline. To the extent that the moral-critical side of the discipline dominates within one department, sociology will not be highly respected as a discipline within academia, even if other academics agree with the left-leaning slant of the morality being preached. And, the same would be if public sociology ever actually gained a hold outside of academia, which thus far it has not. Indeed, sociologists are rarely in the public sphere any more, nor are they consulted by media outlets or even social movement organizations. Currently, most critical and public sociology consists of efforts to proselytize students, with data indicating that those already leaning to the left accept these efforts as useful knowledge and those not on the left feeling that instructors are overly biased. Indeed, the most recent data that I could find from ASA,⁶ which range from a few to as much as ten years old, is that only about 30% of students are interested in sociology for its relevance to social change (activism), whereas a somewhat larger percent of students (around 40%) become majors in sociology because of *the actual knowledge gained about how social structures and culture affect individual behaviors*. These numbers may have changed, but if they have not, then many students may not get what they want from sociology. And, the very students whom ideologues might want to convert will avoid classes, and perhaps all other sociology classes, because they do not feel like taking classes that require a kind of moral conversion experience. Moreover, more general studies of undergraduates reveal that they do not retain many of the details of a major but, instead, the more general frames of reference and analytical styles. Thus, it is unlikely that efforts in the classroom actually convert many students, at least for very long.

Thus, if sociology departments lose respect and are viewed by other faculty and, and worse, by deans, provosts, and presidents as service programs for meeting the needs of

⁶ I am grateful to Karen Edwards and, in particular, Nancy Kidd at ASA who provided me with useful tables from which the following generalizations are drawn here and elsewhere where numbers are used. Also, thanks to William Kalkhoff for informing me to the availability of the data and for his interpretations of what they denote.

left-leaning students, sociology will become a low-prestige service department, often being used (sometimes rather cynically) as a beacon to increase “diversity” on campus but *not* within *all* departments on campus—which is somewhat of an irony for those who have experienced ghettoization outside of academia to find themselves suffering the same fate within academia. While providing a safe intellectual haven for new students is a very important function of a service department, especially if it brings new types of students to campus, the goal should be to bring diverse students to campus and to distribute them across as many disciplines as possible. By making sociology department assume this function, they increase the pool of those likely to be interested in justice issues, thereby further biasing the discipline away from science which, in my view, is not good for the students, faculty, discipline, or society.

I am not sure if Burawoy’s typology is a justification for a more moralized sociology or a sincere effort to find a way to accommodate all types of sociology under a “big tent.” It would be most desirable if the latter was Buroway’s intent and, indeed, if it could be a reality, I would be a staunch supporter. Yet, I am very doubtful that, given current trends, that the sociological “humpty dumpty” can be put back together again. As a result, I propose an alternative strategy that, I admit, is not likely to be embraced by many, if not most, sociologists.

Toward another Type of Public Sociology

There are more ways than those proposed by Buroway for sociology to be public. If we simply go back several decades, there were very prominent public sociologists in the sense of scholars proposing big ideas that captured the public’s imagination. For example, Reisman, Nathan Glazer, and Reuel Denney’s (1950) notion of the “lonely crowd” captured the public’s imagination, as did Daniel Bell’s (1973) analysis of “the coming post-industrial society,” as did my old colleague Nisbet’s (1952) notion of the “quest for community,” and as did C. Wright Mills’ portrayal of a “power elite.” This kind of public sociology is not so much “activist” as intellectually interesting, challenging publics to think about the world around them (just as Thorstein Veblen’s “theory of the leisure class” did in the early decades of the twentieth Century). While none of these ideas endured, they gave sociology a certain cache, which is always good for a discipline because it gives legitimacy and some respect to sociology inside and outside of academia. It would be nice to see a revival of this kind of public intellectual, who is a sociologist. Scholars like Arlie Hochschild, Douglas Massey, Diane Vaughn, Pepper Swartz, Allen Wolf, and a few dozen others have achieved some visibility in this sense; and I think that more sociologists should seek this kind of visibility—that is, a visibility earned by useful data or big ideas that are interesting to publics. In fact, ASA should redouble efforts to publicize this kind of work and by giving visible symposiums, key note talks, media appearances, and creative use of social media. This kind of public sociology can be immediate and relatively low cost, and it can pay off large payoffs to the discipline—perhaps as Burawoy would also see appropriate for his public sociology.

Another potential avenue for public engagement is work that could meet both the needs for a more critical sociology (but less ideological) and public engagement is scholar’s work done on important problems. Much serious and non-ideological research, for example, is done on issue of inequality and published without much public

fanfare, and this is a tragedy because public presentations these data can be interesting to public and, perhaps, affect public and political opinions. For example, in reading down a list of offerings from the Sage Foundation, which publishes a great deal of research on inequality, I am struck by how interesting and less value-loaded the titles in a recent catalogue are: *Immigration and the Remaking of Black America* (by Tod G. Hamilton), *Starving the Beast: Ronald Reagan and the Tax Cut Revolution* (by Nonica Prasad), *Administrative Burden: Policymaking by Other Means* (by Pamela Herd and Donalk Moyhihan), *Golden Years? Social Inequality Later in Life* (by Deborah Carr), *The Government-Citizen Disconnect* (Suzanne Mettler), *Sites Unseen: Uncovering Hidden Hazards in American Cities* (Scott Frickel, James R. Elliot), *Where Jobs are Better: Retail Jobs Across Countries and Companies* (Francoise Carre and Chris Tilly), *Who Will Care for Us: Long-term Care the the Long-term Workforce* (by Paul Osterman), *Cradle to Kindergaren: New Plans to Combat Inequality* (Ajay Chaudry, Taryn Morrissey, et. Al); *Places in Need: The Changing Geography of Poverty* (Scott W. Allard), *Labor's Love Lost: The Rise and Fall of the Working-Class Family in America* (Andrew Cherlin), *Too Many Children Left Behind* (Bruce Bradbury, et al.). All of these are potentially interesting to publics; and if this is to be public sociology, then sociology will only be better for the effort to reach larger publics. This is a public sociology that will be seen as addressing problems of interest without necessarily exposing the relatively far-left ideological views of many critical sociologists—a political stance that *will turn off the very people sociology should try to influence*.

Toward another Type of Scientific and Policy Sociology

The Problem with Professional-Scientific Sociology One of the big problems in professional sociology is over-specialization. As suggested earlier, sociology potentially encompasses the study of the entire social universe, from the biology and sociology of human behavior and interaction through the study of groups, organizations, communities, institutions, inequalities (by class, ethnicity, gender, sexualities), demography, crime, societies as a whole, inter-societal systems and just about any other topic associated with these general topics. It is, then, inevitable that there will be specialization, given the scope and diversity of topics studied by sociologists. But the problem with sociology today, at least in the United States, is *hyper-differentiation* so that even theories of a kindred kind are over-specialized and often partitioned from each other (think of the different types of exchange theory, symbolic interactionist theory, research on behaviors, interactions, institutional systems, aspects of inequality, etc.). The result is that sociologists no longer *read as broadly as they should*, primarily because it is much easier to be a member of a dense network of like-minded thinkers and to publish in the myriad of specialized journals edited by like-minded thinkers. So, for example, social psychology, which encompasses a very large slice of social reality, is actually a rather narrow field, with certain dense networks of scholars working pretty much in isolation from each other in areas such as status processes, emotions, conversation analysis, ritual dynamics, self and identities, exchange processes, rational choice dynamics, and so on, often accompanied by further divisions by methods (experimental, survey, observational) and theoretical commitments (e.g., hard symbolic interactionism using experimental research designs, formal theory vs soft symbolic interactionism using no systematic data or at least non-experimental data, and only loosely articulated theories). Indeed, for

almost any specialization there will be further specialization with intellectual walls erected by the ability of scholars to form small, dense networks and to take advantage of the incredible number of publishing outlets that are now available (literally many hundred, if not well over a thousand for sociological work).

Explanatory theories about the wide range of topics is also rather over-specialized in American sociology, even though theorizing ultimately should be devoted to generalization and subsuming as much reality as it can under a particular theory. But the number of broad theoretical approaches is several dozen (Turner 2014), with specialization and hence barriers within each of these approaches. Thus, what is supposed to integrate knowledge—i.e., explanatory theory—contributes to the parceling up of sociological knowledge into various “camps” and “perspectives.” And, add to these divisions the general skepticism among some theorists that the science practiced by the natural sciences is inappropriate for the social world, coupled with the many “critical theories” articulating a particular ontology, epistemology, and usually, ideology as well, then “theory” in professional sociology does not do what it does in the other sciences. It divides as much as unifies and integrates sociological knowledge.

One consequence of this situation is that most sociologists are unaware of how much sociology knows about the social universe. Another is the problem of self-referentiality mentioned by Burawoy whereby dense networks of scholars publishing in “their” journals engage in self-referencing and self-congratulating to the point that they do not integrate their knowledge into the larger corpus of theoretical and empirical knowledge. Still another consequence is that over-specialization generates research and theoretical traditions that are so narrow as to be uninteresting to larger publics and even other members of closely related specializations.

This extreme parceling up of knowledge makes it difficult for sociology, as a discipline, to present it accumulated knowledge to the public or even to clients who might need this knowledge. Thus, despite the enormous gains in “what sociologists know” *the field is not organized in a way that makes for easy transmission of this knowledge to colleagues, publics, or potential clients*. In this intellectually constipated state, it should not be surprising that ideologically driven moralizing, which inevitably simplifies often complex problems, gains more traction in capturing the imagination of faculty and students. It is easier to attack science as “part of the problem” than to do science or read what are now vast literatures produced by scientifically-oriented scientist in sociology. And it is doubly difficult to integrate the large literatures in science, whether theoretical or empirical, which should be the focus of the discipline within academic departments rather than being the local franchises for teaching social-movement ideologies to receptive (and unreceptive) students.

The Problem with Policy, Practice, Applied, and Clinical Sociology Burawoy underemphasizes the diverse way that sociologists seek to apply sociological knowledge (Steele et al. 1998; Steele and Price 2008). Ideally, theoretical explanations of data gathered by sociologists and other social scientists should be the core of sociologists’ efforts to solve real world problems. There are sociologists in many applied academic settings, such as schools of public policy, business, education, and social work. There are also non-academic sociologists engaged in practice and applied applications of sociological

knowledge, mostly in small and a few larger consulting companies or non-profit companies conducting research for mostly governmental clients. There are sociologists who use both scientific knowledge, experience, and intuition in a clinical sense to analyze problems for clients and suggest solutions. There is not, however, *a clear career path in the application of sociological knowledge*, despite some efforts at certification,⁷ because there is a lack of complete consensus of what is involved in applications of sociological knowledge. And, given the moral biases of sociologists, it may be difficult to develop criteria for the application of knowledge that is not loaded with the ideological leanings of most sociologists. Yet, without a clearly understood and accepted base of knowledge, arrived at through the scientific method and explanatory tools of theory, the biases of clients may lead to the servile application of only acceptable sociological knowledge—as Burawoy identified as the pathology of policy sociology.

Still, it would be enormously useful to clients, society in general, and sociologists seeking careers if there was a much more prominent wing of the discipline devoted to applications of knowledge. Science creates knowledge not just for knowledge for its own sake but also *to be used to solve problematic social conditions*, however defined. Such was Comte's vision, and such is the vision of even the most rabid sociological ideologue or committed scientist. Why is it that sociology has such trouble finding an applied niche for its expertise?

The answer, I think, is that the problem has not been seen in the appropriate light for what applied sociological knowledge involves. Labels like policy sociology, sociology of practice, clinical sociology, and applied sociology all nibble around the core issue: *use of sociological knowledge for engineering goals*. Just the phrasing of the matter in this manner has negative connotations because of past atrocities in “social engineering,” but such need not be the case, if we realized that engineering is not to be guided by ideology and other non-scientific practices. Engineering outside of the social sciences is an effort to use empirical and theoretical knowledge construct useful structures—whether the engineer is a geneticist, an architectural/structural engineer, an electrical engineer, a computer engineer, a biotech engineer, a satellite engineer, a chemical engineer, and so on. Why must we think any different of a *sociological engineer*?

The Case for an Engineering Track in Sociology I have argued in a number of places (Turner 1998, 2001, 2006, 2008, 2014, 2016) that the best way to integrate the discipline, both empirically and theoretically, is to develop (1) an engineering mentality among sociologists and (2) tracks for careers in social engineering—granted, denoted by a less connotative label but more precise than vague labels using such words as “applied,” “practice,” “clinical,” and “policy.” For sociology to have an impact on the world, beyond preaching to captive students, it must demonstrate that its knowledge is useful to a wide variety of clients and publics.

⁷ A number of universities have either MA or PhD programs that seek to apply sociological knowledge—e.g., Baylor, UMass at Boston, and U. of Maryland, Baltimore. These programs, however, tend to be somewhat specialized and scattered in their emphasis; and thus, they do not present a coherent program that can lead to standardized credentials and certification.

This will not occur if the only thing clients and publics know about sociologists is that they are left-leaning advocates (granted for worthy causes). What is required are successive demonstrations that the applications of sociological knowledge will solve real-world problems of organizations for clients, whether these be a profit or non-profit company or corporation, a community, a governmental agency, a social movement organization, a family or group of any sort, any complex organization whatever its activity, and so on. Currently, sociologists who consult actively with clients are to be found in business schools, staffs of consulting firms, non-profit research organizations, governmental agencies, select profit-oriented companies, small consulting firms, and only occasionally in actual sociology departments. But still, *there is no clear career path* to these small niches where sociologists try to apply sociological knowledge. Some of these are niches occupied by those who could not find a tenure-track academic position, or who wandered around looking for work as a sociologist. Thus, engineering applications of sociological knowledge are a rag-tag mix of jobs and careers that normally do not systematically use codified knowledge from the discipline to solve problems. Part of the reason for this helter-skelter application of knowledge is that it is not adequately codified within the discipline as an accepted set of systematic empirical findings or as a set of theoretical principles stated in ways that make them applicable to empirical situations.

Thus, before there can be social engineering or even a modest hope for an applied sociology that is widely sought by clients, there needs to be *much more systematization of empirical findings that breaks down narrow barriers fostering hyper-specialization and that seeks to state theories as sets of general principles from which general rules of thumb can be derived and applied to real-world situations*. I know of no book or set of books titled something like *Principles of Sociological Engineering* or, more muted, *Principles of Sociological Practice* (except the one that I have been working on for too many years). Such books would mean that sociologists had begun to systematize their empirical findings and formalize their theories so that the fundamental dynamics of the social world are clear. Moreover, this effort should seek to draw derivations from data sets and theory, formulated as “rules of thumb” than can be used by practitioners of sociology to solve a particular applied problem. For example, sociologists know a great deal about the conditions that generate or decrease social solidarity and that increase or decrease positive emotional arousal. There is a large body of data from many different types of studies to document these conditions empirically, and there are a wide variety of theories that seek to explain solidarity. What is needed is a systemization of these empirical findings and theoretical principles so that a “social engineer” or “applied sociologists” can reference these principles and apply them to a particular problem of solidarity brought to the sociologist by a client, whatever the nature of the client. To take another example, sociologists know a great deal about complex organizations, both empirically and theoretically. These empirical finding and theoretical principles need to be codified and systematized so that elementary rules of thumb from theory and guidelines from empirical cases can be used by sociologists working on real-world problems of in different types of organizations. To some extent, this is done by sociologists, most of whom are experts in organizational sociology, in business schools; and their expertise and success in consulting is an example of what sociology more

generally can achieve. Policy analysis, which can be rather vague, could be greatly enhanced by this same set of dual goals: systematizing empirical findings and theoretical principles. For example, few sociologists are consulted by governmental or private enterprise clients trying to deal with world system dynamics, whether involving potential warfare, trade wars, technology transfers, labor issues, and so on. The enormous accumulation on data and theories on inter-societal dynamics just sits inside sociology and is not used by governmental or private clients, where it could be very useful in a discipline oriented to engineering applications of its knowledge.

Toward a Longer-Term Project of Increasing Sociology's Relevance

A Not So Modest and Probably Unrealistic Suggestion

The listing in each issue of ASA's footnotes on sociologists "in the news" is interesting, per se, but it is also a very useful reminder of how irrelevant sociology is to many of the big issues of the present-day. An interview here and there, a few quotes, hardly makes for a discipline being highly relevant or potent in displaying its expertise. It is, of course, always nice to see sociologists getting some recognition, but this is rather faint praise when we consider how few sociologists are consulted by those who have the power to influence people's lives. Before sociology can engage publics and provide solutions to problems of many diverse clients—from government agencies to large corporations, and everything in-between—it must demonstrate on a case-by-case basis over a long period of time the utility of sociological knowledge. And the best way for this to occur, I believe, is through an engineering mentality, perhaps with a different name than the hot-button phase "social engineering." Sociology is not really very ready to influence the world until it gets its own house in order and begins to systematize its knowledge—both empirical and theoretical—in ways that make it accessible to sociological practitioners advising clients. To simply shout the injustice of the social world—true enough, to be sure—and to spout social movement ideologies is not a substitute for hard-science knowledge that can be applied in virtually all contexts. A discipline like sociology that becomes identified with identity politics—driving the present "big" social movements—will not be seen as objective, and its knowledge will not be seen as useful by clients in need of scientific sociology. Indeed, for all of the commitment of many sociologists to social movements in their class lectures, these same sociologists are not prominent in the social movements themselves. They are more like the choir preaching to future members of the choir, and the reason for this marginality is fairly obvious: leaders and organizers have already figured out how to make a social movement successful by mobilization resources, one of which is college professors willing to preach to students. Sociologists do, however, have rather detailed empirical knowledge and rather robust theories on the dynamics of social movements, and indeed, that knowledge could be used by clients trying to get some leverage for a new social movement. If sociology had a more engineering mentality, rather than a quasi-

religious commitment to only certain social movements, it could be even more useful to social movement organizers seeking expertise, although many do not need it.

So, my vision is that sociology does not have to parade around at the edges of where the real social action is, or should be; rather, the discipline must go back to what Comte and some of the early sociologists sought: *to make sociology relevant to a wide variety of clients*. Relevance does not come from aping ideological phrases of social movements; only impotence ensues from this, even though sociologists can feel that they have really “stuck it to man” by their stirring oration in the classroom. The reality is that sociologists are not often consulted by potential clients who need our knowledge. My solution is, I am afraid, not likely to stir sociologist to change their ways, but let me outline what I think is best for the discipline:

1. Recommit to view sociology as a science that has the ability to generate and disseminate useful knowledge, not just to students in classrooms but, instead, to virtually all who need knowledge in all facets of human social organization. No other discipline can claim such relevance—certainly not any other social science (economics, psychology, political science, and anthropology). And yet, except for anthropology, the other social sciences are way ahead of sociology in their ability to advise and counsel those running organizations that have the power to make differences in people’s lives.
2. Begin to read literatures more broadly across a much larger intellectual landscape and to gather more knowledge outside of narrow specialties. As long as sociologist stay overspecialized, they will not have a sufficient base of knowledge to be useful in the real world outside of academia.
3. Teach knowledge about how the social universe operates rather than how it *should* operate but, at the same time, address the empirical and theoretical question of whether there are alternatives to present conditions. Exercise constraint in moralizing because, in most cases, the presentation of data and relevant theories on “social issues” and “social problems” *are all students need*. Let students see for themselves the facts as they have been assembled by sociologists and let them think about the implications of these facts. I have found that this is a far better way to teach than by moral crusading (having done the latter early in my career).
4. Be tolerant within departments of those who do research and teach in areas not related to inequalities, and moreover, learn something of what they know, because this knowledge will be more relevant than might initially seem to be the case. These researchers are, as is often charged, not “part of the problem”; their knowledge is likely to be major part of the solutions to future clients’ problems.
5. In general, save activism to one’s personal life; save time in the classroom for students to discover for themselves, under careful guidance by data and theory, what the data and theory imply. Strong politics in professional work rarely goes very far and, as is evident in sociology today, and often marginalizes those with knowledge that the world needs.
6. Encourage students at the graduate level to think about alternatives to tenure-track employment (which will become ever more difficult to

- guarantee in the decades ahead, and dramatically so if sociology enrollments decline). Ponder a more applied specialization in graduate programs devoted to systematizing knowledge in ways that allows for its application in real-world settings.
7. Develop this applied track by encouraging students and fellow faculty members to have an engineering mentality whereby empirical finding and abstract theories are made accessible to all who desire knowledge about human behavior, interaction, and social organization.
 8. Encourage ASA and other professional associations to develop a social engineering—by another name—as something that sociologists can do and encourage some form of certification that anyone who is part of this engineering “fraternity” is appropriately knowledgeable. This can only occur, however, if all those with knowledge within various specialties become committed to making this knowledge available for use by sociological engineers. Channel the emotional intensity of solving problems—that most sociologists have—to making information accessible to practitioners who will carry this knowledge to clients.

I realize that this seems unrealistic, in light of the trends in sociology today. But, if something like what I suggest is not done, then sociology will *not* be seen as relevant by those in need of sociological knowledge. We will have to cede the turf where jobs with very good incomes can be given to applied economists, psychologists, and even political scientists! It is time that *sociologists get realistic as to how a discipline gains power and influence*: by being useful to a wide variety of clients who need knowledge that *only sociology possesses*. It will take several generations of sociologists going out into the real world and helping clients solve their problems before the reputation of sociology as being useful becomes widely known. But client-by-client over time is how an academic discipline becomes “relevant.”

Let me outline my proposal using the categories in Buroway’s typology of sociology, as it done in Fig. 1. The dotted lines around Professional and its Engineering Applications, Policy Sociology, and Public Sociology are the key ingredients of a more relevant and useful sociology. I argue that critical sociology, and the ideological commitments that it involves works against sociology as a discipline and force for amelioration (as counter-intuitive as this sounds) and, therefore, is best left to individual sociologists to practice in their private and/or public lives as concerned citizens. The heavy arrows in Fig. 1 denote what I would like to see as the lines of most influence. The most important is the one that I have emphasized above, use of codified knowledge of the social universe to inform “sociological engineers” (by whatever other name, perhaps something as bland as “applied sociologists”), and the application of this knowledge to real world problems of a wide variety of clients in the real world, with the results of this application also serving as a quasi-empirical test of the viability of the theories guiding the decisions of the sociological engineer for a client. At the same time, as a means for broadening the influence of professional sociology, I would like to see certain types of professional sociology be a major part of the sociology presented to broader publics. One types of professional to public sociologist would be empirical analyses that would be of interest to the broader public. In addition to the books listed earlier from Russell Sage, the ideas from books from such scholars as Arlie Hochschild

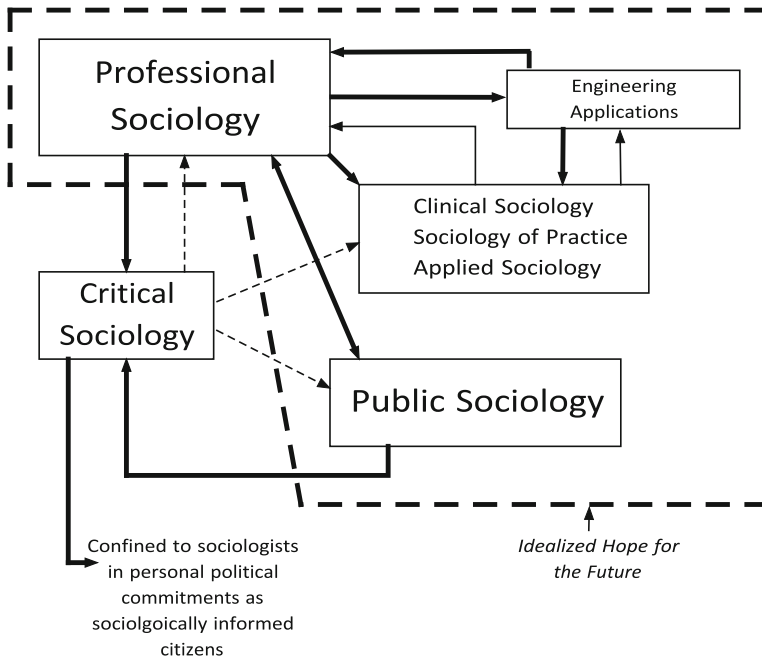


Fig. 1 A Proposal for a More Relevant Sociology

(e.g., *The Managed Heart*, *The Second Shift*, *The Outsourced Self*, and *Strangers in Their Own Land*), Jerome Karabel (*The Chosen: The Hidden History of Admissions and Exclusions at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton*), and Douglas Massey (*Categorically Unequal: The American Stratification System*; *Strangers in a Strange Land*, *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors*). To some extent, all of these works have received publicity outside of academia, but more is needed. Such works are inherently interesting to wider audiences, and thus they portray sociology to the public as a relevant and important discipline. Works like these increase access of sociologists to media outlets, legitimate sociology, and increase sociology's visibility, but they do limit the scope of sociology presented to publics and they fail to institutionalize science as it should be used in engineering applications of sociological knowledge. Yet, this kind of exposure of sociology to publics is better than exposing sociology's ideological biases whereby the biases of many classes and much current scholarship are laid bare to publics that may not accept the left-leaning orientations of sociologists.

I would prefer that public sociology be primarily informed by professional sociology and the scientific empirical findings and theories that would be relevant to issues of concern by various publics. I would also like to see an increase in the influence of professional sociology on policy, even though much influence can be found today. Yet, sociological practice, applied sociology, and clinical sociology are often practiced with only partial influence from professional sociology, with many practitioners being guided by experience and intuition. There is, of course, always a place for this kind of application of sociological expertise; and it can continue in its present form as long as a

stronger program in sociological engineering is institutionalized. At present, most applied programs do not teach courses in which theoretical and empirical knowledge is systematically catalogued and disseminated to graduate students; and such is not only the case for Policy Sociology but for all sociology graduate programs. Overspecialization, ideological ferment, anti-science attitudes, and many other forces prevent what needs to be done: systematization of the vast new bodies of knowledge accumulated over the last fifty years and of the proliferation of explanatory theories. Without this kind of discipline, professional sociology cannot have the effects that I have outlined on engineering applications, policy sociology, and public sociology.

Resistance to what I propose in Fig. 1 will, no doubt, come from those who are comfortable with the current trend toward a discipline built around identity politics and anger at long-enduring inequalities. I remain angry about these conditions 50 years after my days as an in-the-street activist, but I now realize that I can make a much better contribution to the real-world by making sociology relevant by codifying knowledge, as I have been doing for sociological theory over the last 45 years. If I can live long enough, my goal is to finish at least one volume of what I see as a multi-volume project: *Theoretical Principles of Sociological Practice*, where I take my efforts at formalizing and arrange them into rules of thumb around generic types of organizational problems that practitioners are likely to encounter. I have been working for some years on volume 1, only to be interrupted by other intellectual needs to develop new knowledge. But I would encourage others to try to state what they know in ways that a practitioner can use in developing solutions for clients who have organizational problems. I would also encourage ASA and other professional associations to organize sessions and workshops devoted to such exercises, and even to sponsor research that seeks to create what are, in essence, engineering manuals (by another name) for future social engineers (also, by another name). Some of my most pleasant experiences have been sessions where, as a theorist, I sit down with students and colleagues engaged in some form of sociological practice, listening to their various projects (for clients or for their dissertations in applied programs like social work) and then suggesting the theories and theorists whom they might consult to gain better purchase on the problems they are working with. It is surprisingly easy, I find, to offer what I think is good advice, once I know the nature of the problem being confronted. Indeed, I would encourage meetings of theorists who have been interested in developing formal scientific theories (a dying breed, which is another tragedy and a story yet to be told) and practitioners of our discipline. An interesting book that I would recommend is a collaboration between the late Neil Smelser, one of the giants of twentieth Century sociology, and a businessman, John S. Reed, who talked and collaborated on *Usable Social Science* (2012, University of California press). Similar dialogues should occur between theorists and reflective individuals working in the non-academic world. This kind of collaboration is what will help sociologists develop the needed manuals and texts for any social engineering track within current sociology departments or new departments that may emerge in the social sciences if the scientists within the discipline begin to leave sociology in larger numbers than has already occurred.

In moving toward this goal, it would be useful to consolidate the rather scattered approaches now evident in applied sociology.⁸ Whatever their current designations—policy analyst, applied sociologists, clinical sociologist, sociologists of practice, etc.—sociology needs to develop a common name, develop programs of certification, and a curriculum that is heavy in assembling empirical literatures to see what generalizations and trends emerge in the data emerge and in encouraging formalization of theories and derivative rules of thumb that practitioners and clients can consider in addressing certain problems. A few such programs of certification now exist⁹ but they are not as rigorous as what I have in mind for an certification of sociological engineers receiving PhDs. For example, pursuing the brief example offered earlier, sociologists know a great deal about the dynamics of solidarity and it should be relatively easy to develop some rules of thumb about conditions increasing and decreasing solidarity; and these would be relevant to a wide swath of organization problems, such as working morale and productivity, which would be of great interest to a wide variety clients (see Turner 1998, 2001 for this and other examples).

Consequences if Sociology as a Moral Project Triumphs

Over an Engineering Mentality

In looking over data on declining membership in the American Sociological Association, now down by over 30% in the last decade, and in section memberships in ASA, a clear trend is evident: Those sections that have a clear bias toward members who are science-oriented are in decline, whereas those that have a bias toward ideologically-driven social movement activism are increasing their membership. For those who are part of the growing membership, it may seem that this is just a natural and useful change in the discipline. But, this shift also makes the discipline vulnerable in the long run. Disciplines that have engineering applications have a much broader resource base than do those that are confined to academia, where the vagaries of student preferences and whims of university/college administrators can cause rapid decline in the standing of a department within academia. Moreover, those disciplines that do not bring in research grants, especially those grants from science agencies that carry high overhead charges, are likely to be even more dependent upon student enrollments and benevolence by administrators. And if sociology abandons science, and then loses enrollments, the benevolence of or even just tolerance by, administrators will quickly dissipate, and the one historically secure resource base for the discipline—academia—will shrink.

⁸ A useful comparison is the field of public history, which is the application of historical expertise to local community histories. This has been an enormously successful application of historical methods, and it is something that sociology could emulate by having the expertise to solve what are very typical and chronic problems in American communities of all sizes and types. There would be jobs for such “public sociologists”; and these would be jobs that could become careers if the sociologist could provide solutions for the problems that inevitably emerge in cities and urban areas.

⁹ The Association for Applied and Clinical Sociology has developed a procedure for certifying applied sociologists and clinical sociologists. Yet, such certifications are *ex post facto*, rather than tied to a coherent national program of education. What sociology needs is much more rigorous and standardized criteria of expertise for certifying sociologists. Some more like what psychology does for clinical psychology or that any engineering school or medical school does in preparing its graduates to take standardized examinations that lead to certification.

My goal is to make sociology much bigger and more influential by sustaining its scientific base within academia, but also to expand its resource base by developing engineering applications and tracks for sociologists solving problems of clients of every stripe in the society at large. Sociology needs to move outside of academia and develop firms devoted to solving social problems, with these firms employing PhD sociologists who have been trained in applying sociological knowledge in new PhD tracks within sociology department for applied work or, perhaps even more desirable, in separate graduate departments where students are trained in the use of all social science knowledge. If “engineering schools” can prosper by applications of hard-science knowledge within academia, there can also be social engineering schools (by another name) in academia that can bring in grant money and train students for careers inside and outside of academia. If something like this does *not* occur, then I think the prospects for sociology as a respected field of inquiry will be diminished within academia and as a useful field for solving real world problems will not even exist—freeing economists and psychologist to do what we as a discipline can do so much better.

There is another consequence that could accelerate sociology’s decline: the exodus of scientifically-oriented scholars from sociology departments and from their professional associations. Some, of course, might say good riddance but at the peril of their own future as a low-status, low-prestige discipline in academia wholly dependent upon student enrollments and administrative tolerance. There are incipient signs that scientists are preparing to leave the discipline by the dramatic decline in membership in ASA and the widespread belief that maybe another discipline will need to be created for scientific sociologists, coupled with new professional associations and journals, such as the one created several years ago, with the name Sociological Science. When there is no peace within a department and no place on meeting programs so dramatically skewed to activism, this exodus seems inevitable. Of course, if new associations and new departments inside of academia fail to evolve in academia, then the science of sociology will largely disappear.

I have begun to believe that it is time to create two sociologies, one using the current label for the discipline for activist sociology and another, with a new name, for the scientists. I would prefer the name, as did Aguste Comte, *social physics*, for the new department and the label *Society of Social Physicists* for a professional association—granted, not a likely turn of events. But many in sociology are leaving ASA and the exodus will continue, and many others will try to leave sociology departments for other academic locations. Scientific sociology can be saved if new departments, new graduate programs, new associations, and new journals (e.g., *The Journal of Social Physics*) can emerge. These programs and associations will be smaller but more focused, with students committed to science, with access to grants from a variety of public and private agencies, with applied or engineering tracks, and for jobs inside and academia. I am waiting (with low expectations) for the first courageous dean or provost to create a new kind of sociology department—a department of social physics. There are many who would flock to such a department, bringing with them their knowledge and grant-getting abilities, as well as applied experiences.

The End of Sociology?

I do not think this end of sociology scenario is likely to play out, if only because of the student market for sociology in either its activist or scientific mode is still robust. But, I could see a decline in sociology and a dramatic loss of hard-won acceptance in academia and a continued impotence in having any real impact on those individuals and organizations that can change people's lives. Sociology by another name, organized into new departments and new associations, and institutionalizing an engineer track would have a bright future. It would never, in all likelihood, be as large as ASA has at two points in its history become (around 15,000 or so members), nor would majors in sociology be high nor would there be large graduate departments, but I would guess, if done as I have suggested, job insecurity would be low and relevance for the new sociology for dealing with social problems would be much higher than it is today or will be in the future without a discipline devoted to becoming "the science of society." Devoted activists should, I think, be careful in what they "may wish for." They could achieve their goals and make certain the future where (a) sociology never sits at tables of power and influence where important decisions are made and (b) where the very large markets of clients needing knowledge on how to solve organization problems is given over to less able social sciences. Public sociology is a well-meaning and interesting proposal to make sociology relevant but it does not adequately address sociology's "big divide" (Turner 2016); and perhaps no proposal can solve the divide, except the split of sociology into two separate disciplines, each ready to go its own way. Maybe it is time to recognize the impossibility of reconciling the "big divide" in sociology and give in to its implication for what is possible, organizationally.

It is time to do some decisive thinking on this question of the direction of sociology as one or two disciplines. To let current trends continue, sociology as a science will become attenuated to small corners of academia. I would prefer that sociology evolve into a vibrant new social science discipline with more relevance than the old sociology for dealing with problems in organizing modern life. I think that the scientists in sociology should begin to mobilize for the latter as a hedge against the future of a sociology fully committed to an activist agenda.

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