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SYMPOSIUM: THE CHANGING SHAPE OF HIGHER EDUCATION SINCE THE 1960S

# The Structural Transformation of Sociology

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**Abstract** The advent of public sociology over the past decade represents the end of a string of crisis moments in sociology. Since the 1950s and, especially, the 1960s, sociology was argued to be in a crisis because the discipline was thought to be conservative and contributing to sustain the status quo. As a result, the 1970s witnessed a radicalization of sociology, but the 1980s saw a general decline of sociology. Upon a resurgence during the 1990s, the crisis advocates have come back with a vengeance in the form of a renewed commitment to a heavily politicized sociology under the heading of public sociology, a perspective that is now thoroughly institutionalized and widely embraced. In sociology, the effects of the 1960s thus began to be felt in earnest some 40 years late.

**Keywords** Sociology · Public sociology · Sociological profession · Radical sociology · Higher education

Against the background of the development of academic culture since the 1960s, I discuss selected prospects and problems in the institutionalization of American sociology, especially with respect to the organization of the sociological profession and the repercussions thereof for the teaching and learning of sociology in higher education. I begin by describing the role of sociology as it was envisioned by the discipline's founders. In the development of modern sociology, I will show, sociology almost immediately became preoccupied with the idea that it was not doing what it ought to be doing and that the discipline therefore was in some state of crisis. Certain cultural currents of the 1960s amplified these ideas and greatly influenced the practice of sociology in the following years, especially in terms of the professional organization of sociology and its teaching in higher education.

It should come as no great surprise that the sixties had a special impact on the discipline of sociology in a manner other sciences will not have experienced, given the simple fact that sociology and society are specially connected. The crisis of (Western) society that was proclaimed during the 1960s indeed also brought about the argument that sociology was in a crisis. More striking and, I suspect, much less well known is that more recent decades have seen a reinvigorated response to the idea of sociology's crisis, with an increasing impact far beyond what the older crisis guard may have anticipated and others will have feared. Situated in the context of the history of sociology's crisis moments, I discuss the implications of these developments for the professional organization of sociology and its standing at America's colleges and universities. I argue that, among other transformations, a renewal of the moral functions of education will be in order to restore the true nature of sociology.

## The Promise of Sociology

The word '*sociologie*' was invented by Auguste Comte as early as 1838, but the science of sociology did not begin to develop and become institutionalized until later in the second half of the 19th century. Sociology as an academic discipline owes its birth to the endeavors of such notable classic scholars as Herbert Spencer, William Graham Sumner, Albion Small, Georg Simmel, Ferdinand Tönnies, and —the two undisputed classics of sociology— Emile Durkheim and Max Weber. It was readily understood by these classics, and often also explicated in their written works, that sociology was both a discipline and a profession

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and that a great responsibility was placed on the practitioners of the new science of society to take on the right to practice their duties with all due consideration of scientific rigor and academic professionalism.

Emile Durkheim (1858–1917), more than any other classical sociologist, made great efforts to institutionalize sociology as an academic discipline with its own distinct rules and object of study within the context of the university (Durkheim 1895). Durkheim had been educated in philosophy and education and also took up professorships in those fields, but only to introduce and practice a new field of study, sociology, that was occupied with the scientific study of society as a reality in itself. In the course of practicing his scholarship, Durkheim was also a teacher and a builder of a veritable school of sociology, with its own research programs and publications (most notably, the periodicals *L'Annee Sociologique* and the *Annales Sociologiques*), which involved a multitude of sociologists as well as scholars in related scientific fields, such as history, law, and criminology.

Whereas Durkheim primarily advocated the role of the sociological professional by practicing it, Max Weber (1864–1920) was less directly involved in building a school of sociology because, hindered by poor health, he held formal teaching positions only for a limited number of years over the course of his career. Weber nonetheless contributed greatly to the formal standing of sociology as an academic field, first of all because of his broad appeal as an important public intellectual. Additionally, along with Georg Simmel and Ferdinand Tönnies, Weber founded the German Society for Sociology in 1909 and thus had a direct influence on the institutionalization of sociology.

Most importantly in the present context is that Weber also explicitly explicated the role of the scientist in a systematic way. Specifically in his famous lecture on science as a vocation, Weber (1918) suggested how the graduate student can work towards becoming a professional scientist, taking into account certain external conditions but also relying upon an internal calling to the profession and its mission. Written as the professional counterpart to his methodological treatise on value-freedom and value-neutrality (Weber 1904), Weber's writing remains among the most quoted authoritative statements on what it means to be a sociologist and what the challenges and the rights and responsibilities are of those who choose to practice sociology professionally. Among his prescriptions, Weber especially highlighted the duty of the teacher to keep politics out of the lecture-room and practice an intellectual integrity to rely upon analyses and perspectives that are located within the province of one's discipline and specialties (Weber 1918, 145–146).

In the development towards modern sociology, the name of Talcott Parsons stands out above all others, both in scholarly respects and in matters of professionalization. Originally educated in sociology in Heidelberg, Germany, just a few years after Max Weber had died there, Parsons had an initially slow rise in his career. He joined the faculty at Harvard in economics in 1927 and, in 1931, moved to the sociology department that had been newly founded by Pitirim Sorokin. The dynamics of the ensuing internal struggle for domination between Sorokin and Parsons need not concern us here. Suffice it to know that Parsons came out victorious because of the intrinsic contributions of his great scholarly work, no doubt, but also because of his keen awareness that sociology as a practice involves a professional dimension as well. In fact, among Parsons' major substantive areas of research is the sociology of professions (especially in the fields of medicine and law), a specialty area of which he is considered the founding father.

Not content with writing about the professions, Parsons also worked concretely towards the institutionalization of sociology and its professionalization in a number of ways. He was instrumental in establishing and leading Harvard's famous Department of Social Relations, a unit that housed sociology along with psychology and anthropology. This interdisciplinary experiment lasted for almost three decades, from 1946 to 1972, during which time Parsons was also widely revered as the leading sociologist (especially theorist) in the United States and much of the rest of the world. Whatever the intrinsic merits were of Parsons' work and whatever the extent to which those merits were responsible for his stature among other sociologists, there is no denying his factual impact in building sociology as a scholarly field by attracting sociologists into the profession, both directly via his work at Harvard as well as indirectly because of his reputation, and giving them a core set of concepts and shared values of scholarly commitment.

Parsons also contributed to the professionalization of (American) sociology by founding the specialist journal *The American Sociologist*, devoted to professional issues concerning the community of sociologists (as a counterpart to the leading journals of sociological scholarship: the *American Journal of Sociology* and the *American Sociological Review*). The professional journal, edited by Parsons from 1965 to 1970 , was expressly conceived as a forum for communications among sociologists about professional issues in order to itself with the self-study and understanding of the profession (Parsons 1965). But despite Parsons' noble intentions, this profession of sociology was not to be.

## Sociology's Original Crisis

In his historical study of the modern prison system, Michel Foucault once argued that it was astonishing to observe that the reform of the prison system was virtually contemporaneous with its development. As soon as new prison models were introduced, a crisis was proclaimed, necessitating reform and the development of alternative models of punishment (Foucault

1975, 234). A similar story can be told of sociology in the modern age. Sociology in the post-World War II period had barely begun when voices could be heard that proclaimed an intellectual and professional crisis. The trouble with this relatively young science of society was basically argued to be an absence of a more critically oriented scholarly perspective, basically the absence of Marxian thought in modern (American) sociology. An intellectual change was therefore needed that should (and would) also impact the standing of the profession.

In Europe, where the science of sociology originated, there was historically no need for a re-orientation of sociology and the social sciences on the basis of Marx, because social philosophy and sociology had retained a connection more intimate than in the United States. To be sure, Durkheim and Weber mostly reacted against Marx, but they did relate their respective works to him as well as other classics of social philosophy. There was a mutual recognition, if not always admiration, of sociology and philosophy. Following the tragedy of the Great War, this situation changed and Marx began to be entertained favorably within the European social sciences. In the 1930s, for instance, the Institute for Social Research was founded in Frankfurt, Germany, to develop the so-called Critical Theory tradition that was developed by the likes of Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, and Herbert Marcuse. Explicitly inspired by Marx, these scholars sought to respond social-scientifically to deeply troubling currents in society, rapid change, economic trouble, and the rise of fascism and Nazism.

In Europe, the Marxist orientation in the social sciences was always an intellectual undertaking and was embedded within, rather than a reaction against, the sociological profession and related academic enterprises. In the United States, however, the importation of Marx into the pantheon of sociological thought and the re-direction of the works of other classical scholars in a critical or conflict-theoretical direction also involved, and was deliberately meant to be, an attack on the objectives of sociology, both as scholarship and as profession. Since this re-direction took place after World War II, the shift in world power towards the United States would not be without consequence for the standing of sociology on a global level as well. From within American sociology, a revolution could now take place with all due consequence for world sociology. Specifically, since the 1950s, sociology was claimed to be in a crisis as explicated in some publications at least once every two decades. I will show that the direction of these crises and their suggested resolutions have not been stable and greatly impact sociology in the academia today.

### Crisis 1a: *The Sociological Imagination* by C. Wright Mills, 1959

In this popular book, C. Wright Mills has little to say about what the sociological imagination would be other than the capacity to relate private troubles with public issues or to bridge biography and history and to do so in a simple language. On both counts, of course, Mills is reacting against Parsons, whose work Mills dismisses as a 'grand theory' that is too abstract and insufficiently tuned to analyze conflict. The leisurely times of the 1950s allowed other sociologists to make similar critical statements: Ralf Dahrendorf's "Out of Utopia" (1958) and Dennis Wrong's "Oversocialized Conception of Man in Modern Sociology" (1961) are among the more noteworthy efforts. The important consequences of these programmatic statements are not merely intellectual but were also meant to involve a reorientation of the sociological profession. Once power, inequality, and conflict are introduced as analytical categories of sociological thought, an activist attitude positioning the sociologist as an advocate of change is never far behind. Mills (1959, 179–181) explicitly clarifies this role of the new, radical sociologist as one being directed simultaneously at the king and to the public, rather than being a philosopher-king or a royal advisor.

### Crisis 1b: *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology* by Alvin Gouldner, 1970

In this highly influential book, Alvin Gouldner seeks to resolutely destroy the Parsonian framework by claiming it to be conservative. Even more strongly, Gouldner argues that any endeavor to develop sociology as an objective science would be doomed to fail from the very start. For that reason, Gouldner not only condemned the entire world of Parsons but also a range of alternative theories that were developed in response to his thinking (e.g., exchange theory and ethnomethodology). And, unlike Mills in the 1950s, Gouldner could now rely on a new generation of sociologists, the generation of the "young radicals" of the 1960s, who had "sentiments" which the "old theories" could not meet (Gouldner 1970, 7). In other words, Gouldner argued that the subjective nature of social life should also be recognized by the sociologist as being applicable to sociological knowledge itself. Sociologists should therefore translate their attitudes, their sentiments, their feelings into their work and thereby seek to liberate society and practice a truly radical sociology.

The crisis pronouncements of the 1950s and 1960s effectively brought about an activist radicalization of sociology (Lipset 2001). Especially the early 1970s, when the 60s generation came off age, witnessed the production of many, more and less radical variations of a new sociology. Some of these developments were intellectual and some of them were waged at the professional level.

In matters of scholarship, a slue of radical sociological writings began to be published from the early 1970s onwards. Almost overnight, Karl Marx became one of the founding fathers of sociology (Manza and McCarthy

2011). Marxist sociological research began to appear more and more in the established sociology journals, while new specialized journals of an explicitly critical bent were founded as well and major books in the field were influenced by Marxian and otherwise radical thought.

On a professional level, there occurred a radicalization of sociologists as well, specifically in the American Sociological Association (ASA). This redirection involved a call for broader acceptance of more diverse perspectives and sociologists of diverse backgrounds. The ASA at times engaged in explicitly political and moral issues and accordingly did not even shy away from acting against some of its own members. Two moments stand out. In 1967, a demonstration was organized at the annual meeting in San Francisco against the Vietnam War (Rhoades 1981). The Sociology Liberation Movement sponsored an ASA resolution that called for an end to the War. The resolution was defeated when a majority of members voted for the Association not to adopt a formal policy. Reintroduced in 1968, the resolution was again defeated. The other telling episode occurred in 1976, when the ASA leadership, under direction of then ASA President Alfred McClung Lee, sought to have Chicago sociologist James Coleman censured by the Association because of his work on education and desegregation policies. In his research, Coleman had found that whites tended to move out of the public schools that had busing programs. The censure effort failed, but only after a plenary session had been held at the Association's annual meeting where posters were displayed with Coleman's name appearing alongside of Nazi swastikas (Coleman 1989).

The radical crisis sociologists relied on favorable demographic circumstances. The 60s generation of sociology was notable in terms of size, especially because the optimism that existed in sociology in the post-World War II period had contributed to an increase in the number of students majoring and receiving graduate degrees in sociology (Turner and Turner 1990). By 1960, the American Sociological Association had more than 6,000 members, more than twice as much as 10 years before. The 1960s were no doubt a fruitful decade for sociology, to wit not just the numbers but also the kind of and, especially to be noted in the present context, the variety of sociologists produced in those days (see, e.g., the autobiographies in Sica and Turner 2005).

## The New Crisis and the Anti-Crisis

During the 1980s, the decade which the owner of the famous New York nightclub Studio 54 once called the 'dull age,' sociology was not doing well. The heyday of the post-1960s generation was leveling off and the number of students and sociological professionals was declining. In 1970, the ASA had again been able to more than double its membership from the decade before to almost 15,000, but by the mid-1980s the number was down to about 11,000. Sociology's negative growth was a curious outcome considering the renewed optimism, in a radical direction, that was ushered in during the 1970s.

More bad news came by the end of the dull decade as an assault was taking place on the very existence of sociology in higher education, an event that even reached the popular press (something very rare for sociology) (Kantrowitz 1992). Among the most troubling signs were the plan to cut the Sociology Department at Yale University by 40 % and the actual closure of some sociology departments, such as at the University of Rochester and at Washington University in St. Louis. Although it is not clear if those events were disconnected incidents or if there was a trend that affected sociology more broadly, the discipline was thought to be in trouble. In response, a new and altogether different crisis of sociology was announced.

### Crisis 2a: *The Decomposition of Sociology* by Irving Louis Horowitz, 1993

This book by a critical biographer of C. Wright Mills (Horowitz 1983) develops the argument that sociology is in decline as a discipline because of its ideological leanings, especially in the Marxist vein, and its simultaneous irrelevance to policy (Horowitz 1993). Infested with ideology, Horowitz maintains, sociology is at the same time very fractured and lacking in cohesion. Moreover, certain areas of study, such as crime and law, have become subject matters of newly developing fields of study (criminology, law and society) and have thus been taken out of sociology, which has, in consequence, been shrinking.

### Crisis 2b: *What's Wrong with Sociology?* Edited by Stephen Cole, 1994/2001

Originally published in 1994 as an eight-article special issue of the journal *Sociological Forum* and expanded with an additional eight chapters as an edited book appearing in 2001, this volume addresses a wide variety of troubles associated with sociology's radicalization (Cole 2001a). The authors chiefly lament the ideological nature of sociology and, relatedly, point out various commonplace and largely unacknowledged intellectual deficiencies in sociological theory and research. The answer to the question of the book, then, was decidedly that a lot was wrong with sociology and that the prospects for improvement were not good. How much was really wrong with sociology could not even have been foreseen by those who accepted the basic premise of the new crisis of an ideologically perverted and intellectually incoherent sociology. For whereas the old crisis could rely on the counterculture generation of the

1960s to radicalize sociology, the new crisis had to deal with the implications of sociology's decline during the 1980s.

### Anti-Crisis: Public Sociology by Michael Burawoy et al. (1999–2004)

The final moment in sociology's history of crises did not originate or crystallize with a specific publication but began with a professional event in the history of American sociology. In 1999, the then Chair of the ASA Publications Committee, Michael Burawoy, decided to resign from his position in protest of the fact that his Committee's suggestions for the editorship of the *American Sociological Review* were not followed by the Council of the ASA, which instead appointed another team of two sociologists to edit the organization's flagship journal (ASA 1999). The resignation was Burawoy's prerogative, but he also elected to communicate with others about his decision and divulge information about the selection process, thereby violating the Association's confidentiality policy.

The resignation of the Chair of the ASA Publications Committee received a lot of attention among sociologists, especially in view of the fact that the matter had political and racial undertones as the new editor was projected to be a person of color and the decision was also hoped, and deliberately crafted, to involve a substantive re-orientation of the journal to reflect more diverse forms of sociology. No doubt sensing that the time for victory and revenge was upon him, Burawoy almost immediately following his resignation, in 2001, ran for the Presidency of the ASA. A year later, he was elected (beating out Teresa Sullivan, then a professor at the University of Texas in Austin) and he took up the Presidency in 2003 after serving a year as President-Elect.

Burawoy had run on a platform of a program that he dubbed 'public sociology' and which he defined in terms of sociology's function as "mirror and conscience of society" inspired by an explicitly activist notion that "the world could be different" (Burawoy 2002). By the time the annual meeting organized by Burawoy under the theme of public sociology was held in San Francisco in August 2004, the perspective had already garnered broad support for what was a heavily politicized understanding of sociology in the tradition of the usual leftist activism. The meeting was not only the most explicitly politicized but also the best-attended meeting the ASA had ever held (ASA 2004).

The precise nature and problems of public sociology need not concern us here (Deflem 2004a, 2005), but suffice it to say that public sociology has, since its initial introduction, continued to be eagerly embraced, in all kinds of meanings and with all kinds of variations, not only in the United States, but in many other parts of the world where sociology is practiced. This world-wide absorption was aided by the fact that Burawoy was funded by the ASA as its President to tour the country and many parts of the world to lecture on the virtues of public sociology. More than two dozen symposia have to date been devoted to public sociology in academic journals across the world. In 2010, Burawoy took up a 4-year term as President of the International Sociological Association (ISA Website). Considering its global success, it can safely be concluded that public sociology has ushered in a new era of sociology, one without any sense of crisis at all. Sociological radicalization has now been accomplished to the point of a full institutionalization of public sociology as an approach that can no longer be objected to without destroying or, at least, attacking the whole of actually existing sociology itself. In what follows, I discuss some of the conditions and implications of this development, especially with respect to the position and role of sociology in the university.

## Sociological Professionals and Professors

*The Organization of Sociology* The sociological profession is presently doing extremely well in a quantitative sense, to wit the increase in membership in the ASA since 2001 (since when annual membership is around 13,000) and the consistently high attendance at the Association's annual meetings (Scelza et al. 2010). I argue that this success of the sociological profession has taken place with an extremely underdeveloped group of sociologists who are educated and skilled with less distinction than ever before. It is not entirely without merit to suggest that entrance into the profession of sociology has moved back from achievement to ascription as an ever-growing group of politicized sociologists and activists has taken over the ranks of the profession. Today's professionalization of sociology has been enabled by unprofessionalism. The old crisis of sociology has ended in a two-fold sense: sociologists today are many, and many are political.

The success of this new radical, highly politicized sociology cannot simply be the result of an increased politicization of its practitioners, for most people who practice sociology have generally always been left-leaning to some degree or another. Even the older (and younger) guard of sociologists who lamented the decomposition and wrong turn of sociology in the early 1990s were themselves, politically, most all leftists. However, as Lipset (2001) notes, this generation of sociologists kept their politics and activist orientations clearly separated from their scholarly activities, even when the initial impulse to do the latter was rooted in the former. Once a field of study was selected, at least partly under the influence of explicit political and otherwise moral concerns, the further development of theory and research was conducted scientifically.

But the analytical separation between theory and praxis is no longer widely accepted today, as political and activist

agendas are now much more easily embraced by sociologists in conducting various activities of their profession. The ASA's most promoted and visible recent activities, for instance, have nothing to do with the scientific study of society or the improvement of sociological scholarship (even though that is explicitly stated as the Association's objective in its constitution[1]). Instead, the organization is more predominantly oriented at political-activist issues that aspire to relate to certain important issues of the day.

With respect to its organization, for example, the ASA is committed to a 'Diversity Statement,' which reads that it is the organization's policy "to include people of color, women, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered persons, persons with disabilities, sociologists from smaller institutions or who work in government, business, or other applied settings, and international scholars in all of its programmatic activities and in the business of the Association" (ASA Website). It would be awkward, to put it mildly, for any professional organization in the United States that it would exclude any of the specified categories. But why the organization chooses to include only some categories (and lump them all together on some sort of equal footing of repression) and why it excludes others is far from clear. The Diversity Statement is also decidedly skewed and outdated. Most strikingly, the number of minorities in sociology continues to be extremely low, so low in fact that it must be asked what is wrong with sociology that it has not been more effective in recruiting scholars of color irrespective of any structural obstacles and cultural dispositions. In 2010, the ASA counted only 6 % African-Americans and 4.3 % Hispanics among its total 13,708 members (Scelza et al. 2010). In contrast, the number of women in sociology has increased sharply, and since the early 1990s, women in the ASA and in sociology at large outnumber men, especially among students.

Among its activist programs, the ASA has passed resolutions against the war in Iraq in 2003 and in favor of same-sex marriage in 2004 (Deflem 2005). The Association further prides itself on having filed *amicus curiae* briefs in several Supreme Court cases (ASA Website). Activism also rules supreme at the Association's annual meetings. The themes of the most recent meetings include such topics as "Social Conflict" (2011), "Real Utopias" (2012), and "Interrogating Inequality" (2013). Politicized sociology even fills the pages of the sociology journals, where it coexists with bland work that is highly scientific in its methodological approach rather than its substantive orientation, whereby the latter which occasionally masks political motives.

[1] Article II of the ASA constitution reads: "The objectives of the Association shall be to stimulate and improve research, instruction, and discussion, and to encourage cooperative relations among persons engaged in the scientific study of society." http://www.asanet.org/about/constitution.cfm

No doubt, without Burawoy's introduction of public sociology, the recent history of sociology would have been different. But even a professor of sociology at the University of California at Berkeley needs favorable circumstances to successfully execute his revenge and launch an effective crusade to take over the whole of the sociological profession. In that respect it can be noted that the concept of public sociology had been introduced in American sociology once before, when Columbia University sociologist Herbert Gans suggested the term, with a different meaning than Burawoy, in his 1988 address as ASA President (Gans 1989). By Gans' (2011) own admission, his effort had not been able to greatly affect the discipline. Things changed when Burawoy appropriated the term, an event greeted with initially reserved, but eventually less qualified enthusiasm by Gans. When Burawoy had announced his candidacy for the ASA Presidency on a public sociology platform, Gans quickly sought to remind sociologists that he had introduced the term (Gans 2002). Since the success of public sociology following the 2004 ASA meeting, however, Gans has accepted his status as a founding-father of a public sociology he does not advocate (Gans 2011). In 2006 he was given the Career of Distinguished Scholarship Award from the ASA. The matter over the proper meaning of public sociology, in any case, is now mute as a strategic and convenient move has taken place towards the acceptance of *any* kind of public sociology (sometimes expressed in the pluralized version of public sociologies). Based on the understanding of public sociology, then, the discipline is now well beyond the crisis, not because a postmodern condition would have been reached in which no one can agree anymore (Lemert 1995), but, on the contrary, because there is nothing but agreement among sociologists as all are expected to be adherents of public sociology. Those who disagree no longer belong.

Given the warm embrace of public sociology, in whichever meaning found suitable, and its continued success among a large group of sociologists, it can be assumed that the return of the old-crisis proponents was enabled, in no small measure, by the impact of the cultural climate that was created during the U.S. Presidency of George W. Bush. Yet, there must have been more, for the political turn to the right can only have contributed to the success of public sociology from about 2004 onwards following the invasion of Iraq, but cannot be responsible for its initial rise in 1999 when such politically divisive issues were not yet formulated (and possibly also not since the election of President Obama, when all would have been normalized again).

I argue that it is not the political orientation of many of today's sociologists, but the relative weakness of their intellectual prowess that must be considered to account for the contemporary radicalization of sociology. Many sociologists today have fallen for the trappings of a radicalized sociology, under the seemingly benign heading of public sociology,

simply because they do not have the intellectual skills necessary to think critically about their own activities, to take epistemological challenges seriously, to differentiate between theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches, on the one hand, and the professional questions of the various sociological crises, on the other, or even to conceptualize the distinction between profession and scholarship, let alone understand its implications.

At the organizational level of the profession of sociology, especially in the ASA, the rise and rise of public sociology has been able to connect itself with the organization's turn towards a market model, the managerialization of its staff, and an organizational quest for publicity. Rather than orient itself towards advancing sociological scholarship, the ASA has been publishing press releases and issuing statements concerning political and moral issues, while boasting successes of the profession in quantitative terms. Examples include reports on the number of students in sociology programs, the number of graduate degrees awarded, and the participation at the ASA annual meetings (ASA Website). On the wikipedia page, the ASA is described as "the largest professional association of sociologists in the world, even larger than the International Sociological Association" (Wikipedia). The statement is definitely the product of the ASA itself –in 2001 the Association initiated a " Sociology in Wikipedia" project— and a deliberate form of self-presentation, betraying a market orientation that is amazingly lacking in geo-cultural sensitivity or even a simple understanding of demographics. Otherwise it would have been recognized that the number of sociologists per capita in the U.S. is actually lower than in many other western nations.

The marketization of the sociological profession was already going on for some years before the advent of public sociology. The development was largely the result of the flight of intellectually qualified members of the sociological community away from the time-consuming duties of professional positions and, concomitantly, the importation of managers into central positions in the profession. Especially noteworthy in this respect is the fact that the position of Executive Officer in the ASA has since about two decades now been in the hands of individuals who are primarily known as managers with highly developed technical skills and whose earned doctorates in sociology merely serve as a legitimizing tool. The adoption of public sociology could rely on earlier publicity efforts that were oriented at making sociology more policy relevant, for instance by setting up a "Public Affairs" division (ASA Website), even when public sociology defines itself as being distinctly different from policy sociology. Relatedly, the ASA sells various promotional items —featuring the organization's logo and annual meeting themes— such as sweatshirts, mousepads, mugs, buttons, dog t-shirts, bibs, and infant creepers (Deflem 2004b).

The managerialization of sociology should cause no great consternation on the part of anyone, least of all the informed sociologist. After all, it would be intellectually puzzling to assume that what applies to most organizations under conditions of advanced capitalism would not also apply to the profession of sociology. As an organized profession, sociology is an economic entity as well. This is no problem as such, as every human endeavor, however noble or ideal, needs an organizational infrastructure to sustain itself. What is more problematic is that the dictates of the material infrastructure of sociology have also intruded upon the discipline's mission and have redirected what sociologists think about who they are and what they should do. The ironic conclusion, in any case, is that the radicalization of sociology has been facilitated by the profession's marketization. The success of sociological Marxism is a product of American capitalism.

*The Education of Sociology* How has sociology's perpetual crisis until the turn of the current century and its resolution by public sociology's anti-crisis since then affected the discipline as it is taught in the setting of American colleges and universities? To some extent, of course, things have gone on as before and they may also go on as usual for some time to come. Courses are taught and degrees are awarded. But there have been important changes as well.

Confirming what I said about the intellectual standing of sociological professionals, students who major in sociology at America's colleges and universities do not tend to be recruited from the top-performing categories, as measured by GPA and test scores such as GRE results (D'Antonio 1992). Especially in recent decades, smart students do not tend to think of developing a career in sociology. Of course, our society being what it is, the brightest students will disproportionately move to disciplines with more financially rewarding prospects. Yet that cannot be the only reason, for the post-World War II era did attract highly talented people even though the stratification of the professional reward structure could not have been much different then than it is today. The post-War golden era of sociology can be said to have benefitted from the urgency that was felt to study society and to work towards alleviating social ills by means of sociological scholarship. Yet every era has its own pressing social needs and concerns, and societal changes will always affect academic sociology differently and more profoundly than other disciplines. Today's problems with respect to such issues as international violence and economic turmoil can hardly be assumed to be any less relevant to sociology than the problems societies were facing in earlier decades. The conclusion must therefore be that sociology is no longer able to deliver on its original promise. Society is still relevant to sociology, but sociology is not generally thought to be relevant to society. The problem, then, must be at the supply side of sociological education.

Sociology can only reap what it has sown. Attracted to sociology because of ill-conceived political leanings and poorly educated at a time when sociology was thought to be in an intellectual crisis but also enjoyed the richness of being able to graduate a multitude of students, many of the students of sociology from the 1970s onwards could only become poorly educated professionals. And poorly educated professionals can simply not be expected to educate well. Because sociologists today do not even agree on what is most important to study and what the most appropriate perspectives and methodologies are, they are accordingly inconsistent in teaching what they think is most necessary. The lack of consensus among sociologists what constitutes good work implies that people working in the most esteemed schools or receiving the most attention for their work are not necessarily the brightest (Stinchcombe 2001).

As a result of the poor understanding of the mission of sociology, politics has now taken the place of scholarship. Max Weber's (1918, 146) admonition that "the prophet and the demagogue do not belong on the academic platform" has been completely lost on a considerable number of sociology professors today. Adherents of public sociology, in particular, have done much to advocate the activist sociologist on the college campus, one of the few terrains incidentally where they have been able to do so, as their skills as individual scholars affecting society otherwise are extremely weak. Public sociology has even become an area of specialization and/or teaching subject or perspective at several U.S. college colleges and universities.[2] As a result, left-leaning students are more drawn to sociology than their conservative counterparts, contributing to a further homogenization of the political make-up of the discipline (Fosse and Gross 2012).

The effects of the radicalization of sociology are mostly felt on campus. On the few occasions when public sociology actually manages to venture out into the mainstream, especially in the media, the consequences are dumbfounding. The blandest dribble is presented as a grand act of public sociology just because it appears in the popular press. Even a theoretical sociologist esteemed and (rightly) acclaimed as Jeffrey Alexander recently described one of his writings as public sociology because it appeared in the *Huffington Post* (Yale Sociology website). The article explains that Barack Obama lost the first presidential debate with Mitt Romney because of the "theatrical failure" that Obama's "gestures were not eloquent" (Alexander 2012). More than a month after the article had been posted online, it had received a mere 11 Facebook shares and 25 Twitter posts.

Unlike the politicized populists in the profession, sociologists who remain committed to scholarship on the basis of scientific standards do not become as well known to the public at large or to potential students, because the relatively high degree of scienticity (even when it is low as compared to other sciences) of their work will be perceived as an obstacle. And when popular themes are taught from a scholarly perspective, it will be perceived through the hazy mist of a perverted context. As somebody who works mostly in the area of law and society, I can testify to the negative implications of teaching classes on topics that have a high degree of societal relevance (e.g., crime, police, terrorism) but that are, within the present academic context, also easily misunderstood. I became even more acutely aware of this problem when I began teaching a sociology course that contains the words 'Lady' and 'Gaga.'[3]

Scientifically minded sociologists face an uphill battle against their politicized and less than stellar colleagues. As sociologist of science Stephen Cole (2001b) has remarked, many sociologists are not only ideological but so overtly ideological that it has contributed to the widespread notion that sociology itself is all-out and necessarily leftist. Not rarely enough, the perception among students is that sociology is not a science and is often seen as or confused with socialism.[4] Sociologists who see themselves as committed to a political cause in their teaching would not wish to see it any other way. When public sociology was launched a decade ago, Michael

[2] After 2004, several sociology departments spontaneously began to self-identify as having a special interest or concentration in public sociology. Examples include departments at George Mason University, Ithaca College, Florida Atlantic University, American University, and UC-Berkeley (Deflem 2005). Based on an online search, the number of departments explicitly espousing a public sociology agenda has in recent years increased manifold and now also includes Missouri State University, Syracuse University, Saint Louis University, the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, Salem State University, Humboldt State University, and Baker University, among others (Google search, October 30, 2012).

[3] When my course "Lady Gaga and the Sociology of the Fame" at the University of South Carolina was first announced late October 2010, it became the number-one Lady Gaga news story in the world, with multiple thousands of news reports and commentaries appearing on the internet, in print, and on radio and television. Sadly indicative of the public perception of sociology but ironically also confirming the societal relevance of fame and celebrity, the course objectives were routinely misunderstood, not only by the sensationalist entertainment media, but also by certain conservative outlets, where the course was misinterpreted as part of a non-academic trend in higher education (e.g., Allen 2011) when the exact opposite was true (Deflem 2012). In organized sociology, the situation was even more troublesome. The ASA newsletter *Footnotes* published two notices about the course (mentioning only three media sources) despite the fact that I was no longer a member of the Association and had not given permission for the notices to be published. Public sociologists even claim what is not theirs.

[4] An article in the *American Sociological Review* (Volschoa and Kelly 2012) was recently received on a blog to imply that sociologists had declared that Republicans would be bad for America (Science Codex 2012). Even more interestingly, in the comment section, somebody remarked that "anthropologists" should not write such work, especially not just before a national election, to which another commentator remarked: "If only they were anthropologists, then it would just be 90 % non-scientific. Since this was a sociologist and a political scientist this was instead 100 % made up."

Burawoy (2002) immediately emphasized the centrality of teaching and the relevance of students as "our first public."

The politicized nature of sociology has influenced university administrators, policymakers, and the general public to doubt the credibility of the discipline. The truly sad aspect of such perceptions is not so much that it is not true that sociology is necessarily political or even that some sociologists obviously do not have leftist leanings and not even that some sociologists still manage to keep their politics out of the classroom. Instead, it is most troublesome for sociology, as it has to be for any academic discipline, that the intellectual incapacities of many sociologists are not recognized and are perceived as a matter of politics. No science can advance, by definition, if it refuses to entertain the force of the better argument rather than rely on the comfort of political expediency.

It is one thing for sociologists to be political and to act accordingly in their teaching. It is quite another to contemplate on the reasons if and why this attitude can persist and flourish in the setting of higher education. To some extent, sociology has been in trouble over its politics, to wit the discussions on the closing of some departments. However, in view of the politicization of sociology on a much larger scale than the few departments that faced cancelation in the early 1990s and in view of the fact that the politicization of sociological education has increased exponentially in more recent years, it is more remarkable that so many sociology departments in America's higher-educational settings still exist today and still operate as if nothing has changed at all.

It has occasionally been remarked that university administrators, deans in particular, have rather low ideas about sociology departments and their faculty (Lipset 2001). A recent study found that academic deans rate sociology professors unfavorably on several other important areas, such as maintaining academic rigor, success in attracting graduate students, ability to secure grants and publish peer-reviewed publications, and overall prestige on campus (Hohm 2008). It has also been suggested that deans hold relatively negative views of their sociology departments because they generally attract leftist and otherwise activist-leaning students, lack consistency and agreement on substantive and methodological issues, and espouse anti-rationalist currents (Huber 2001).

What deans say does not necessarily harmonize with what they think and do. If the problems of sociology are so obvious and so clearly recognized by deans, the important question is why the departments have allowed to continue to exist. In this respect, I maintain that it is not the supposed political nature of higher education that has sustained the politicization of sociological education, but instead its marketization. The former argument is a popular one and is often voiced in the media or among the public at large: that colleges and universities are leftist across the board, that they breed liberals, that they tend to secularize students, and so on. But this idea is neither descriptively accurate not analytically capable to account for the development of higher education. Rather, the politicization of sociology has been able to continue to exist in American colleges and universities because of the economic functions that sociology departments can fulfill.

Universities today have lowered their standards of admission and accepted more students regardless of their level of preparation. For example, at the University of South Carolina, where I am presently employed, the number of undergraduates has gone up from about 18,000 in 2006 to 22,000 in 2011. As a purely educational matter, the masses of students that have to be taught despite their relatively low intellectual skills place a rather distinct pressure on teachers to maintain standards in the face of resistance. Even for the best teacher working under these circumstances it is not an easy job to maintain academic standards to accommodate students and avoid trouble (Becker and Rau 2001). Political correctness has brought about that holding a student to an intellectual standard may be perceived to imply a political act as part of a politics of exclusion. Most tragically, there are pressures exerted by university administrators towards departments to maintain enrollment. Students of lesser skill-levels are not only admitted, they must also graduate. Obtaining a college degree has become a matter of justice, and the very notion of an earned degree has become a mockery. The integrative functions that are attributed to higher education and the need for increasing diversity of the student population produce additional ironic consequences.

In their comprehensive study *Academically Adrift*, sociologists Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa (2011) indeed show that there exists a dual structure of students in colleges and universities today. A large and growing proportion of undergraduate students lack adequate reasoning and writing skills. Unfocused and lacking in purpose, they tend to choose the easiest courses and spend as little time as possible studying. Professors and (an increasing proportion of) graduate assistants who teach these courses are pressured, and often surrender, to give unearned grades. Other students, who typically come from privileged backgrounds and good high schools, are still intellectually challenged and do learn significantly during their college careers. Academic administrators are well aware of these issues, but their managerialized thinking leads them to accommodate the situation rather than deal with the problem.

The societal changes influencing the organization of higher education affect the various disciplines differentially. It is extremely doubtful that a department of chemical engineering or cell biology will have to welcome a lot of the supplementary admitted students who lack the necessary intellectual abilities for higher education. But sociology and other social and behavioral sciences and the humanities that are somehow thought to be less challenging are more adversely affected and have to accept the worst students. Ironically, ever more sociologists today can fulfill this task rather well. And the deans know it and like it. Where once

sociologists feared that their departments would be vulnerable to budget cuts and lose respect from the university administration because the discipline attracted the least intellectual students (Becker and Rau 2001), today the exact opposite is true as administrators warmly embrace sociology for the very same reason. Sociology is allowed to continue to exist for fulfilling an economic function. University administrators have reconfigured universities as businesses and have abandoned the idea of teaching as a calling. Again using the university that presently employs me as an example, the University of South Carolina in 2012 launched an "integrated marketing and branding campaign" in which students and university employees are encouraged to "Live the Brand!" (USC Times 2012). Under such circumstances of the entrepreneurial university (Etzkowitz et al. 2000), it is a lack of morality, not a particular political or ethical direction, but an absence of any moral guidance that has contributed that sociology has been able to go on in its own radicalized and politicized form.

## Sociology and Politics

Sociology has historically gone through various cycles, passing from and to dominant explanations and their opposing approaches. Today, the cycle of crises has ended as a new era of stability has been ushered in. I showed that the current success of sociology on campus is a result of the manner in which economic changes interact with developments in sociology. Societal changes that are external to sociology (especially the fiscal crisis) have led university administrators to cop out to a marketization model and make an irresponsible economic choice that *de facto* abrogates the academic mission of the university and evades any sense of individual responsibility in the name of a sustained sound financial position. This culturally weak response has allowed a heavily politicized sociology to continue to exist in the university because it is intellectually not as challenging and therefore more popular. Sociology's politicization is itself a result of the poor intellectual development of its practitioners who, in view of the direction of sociology since the discipline's anti-crisis, do not even understand their proper role as scholars and educators and do not know better than to have their politics take the place of scholarship. The fact that politicized sociology is predominantly leftist in orientation is but a modality of its deeper causes in a lack or, at least, low degree of intellectualism. The war on science is bipartisan.

External societal changes and sociology-internal dynamics have met at the institutional level of higher education where colleges and universities have abandoned their moral missions in favor of a business model based on the bottom line. A century ago, Max Weber (1918) already remarked that "the American's conception of the teacher who faces him is: he sells me his knowledge and his methods for my father's money, just as the greengrocer sells my mother cabbage" (149). Today, the administrators of higher learning ask their teachers to adopt the same attitude and consider themselves greengrocers and their students customers. In contemporary sociology, there are many who comply.

Much of sociology today is too political to attract good students and intellectually not sufficiently equipped to properly teach the ones that do enter. What is to be done? Internally, in the discipline of sociology, what has to happen is to launch a new crisis, to strengthen the idea of sociology as a science, to emphasize quality instead of quantity, to make sociology unpopular, and to relaunch the original promise of sociology. Sociologists should become more rigid in their work on the basis of a clear scientific standard. Towards students, this attitude should translate in specifying precise criteria for theory and research and judge work accordingly rather than on the basis of political or humane considerations (Cole 2001b). Externally, in the face of economic pressures, changes need to take place as well. Because these problems are structural, this task cannot be easy. Yet, it is necessary that we work collectively towards a renewal of the moral functions of education.

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