Public Sociologies: A Symposium from Boston College

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This symposium brings together the theory and practice of public sociology. The introduction sets out the meanings of public sociology, emphasizing its plurality and its relation to multiple publics. From there, it frames public sociology in relation to policy, professional, and critical sociologies. This constellation of the division of sociological labor varies over time and between countries. We argue for a normative model of antagonistic interdependence, which holds all four types in equilibrium. The core of the symposium contains six autobiographical case studies of the practice of public sociology, all from Boston College. In different ways, each case study responds to the issues raised in the introduction. The conclusion to the symposium is a manifesto for public sociologies, setting out the implications of the case studies for sociology's relation to society.

Introduction
Michael Burawoy

In its origins, sociology was stimulated by moral commitment. Thus, Marx, Weber, and Durkheim were all driven by an appraisal of the malaise of modernity—alienation and inequality, rationality and domination, anomie and egotism. Similarly, the early American sociologists were driven by moral reform—whether Jane Addams in Hull House, Ministers of Religion, or the apostles of secularization.[1] Sociology as science came of age when it fought for a niche in the academy, competing with the other social sciences during the first half of the twentieth century. In assessing progress during the 1950s, Seymour Lipset and Neil Smelser (1961:1–8) triumphantly declared sociology's moral prehistory finally over and the

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1. The relation of the early sociologists to religion has been a contested issue. I'm drawing on Smith's (2003) assessment that the early sociologists were divided into religious reformers and irreligious or anti-religious academics.

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path to science now fully open. Three years later, moral issues would once again engulf the discipline, beginning on their own doorstep at Berkeley. It was the return of the repressed—not for the first time, nor for the last.

What applies to the discipline applies to the individual. Sociologists often enter the discipline with questions of social justice and inequality uppermost in their minds, stimulated by their undergraduate teachers. Graduate school seeks to expel that moral moment through a variety of disciplinary techniques—standardized courses, regimented careers, intensive examination, the lonely dissertation, the refereed publication, all captured by the all-powerful CV. Moral commitment takes cover, goes underground. It may reappear in private life or blossom forth after tenure—if one gets that far. Again, moral commitment is not banished, only repressed. It's still there like a subterranean geyser, forcing its way to the surface, driving sociology onto new terrains.

What would happen if, rather than repressing the moral moment of sociology, we were to give it room to breath, recognize it rather than silence it, reflect on it rather than repress it? Would it inspire the development of science, or spell its demise? Would it enhance the legitimacy of sociology, or end its credibility? How vulnerable is science to an examination of its foundational values, to deploying its findings in the policy arena, to promoting dialogue about issues of public concern? While there are always risks and dangers in bringing sociology to a wider non-academic audience, the potential benefits are great—both to sociology and its non-academic audiences. Indeed, perhaps we have no alternative. At least, such is the presumption of this discussion paper.

The first step is to name it—public sociology—a sociology that seeks to bring sociology to publics beyond the academy, promoting dialogue about issues that affect the fate of society, placing the values to which we adhere under a microscope. What is important here is the multiplicity of public sociologies, reflecting the multiplicity of publics—visible and invisible, thick and thin, active and passive, local, national and even global, dominant and counter publics. The variety of publics stretches from our students to the readers of our books, from newspaper columns to interviews, from audiences in local civic groups such as churches or neighborhoods, to social movements we facilitate. The possibilities are endless.

Thus, when we talk of public sociology, we should not simply think of writing op-ed pieces for the *New York Times* with its invisible, thin, passive, and national public, but also of carrying sociology into the trenches of civil society, where publics are more visible, thick, active, and local, or where indeed publics have yet to be constituted. We call the first elite or "traditional" public sociology, and the second grass roots or "organic" public sociology.[2] These are just two types. In reality, public sociology may combine traits from each. Any individual may have feet in both camps, or oscillate between them. The analytical distinction between traditional and organic public sociologies serves its purpose if it calls attention to the diversity of public sociologies, validating what was hitherto hidden or discredited.

The next step is to frame public sociology in relation to other types of sociology. Neither traditional nor organic public sociology is charity work we do in our private life, something apart from sociology "proper." It has a dynamic connection to professional, critical, and policy sociologies. Public sociology is similar to policy sociology in that its audience lies beyond the academy, but it is also quite different from policy sociology in that it is not beholden to the limited concerns of a client, or even the broader concerns of a patron. It is not a servant of

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2. Posner's (2001, chapter 5) account of the decline of the public intellectual uses the number of media, web, and scholarly citations to establish a rank ordering of intellectuals. Sociologists account for 6.8 percent of citations to public intellectuals in the period 1995 to 2000, whereas economists account for 8.2 percent, history for 10.4 percent, political science for 8.4 percent, psychology for 2.7 percent, and anthropology for 0.9 percent. Like most of the literature on public intellectuals, Posner is only dealing with elite or traditional public social science. Even if traditional public sociology is on the decline, which I doubt, organic public sociology could still be on an ascendant trajectory. About the latter, Posner, of course, has nothing to say.

power, nor does it enter into a contractual relation with an employer. It has a reflexive relation to a public, rather than an instrumental relation to a sponsor. Like all analytical distinctions, this one is sometimes hard to make in reality, but it is a useful discriminating tool, nonetheless. Public sociology is the conscience of policy sociology, critical of being trapped by the dictates of money or power, of the limitations of social engineering, just as policy sociology can get impatient with the perpetual questioning of critical dialogue.

There can be neither public nor policy sociology, however, without a professional sociology that develops a body of theoretical knowledge and empirical findings, put to the test of peer review. Professional sociology provides the ammunition, the expertise, the knowledge, the insight, and the legitimacy for sociologists to present themselves to publics or to powers. Professional sociology is the *sine qua non* of all sociologies. Like policy sociology, it is founded on a bedrock of instrumental knowledge—the solving of puzzles. Normal science, as Kuhn called it, makes progress within the confines of research programs that function only on the basis of assumptions, models, concepts, techniques, and guiding questions. Research programs have a logic of their own often incomprehensible to those outside them. While public sociologists may despair of professional sociology's pathologies—its irrelevance, mindlessness, obsession with technique—and policy sociologists may wonder about the usefulness of professional sociology's research findings, the fact is that today without professional sociology there can be no other sociology. For their part, professional sociologists worry that public sociology and even policy sociology may threaten the integrity of their scientific agenda and the legitimacy of the discipline. Public sociology counters: the professional temptation toward insularity and abstraction threatens to cut off sociology's lifeblood that comes from connection to the concrete world beyond.

This is where the fourth type of sociology, critical sociology, enters as guardian of the discipline and the conscience of professional sociology. It seeks to remind professional sociologists of their place in the world and of the assumptions and values that underpin their research programs. The audience for critical sociology is academic—critical of the professionals but at the same time often drawing sustenance from what Alvin Gouldner (1979) called a culture of critical discourse. The latter often transcends disciplinary boundaries, drawing on traditions foreign to sociology. In its concerns with values, critical sociology has an elective affinity with public sociology, just as it is suspicious of policy sociology's engineering projects that focus on means rather than ultimate ends. Indeed, critical sociology infuses public sociology with its values. Just as professional sociology can suffer from the pathologies of "grand theory" and "abstracted empiricism" (Mills 1959), so critical sociology often veers toward ideology or utopia. It too needs to be reigned in from time to time, disciplined but not broken by professional sociology.

The four sociologies can be presented in a cross classification of type of audience against type of knowledge. The distinction between academic and non-academic audiences is relatively clear, but the distinction between instrumental and reflexive knowledge is less so. By instrumental, I intend a "means-end" orientation, whether it be the puzzle solving of normal science, or the problem solving of policy sociology. It is technical or formal knowledge insofar as it does not critically engage its foundations, its value premises. Reflexive knowledge holds instrumental knowledge up for examination in the light of its presuppositions, often challenging those presuppositions as arbitrary, and even proposing alternative principles.[3]

Table 1 summarizes the four types of sociology and gives us tools to understand the dynamics of the disciplinary field. First, the table refers to sociologies and not sociologists. Any given sociologist may simultaneously occupy more than one quadrant. Quite usually, sociologists have one foot in professional sociology and another foot elsewhere, in policy,

3. In ways I cannot go into here, this scheme bears a close relation to Habermas's theory of system and lifeworld, and a more distant relation to Talcott Parsons's AGIL system. The distinction between instrumental and reflexive sociology has its roots in Max Weber.

Table 1 • *Types of Sociology*

	Academic Audience	*Extra-Academic Audience*
Instrumental Knowledge	PROFESSIONAL	POLICY
Reflexive Knowledge	CRITICAL	PUBLIC

critical, or public sociology. Replete with tensions, the exigencies of academic employment may require a commitment to professional sociology before all else. Outside the academy, where 30 percent of sociology Ph.D.'s are employed, it is possible for a sociologist to be concerned only with policy or publics. The table not only helps us understand the tensions and contradictions of living in a particular disciplinary space at a particular time, it also serves to map sociological careers as moving between quadrants. Graduate students may start out as critical sociologists, become professional sociologists, and then later turn to public sociology. It is conceivable that a policy sociologist from outside the academy may reenter the university as a professional sociologist, only to become dissatisfied and turn to critical sociology.

Our four types of sociology also map national disciplinary fields as they change over time. One might say that U.S. sociology began as public sociology, was professionalized, and only then engendered critical and policy sociologies. Today, we might be turning back to public sociology. The configuration of disciplinary fields of sociology also varies from country to country. In Scandinavia, for example, professional sociologists think nothing of working within the state or having their research written up in newspapers. Public and policy sociologies are part and parcel of their daily practice, mirroring the social democratic milieu in which they are embedded. Very different is sociology's rocky history in the Soviet Union. Repressed by Stalin, sociology reappeared in the late 1950s as a critical sociology, based on empirical surveys that showed the gap between official ideology and reality. It was drawn off into policy research at the same time that professional sociology began to gain ground. With Perestroika in the 1980s, critical sociology resurfaced and was released into the public sphere with close ties to flourishing civic associations. Today, postcommunist Russian sociology has retreated from the public realm, has been expelled from the professional realm, and has reverted to opinion polling governed by the demands of market research and electoral politics. Policy sociology prevails. Turning to the global south, one finds that wherever sociology thrives, it has a strong public presence. Indeed, in many countries sociologists assume that their work is inherently public. Only in the United States do we have to invent the term "public sociology" as an antidote to a powerful professional sociology!

If the table is a useful template to describe the trajectories of disciplinary fields and of individuals within those fields, it also has normative implications. The table implies that a vibrant discipline requires each quadrant to be both autonomous from but depend upon every other quadrant. None should get insulated from the others but nor should any colonize the others. Hyper-professionalism endangers professional sociology by cutting it off from the sources of its inspiration. Hyper-professionalism can also suffocate critical and public sociology, again to its own detriment. The development of each type of sociology is the condition for the development of all. The six short essays that follow examine the practice of public sociology. In so doing, they underline the obstacles and possibilities of realizing this normative vision of our discipline.

Life on the Interface
William Gamson

Michael Burawoy's thoughtful and provocative comments on the different ways of doing sociology forces me to ask myself whether I do what he calls public sociology. The answer is

not simple. Probably more than 95 percent of what I have written is directed at an audience of professional sociologists or other social scientists, published by university presses or in professional journals. Of course, there are occasional forays into journals directed at a broader audience—*Psychology Today* or *Transaction* early in my career, and *Contexts*, *Society*, or the *Non-Profit Quarterly* more recently—but virtually every professional sociologist could make the same claim.

I can also claim, however, that for the past 20 years, since moving from Michigan to Boston College in 1982, I have been doing public sociology through my partnership with Charlotte Ryan in co-directing the Media Research and Action Project (MRAP). To some degree, this has been a kind of vicarious public sociology on my part, with Ryan doing the public sociology as what Burawoy calls the organic intellectual. She has been the creative force behind the numerous collaborations with grassroots community groups on using the mass media to achieve a more just society. I have had the privilege of being able to go along for the ride, watching and bringing into the discussion some insights and techniques from professional sociology, and using my standing in the profession to open doors in the university that help it to happen.

More detail about MRAP is in order here. To condense a long and complicated history into a couple of paragraphs, MRAP has gone through three phases since the mid-l980s when we began. At first, we were a weekly non-credit research seminar, meeting during the academic year, which served as a kind of incubator for doing public sociology focused on the mass media and social movements. Graduate students developed public sociology projects focused on strategies of change, various faculty from sociology and other departments and universities used the seminar as a sounding board for their work, and staff members from advocacy groups or campaigns would join us to think through their experiences or do strategic planning with us. Ryan would often run one or two day workshops and other training exercises on the media for various groups during this phase.

Becoming dissatisfied with one-shot training exercises as building effective media strategies in advocacy groups, we entered a second phase in the mid-1990s. This community outreach phase involved actively seeking outside funds and building long-term relationships with advocacy groups. The two most important projects in this phase were an ongoing relationship with the Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence and a multi-year media fellows program. The media fellows were community activists, nominated by advocacy organizations, who spent several days a month over a one or two year period, working with MRAP staff to strengthen the media capacity of the organization they represented. Charlotte Ryan, in her collaborative style, took the lead and provided the central energy to make these programs happen. We now enter a new phase, having shut down the outreach program as of the summer of 2003, of being again a research seminar and incubator of public sociology.

Both the continuing MRAP seminar and my participation in the sessions with the media fellows have been enormous intellectual resources for me personally. This experience has informed and shaped my professional sociology writing of the past 20 years. It is exhilarating to both see the practical usefulness of my ideas about media framing processes but at the same time confront the multiple ambiguities and the limiting conditions and taken-for-granted assumptions in the professional sociology on this topic, including my own. My public sociology has helped to keep my professional sociology grounded in the real world.

A concrete example will serve to illustrate. After the first general session with the media fellows, we gave them an assignment: set up a media committee in the organizations they represented before our next monthly meeting. We offered little instruction on how to do this and, to be honest, had not thought through what this might involve.

At the next meeting, they reported on their multiple problems. Our media fellows were younger than the typical board members and leaders of the organizations that they represented. Furthermore, they were more likely to be women. Older male leaders in some organizations seemed wary that the media fellows would become the public face of the organization,

siphoning off their own status and power. Other leaders of the organizations were eager to dump media work on the fellows so that they would not themselves have to worry about it. The fellows found it difficult to answer such apparently simple questions as: Why do we need a media committee?

In facing the first problem, we quickly came to the collective conclusion that one needed to analyze the power dynamics in the organization before trying to set up a media committee. The nature of the media committee and the role that the media fellows would need to play in being a catalyst for such a committee had to be understood in order to make such a committee effective. Setting up a media committee requires a conscious strategy and should not be done casually or haphazardly.

The same lesson was true for the second problem of dumping media work on the MRAP fellows. For us, this violated a central MRAP principle: that media strategy should be a part of a larger organizational strategy, not divorced from it. But this kind of strategic thinking does not necessarily come naturally to either the media fellows or the potential members of a media committee in their organizations. Thinking strategically was something that the fellows needed to understand well enough to be able to communicate in explaining to people why a media committee was desirable and what it would do. By the end of the session, we decided to make setting up a media committee a goal to be achieved by the end of the year while we worked through the issues together.

Burawoy offers an insightful analysis of the complementarities and tensions between the four sociologies. One obstacle that professional sociology has presented to both critical sociology and public sociology is a false set of choices—for example, between social scientists as advocates versus social scientists as disinterested and objective observers. For those addressing social issues, the process is inevitably political. There are typically a variety of groups eager to play the role of advocate in such controversies.

Rather than being an advocate, I see myself as a potential resource for those groups who share my values and preferred framing of the social and political issues that interest me. Being a resource here means doing first-rate professional sociology. One owes this to one's partners—the advocates who are attempting to create a more just world. They need to be able to assess with some accuracy the nature of the opportunities and constraints they face, the weaknesses and strengths of their adversaries, the dynamics of the contest in which they are engaged, and their own internal problems in carrying out their mission. The sociologist in this partnership has a responsibility to help the advocate partners to be objective in the following sense: separating their desires that the world ought to be a certain way from a tough-minded assessment, based on the best available evidence, of whether it actually is that way.

Boston College, as an institution, has provided a supportive environment for MRAP and for both public and critical sociology. At Boston College, the idea of a value-engaged rather than a value-free way of being a sociologist is completely legitimate and positively supported. When I arrived here in 1982, after 20 years at the University of Michigan, I found that old battles to defend the legitimacy of a value-engaged critical and/or public sociology against those who would disparage it as "journalism" or "ideology" were not relevant. All four of Burawoy's sociologies were legitimate and desirable and, far from being marginalized or merely tolerated, public sociology could make the claim of furthering the special mission of the institution as a Catholic university. This was interpreted in terms of furthering Catholic values of social and economic justice, generally with a thoroughly ecumenical spirit.

Yet, the MRAP enterprise, in spite of its institutional legitimacy, has faced a number of difficult challenges and frustrations. During one of his recent seminars at Boston College, Burawoy was discussing doing public sociology as "organic intellectuals" in contrast to those who do it as "traditional intellectuals." Someone from the audience wise-cracked, "Yeh. Those are the ones who get paid." Charlotte Ryan and I exchanged glances and a rueful smile. The wisecrack was a reminder of how, even in the mostly favorable and supportive environment at Boston College, it has been extremely difficult to institutionalize the kind of public

sociology pursued by Burawoy's organic intellectuals. The experience has sensitized me to additional tensions between professional sociology and public sociology beyond the false dichotomy between scientist and advocate.

During the community outreach phase of MRAP, the university supplied both in kind support in the form of office space and, for about four years, a half-time salary for Ryan as co-director. But Boston College aspires to be the leading Catholic research university, and the research university ideal is Harvard's "Every tub on its own bottom." Ultimately, the MRAP community outreach program would have to compete for sponsors with more conventional professional and policy sociologies to survive. Our experience in seeking external, long term funding for operational costs has been a discouraging one.

It is possible to frame what MRAP does in ways that are acceptable to non-profit and public sector programs and we made such attempts—we accepted contract work from non-profits, wrote grants, and responded to federal requests for proposals. A brief account of one such attempt will illustrate one of the central problems. MRAP participant, Bill Meinhofer, an experienced grant writer, worked with eight of our community partners to respond to a Commerce Department request for proposals to address the digital divide: the program proposed to help low-income communities, particularly communities of color, increase their uses of new technologies including the Internet.

Building on the groups' participation in our Media Fellows Program, we requested funding for computers, database creation, web site development, and training in new technologies, the goal being to increase the groups' overall communications capacity. In our proposal, we made the point that none of the organizations had sufficient staff and resources to achieve such a capacity on their own since they were almost all small organizations with budgets of $500,000 a year or less.

We received a high rating, just below the funding level for that year, and were encouraged to resubmit. The kicker was in the content of the reviews regarding how we could improve our proposal. The reviewers, we were told, were concerned about the stability and survivability of the grassroots organizations with whom we had developed working relationships. We were likely to be funded, we were told, if we made the same proposal with a large, well-established statewide non-profit such as the United Way. A public sociology dedicated to helping grassroots change organizations with limited resources increase their capacity and, therefore, their chances of survival, was not fundable; but working with an established charitable organization would be. We did not resubmit.

Our efforts to achieve funding from private foundations were more promising and successful. The Boston Foundation funded the media fellows program for a few years and we had a number of other small grants for specific projects. Often these projects consumed more resources than they provided since large portions of them went to the community groups with whom we were collaborating; program implementation required a considerable amount of uncompensated work on top of what was covered in the budget.

We found that foundations are happier to provide seed money for projects that will eventually be self-sustaining, but have unrealistic expectations about the speed with which this can be accomplished. Furthermore, foundations with a social action orientation are often distrustful—for good reasons—of university-based projects with community "partners" who are more like clients than collaborators.

Finally, the last three years of a declining stock market has changed the culture of the major foundations. Shrinking portfolios have produced caution about funding new initiatives; it is difficult enough to maintain one's ongoing commitments, let alone take on new ones. Perhaps we would have succeeded in making MRAP a self-sustaining enterprise if we had persisted until better times arrived. But ultimately, large amounts of time spent on cultivating relationships with foundation officers and writing grant proposals is subtracted from the time to do public sociology.

For the kind of public sociology represented by MRAP to survive in a university, perhaps it is necessary for the institution to incorporate a larger vision of its value. Not every tub can stand on its own bottom. Programs whose goals include the achievement of a more just society may not always be able to be self-sustaining and may need ongoing subsidies. Given their contribution to a better professional sociology and to a liberal education as well, they may still be an excellent bargain.

Can We Be Compañeros?
Charlotte Ryan

Meeting for Wednesday breakfast since 1985, participants in the Media Research and Action Project (MRAP) work primarily within one sub-field of sociology: political discourse, particularly, how social movements and marginalized constituencies "talk politics" under conditions not of their own making. Our choice of media as an entry point reflects our understanding of mass media as our historical period's master forum—the arena in which groups commonly engage in political discourse.

When we introduce MRAP and its range of activities, we describe two wings. The more formal academic wing has helped participants "bake" doctoral dissertations, papers, books, and lectures. The translational research/action wing has served as a sounding board for policy advocates and a strategizing space for MRAP's community and labor partners. Additionally, since 1990, we have run workshops and capacity building programs to help non-profits, community, labor and other social movement groups deepen their ability to strategically frame and disseminate messages that enhance their organizing efforts.

Some MRAP participants inhabit each of Burawoy's quadrants. The quadrants' relative merits are less important to us than their ability to work together synergistically to serve publics. MRAPers rooted in academic sociology—whether professional or critical—share their insights with policy or public sociologists who return the favor. Together, we are more than apart. We ask not, "How can we make public sociology a valued function of sociology?" but rather, taking that for granted, we ask, "How can we make sociology a valued function of public life?" Sociology should be part of public life. Public life should not be thought of as a little corner of sociology.

If inside academia, I am dubbed a practitioner, in the world of organizing and movements, I am seen as the theorist. This is not a new role for me, and not one I acquired in graduate school. In the gangs and gaggles of my mill town childhood, I was the listener, the leader's right arm: I named problems, voiced group sentiments, and proposed compromises.

I spent 1971–72 in Popular Unity Chile and I've searched ever since for an American equivalent of the word, "compañero." With social movements in bloom, many Chilean intellectuals and activists made common cause to become compañeros, mutually respected partners. MRAP is one place I have sought and often found compañeros.

My involvement began in my mid-thirties. Hungry for space to reflect on years of organizing, I joined with Bill Gamson and a cast of dozens to build MRAP. With a blanket draped over the breakfast seminar table, my toddler playing below, we approached activists, asking them to share with us successful experiments in "talking politics." To create a workshop curriculum, we blended their identified best practices with social movement scholars' lessons from the civil rights, anti-war, women's and gay liberation movements. We modeled ourselves after Aldon Morris' "movement half-way houses," building intentional relations between academic social movement theorists and social movement practitioners. By 1995, having conducted short workshops for dozens of organizations, we collaborated with community partners to design and seek funding for a political communications capacity-building program, the Media Fellows Program. In all this work, we applied Freirian, constructionist,

and feminist theories stressing dialogue. And we've learned volumes. While our learning is largely stored for now in personal files and journals, I present some key lessons below.

As a public sociologist, I work with collective actors to apply theoretical constructs to an actual situation—a historical conjuncture or political opportunity in theoretical parlance. Working as a team, the collective actors and I attempt to draw insights and directions from existing social movement paradigms. To impose theories on activists would be to ignore the fact that all human beings theorize. Subjected to practice, only the most robust theoretical constructs survive. Most theoretical models are under-developed offering a vague sense of relationships between ideas, sometimes little more than a direction for future inquiry. In practice, one quickly knows which concepts are under-specified. Far more easily than intellectuals working alone, collective actors and I in tandem link concepts into workable and transferable paradigms and related transformative practices. The framing caucus is one such transformative practice that evolved through collaboration.

Spring-boarding from the sociological literature on the social construction of meaning, MRAP developed framing tools to help groups "talk politics." Working with our community partners, however, we came to a deeper understanding of framing as a collective actors' reflexive process of "real talk"—Belenky and associates' term for dialogue that stresses listening and grounded knowledge. Many of these insights came through our work with the Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence (RICADV). Preparing for media appearances, the Coalition staff crafted MRAP's framing concepts into a caucus format, a routine group meeting to prepare spokespersons. The framing caucus routine, says Karen Jeffreys, RICADV organizer, allows RICADV members to collaboratively "think for the organization." Individuals work as a team, consciously and systematically functioning as the collective actor's brain.

When sociologists reserve theorizing as the proper function of academics, we deny the publics we serve access to a source of power and pleasure—thinking. The various movement groups with whom MRAP collaborates describe the process of talking about ideas—in framing caucuses and informally over lunches—both as pleasurable and as meaningful. Three RICADV interns, Titus Dos Remedios, Mao Yang, and Sarah Catald, describe participation in the framing caucuses as life-changing: "Anyone can develop a message and put it out, but here it matters. Our individual opinions matter; we're part of making the group message. And the group message matters. Our group is part of a movement, part of something bigger. Our message gets out and has real power. People need to feel like they're part of something bigger."

Collaboration is fine in principle but not so smooth in practice. The obstacles we've faced have been daunting. Community-university partnerships usually involve three-way or four-way negotiations among community-based organizations, universities, funders and, sometimes, government agencies. Despite shared goals, each social location has competing agendas, constituencies, time tables, standards, budgets, and space limitations. Accrued, these complicate collaboration.

From the professional sociologist's standpoint, dialogic social movement theorizing is risky business. MRAP finds it takes five to seven years for a full-fledged collaboration to bear fruit. Yet, the nomadic academic marketplace makes it difficult for sociologists to make long-term commitments. Rather, with tenure track as the pace-setter, academic culture pushes fast track research achievable in a summer. Academics need sure bets: stalled collaborations or disagreements over findings represent lost publications—not heavenly opportunities to deepen theory. And so, academics gravitate toward quick ways to harvest data that minimize relation building.

The pressure to publish additions to existing paradigms also results in academics writing in language impenetrable to non-specialists. For instance, social movement theory devolves into a secret language of social movement scholars. Collective actors who do not speak the secret language of social movement theory are seen as atheoretical, or as sources of raw

material in the colonial tradition. This hurts relation building. Activists rarely see social movement theorists honor their ideas, much less recognize that activists theorize constantly. Perceiving theorists as being more interested in each other than in front line experience, activists withdraw as well. That activists could have been theorists' collaborators and have been given the short end of the academic whooping stick is obscured. A self-fulfilling prophecy is at work, with each side retreating to a stereotype of the other.

Some theorists have tried to collaborate but feel undercut by the pragmatic, anti-theorizing bent of many schools of movement organizing. To complicate the most engaged theorist's tasks further, collective actors, themselves, are responding to many external rhythms—city hall hearings, legislative cycles, funding cycles, and contract negotiations. Each arena—politics, philanthropy, education, economics, health care—introduces unique rules of play and evaluation standards and boasts its own specialized languages, demands, and criteria for success. Organizers fear that acknowledging weaknesses will erode a hard-won reputation, destabilize a coalition, or undercut foundations' interest.

To gain funding, for instance, the collective actor may code-switch; a project denied funding when called "infrastructure," is funded when labeled "capacity building." They may feel pressured to claim early and exaggerated victories rather than share mixed or disappointing results. In failing to learn from valiant but unsuccessful experiments, the natural cycle of learning through action and reflection is disrupted.

Collective actors need to be convinced that academics or foundations' invitation to reflect on practice will be worth the effort and will not be used against them. Activists say, "We are working so hard just to hold the fort. To evaluate our own work critically is to risk not getting a grant renewed. We need safe spaces to talk and reflect, safe spaces that allow us to juggle multiple issues and constituencies often divided in perceptions and priorities."

While MRAP never had adequate resources, we had enough to begin—space for reflection, access to libraries, the Internet and web, and an institutional sponsor(s) so that we could approach foundations. The space we gained was tenuous at best; many of our academic peers dismissed our work as traditional professional "service." We have never achieved sufficient institutional stability—the very process of establishing partnerships and delivering tangible results often exhausts more resources than are allotted. As a result, we learn enormously, but consolidate our lessons incompletely.

While partnerships between academics and collective actors may slow the work, the ultimate result is infinitely superior. Given limited space, a story may best illustrate this. One of our community partners, Project RIGHT, complained repeatedly to local TV news stations regarding negative portrayals of their community and Boston's communities of color as crime-ridden. They asked not that crime reports be stopped, but that news coverage of communities of color put crime in economic and political context, for instance, that youth crime be covered in the context of public and private disinvestment in jobs, education, etc. Working together, the Boston Association of Black Journalists, MRAP, Project RIGHT, and other organizations surveyed community needs, documented weaknesses in coverage, and developed proposals for change which they presented to general managers of local TV stations. Having researched and strategized carefully, we were able to counter the media outlets' token responses and push beyond them. While our long-term impact was modest, the experience thrilled all involved. For me, it represented public sociology at its best, synergistically linking uncommon partners to deepen knowledge and equalize social resources.

Most MRAP community-university partnerships fell short of their full potential. No matter. In working to be compañeros, MRAP defied the lonely divides of American sociology and American life. We watched each other's backs; we shared strengths to counter individual weaknesses. We used the power of ideas and community to challenge inequalities—"to put a heart where a gash has been," in the words of radical planner, Mauricio Gaston. The imperfect whole far exceeded the imperfect parts.

To sustain compañerismo—my ideal of public sociology—many scholars and publics would have to build dialogues and relationships. If we did, we could alter the institutional practices that divide us. We could be compañeros.

Blessings and Curses in the Sociology Classroom
Stephen Pfohl

Michael Burawoy's call for a revitalized public sociology that addresses moral values and promotes "dialogue about issues that affect the fate of society" comes at an important moment in the history of our discipline and collective social lives. Indeed, in the political aftermath of the recent invasion of Iraq and what appears to be perpetual war against both the poor and anything that threatens America's status as sole superpower, it is difficult today to imagine a viable public sociology without first recognizing the massive contemporary suppression of reasoned public debate and what C. Wright Mills called the sociological imagination. Draped in the corporate-military-state language of fear and donning the colors of global empire, privileged vectors of power today benefit greatly by heavy doses of historical amnesia and the mass circulation of simplistic patriotic stories about good and evil and why people pushed to the margins of society deserve their status as outsiders. It is within this troubled cultural landscape that sociology attempts to communicate a more complex vision of the effects of unequal power, while struggling to facilitate reasoned dialogue among its diverse publics. One of these publics involve the students whom we sociologists address in our classrooms.

The class-based, gendered, and racialized injustices associated with social inequality are well documented by professional sociology. But guided by a manifest commitment to social justice, the kinds of public sociology envisioned by Burawoy move beyond an empirical documentation of the harms of hierarchy. Energized by dialogue with particular counter-publics, Burawoy imagines public sociologists producing accessible, theoretically informed, and empirically grounded stories to counter the dominant cultural and political narratives spun by those who profit most from the exploitation of others.

Public sociologies labor to alert people to the pitfalls and blind spots of contemporary social institutions and practices. Their goal is to foster both public concern and collective action aimed at the realization of a more just society. In this article, I draw attention to one site of public sociology that involves the labor of a great many sociologists—the classroom. At different points in my career (or vocation) as a sociologist I have engaged with different kinds of publics—having served as Chair of the Massachusetts Governor's Juvenile Justice Committee, a lecturer in prison, author of an array of scholarly publications, including a widely read textbook and numerous essays on the World Wide Web, an "expert" consulted by both the media and social movement organizations, a video-maker, writer, and performing artist of a variety of mixed-media sociological texts, presented in venues ranging from nightclubs, literary salons, and art galleries to professional conferences, college campuses, and film festivals. I was also President of the Society for the Study of Social Problems, a department chairperson, and founding member of the innovative Boston activist group, SitCom International. But, like many sociologists, my most common site of public engagement is the classroom. Here, I am less imagining the professional classroom, where one generation of sociologists trains another, than the general college or university classroom, where sociologists typically encounter a public composed of students steeped in the common sense of the dominant culture. This means that when most students first enroll in our courses they bring with them an undoubted belief in the supremacy of the autonomous individual along with assumptions about the supposed naturalness of dog-eat-dog competitiveness. These worldviews are often accompanied by a profound lack of historical awareness and unchallenged convictions about the moral and practical superiority of the American way of life (and death).

If, as teachers, we are to effectively engage our students as a public we must do far more than provide them with information about how society works. This point was made by Mills (1959), who argued, "it is not only information" that students need to become active participants in a democratic society, particularly in a society where "information often dominates their attention and overwhelms their capacities to assimilate it" (p. 5). Instead, what is needed most "is a quality of mind that will help them use information and to develop reason in order to achieve lucid summations of what is going on in the world and what may be happening within themselves" (1959:5). This was what Mills meant by the sociological imagination—a quality of mind that enables people to make interpretive links between biographical experience and the historical social structures which mediate and give shape to experience.

A hallmark of critical approaches to sociology, my earliest lessons in the sociological imagination took place while I was an undergraduate at Catholic University of America in Washington, DC from 1967–1971. This was a time when the walls between the university and society-at-large had been worn thin by collective struggles to alter deep-rooted structures of domestic inequality and a will to global warfare. Inspired by critical thought, activist pedagogy, and the ethical imperatives of the Catholic left, the sociology classroom became for me a place to meditate publicly about our complicities with the seductions and violence of domination, as well as dreams of utopian escape, resistance, and transformation. This view of the classroom remains with me today.

Fostering a sociological imagination within the market-driven confines of contemporary college classrooms is no simple matter. But this is the challenge facing the sociologist who views the classroom as a dialogical laboratory for nurturing the reflexive social sensibilities necessary for critical discernment and collective democratic action. Inviting students to view everyday life through the lens of a sociological imagination is no guarantee that one will be a popular teacher. Nor is this likely to win organizational rewards from institutions of higher education drawn into complex webs of corporate and conservative state sponsorship. But if undertaken with artfulness and respect, inviting students to develop a sociological imagination represents an invaluable contribution to the construction of a curious, responsible, and informed public. For those of us working at Jesuit institutions, such as Boston College, this challenge resonates with our university's commitment to ethical reflection and social justice. Nevertheless, as students quickly learn, the acquisition of a sociological imagination comes as both a blessing and a curse.

As a blessing, this analytic and ethical sensibility often begins with an extended process of unlearning. This involves a radical questioning of previously assumed privileges, intellectual assumptions, moral judgments, and emotional comfort zones. This is to unsettle the taken-for-granted character of supposed "facts" that had passed unquestioned. For many students this process will prove exciting, as doors to previously unimagined worlds will suddenly swing open. For others, this may be difficult and unnerving. Sometimes it will provoke complex feeling-tones of guilt and unease. The point here is not to provide students with a supposedly "politically correct" viewpoint, but to encourage the discernment and thoughtfulness necessary for democracy itself.

In my own classes, such unlearning usually begins by introducing historical questions about power that lie outside of the dominant stories our culture tells about itself through the institutions of religion, law, science, medicine, family, economic exchange, and the mass media. Asking historical questions about the stories told by science, and the science of sociology in particular, is an important part of this lesson. My aim is not to weaken the stories that science tells about the world and ourselves. It is rather to strengthen the truth-claims of sociological stories by engaging rigorously with sociology as itself a situated historical practice of knowledge and power. This is to remind each of us that our own personal and institutional locations within matrices of power always partially shape what we see and what escapes our sight. It is also to remind us that things which lie outside of our conscious awareness do not lose their existence simply because we fail to recognize them. Teaching students to read the

social world for symptomatic traces of what has been repressed by dominant forms of power is also a key lesson of the sociological imagination. This involves efforts to make connections between experiences such as anger, anxiety, or bodily unease and the structured historical settings in which such feelings take place. Inspired in large measure by feminist standpoint epistemology and other critical approaches to "situated objectivity," attention to such matters is guided by what I call a power-reflexive methodology. This, I believe, is a crucial resource for public sociological practice.

The nurturing of power-reflexive sensibilities may assume various forms. At times I expose aspects of my own biography to the heat of critical sociological inquiry, making use of such things as my own childhood writings and artifacts. Often laced with humor, the public classroom analysis of what might otherwise appear as innocent childhood experience underscores the most basic of sociological lessons—that we are never simply ourselves alone, but always also complex social personae, enacting cultural scripts not entirely of our own making. Knowing that the everyday lives of many students are ensnarled within the fast-moving exigencies of popular and telelectronic cyberculture, I also make use of provocative mixed-media materials and invite students to do the same. This adds a sensory element to classroom engagement and helps students perceive what is routinely obscured by these same communicative technologies, drawing attention to their attractions and repulsions, fascinations and fears. I likewise invite students to analyze aspects of their own biographies as well as major political or culture events by situating such matters within the social networks of power and resistance in which they occur. Most of my courses also require collective ethnographic fieldwork that places students in conversation with publics situated outside the academy. Students are also frequently asked to imagine strategies aimed at just social change and to pay attention to the social positioning of change agents within the circuits of power within which they struggle.

The kinds of reflexive pedagogical practices mentioned above help transform the classroom into a laboratory for public sociological engagement. This is a gift of a sociological imagination. But as Mills cautioned, this magnificent gift can also assume the form of a "terrible lesson" or curse (1959:5). This may involve the curse of no longer being able to easily exercise white, heterosexist, or class-based privilege without pangs of conscience. Or perhaps this imagination will condemn those who acquire it to grapple with an awareness of how ingrained habits of first-world consumption result in both the amplification of third-world poverty and ecological threats to the life of the planet. Or, maybe, following lessons in sociology, words such as terrorism will take on entirely new meanings, particularly if students are confronted with the historical reality of U.S.-supported deaths squads in Central America, the genocidal terror enacted by "freedom loving" Europeans against Native Americans, or the routinized violence of men against women. These may be difficult lessons to learn and to carry into everyday life after graduation. This is why an acquisition of a sociological imagination comes with curses as well as blessings. But if public sociology is to have a material impact upon public, social, and political life, the blessings and curses of imparting a critical sociological imagination will be one of its most important gifts; and the sociology classroom one of its most important sites of practice.

Public Sociologist by Accident
Diane Vaughan

Public sociology was not something that I was formally exposed to in graduate school. I stumbled into awareness when a journal article I published my third year resulted in an invitation to a two-week professional conference in Bellagio and also was featured in *Psychology Today*, and then again when I taught my preliminary research on uncoupling to my class and saw how the patterns it exposed altered students' understandings of their lives. From these experiences, I learned that teaching professional sociology to other audiences was a way to create change. Public sociology did not have a name then, but I did learn that it was

not condoned by professional sociologists when a professor said in class that his career was sufficiently established that he had just published in *The Readers' Digest* and was not worried about it. Standing in the square of professional sociology, but a true believer nonetheless, I began to practice public sociology in a low-profile way: writing so that both the theory and findings would be accessible to a general audience; taking research results back to the people who participated; publishing one piece from each project someplace where relevant non-academics could read it.

This graduate student commitment led me in directions I did not imagine. My career pattern has been characterized by periods of invisibility during the data gathering, analysis, and writing of professional sociology, punctuated by an intense burst of media attention and public sociology after book publication. Three times this has happened: at the publication of *Uncoupling, The Challenger Launch Decision,* and again when the Space Shuttle *Columbia* accident occurred. In "Revisits," Burawoy (2003) writes about the ethnographic revisit, a situation in which a researcher returns to a previous research setting. But the *Columbia* accident precipitated the reverse: my previous NASA research revisited me.

Columbia disintegrated about 9:00 a.m. on February 1, 2003. At 10:30 a.m., my phone began ringing, initiating three weeks of 12-hour media days, which settled into eight, leveling off to four in March, then resurging in April when I was called to testify before the *Columbia* Accident Investigation Board, falling or rising after that in response to turns in the investigation. E-mail dramatically increased the possibilities for public sociology. By mid-May, I had received over 800 e-mails from varied publics. In addition to print, broadcast, web, and TV journalists, I was contacted by NASA working engineers, current and past; people who read my book or were responding to some media quote; students wanting reprints, interviews for paper assignments, or reference letters; space buffs and writers; documentary producers; NASA personnel I had interviewed for the book; conference organizers; NASA contractors; colleagues and old friends; and the *Columbia* Accident Investigation Board.

The number of contacts does not convey the amount of invisible public sociology—and invisible work—in these encounters. Previously, my press's publicity director acted as an intermediary; this time, media representatives and others located *The Challenger Launch Decision* on the Internet and telephoned or e-mailed me directly. I responded to every contact, many resulting in continuing conversations. As in the past, my exchanges with print journalists were the most time consuming but also the most rewarding. Talking to the press is a great teaching opportunity because they want to know what you know, you control the timing and length of the conversation, have a sense of whether they got it or not, and can follow up with e-mail if they didn't. TV takes less time, but offers less opportunity to get the sociological perspective across because control of time and content is unilateral. The encounter is not one of exchange, but interrogation in public forum—impersonal, alienating, and stressful.

The accident and Board activities were breaking news for months. Initially, many reporters were new to the space beat and wanted background information: an explanation of *Challenger,* NASA's culture, launch decision process, or Shuttle Program politics. But reporters' questions changed over time. Rather than talking about the same topic, as in book publication interviews, I was asked to respond to new evidence, so I had to keep up with daily developments. Mornings became a scramble of downloading and absorbing the news, but the repeated contacts allowed me to reinforce sociological concepts and interpretations. E-mail changed the form, content, and spontaneity of these on-going conversations. In a fascinating turnabout, print journalists began teaching me. They sent information—the most recent development, story ideas, or data they had obtained through the Freedom of Information Act—asking for interpretation. When NASA released the controversial Boeing engineering analysis of Columbia's foam debris hit, three journalists sent copies of the 23-page document because they defined me as an expert at translating engineering risk assessments.

Most significantly, e-mail empowered the public to break through the remoteness of the ivory tower and media representations of events. People sent comments about my book,

the investigation, or newspaper clips about *Columbia* that they saw as relevant. NASA and contractor engineers sent their experiences with NASA, despairing over this latest accident and the organizational parallels with *Challenger*. Other technical experts sent detailed alternative analyses of the technical causes of the *Columbia* accident. Contractor officials conveyed difficulty in implementing NASA objectives. In short, I was getting data from both the press and the public showing similarities and differences between *Challenger* and *Columbia*, which helped me develop a systematic comparison and elaborate the book's theory.

When I was called to testify before the Board, my position changed. I had been responding to the news; now I became the news. My Board appearance was announced in newspapers and in *Aviation Week and Space Technology*. I would travel to Houston to give the Board a briefing, followed by testimony in a public hearing that would be attended by journalists, broadcast live on NASA TV, video-streamed into TV networks, press rooms, radio stations, and home computers. This was surely the ultimate opportunity to teach sociology to multiple publics. It also was a great opportunity to affect policy, for the Board would issue a report recommending changes at NASA. But it was also the ultimate in fear. Having always experienced TV work as interrogation in public forum, I was now confronted with the real thing. Moreover, I was having difficulty putting together my presentation, juggling year-end academic responsibilities, and keeping up with new developments so that I could be prepared for any line of questioning.

My Board appearance deserves a full ethnographic account, but for now let me say only that, stress notwithstanding, it was the most exciting and consequential of my adventures in public sociology. Prior to my appearance, the Board announced to the press the importance of the sociological perspective to their analysis. After, NASA officials publicly rebutted my testimony. In a cordial two-hour telephone soliloquy, one top NASA official called to tell me how wrong I was about parallels I drew between *Challenger* and *Columbia*—all the while reproducing some of those parallels as he talked. In a press conference, NASA's top administrator, apparently feeling pummeled by questions about my comparison, commented bitterly that "book sales must be up." One reporter e-mailed the observation, "That just shows he doesn't know anything about publishing EITHER."[4]

The Board's response was to invite me to work on their investigation and report writing. Not only was the offer an opportunity for the experience of a lifetime, but also it gave me a chance to encourage the Board's use of the sociological perspective. This revisit had converted me into an active participant in the social control of the agency I once studied from the safe distance of professional sociology! I was still caught in conflict between professional sociology and public sociology, however. I set aside my current research when *Columbia* disintegrated. Working with the Board took additional months from it, with no guarantee that the sociological perspective would materialize in the report. The summer was an exciting blur of 12-hour days, 7 days a week, in which I had little time for either professional obligations or press. Everything took a back seat to the August 26 report deadline. The crisis of dancing between Burawoy's boxes came the week of ASA in Atlanta, when my choices were to make final changes in the social cause chapters in Part II of the report, which included a chapter I had written, prepare my ASA commitments, or meet a final writing deadline that gave me an opportunity to respond in print to a colleague's published criticism of my book. I worked on the report and prepared for ASA.

Both professional sociology and public sociology are work, but for me public sociology has always been intensely emotional work. Because my primary allegiance is professional sociology, aspects of public sociology are threatening. Media work involves public performance in settings I don't normally frequent where I am asked questions by strangers who will translate my words for other publics. No matter how much experience I accumulate, this

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4. Book sales increased in February, the month of the accident, but then returned to the normal sales pattern despite my increasing media presence.

is still stressful. These situations carry extra weight professionally because of the risk of distortion due to media editing or failure on my part to adequately translate sociological principles and theoretical explanations into language that non-academics can grasp. Moreover, time spent doing public sociology is time away from doing professional sociology. With each of my three experiences, the extent of media and public reaction surprised me, causing anxiety by taking huge unpredicted blocks of time from an ongoing research agenda.

Finally, there is *The Readers' Digest* dilemma. In *Uncoupling*, a chapter titled "Going Public" shows that how we present our selves to other audiences affects our social relationships and identity. Despite the rewards and sense of accomplishment, despite the fact that my scholarship has won disciplinary awards, I embrace public sociology willingly but with insecurity and ambivalence, reflected (I now realize) in the fact that with probably well over two thousand hours of media work I have never listed any of it on my CV. In giving public sociology a name, perhaps Burawoy's enduring gift is to confer it with legitimacy.

But not to engage with these publics has never been an option. Once the research is in print, I feel a professional obligation to respond—more so with the *Challenger* book because it is history. Public sociology is both a privilege and a challenge. In this revisit, my goal was to teach the causal theory of the *Challenger* book. Whereas journalists readily grasped the link between the organization and engineering decisions, they did not incorporate the macro-level political and economic factors into their stories, despite my soundbite, "the trickle-down effect," and follow-up email. I believe this was a problem of interest: they got the *Challenger* example, but the emerging data on *Columbia* were micro and how the agency's political environment fit in was not clear until late in the investigation. My Board appearance was another chance to teach that point. However, after seeing two overheads with macro/meso/micro principles laid out, the Board leader said, "I keep searching for principles here." Maybe this was a problem of cognition, or maybe I didn't do a good job.

But reviewing the transcript of my Board testimony, I think that he was struggling with how to translate sociological principles into formal recommendations for NASA. Having written that strategies for control need to be connected to the social causes of a problem, I saw my work with the Board as another chance to influence their policy recommendations in that direction. As I write, NASA is struggling with how to translate sociological principles into organizational change. But having a plan is not enough—implementation is critical. The historic political and economic problems that affected the agency, resulting in both *Challenger* and *Columbia*, originated with Congress, the White House, and international relations. Effective change by NASA is dependent upon policy change by more powerful actors. Moreover, the power dynamic is reversed between NASA and the Board. After the Board issued the Report, it disbanded. NASA created its own board to oversee that changes are "true to the intent" of the accident investigators.

Policy sociology may subject public sociology to criteria of effectiveness, in which case my efforts will surely fall short. But the effectiveness of public sociology cannot be measured by policy implementation only. The week the Report was issued, my last official act was to work on an overview of the social causes of the accident to be included in a Powerpoint of the Report for Board members to use in the speaking invitations that already were piling up (*Columbia* Accident Investigation Board, 2003). Now dispersed, they are lecturing at universities, government agencies, the military, safety regulatory bodies, and corporations, giving the social causes equal primacy with the technical causes of *Columbia*'s tragic demise. Measuring what is visible and therefore measurable, like policy implementation, does not take into account the invisible work of dialogic teaching that goes on in the groups we participate in as we try to make change. Like other kinds of teaching that sociologists do, engaging in dialogue about issues of public concern can make change by altering the perspective of individuals or giving support to what they already think—but the full effects of such change are not always measurable or even knowable.

Public Sociology as a Vocation
Charles Derber

I am grateful to Michael Burawoy for helping us name and understand the role of the public sociologist. Over the last fifteen years I have embraced the role of writing and speaking for public audiences. My last three books—*The Wilding of America, Corporation Nation*, and *People Before Profit*—are published by trade houses rather than academic presses, directed to public audiences, social movements, and students, and translated into multiple languages (including all three translated into Chinese in large trade printings). I write for magazines and newspapers such as *Newsday* and *The Boston Globe* more often than for professional journals, and I spend far more time talking to the media, and to labor and community groups, than at scholarly meetings. I collaborate with Ralph Nader, Noam Chomsky, and many other non-sociologists who do a similar brand of public intellectual work, and I see them as my primary reference group.

As a graduate student at the University of Chicago in the 1960s, I regarded professional academics as part of the problem rather than the solution. I wanted to become an intellectual who helped change the world, and I marveled at the public impact of Marx, arguably the greatest public sociologist. C. Wright Mills was a more contemporary American example who practiced the public craft that I hoped to emulate. Mills fits Burawoy's model of the public sociologist, since he wrote for public audiences and his knowledge was reflexive. Like Mills, I remained in the university but chose the public rather than professional sociology route, a luxury for the public intellectual but one laced with contradictions and not easily embraced prior to tenure. Public sociologists are usually pure critical or professional sociologists before tenure and then often dance back and forth between critical (or professional) and public sociology after tenure, seeking to legitimate themselves with their colleagues as well as their publics.

Like Mills, whom the leading professional sociologist, Paul Lazarsfeld, refused to allow to teach graduate students at Columbia, I have had a conflicted relation with professional sociology. As a graduate student, I was alienated from most of the sociology faculty at the University of Chicago, except Richard Flacks, my dissertation advisor, who was very publicly engaged in building the 1960s student movement. He also had his conflicts with professional sociology and Burawoy's assumption of an essential complementarity among the four sociologies masks deep tensions among them.

I have been dependent on the existence of a professional discipline that has allowed me to get a job in the university and helped shape my intellectual formation. Theoretically, I could have educated myself about society, become a public intellectual, and survived on my writings without a university job or any relation to the professional discipline. I took few graduate courses in sociology, taking courses in other departments and many independent reading courses that allowed me to create my own intellectual discipline. But in the absence of professional sociology, as Burawoy argues, public sociologists like myself would lack the knowledge base and credentials that earn us our bread and butter. We would also lack connection to one of our main audiences—students in sociology classes around the country. Professional and critical sociologists often turn to the work of public sociologists for accessible and topical books that can electrify their students, and all three of my most recent books have been widely assigned by sociology professors. Students can go to several websites to buy term-papers about *The Wilding of America* (colleagues, be on guard, for such student Internet "wilding" has become endemic for popular books).

The conflicts of Mills, myself, and many other public sociologists with professional sociology reflect serious schisms. Professional sociology seeks a restricted, credentialed audience, for the essence of professionalism is to monopolize knowledge and create a knowledge base inaccessible to the uninitiated. In contrast, the essence of public sociology is the quest for knowledge accessible to the public. Some might suggest that the public sociologist does not

reject professional sociology but translates its findings to the larger public. But, at minimum, public sociologists do not accept the professional proposition that the production and/or consumption of knowledge should be restricted to the credentialed. The public sociologists' vocation is to construct a public knowledge base, one expansive enough to threaten the definition of professionalism itself. Marx, Weber, and Durkheim—the most important public sociologists—practiced an intellectual craft spanning the contemporary fields of history, politics, sociology, and economics, challenging today's narrow professional segmentation of knowledge. Public sociology is really public intellectualism that is not only inter-disciplinary, but anti-disciplinary.

This may explain why one of my close colleagues notes that I do "not play the professional sociology game." I read and interact with journalists, activists, and non-sociological scholars and policy elites, as much I do with sociologists, and I am far more likely to be present at a meeting of student activists or community groups—or speaking on a radio program—than at an ASA meeting. I have gone to only five ASA annual meetings in the last twenty-five years and have never been active in an ASA section or committee. My greatest investment of time, other than writing, is with student and community groups on activist projects and giving interviews to journalists or being on talk shows. Beyond the normal media rounds related to public books, a media group based in California called The Mainstream Media Project sets up hundreds of media programs for me to bring an alternative voice to the airwaves. Fortunately, such work can be done mainly from the office and involves engaging public conversations with callers who educate and challenge me. I offer readers, radio audiences, the community, and activist groups a framework for making sense of the problems that engage them personally and politically, and there is a significant audience grateful for the critical sociological voice they rarely hear. Their e-mails, calls, letters, conversations, and collaborations keep me going but require constant cultivation and are not dependable as a secure sense of one's own worth and impact.

While my public audiences are broad, diverse, diffuse, and often temporary, I develop continuing relations with specific media hosts who invite me regularly on their shows, and with particular community and public interest groups for global justice. I have had a long-term collaborative affiliation with The National Labor Committee (NLC), a New York-based organization led by Charles Kernaghan, the firebrand organizer and national spokesperson of the anti-sweatshop movement who exposed the Kathy Lee Gifford sweatshops. I periodically meet with the NLC to help them conceptualize their work and plan their global campaigns. They introduce me to the Third World sweatshop workers they bring on U.S. campus tours, and offer me a visceral understanding of globalization issues. My interactive relation with the NLC, in which I help conceptualize and organize social justice campaigns and they educate me about the issues I'm writing on, is similar to my collaborations with Chuck Collins and Mike Prokosch at United for a Fair Economy, a remarkable public education and advocacy group for equality that educates me and provides me with data as I help them frame some of their issues and connect to campus groups. Ralph Nader has linked me with his network of public interest and citizen action groups, greatly enriching my knowledge of corporate power and anti-corporate activism while giving me a much wider public and activist audience and personal exposure to Nader's own immense knowledge about the issues on which I write.

My relationships with social movements have been an antidote to the "floating" problem that can bedevil the public sociologist who does not find a home in the profession. Public sociology can be surprisingly lonely if one does not create sustainable connections with one's publics. The media itself, while a central outlet, is never a reliable friend, since it has its own agenda and the public sociologist must learn how to use journalists as they seek to use you. I have depended heavily on relations with organizers and organic intellectuals in social movements for both political efficacy and a sense of community. My close ties to student activists have also helped anchor me, as have sustaining ties to my own close faculty colleagues, whether public sociologists or not.

Relations with such prominent public figures as Nader and Chomsky have been important in dealing with other anxieties endemic to public sociology as a vocation. I cannot depend on normal professional affirmations to assure myself that I am doing something worthwhile. How do I assess whether public sociology matters, that it is important enough to be my vocation, and that I am doing it in a way that makes a difference? There is no decisive answer for me, but validation by leading public intellectuals has mattered. Since I am confident that their careers have made a difference, their validation helps persuade me that I am doing something useful. Public reception of my books, invited lectures, close work with social movements, and attention from the media also all help me deal with vocational anxiety—the anxiety of not knowing whether I am among the damned or the elect, as Burawoy put it to me—but never in a fully satisfactory way. Therefore, public sociologists are particularly vulnerable to the cults of media and celebrity, and scanning the public radar screen for evidence of one's mark in the world can become a preoccupation. What keeps me going in the end is my political passion and my love of public writing and speaking, making this the vocation best suited to my temperament and talents.

I would hypothesize that the conflicts among Burawoy's four sociologies are part of a larger conflict about the structure of knowledge and of social domination. Professionalism is a part of an ongoing political struggle for ideological hegemony and the control of knowledge. In my book, *Power in the Highest Degree*, I argued that professionals could be seen as a new knowledge class integrally linked to broader systems of domination. The movement toward historical emancipation might then eventually transform or abolish professional sociology and professionalism more broadly, creating a different knowledge and class structure. It would integrate what we now call sociology into a system of knowledge production and organization that would have far more public participation, accountability, and accessibility. But any such transformation, in abolishing professional sociology, would also abolish the other three sociologies as part of a reconstruction of the entire knowledge system. Burawoy is certainly right, then, in pointing to the historical interdependence of the four sociologies. The cooperation and struggle among them help shape a broader hegemonic struggle that will eventually obliterate them all, giving way to a new knowledge order that we cannot yet name.

From Obscurity to *People Magazine*
Juliet Schor

One of the media accounts of *The Overworked American* began by describing me as a Harvard labor economist "toiling away in obscurity" before I published this book. That description gave me a good laugh, partly because not much about it was true. I wasn't a labor economist—my official field in the department was in radical economics. (I don't think I even took a course in labor during graduate school). And although I was hardly a household name, I was already reasonably well-known among radical economists. I was an Associate Professor of Economics at Harvard, one of the top two graduate programs in the country, and one of only a handful of radical economists at elite departments. I'd spent a number of years directing a prestigious international research project that was comprised of leading Keynesian and radical political economists from around the world, and which led to the publication in 1990 of an influential edited volume entitled *The Golden Age of Capitalism*. I'd participated for years in URPE, The Union for Radical Political Economics. I'd organized a couple of important conferences of radical economists. Work I'd done in graduate school had already circulated widely in draft form and was highly cited. And during graduate school I'd founded two progressive institutions, the South End Press and the Center for Popular Economics. Both brought me into contact with numerous academics and even activists. Why then, when my book was released to a torrent of publicity, was I perceived to have come out of nowhere?

I raise this question because I think it illustrates some aspects of the relationships among three of Burawoy's four categories, namely, public sociology, professional sociology, and critical sociology. In my case, the discipline was economics, but I think the story might have been similar had I been in sociology. Here's what I learned about how the three relate.

I suspect I was thought to have come from nowhere because most of the professional activity I had been involved with prior to the publication of *The Overworked American* fell into Burawoy's "critical" category. I attended the University of Massachusetts, which was the premiere "radical economics" program in the country. I was actively involved in critiques of neo-classical economics, and was trying to create an alternative paradigm that was rooted in classical economics, and most specifically in Marx. But I suspect even more than in sociology, it was difficult in the discipline of economics to make headway against the dominant paradigm. I received my Ph.D. in 1982, and by then, the discipline was moving rapidly rightward and corporate influence was escalating. One measure was the extent to which neo-classical economics was vanquishing the Keynesian perspective, even the watered-down version that had been incorporated in the 1950s. By the 1980s, many of the sub-fields of economics, which had diverged from the neo-classical "free market"—all government intervention is bad, people are super-rational and self-interested, the market cures all problems approach—were being brought into line. Orthodoxy was taking over not only macroeconomics (where Keynesian thought had been strong), but also development, labor, and other fields. One indication of the rightward shift of the field was the first political battle I was involved in at Harvard. The large principles course had just that year been taken over by Martin Feldstein. Previously, under the liberal Otto Eckstein, the course included a "radical section" which added critiques of the mainstream material. As the new radical on the block, I was slated to teach the section, but Feldstein was adamant that it shouldn't be allowed. He characterized radical economics as "fringe," something only a few, presumably deluded economists put stock in. Needless to say, we lost that battle and radical economics was systematically deleted from the curriculum over the ensuing years. Interestingly, this issue resurfaced again this year, almost twenty years later, when disgruntled students attempted to get a second, less right-wing course admitted into the curriculum as a substitute for Feldstein's course. They lost too.

Given what contemporary terminology might dub a "hostile environment" for left-wing economics, I interpreted my situation not as "obscurity" but as an inability to penetrate the mainstream of my field. Few mainstream economists cited my work. I was not asked to join the National Bureau of Economic Research, in contrast to many Harvard junior faculty. Indeed, in at least two cases, my colleagues wrote papers that were very similar to work I had done and failed to cite mine. It was nearly impossible to get radical economic theory into the top journals. I also believe I was doubly disadvantaged by being a woman in a male-dominated field that was still very hostile to women.

My experience was that the "professional" side of the field was virtually off-limits to critiques from the left (and to a certain extent to some far-far-right wing approaches as well). It was just really difficult to play in both ponds. I don't think it was absolutely impossible, especially if the work was empirical. But in that case, one typically suppressed the more radical theoretical interpretations of the empirical material, and the evidence ended up in the category of a Kuhn-ian anomaly. Indeed, as I think back over the last thirty years of radical economics, I've come to the conclusion that most of the critical economists who have seriously engaged with the mainstream have ended up doing mainstream work.

As it turned out, I was only able to get more professional credibility by succeeding in the realm of the public. This happened for a few reasons. A big enough public success earns grudging respect from highly professionalized peers. Many academics would like public recognition for their work, and do value media attention, best-sellers, New York Times op-eds, and so forth. This was the response from many of my colleagues and other professional economists. *The Overworked American* was also read widely, including outside of economics. It was cited far more than the research I had done in the previous decade. It helped to spawn a

large number of studies of trends in working hours, an area that almost nobody was working on before then. It found its way into numerous courses in economics and other social sciences such as anthropology, sociology, and women's studies. It has been used in core courses at both Harvard and the University of Chicago. In that sense, public success translated into professional influence.

But my story was a bit more complicated. My book stirred up a controversy. I found that working hours had risen substantially. A sociologist named John Robinson and a couple of economists who had done a lot of work claiming the reverse—that leisure time was increasing—attacked me in the media, claiming my results were illegitimate. Robinson said that I had cooked my numbers, despite the fact that I used a standard source for hours, and had followed a method identical to that of a well-respected Stanford economist (whose work engendered no controversy). Robinson has since backed off from that view, and trends in worktime in the last decade have supported my viewpoint. In retrospect, I feel that the attack on me occurred partly because I did not emerge from the inner circle. From their perspective, it was true that I "came out of nowhere."

A similar reaction occurred when Laura Tyson was appointed by Bill Clinton to be head of the Council of Economic Advisers, the pinnacle of policy economics. She was also from something of a critical tradition. The inner circle threw a tantrum, claiming that she wasn't a "real" economist. (That, despite her M.I.T. Ph.D. and tenured professorship in economics at Berkeley.)

In my case, the debate about trends in worktime began in the public, and it mainly stayed there, playing out in the media. This was a major mistake on my part. I should have jumped into the professional arena to defend myself, writing an academic rebuttal to Robinson and associates, something I only did years later. As I reflect on it, I think it was because debates in the public arena are hard to control and can get nasty. I was too thin-skinned, having been schooled in the more genteel world of academia. One lesson I took away from this experience is that professional credibility can only be upheld in the professional realm. And in the end, I agree that the professional is the most highly-esteemed of the four areas and that professional reputation is the most fungible currency.

I believe strongly in public economics and public sociology. And I think Burawoy's distinction between the media and grass-roots versions is important. But I also believe that in the current environment, it's difficult to translate critical work to a public audience through the media. With *The Overworked American*, I was lucky because I happened to be writing about the experiences journalists were having in their personal lives, so it had a strong resonance for them. Indeed, much of my writing over the last decade has concerned trends in middle-class America. Too much work, too much debt, too little meaning. These are very familiar themes to reporters, producers, and other members of the media. Indeed, I feel they're too quick to think that their experiences are universal, and that's one of the reasons I've had such success in gaining access. This also accounts for the fact that unlike many other academics, I rarely feel I've been misunderstood or had my message distorted by the press. They have an almost natural affinity for my arguments. I also think that *The Overworked American* took radical ideas and conveyed them in a non-threatening way that appealed to the media. (In fact, the book was so non-threatening that it even appealed to many conservatives. But the more ideological right-wingers weren't fooled. Newt Gingrich fingered me as a "Bolshevik on the Charles.")

But what about those who write about subjects which are farther from middle-class American experience, such as poverty or environmental racism or the critique of imperialism? These topics are much harder sells, and more easily dismissed by the media as stories we've already heard, throw-backs to the sixties, and so forth. I have come to the conclusion that my experience is not necessarily typical. It's possible to succeed with media-driven public sociology, but it has its limits.

And what of grass-roots public sociology? The aim of using sociology to strengthen grass-roots movements is a worthy one. Public sociologists can be translators of knowledge generated in the professional and critical sociology realms. They can also be facilitators and co-participants, in cases where their participation helps to generate new knowledge. Both models can be empowering. I personally have been deeply involved in two successful grass-roots efforts—the Center for Popular Economics, which teaches economics analysis to political activists, and the Center for a New American Dream (www.newdream.org), which educates the public about issues of sustainability. But there are limits to this strategy as well. Grass-roots public sociology will, in the end, only be as strong as the movements it serves. In periods of weakness for radical social movements, it will be harder to sustain significant numbers of public sociologists (or economists). But conversely, when social movements grow, they desperately need academics to work with them. Fortunately, the current moment resembles the latter case far more than the former. I suspect it's a very opportune time to become a public sociologist.

Manifesto for Public Sociologies[5]
Michael Burawoy

I began this symposium by emphasizing the moral impetus behind sociology, propelling the discipline as a whole as well as individual careers. Moreover, the moral impetus finds an outlet in public sociologies that engage diverse audiences in a conversation about public issues and values. In this conclusion, I use the forgoing six case studies to draw programmatic conclusions about sociology's contribution to society. As Charlotte Ryan writes, we must not only ask, "How can we make public sociology a valued function of sociology?" but also, "How can we make sociology a valued function of public life?" What gives sociology its special place in the public arena? Has sociology a special vocation to engage with public issues? My answer to this last question is an unequivocal yes.

Sociology, as we know it today in the United States, descended from the writings of Comte and Spencer, Marx and De Tocqueville, Pareto and Simmel, Weber and Durkheim, mediated through a host of American interpreters. This classical sociology, which we have inherited, was born with European civil society at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. It arose together with political parties, trade unions, mass education, newspapers, and a myriad of voluntary associations, all connecting subaltern classes to the state. The state, for its part, reached down into civil society with extensive networks of transportation (road and rail), new systems of communication (postal service), and new modes of regulation (police). Classical sociology both reflected on and took as its objects this dramatic thickening of civil society. Where civil society died, as in fascism or Stalinism, sociology died with it. Where civil society was rejuvenated, as for example in Russia during the late 1980s, or in South Africa during the 1970s and 1980s, or in the United States in the late 1960s and early 1970s, so sociology took on a new lease of life. Its vitality has rested with its connection to a vibrant civil society.

Today, civil society—nationally and globally—is under threat from terrorizing states and unconstrained markets. The question is whether society will simply subside before multiple assaults or recoil in reaction. Where will sociology stand in this matter? Dissenters notwithstanding, if the political scientist identifies with the extension of political order and the state, if the economist identifies with the virtues of the free market, then the sociologist identifies

with civil society.[6] Thus, sociology's particular interest in its own perpetuation, in its own conditions of existence, ever more closely coincides with humanity's interest in opposing the erosion of civil liberties, the violation of human rights, the degradation of the environment, the impoverishment of working classes, the spread of disease, the exclusion of ever greater numbers from the means of their existence, and deepening inequalities—all forces that threaten the viability and resilience of civil society at home and abroad.

Such is the raison d'etre of sociology as it spontaneously grapples with society, whether through surveys or participant observation, whether through historical or comparative studies. Public sociology problematizes that grappling, focusing on the umbilical cord that connects us to civil society, thus compelling us to reflect on public sociology's relation to the rest of the discipline, which my introduction divided up into professional, policy, and critical sociologies. In sociology's imperative to defend itself and thus society, however, there is no implication that we should all become public sociologists. To the contrary, in the division of sociological labor, pursuing any one form of sociology contributes to the others, so long, that is, that they are connected in a synergistic way.

Thus, four of our six cases of public sociology come from sociologists whose primary identity lies in the other quadrants. Diane Vaughan is unequivocal in her identification as professional sociologist, yet by virtue of that commitment, is swept up in a veritable hurricane of publicity around the *Columbia* disaster. William Gamson may be the theorist behind MRAP's (Media Research and Action Program) deployment of framing in community organizing, but he too lodges himself in the professional quadrant. He insists that public sociology requires the very best of professional scholarly research. Even Juliet Schor, successful though she has been in engaging publics, writes her account as a critical sociologist as much as a public sociologist—infusing her public sociology, whether best-selling books or grass roots organizations, with radical economics. Stephen Pfohl is no easier to pigeon-hole, but the epicenter of his sociology also lies in the critical box, reverberating into his teaching, his mixed-media public performances, and even into the policy world of Juvenile Justice. Only with Charles Derber and Charlotte Ryan do we find primary identification with public sociology, deploying professional and critical sociology in their public endeavors—the one primarily through his writing, teaching, and connection to various grassroots organizations, while the other primarily through her detailed engagement with community organizers; the one positioned within the academy, while the other negotiating the borderlands of the academy. On the face of it, there is no inherent tension among the different types of sociology, and in particular between public sociology and those other sociologies—professional, policy, and critical. But that is not the story our contributors tell about their own practice of public sociology.

Let us turn then from the normative picture of organic interdependence to the real disciplinary field (in Bourdieu's sense of relations of domination) into which our four sociologies are inserted. As a relative late-comer to American social science, sociology had to play by the rules of the academy. Like that of its competitors, its knowledge, therefore, had to be abstract and universal, rendered inaccessible to lay audiences. Only in that way could sociology build a place for itself among the social sciences. Like any other profession it deploys its knowledge monopoly and its credentialing to defend its autonomy against publics or governments, against the encroachment of other professionals or university administrations. It governs itself through a system of elders, hierarchies, and peer review. Public sociology is its antithesis. Its knowledge cannot be abstract and universal but has to be concrete and particular so as to make it accessible to lay audiences. Its legitimacy is based not only on its scientific status, but also on its relevance to public issues. Public sociology must be accountable to publics as well as to professional sociology, breaching the latter's sacred autonomy. If their forms of knowl-

6. Dissenters include prominent figures. For example, in economics, Sen's (1999) view of development as the enhancement of the freedom to realize human capacities and potentialities has a strong institutional and sociological bent, as do the concerns of political scientists Skocpol (2003) and Putnam (2000) with the decline of American civic life.

edge, their bases of legitimacy, and their mechanisms of accountability are at odds, then professional and public sociologies can only coexist in a relation of domination (or insulation). The arrangement familiar to us in the United States has professional sociology on top. The hierarchy manifests itself at multiple levels: not just in the academic recognition given to individuals, but between factions within academic departments, between departments in the same university, within the American Sociological Association and also between the ASA and other sociological associations, including state associations of sociology. At the same time, where teaching and service takes priority over research, as they do in many state and community colleges, the hierarchy may be inverted.

The experiences of Charles Derber, Juliet Schor, and Charlotte Ryan graphically capture the academic opposition to their public and critical faces. By taking a critical stance toward professional sociology in Derber's case, and toward the even more daunting professional economics in Schor's case, they only intensified their marginalization by colleagues unenthusiastic about foundational critique. Looking at the academy from the outside as well as from the inside, Charlotte Ryan writes of the clashing institutional rhythms between the academic world and the world of community organization—in addition to the conflicting forms of knowledge, legitimacy, and accountability. The processes of obtaining jobs and then tenure, or more generally, the reward system, conspires against public sociology. Even Gamson, Vaughan, and Pfohl, who have more secure bases in the academic world, find their accommodation to public sociology to be replete with tension.

Should it be different? Could it be different? I am not proposing to replace professional and policy sociology with critical and public sociology. Indeed, the latter two make no sense without the former. Still, I do believe that professional sociology (and policy sociology too), will be that much stronger, more vital, and less self-referential if it were brought into continuous contact with publics via a legitimate public sociology. This would mean institutionalizing public sociology within the academy, defining criteria for what is good and bad public sociology, making it an essential part of the system of rewards. It would not mean creating a journal of public sociology but including articles of a public sociology within the *American Sociological Review* or *Social Problems*. It would mean designing courses on public sociology that might, for example, deepen and extend service learning. In short, professional and policy sociology would remain dominant, but that dominance would be enlightened rather than parochial, hegemonic rather than despotic.

There is, of course, a danger that in recognizing public and critical sociology we merely indulge in a sort of tokenism or faddism, and all the more effectively consolidate an uncontested domination of professional sociology. There is a danger that public sociology be let in through one door only to be expelled through another; once the wave of enthusiasm subsides, critical faculty leave or budgets tighten. A case in point is MRAP, whose highly promising collaboration between community and academy was brought to an end for lack of funding. In advancing a program for public sociology, this is the risk one has to take, but public sociology's very presence creates a new terrain of debate and dialogue within the academy. The struggle for public sociology is first a struggle over classification, a struggle for a classification which brings public sociology into a relation with professional, policy, and critical sociologies as opposed to a classification into quantitative and qualitative sociology, micro and macro sociology, pure and applied sociology, etc. The first step to public sociology is to recognize it, the second step is to legitimate it, the third step is to institutionalize it, the fourth step is to defend and expand it!

Public sociologists are often their own worst enemies. So many of those who promote public sociology express unconcealed contempt for professional sociology. Thus, Ben Agger's (2000) *Public Sociology* is a minute analysis of the pathologies of professional sociology, but says curiously little about public sociology and *its* dilemmas. Russell Jacoby (1987) began the recent line of lament with his *The Last Intellectuals: American Culture in the Age of Academe*, followed by Richard Posner's (2001) *The Public Intellectuals: A Study of Decline*. Harking to some

mythical golden age, these commentators mourn the so-called demise of grand public intellectuals. Their wailing has found a home in sociology too. Thus, on the occasion of the death of David Riesman, Orlando Patterson (2002) wrote an op-ed piece for the *New York Times* entitled, "The Last Sociologist," who, of course, was none other than Riesman himself. Since Riesman, it has all been downhill for sociology. Patterson rolls out the familiar accusations against sociology—irrelevance, methodological fetishism, inaccessible writing, etc.[7] While one can find evidence for these claims, this is by no means the whole story. He should take a look, for example, at the ASA's new magazine *Contexts*.

These critics of professional sociology present a profoundly elitist image of the public sociologist—the pundit who pronounces on the issues of the day from the pulpit of *The New York Times* or the corridors of Harvard University, disseminating it to unknown, thin, passive, and mainstream publics. Such traditional public sociology is important, but it should not eclipse the no less important work of organic public sociologists who speak to visible, thick, and active publics, mainstream as well as counter publics. We need to pluralize and democratize the very notion of public sociology—hence the idea of public *sociologies*—to include more than those few who have access to national media. Professional sociology would benefit from the proliferation of organic as well as traditional public sociologies, and also from a dialogue between them. Indeed, professional sociology has benefited from such ubiquitous but often hidden sociologies of the street as much as from the celebrated sociologies in the sky.

So far I have assumed that there are publics with which sociologists can converse. If this is not the case, or if publics are weak and diminishing, should we turn to policy sociology? Can we make inroads into policy sociology? Of our six cases, Diane Vaughan offers the only successful example of policy sociology, but she approached it as a public sociologist. She spent endless hours educating journalists in the fine arts of "normalizing deviance" or "organizational cultures," and they in turn fed her illustrations of her argument. They then provided her with the platform from which she persuaded the *Columbia* Accident Investigation Board to present a cultural, historical, and contextual—in short, sociological—interpretation of NASA's organizational malaise. She wasn't proposing solutions so much as framing problems, opening discussions to new perspectives—the role of the public sociologist in the policy arena. She offers us a model of how sociologists might influence policy—on the shoulders of a strong public sociology, itself resting on the mighty shoulders of professional and critical sociologies.

When it comes to policy, we cannot compete with economists. In this country, at this particular historical time, our concerns are simply too far to the left. But it is not only an unpropitious context that we face. We are also constitutionally ill-equipped to influence policy. We simply do not have the economists' consensual, homogeneous paradigm, which allows them to present a united front to the policy world. When an economist speaks, he does so with the unambiguous and singular authority of his or her profession. The economics profession is intensely hierarchical, elitist, and carefully regulated—ironically quite at odds with its espousal of individual free choice! We, on the other hand, are a more decentralized discipline with multiple centers of power. From the standpoint of narrow professionalism, this decentralization is a sign of fragmentation and dissolution, but from the standpoint of public sociology, it is an asset, facilitating multiple conversations with multiple publics. That is not to say there is no underlying unity, but that the unity comes from the research programs we follow, the foundational assumptions and value commitments we share, the methodologies we deploy. Diversity in unity is our greatest strength!

7. Best (2003) offers an excellent summary account of the lament from both within and outside academia. He describes the low status and self-esteem of sociologists, the attacks to which they are subject and to which they subject themselves. But his programmatic conclusions are familiar: we should watch our language, pay attention to evidence, and acknowledge complexity. His is more a program for policy sociology than for public sociology—the latter calls for a more critical and dialogical approach to public engagement.

I have discussed some of the internal obstacles to public sociology, but what of the external obstacles? Let me return to the question: Are there publics to converse with? If we believe the pessimistic analysis of the Putnam-Skocpol school of ever-diminishing social capital, then what does this mean for public sociology? If the situation is indeed so desperate, if civil society is a barren terrain, then that surely suggests we should think about creating publics. That's easier said than done! Still, feminists, sociologists among them, first defined the public of women and then from a public-in-itself, women, or a segment of them, became a public-for-itself! The social problems literature is adept at defining categories of people who are potential publics. Similarly, the sociology of social movements is forever discovering publics, naming them, endorsing them, and making them conscious of themselves. Pierre Bourdieu's classificatory struggles are important precisely because they are struggles over the definition of publics as well as principles of their stratification and exclusion.

Still, following the bleak prognosis of an eviscerated civil society, an alternative strategy is for professional associations to become active publics themselves, much as Durkheim imagined them, what Terence Halliday (1987) has called civic professionalism. Lawyers are a case in point: they have a long history of constituting publics but also of constituting themselves as a public defending human rights and rule of law. They use their power and expertise to propagate their moral commitments in the public arena (Halliday and Karpik, 1997). The ASA shows signs of doing the same—defending the human rights of sociologists such as Saad Ibrahim, submitting an *amicus brief* to the Supreme Court on behalf of affirmative action, declaring the continuing importance of race in opposing the Racial Privacy Act in California, and, most controversially, declaring itself (with a two-thirds majority) to be against the War in Iraq. A similar vote in 1968, at the height of civil turmoil against the war in Vietnam, was voted *down* by a two-thirds majority. One can only assume that the membership today is more desirous of their association declaring positions on political issues (or simply more desperate about the political situation). Consonant with the goal of public sociology, the ASA is an unusually democratic professional association—a resolution that has the support of 3 percent of the membership, if it is not simply endorsed by the Executive Council, has to go to the membership for a vote. In its constitution as well as in the organization of its subfields, therefore, the ASA is set up to be responsive to publics and public issues.[8]

Let me return once again to the question: are there any publics out there? Is civil society a desert with but few oases? Even in the United States this is far from being the case. There is plenty for sociologists to work with. For example, sociologists at the University of California have established a new engagement with the labor movement through the legislatively funded Institute of Labor and Employment, directed by sociologist Ruth Milkman. Even if labor is in decline, it still constitutes an enormous public or publics. The increasing conversation between sociology and the labor movement is reflected in excitement around the newly created ASA section on labor and labor movements. Much the same could be said for many of the ASA sections and their constituencies in the world beyond. Another obvious area to explore is the religious realm, where an even larger array of publics can be found. Indeed, in this area the evidence suggests that communities of faith have never been stronger or more active (Hout and Fischer, 2001). Again I refer to the United States.

But now we encounter another obstacle—these publics may hold values that are incongruent with those of the majority of sociologists. We've already suggested that sociology may be too "left" to be effective in the policy arena, but is it also too "left" of most publics for it to be effective in the public arena? As a condition of public sociology, do we first have to move to the right? "Politics" does not seem to have been a problem for our six contributors who have had little difficulty finding constituencies in tune with their own agendas. For it remains the case that we can pick and choose our publics, and some are more receptive to sociological

8. This is, of course, why in previous years the ruling elders of sociology have sought to recentralize the ASA. The attempts generated much resistance and the reforms came to naught.

messages than others. But just as important, we are in the business of education. Stephen Pfohl's analysis of teaching applies as much to the communities we engage as to the classroom. The relation between educator and educated is a reciprocal one, bringing to both curses as well as blessings. However painful, it *is* possible to nurture or shift people's perspectives, by helping them grasp the context within which they operate, galvanizing their dispersed and shattered wills into collective actors inspired by insights into the conditions of their existence. This is what Alain Touraine called action sociology.

There are multiple cautions here but one in particular is the danger that, when we talk of civil society, public sphere, or social capital, we give it a purely positive valence. Civil society is a terrain of many interests and perspectives, it has fissures and ravines dividing races, and scattered hegemonies of gender and sexuality. Civil society is shaped and even colonized by states or markets, giving rise to the inequalities and injustices we study and inveigh against. If protecting society from commodification and bureaucratization and elevating reciprocal communication is the underlying task of public sociology, it is made ever more difficult by privatization, markets, and coercive states.

In the face of threats to civil society and its publics, we can curl up into a professional cocoon; or we can venture forth to constitute and articulate public voices, thereby sustaining the basis of our existence and revitalizing all our projects—professional, policy, and critical, not just public. We can hide our conscience behind a veil of pure science; or we can display it in sociological form. We can pretend to be insulated from external relations; or we can collectively discuss and debate among ourselves and with others how to mirror those relations in our own discipline. We can remain oblivious of our relations to other disciplines; or we can think through our particularity, and thereby lay the basis for genuine inter-disciplinary collaboration. We can ignore the rest of the world, and thereby miss the peculiarity of our own U.S. sociology; or we can converse with other national and regional sociologies, and thereby deploy the enormous power we wield for a global sociology, rooted in an emergent transnational civil society. The choice is here, right now! *Hic Rhodus, hic salta!*

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