

# Public Sociologies: Contradictions, Dilemmas, and Possibilities\*

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## *Abstract*

*The growing interest in public sociologies marks an increasing gap between the ethos of sociologists and social, political, and economic tendencies in the wider society. Public sociology aims to enrich public debate about moral and political issues by infusing them with sociological theory and research. It has to be distinguished from policy, professional, and critical sociologies. Together these four interdependent sociologies enter into relations of domination and subordination, forming a disciplinary division of labor that varies among academic institutions as well as over time, both within and between nations. Applying the same disciplinary matrix to the other social sciences suggests that sociology's specific contribution lies in its relation to civil society, and, thus, in its defense of human interests against the encroachment of states and markets.*

In 2003 the members of the American Sociological Association (ASA) were asked to vote on a member resolution opposing the war in Iraq. The resolution included the following justification: “[F]oreign interventions that do not have the support of the world community create more problems than solutions . . . Instead of lessening the risk of terrorist attacks, this invasion could serve as the spark for multiple attacks in years to come.” It passed by a two thirds majority (with 22% of voting members abstaining) and became the association’s official position. In an opinion poll on the same ballot, 75% of the members who expressed an opinion were opposed to the war. To assess the ethos of sociologists

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today, it is worthwhile comparing these results with those of 1968 when a similar double item was presented to the membership with respect to the Vietnam war. Then two-thirds of the votes cast *opposed* the ASA adopting a resolution against the war and only 54% were individually opposed to the war (Rhoades 1981:60).

It is complicated to interpret this apparent shift in political orientation, given the different national and military contexts within which the voting took place, given the different wording of the questions. Still two hypotheses present themselves. First, the membership of the ASA, always leaning toward the liberal end of the political spectrum, has moved much further to the left. In 1968 the opinion of sociologists was close to the rest of the population (54% of sociologists opposed the war as compared to between 46% and 54% of the general public), whereas in 2003 the two distributions were the inverse of each other — 75% of voting sociologists opposed the war at the end of April, 2003, while at the same time 75% of the public supported the war.<sup>1</sup> One might conjecture that in 1968 a very different generation dominated the profession — a postwar generation celebratory of the U.S. and its “victory over fascism,” among them pioneers of professional sociology. Today’s post-Vietnam generations are more accustomed to criticizing the U.S. government and in particular its foreign policy. They are also less concerned about the purity of sociology as science and more likely to assume that our accumulated knowledge should be put to public use, whether in the form of member resolutions or policy interventions.

Second, the world itself is different. In 1968 the world seemed ripe for change for the better. The civil rights movements, the women’s movement, student movements around the world, antiwar marches and sit-ins captured the imagination of a new generation of sociologists who saw conventional sociology as lagging behind the most progressive movements; whereas today the world is lagging behind sociology, unapologetic about its drift into political and economic fundamentalism. Sociologists shift their critical eye ever more away from sociology toward the world it describes, a shift reflected in the insurgent interest in public sociology. In short, over the last 35 years there has been a scissors movement. The political context and the sociological conscience have moved in opposite directions, so that the world we inhabit is increasingly in conflict with the ethos and principles that animate sociologists — an ethos opposed to inequality, to the erosion of civil liberties, to the destruction of public life, and to discrimination and exclusion.

This shift in sociological ethos is not uncontroversial. It has, indeed, generated its own opposition. Dissatisfied with the political winds, 102 ASA members signed a petition, sent to the association’s Committee on Professional Ethics, charging that the anti-Iraq-war resolution violated the ASA’s code of conduct. Why? Because it did not rely on “scientifically and professionally

derived knowledge.” The complaint did not get far because, unlike other professional associations, there are no clear rules that limit the types of resolutions the ASA can endorse. Nonetheless, the 102 (and presumably many others) did take a principled position: scientific sociologists have no business making moral or political pronouncements. Taking a moral or political position is incompatible with scientific objectivity. Opposition to the resolution also took a more pragmatic form, fears that such a visible and public stance against the war (and I have not found another association to have taken such a stance) would undermine what legitimacy we have as sociologists, conceivably threaten research funding, and even prompt political reprisals. Alas, this is not so far fetched.

In contrast to these two arguments against adopting such a resolution, there are two arguments for considering the resolution to be within the ASA’s purview. First, there is the Weberian position that moral stances or value commitments are the *sine qua non* of any research program, so that there is no inherent contradiction in publicly declaring those commitments (although for Weber this should be done in the altogether separate sphere of politics). Second, there is the more Durkheimian position that we, as an association, constitute an actor in civil society and as such have a right and an obligation to participate in politics. To be sure the position adopted should be informed by our distinctive expertise, which in this case does indeed suggest that military conquest might be as easy as national reconstruction (of Iraq) is tortuous and self-defeating — a position Michael Mann elaborates in his *Incoherent Empire*.

The “pure science” position that research must be completely insulated from politics is untenable since antipolitics is no less political than *public engagement*. The more usual “abstentionist” position limits politics to *professional self-defense*: that we should enter the political arena only to defend our immediate professional interests. Thus, we might mobilize resources to oppose the defunding of research into sexual behavior (as was attempted in Congress recently), or to protest the closure or dramatic cuts in a sociology department (as in Germany today), or to protect the human rights of an individual (e.g., Egyptian sociologist, Saad Eddin Ibrahim), or, most recently, to defend a journal’s right to review and edit articles from “enemy” countries. In all these instances we enter the political arena, but solely to defend the integrity of our professional activities.

Between professional self-defense and public engagement there is a compromise position that moves from the defense of professional interests to *policy interventions*. Here the association takes a political position on the basis of an accumulated body of evidence whose validity is widely accepted and whose interpretation is unambiguous. One such example is the ASA’s recent statement that summarized the sociological literature on race: race exists, it has social causes, and it has social consequences. An extension of this was the

ASA's Amicus Curiae brief to the Supreme Court in the 2003 Michigan Law School affirmative action case, *Grutter v. Bollinger*. Again a body of sociological research was mobilized to show that racial discrimination exists and that efforts to diversify the student body would improve the educational experience of all.

So far, then, we have three possible political stances: "professional self-defense," "policy intervention" and "public engagement." There is, however, a fourth stance. The association is a political venue unto itself — a place to debate the stances we might adopt. We cannot advocate democracy for others if we are not internally democratic, if we do not attempt to arrive at public stances through maximal participation in collective deliberation. It is just such a critical debate that we are involved in today. The resolution against the Iraq War is but a dramatic instance of the broader issue we are discussing: what should be our involvement in the world beyond the academy? Recognizing we are part of the world we study, we must take some *stance* with respect to that world. To fail to do so is to take a stance by default.

We can problematize our place in society by asking two questions. The first was posed by Alfred McClung Lee in his 1976 Presidential Address to the American Sociological Association: "Knowledge for Whom?" As sociologists are we just talking to ourselves? Are we to remain locked up in the antechambers of society, never really entering its tumultuous currents, hiding behind the barricades of professional insularity? Or can we, ever cautious, ever vigilant, wade forth into society, armed with our sociological expertise? If we are going to talk to others, which others and how shall we do it? This leads directly to the second question, famously posed by Robert Lynd (1939): Knowledge for What? Do we take the values and goals of our research for granted, handed down to us by some external (funding or policy) agency? Should we only concentrate on providing solutions to predefined problems, focusing on the means to achieve predetermined ends, on what Weber called technical rationality and what I call *instrumental knowledge*? In other words, should we repress the question of ends and pretend that knowledge and laws spring spontaneously from the data, if only we can develop the right methods? Or should we be concerned explicitly with the goals for which our research may be mobilized, and with the values that underpin and guide our research? Going further afield, should sociologists be in the business of stimulating public discussions about the possible meanings of the "good society"? Like Weber, I believe that without value commitments there can be no sociology, no basis for the questions that guide our research programs. Without values social science is blind. We should try to be clear about those values by engaging in what Weber called value discussion, leading to what I will refer to as *reflexive knowledge*. This communicative action, as Jürgen Habermas (1984) has called it, aspires to a dialogic character, although mutuality and reciprocity are often difficult to achieve in practice. Thus, empirical science can only take us so far:

TABLE 1: Division of Sociological Labor

	Academic Audience	Extra-academic Audience
Instrumental Knowledge	<i>Professional Sociology</i>	<i>Policy Sociology</i>
· Knowledge	Theoretical/empirical	Concrete
· Legitimacy	Scientific norms	Effectiveness
· Accountability	Peers	Clients/patrons
· Pathology	Self-referentiality	Servility
· Politics	Professional self-interest	Policy intervention
Reflexive Knowledge	<i>Critical Sociology</i>	<i>Public Sociology</i>
· Knowledge	Foundational	Communicative
· Legitimacy	Moral vision	Relevance
· Accountability	Critical intellectuals	Designated publics
· Pathology	Dogmatism	Faddishness
· Politics	Internal debate	Public dialogue

it can help us understand the consequences of our value commitments and inform our value discussions, but it cannot determine those values. Determining values should take place through democratic and collective deliberation.

Taking these two questions seriously generates a two-by-two matrix of the field of sociology (and indeed any discipline). Table 1 represents the four positions that are parallel to the distinctions I drew above in relation to associational politics. Professional and policy sociology are forms of instrumental knowledge focusing respectively on academic and extra-academic audiences. Critical and public sociology are forms of reflexive knowledge focusing respectively on academic and extra-academic audiences. Let me consider each in turn.<sup>2</sup>

*Public sociology* engages publics beyond the academy in dialogue about matters of political and moral concern. It has to be relevant to such publics without being faddish, that is subservient to publics. Public sociology comes in many forms. We can distinguish different forms of dialogue (mediated or unmediated, unilateral, bilateral or multilateral) and different types of publics (national and local, thin or thick, hegemonic or counter-hegemonic, active or passive). I would also propose a distinction between elite and grassroots public sociology. The former reaches a wide but thin audience and would include books that stimulate reflexive debate (e.g., David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd*, Gunnar Myrdal's *The American Dilemma*, Robert Bellah and collaborators' *Habits of the Heart*) or columns in national newspapers such as the *New York Times*. I call this form of public sociology *traditional* because, for the most part, it formulates a common public "interest" and it does so at arms length, in

contrast to an *organic* or grassroots public sociology that engages the particularistic interests of more circumscribed publics — neighborhood groups, communities of faith, labor organizations, and so on. Traditional public sociology assumes the limelight so we need to make the extra effort to validate the often invisible organic public sociologies. We need both forms of public sociology; indeed, each feeds off the other.

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

Public sociology should be distinguished from *policy sociology*. While public sociology generates conversation or debate between sociologist and public on a terrain of reciprocal engagement, policy sociology focuses on solutions to specific problems defined by clients. The relation between sociologist and client is often of a contractual character in which expertise is sold for a fee. The sociologist, thereby, cedes independence to the client. All manner of organizations may contract sociological expertise, from business to state, from multilateral organization to the small NGO. What makes the relation instrumental is that the research terrain is not defined by the sociologist. It is defined narrowly in the case of a "client" or broadly in the case of a "patron."

There is no watertight distinction between public and policy sociology. Policy sociology can enter the public domain as in James Coleman's (1966) report to Congress on the advantages of racial integration in schooling, just as his later reversal of his advocacy of busing (Coleman 1975), one might say, took public sociology back into the arena of policy. Likewise the Moynihan Report (1965) on the black family, originally written for the Department of Labor, became a public document that was nationally debated as it related to questions of racism and the legacies of slavery. Diane Vaughan's (1996) book, *The Challenger Launch Decision*, which examined the contribution of the organizational culture at NASA to the Challenger disaster of 1985, started out as professional sociology, entered the public arena as a critical account of NASA and was then mobilized in the policy venue when the Space Shuttle Columbia met a similar fate in 2003. Her ideas about the inevitability of such disasters and the way organization can "normalize deviance" caught the public imagination,

propelling her into a key advisory role with the Columbia Accident Investigation Board (Vaughan 2004).

Public and policy sociologies could not exist without *professional sociology*, which provides legitimacy, expertise, distinctive problem definitions, relevant bodies of knowledge, and techniques for analyzing data. An effective public or policy sociology is not hostile to, but depends upon the professional sociology that lies at the core of our disciplinary field. Why do I call our disciplinary knowledge instrumental? As professional sociologists we are located in research traditions, sometimes going back to founding fathers (Weber, Durkheim, and Marx) and otherwise of a more recent pedigree (feminism, poststructuralism). These research traditions may be elaborated into self-conscious research programs — structural functionalism, stratification theory, sex-gender systems, experimental social psychology — with their grounding assumptions, distinctive questions, exemplary models and appropriate techniques of research. Research programs (Lakatos 1978) advance by resolving internal contradictions and absorbing anomalies (discrepancies between theoretical expectation and empirical observations). They require a community of scientists committed to working on the important (collectively defined) *puzzles* that the research program generates. Flourishing public and policy sociologies increase the stakes of our knowledge and thus makes the vigilant pursuit of coherent research programs all the more important.

In the world of normal science we cannot push forward the frontiers of knowledge and at the same time question its foundations. The latter task is the province of *critical sociology*. In much the same way that public sociology interrogates the value assumptions of policy sociology, so in a similar and more direct way critical sociology is the conscience of professional sociology. Robert Lynd (1939), C. Wright Mills (1959), Alvin Gouldner (1970), and, later in his life, Pitirim Sorokin (1956) were critical sociologists who questioned the moral foundations of existing professional sociology. They probed the very meaning of the sociological enterprise, posing the questions of “knowledge for what?” and “knowledge for whom?” More recently feminism and to some extent poststructuralism have challenged the received canon and reconfigured its research programs. A flourishing professional sociology always has to find space for such critical engagement to facilitate open discussion of what we are up to. Indeed, one might argue, it is this reflexivity that makes sociology an intellectual as well as a professional enterprise. Critical sociology engages first and foremost with professional sociology, but has also mounted critiques of policy sociology for putting values up for sale, and has infused moral commitments into public sociology.

Having outlined the four types of sociology in Table 1, we can elaborate the scheme in a number of directions. First, these are ideal types, each of which is internally complex. There are reflexive moments to both professional and

policy sociologies, just as there are instrumental dimensions to critical and public sociologies. Professional and critical sociology can border extra-academic audiences just as policy and public sociology have their interfaces with the academic world. Thus, for example, we can subdivide professional sociology into a core research quadrant serviced by a policy moment (ASA's defense of professional interests, the publication of *Footnotes*), by a more public face represented, say, by *Contexts* magazine, and by a critical moment that organizes debate and adjudication among competing research programs. One can even say that reflexivity is essential to puzzle solving. In its ideal typical form, however, the policy, public, and critical moments within the professional sociology "cell" are subordinate to their *raison d'être*, namely the promotion of professional sociology. We can perform the same subdivision, or what Abbott (2001) calls "fractalization," on the three other types of sociology.

The second qualification is that these are types of sociology. Sociologists can simultaneously inhabit more than one of the cells, although most concentrate their efforts in one. Over a sociologist's career the concentration may shift from one cell to another. In a typical trajectory, a graduate student enters sociology infused with moral commitment, then suspends that commitment until tenure whereupon he might dabble in policy work and end his career with a public splash. Alternatively, a graduate student might cling to her moral commitments, resisting the mortification of graduate school, and carry them through her entire academic career. Others, of course, may not be touched by moral concern at any point and may never leave the professional cell.

Not only individuals but research too can have its own moral career. Most articles published in scientific journals die a silent death, but occasionally they are picked up and develop a life of their own. Judith Stacey and Timothy Biblarz (2001) published an article on lesbian and gay parenting, "(How) Does the Sexual Orientation of Parents Matter?" in the *American Sociological Review*. Arguing against both those who say gay and lesbian parenting disadvantaged children and those who claim it makes no difference, Stacey and Biblarz found it did have small differential effects on children, including a greater openness to homoerotic relations. The article was infused with Stacey's critique of "family values," and her endorsement of multiple family forms, but that was not how it was always interpreted in the public realm where it was used to show the dangers of lesbian and gay marriage. Under interrogation, as an expert witness on the side of gay marriage, she found herself in the contradictory position of defending what she normally opposed, namely "positivist" research and the institution of marriage. Reflecting on her experience, she indicts public sociology: "under contemporary conditions of globalized, market-driven communication technologies and neoconservative discursive frames, to engage in public sociology is to reinforce positivist hegemony, whatever your epistemological convictions" (Stacey 2004:142). Her indictment, of course, applies less to public sociology than to policy sociology in which the sociologist



cedes the discursive terrain to her client.<sup>3</sup> A critical sociologist holding values hostile to those prevailing in society might be well advised to steer clear of policy sociology, which by its nature defines the problem and acceptable solutions. A critical sociologist might be better off working with public audiences and in this indirect way influence policy.

Table 1 can also be conceived as a division of labor among four interdependent sociologies. Whereas it is obvious that professional sociology is a *sine qua non* for critical sociology (without it there would be nothing to criticize) as well as for policy and public sociology (legitimacy which depends on its expertise), a flourishing professional sociology itself depends on the challenges posed by the other three sociologies. Public sociology has been the transmission belt of the civil rights and women's movements that have transformed professional sociology, just as policy sociology has shaped professional agenda in areas such as criminology, education, and aging. Just as there is a mutual influence between professional and policy sociology, so there is a fruitful interplay between critical and public sociology.

This normative model of *reciprocal interdependence* is threatened by tendencies toward autonomization of the parts. In this respect, each type has its own pathology. Professional sociology has often been accused of sacrificing substance for method, of irrelevance, of making the obvious esoteric. This comes about when professional sociology cuts itself off from its moorings in the other three types, when it becomes self-referential, often in the name of "pure science." Policy sociology is often accused of the opposite pathology, of becoming a servant of power and sacrificing scientific integrity in the process. Likewise public sociology loses its moral integrity when it panders to public concerns, losing its connections to critical and professional sociology, and thus devolving into "pop" sociology. Finally, critical sociology has a tendency toward sectarianism and dogmatism, especially when unrestrained by serious engagement with the other sociologies and, in particular, with professional sociology. The flourishing of each depends on the flourishing of all.

But surely this is too simplistic and unreal. Where are power and history in this schema? These four sociologies also comprise an academic field of structured domination. Their interdependence may be reciprocal but it is also antagonistic. Professional sociologists do not like to have critical sociologists nipping at their heels, dismissing their painstaking research as trivial or irrelevant. Nor do they care to be reminded of the arbitrary foundations upon which their elaborate research programs are erected. Again, it is one thing to pursue abstract knowledge with its concepts and terminology, evaluated by peers on the basis of scientific norms, competing with other social science disciplines; it is another to pursue communicative knowledge accessible to and accountable to lay publics. It is difficult to contain these antagonistic forms of knowledge in a relation of stable interdependence without establishing a hierarchy. But there are hierarchies and hierarchies, intolerant despotisms and

negotiated hegemonies. These hegemonies attempt to recognize the interests of all, if not in equal measure.

There are different perspectives on the hierarchy within sociology. For example, today there is a dissident coterie who consider sociology to be bent too far in the reflexive direction. Beginning in the early 1990s a spate of books and articles appeared lamenting the dissolution of sociology. They include Jonathan Turner and Stephen Turner's (1990) *The Impossible Science*, Irving Louis Horowitz's (1993) *The Decomposition of Sociology*, and Stephen Cole's (2001) edited collection, *What's Wrong with Sociology?* In each case the argument is that sociology has suffered fragmentation, a loss of coherence, and ceased to be a cumulative science (if it ever was). The blame is placed on sociology's vulnerability to unmediated pressures from the external world, and specifically to the "political" invasion born out of the struggles of the 1960s and 1970s. This dissolution thesis is largely developed by sociologists who either lament the fall from grace of the putative consensus around structural functionalism or who wish to create a discipline with a single paradigm, perhaps rooted in a particular methodological technique.

My own view is rather different. Rather than looking backwards to the halcyon postwar years of the purported domination of sociology by a single overarching paradigm, I look forward to a unity based on diversity — a unity that incorporates a plurality of perspectives. In this vision, professional sociology, in order to safeguard its own enlightened self-interest, must be prevented from colonizing critical and public sociologies. We have to institutionalize these subordinate sociologies within the academy, alongside a hegemonic professional sociology.<sup>4</sup> To make contributions to public sociology part of the assessment of professional sociology is fraught with problems, not least deciding the criteria of good public sociology and who should evaluate it. It will be opposed in many leading departments even though, I believe, the vitality of sociology would benefit.

One function of critical sociology is to show that the world does not have to be the way it is. Critical sociologists should be as attentive to alternatives to their own disciplinary world as they are to the world beyond the academy. We should destabilize the inevitability of the present by exposing the peculiarity of contemporary U.S. sociology. One useful starting point is to explore the history of the division of sociological labor in the United States. As Turner and Turner (1990) argue, professional sociology began in the middle of the nineteenth century as an engagement with diverse reform and religious groups. After World War I, sociology consolidated its presence in the university but became increasingly dependent on funding from foundations, such as the Rockefeller and Carnegie, and from the state in the form of the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Defense. The expansion of the university after World War II led to the rapid expansion and professionalization of sociology that, in turn, engendered a challenge from critical sociology in the

1960s and 1970s. Critical sociology had existed before, but it never had the widespread support it garnered in the 1970s. In each of these periods professional sociology was nourished by a distinctive dialogue: in the first period between public sociology and professional sociology, in the second period between policy sociology and professional sociology, and in a third period between critical sociology and professional sociology.

Are we now ready for a new dialogue between professional and public sociology? On the one hand, students of social capital, such as Robert Putnam (2001) and Theda Skocpol (2003), argue that publics are disappearing or, like Alan Wolfe (1998), imply that they are so far out of political kilter with sociology that they can offer no stable roots for a public sociology. On the other hand, the impulse from within sociology toward a public face is all the stronger as sociology becomes ever more critical of deepening inequalities, the erosion of civil liberties, and the crusader state. There are still many publics with whom we can converse. As Christian Smith and Robert Bellah have shown, communities of faith *are* within the orbit of sociology, just as the newly created ASA section on labor and labor movements has reconnected sociology to a still enormous public, desperate for new ideas. Nor should we forget that sociology itself creates categories of people who then often assume a public identity of their own. Social movements arise from new identities, often forged by intellectuals, and those identities in turn forge new publics. Indeed, sociologists do not need to search far and wide for publics, they are often waiting on our doorsteps.

In constituting a history of the discipline one danger is to introduce a false homogenization, a history written from the standpoint of the privileged. As sociology grew, its institutional base differentiated, so that today sociologists work both inside and outside academia. Those outside tend to occupy positions in government agencies, such as the census bureau or the department of corrections; in consulting companies for human resource management; or in international NGOs. Then, there are sociologists who are employed in professional schools — business schools, public administration, educational schools, agricultural extension, and so forth — where they may engage non-academic audiences. Equally important is the complex hierarchy of the university system which ranges from elite private universities, to the different tiers of state university systems, liberal arts colleges, and two year community colleges. The configuration of the division of sociological labor will vary with a department's location in this system. Thus, in state colleges where teaching takes up so much of one's time, research has a public or policy dimension, often driven by local issues. Based on my attendance at the meetings of state associations, such as the North Carolina Sociological Association, I have found public sociology to be both more widely practiced and more highly valued in state colleges than in most elite departments. I have found projects ranging from research on displaced workers, toxic waste, housing inequalities, and

educational reform, to advocacy for public health campaigns around HIV-AIDS or needle exchange to training community organizers to deal with the media. Sadly, all too often, this public (and policy) sociology, widespread though it may be, remains invisible and unrecognized because its practitioners lack the time or incentive to write it up.

History and hierarchy give one sense of the possible variation in the configuration of the disciplinary field, international comparisons give another. When one travels the world talking about public sociology, one quickly learns just how distinctively American the concept is, marking the unique strength of professional sociology in the U.S. In many countries it is taken for granted that sociology has a public face. Why else be a sociologist? The career of sociology in many Third World countries reflects the succession of different political regimes. One of the first acts of the Pinochet Regime in Chile was to abolish sociology. In South Africa sociology flourished in the late 1970s and 1980s as the anti-apartheid movement grew in strength, just as it has suffered amalgamation and budgetary cuts in the post-apartheid period. Soviet sociology, nonexistent under Stalinism, reappeared in the 1950s as an ideological and surveillance arm of the party state. Sociological opinion research was deployed as a weapon of critique, revealing public discontent in order to justify swings in policy. This instrumental use of sociology comes home to roost in the post-Soviet period where, increasingly, it has become a form of market research. If it is not co-opted or repressed by authoritarian regimes, sociology's reflexive side may sustain critical opposition, as was often the case in Eastern Europe. In the social democratic countries of Scandinavia, by contrast, it is the policy dimension that often stands out. Although when conservative parties assume power, the sociological winds shift direction from policy to public.

Here then are just a few hints at national variation, underlining once again just how peculiar is U.S. sociology. It is not just peculiar, it is also very powerful, dominating the world scene. Accordingly in the international division of sociological labor, professional sociology is concentrated in the resource rich United States, and to a lesser extent in Western Europe, while public sociology has relatively greater strength in the poorer countries — a distribution that mirrors the hierarchy within the U.S. Promoted by the World Bank, this global division of sociological labor effectively disrupts the synergy to be obtained from the articulation of all four types of sociology at a national level. Professional sociology parachutes in from the U.S., remote from the issues that concern local publics and even policy communities. An indigenous professional sociology needs to be elaborated from below that creates national syllabi, research programs, journals, and associational infrastructures on the basis of public engagement with local issues and with the aid of critical sociology. Furthermore, nourishing a transnational sociology of the global South could be a counterweight to the temptations and asymmetries of North-South interchanges. Transnational social movements, whether around human rights,

the environment, women's movements, or labor, could become the foundation of a global public sociology, and a springboard for the critique of U.S. sociology, provincializing its universalistic claims.

Moving from the U.S. and other national configurations to a global division of professional, policy, public and critical sociologies involves projecting the four-fold distinction in Table 1 from a lower unit of analysis to a higher unit of analysis. That is, instead of breaking up a national disciplinary terrain into its component parts, we locate each distinctive national configuration in a global division of labor. It is one example of "fractalizing up." Another instance of upward fractalization is the movement from sociology to other social sciences, distinguishing them by the emphasis they place on the different types of knowledge.

If today economics is especially effective in the policy realm, this is because of the legitimacy it has established as a profession, its unity as a science and its success in constituting its own object of knowledge — the economy. Its power as a policy science is reflected in the tight organization of its profession with its effective gatekeepers, who define and enforce relatively clear standards for the advancement of science. Indeed, economics may be likened to the communist party with its strict ideological controls and international dissemination, whereas sociology is more like an anarcho-syndicalist profession with decentralized participation in a system of democratic councils (its 43 sections). Sections vary in the weight they give to professional, policy, public and critical sociologies. One might say that the theory section is more focused on the professional, that the education section gives more weight to policy, sex, and gender to the public, and Marxism to the critical. Sociology's pluralism and its relatively well developed reflexivity may be a handicap in the policy world, but is an asset in reaching and influencing publics. Within political science the balance between instrumental and reflexive knowledge lies between economics and sociology. Internally it is more divided than economics but less pluralistic than sociology. To complete a map of the social sciences, how much of an exaggeration would it be to claim that economics and political science patrol the policy world, while philosophy dominates the critical world, leaving sociology along with anthropology to engage the public? This upward fractalization from the internal division of each discipline to the configuration of the social sciences is, it hardly needs emphasizing, confined to the postwar period and to the U.S. It looks very different in other countries and at other times.

Finally, we come to the critical question: what are the grounds for claiming sociology's affinity to the public? If political science's distinctive object of study is the state and its value the protection of political order, and if economics has as its distinctive object the economy and its value is the expansion of the market, then sociology's distinctive object is civil society and its value is the resilience and autonomy of the social. Sociology is born with civil society and dies with

civil society. The classical sociology of Weber, Durkheim, Simmel, and Pareto arose with the expansion of trade unions, political parties, mass education, voluntary associations at the end of the nineteenth century, just as U.S. sociology was born amidst reform and religious organizations. Sociology disappears with the eclipse of civil society as in fascism, Stalinism or Pinochet's Chile, just as it quickly bubbles to the surface with the unfurling of perestroika in the Soviet Union or the civic and labor associations of South Africa's anti-apartheid movement.

One should beware, however, of a naïve and simplistic coding of the disciplines. Just as each discipline has a dominant project, each is also a contested field. Within political science the perestroika movement has challenged the hegemony of rational choice perspectives, just as economics has its own dissidents declaring the limits of the market, including such distinguished economists as Paul Krugman, Joseph Stiglitz, and Amartya Sen as well as the movement for postautistic economics. Often, the subordinate or dissident movements in both these fields borrow ideas from sociology. No less important, sociology is itself a contested field, reflecting the ambiguity of civil society that reproduces dominations and segmentations, hegemonies and exclusions. Civil society can force markets and states to be democratically accountable, but it can also collude in the reproduction of oppression and inequality, absorbing suffering and diffusing resistance. Critical sociology, therefore, has the urgent task of clarifying the possibilities and dangers of defending civil society as a bulwark against encroachments by state and economy.

The burgeoning interest in public sociology and the unanticipated vote against the war in Iraq suggest to me that the stakes are indeed becoming clearer. In a world tending toward market tyranny and state unilateralism, civil society is at once threatened with extinction and at the same time a major possible hold-out against deepening inequalities and multiplying threats to all manner of human rights. The interest of sociology in the very existence, let alone expansion, of civil society (even with all its warts) becomes the interest of humanity — locally, nationally and globally. If we can transcend our parochialism and recognize our distinctive relation to diverse publics within and across borders, sociologists could yet create the fulcrum around which a critical social science might evolve, one responsive to public issues while at the same time committed to professional excellence.

## Notes

1. Figures for public support of the Vietnam War come from Mueller (1973, Table.3.3), while figures for support of Iraq War come from Gallup Polls.

2. This scheme bears some resemblance to Talcott Parsons's four function (AGIL) scheme of adaptation, goal attainment, integration, and latency (pattern maintenance). The survival of any social system requires the performance of all four functions. Critical sociology corresponds to the latency function with its concern for value commitments whereas public sociology corresponds to the community basis of integration where influence is the medium of exchange. One might say that the policy sociology corresponds to goal attainment where the medium of exchange is power. It is difficult to think of professional sociology in the way that Parsons thinks of adaptation, as the economy based on money, since its medium of exchange is better understood as the expert credential. If one were to think in the terms of Pierre Bourdieu one would see disciplines as fields of power, each with their own dominant form of intellectual capital.

3. Another instance of the feminist expert witness unable to convey the complexity of the world was in the gender discrimination suit brought by the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC) against Sears, Roebuck and Co. Here Alice Kessler-Harris, called by EEOC, found her own scholarship being used (often out of context) against her. She was engaged in an uphill battle to demonstrate that the differential rate of acceptance of women into sales positions was due to employer preferences rather than the qualifications and preferences of female job applicants. Ranged against her argument of equal treatment for men and women was the expert testimony of Rosalind Rosenberg who argued that women are different from men and, therefore, should not be automatically allowed access to men's jobs. See, Ruth Milkman's (1986) excellent account of the predicament Kessler-Harris faced, and the structural bias of the context of the courtroom.

4. I am reminded here of Durkheim's ([1893]1984: book 3, chapter 1) treatment of Comte. Faced with the dissipative tendencies of the division of labor, Comte proposed the restoration of a consensus society with sociology as its new ideological cement. Durkheim maintained that in restoring a strong homogeneous collective conscience Comte was trying to resurrect a past that had disappeared forever, whereas he, Durkheim, proposed to move forward toward a new richer solidarity based on the division of labor, buttressed by a thinner, vaguer and differentiated ethos of social justice and individual dignity. Similarly, in sociology we need to leave behind dreams of a singular research program and instead must move forward to an elaborated division of labor based on a new critical ethos.

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