

Histories and Visions

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In this issue we feature the work of junior colleagues who may develop into mature historians of sociology and related fields. It is a privilege and a joy to be able to nurture such scholarship. Special thanks are due to Professor Charles Camic, who made the suggestion that some issues of this journal be devoted to the research of younger generations. It was his hope that we might thereby provide a distinctive service, and I believe that events have now validated that vision.

I would also like to express my appreciation to others who made this issue possible. Professor Richard Swedberg of Cornell, in his capacity as Chair of the ASA Section on the History of Sociology, did much to bring about the 2013 Junior Historians symposium at the New School for Social Research. Laura Ford and Michael Bare, who were then doctoral students at Cornell and Chicago, respectively, carried out the myriad of tasks involved in that mini-conference. Subsequently, when papers were submitted to this journal, reviewers—most of them members of the editorial board—provided constructive critiques and helpful guidance.

This issue also presents two analyses of the thought and intellectual development of George Herbert Mead, by Professor Sam Parkovnick of Dawson College, Montreal. It has been my pleasure to become acquainted with Professor Parkovnick at annual conferences of Cheiron, the International Society for the History of the Behavioral and Social Sciences. While Cheiron includes scholars from a range of fields, such as history, anthropology and sociology, most of its core members represent the discipline of psychology. Readers will, I think, find in Professor Parkovnick's papers insights that are less likely to emerge from a sociological perspective, and these enrich our understanding of Mead. Social psychology, as taught in departments of sociology and of psychology, might be described as non-identical intellectual twins that are at once remarkably similar and yet strikingly different.

The desire to connect with others from different eras seems a fundamental and universal human yearning that is independent of the particulars of social and cultural

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milieux. Very early groups had oral traditions and tales of ancient ancestors. In more recent times, complex and “rationalized” social orders contain ever-proliferating organizational records as well as diverse historical archives. Individuals and groups from prehistoric times to the age of digital electronics have had a trans-temporal dimension in their identities. In a very real sense, we are “those who have come before us.” Insofar as we memorialize them and model our activities on theirs, they live on in us.

As a field of study, sociology, like all organized groups, requires some minimum level of inter-generational solidarity to endure and to flourish. The papers presented here can promote a sense of solidarity and unity, without glossing over important historical omissions or injuries. We can, I think, be committed to the ideal of justice, and yet be compassionate and generous in assessing the efforts of predecessors in their different historical contexts. Very likely that is how we ourselves would wish to be judged, in centuries yet to come, by historians with the sensibilities of a future age.

Meanwhile, with the authors of this issue, let us celebrate a sense of sociology as both a living tradition and a creative beginning.