



Editor's Introduction: Canons, Recovered Contributions and International Influences

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Accepted: 26 August 2022 / Published online: 2 September 2022

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In this issue we present papers that are mostly historical, but which bear on issues of much current relevance, including possible and actual canons in the field of sociology, the contributions of forgotten or under-recognized scholars and activists, mutual influences across national and cultural boundaries, and the difficulties of doing sociology in highly politicized environments. Two of the articles also highlight issues of methodology and the proper uses of methods by sociological researchers.

In the first article, Cynthia Guzman, Daniel Silver, Sebastien Parker and Lars Dopking analyze rhetorical justifications for actual or possible canons that are presented in English-language sociological textbooks. On the basis of an examination of more than two hundred works, the authors find three recurrent rationales, which they designate, respectively, as functional, historicist and humanist. Functional justifications seek to legitimize canons by pointing to their alleged ability to define and integrate academic disciplines. Historicist justifications cite the role of a canon's founders in determining the directions that a field actually took. Humanist justifications attempt to legitimize canons by citing the alleged extraordinarily high quality of their proposed works. Each approach involves a particular conception of how canonization is problematic, in terms of representation, relevance or externality, along with a proposed solution to the problem.

Manisha Desai and Rianka Roy focus on the sociologically relevant activism of women in nineteenth-century India who were members of the Satya Shodhak Samaj, or the "Truth Seekers Society." Examining published and unpublished materials, including poetry, the authors make a case that the praxis of Savitribai Phule and other activists is relevant for a historical understanding of sociology, in the sense that it prefigured recent and current activism in the field, especially that of decolonial and post-colonial scholars. In particular, according to the authors, the women described in the article exercised a sociological imagination that recognized the intersectional oppres-

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sion of a Brahmanic and colonial hierarchy then operative in their socio-historical situation. The article might help readers to reflect on the question of which activists in earlier eras can legitimately be defined as “sociologists” and which cannot.

Jan Balon and John Holmwood delve into the complex career of Herbert Adolphus Miller and its connections with sociology at Chicago, the larger sociology of immigration, the progressive tradition in U.S. sociology, and the founding of the Czech Republic. The authors argue for greater recognition of Miller as an analyst of immigrants and immigration, and also as a theorist who developed such ideas as “proportional patriotism.” Ironically, in the authors’ view, Miller received credit for work not done, specifically on the volume, *Old World Traits Transplanted*, but not for much other work that was actually carried out. Conventional collective memory, in other words, has been wrong on both counts. Indeed, if Miller is defined as part of the circle of Chicago sociologists, there is a further error, in the sense that inclusion of Miller would add a more progressive voice to narratives of the “classic Chicago” approach.

Nicolas Eilbaum advocates for greater recognition of Paul Siu as both a representative of the “classic Chicago” approach to sociology and also a dissenter from that approach, based largely on the personal experience of being an immigrant who self-defined as a “sojourner,” that is, someone who never gave up the dream of returning one day to the homeland. The more dominant—or, one might say, “canonical”—emphasis at Chicago was on the assimilation of immigrants as a natural phase in the “cycle of race relations.” Siu’s work, in contrast, points to the experiences of those who do not wish to assimilate, as illustrated by the lives of Chinese persons in the laundry industry. These persons, who are often males who had come to the U.S. in the hope of amassing wealth to be shared with the homeland, become marginal both in their new country and in the land of their birth. They are dreamers, but their vision is not “the American Dream.”

Ana Sinha and Pooja Lakhanpal describe the lengthy and sometimes troubled career of Chinese sociologist Fei Xiaotong, in order to demonstrate the global flow of knowledge and research methods. Fei’s work, as a case study, was influenced by that of Robert Park, British social scientists (especially Bronislaw Malinowski), the Russian anthropologist Sergei M. Shirokogoroff (the adviser on Siu’s M.A. thesis) and Chinese colleagues. Fei blended these creatively in such works as *From the Soil*, which applies the indigenous idea of “chaxugeju” to distinguish between Chinese society and its western counterparts. The article also touches on the difficulties of conducting sociological work in a highly politicized environment, which in this instance means an authoritarian regime on the far political left.

Paolo Velasquez delineates other international connections and influences through an analysis of the career of Hans Zetterberg. The article features a memoir by Zetterberg dealing with the experience of being on the sociology faculty at Columbia University during the era of sociology’s prominence there, especially as embodied in the collaborative approach of Robert K. Merton and Paul Lazarsfeld that sought to integrate theory and empirical research. Having returned to Sweden, Zetterberg became an important figure there in sociology, partly through the application of ideas and methods learned at Columbia. The paper also includes a sketch of the establishment of sociology as a formal academic discipline in Sweden.

Andreas Schmitz and Julian Hamann provide a thoughtful discussion of relations between research methods and the exercise of power, whether to sustain or to transform particular sociocultural orders, while producing social scientific knowledge. The authors focus in particular on two widely used approaches, namely, survey research and qualitative interviewing. They consider three related aspects of power dynamics: how outside groups affect the use of methods; how researchers exercise control during the application of methods; and how the results of the methods influence external groups and societies. Schmitz and Hamann recognize many nuances in the processes they examine, including how researchers remain dependent upon the cooperation of respondents in producing valid empirical data. The authors conclude with an appeal to sociologists to develop a greater awareness of the power aspects of research that they carry out.

David L. Morgan examines the relationship between Robert K. Merton and the subsequent history of focus group literature. The author casts into doubt Merton's claim that the process of "obliteration by incorporation" might account for an alleged lack of recognition of Merton's early contributions. Actual citations do not fit this pattern, but indicate, rather, the "reawakening" of what might be termed a "sleeping" source. Somewhat ironically, according to the author, Merton's "obliteration by incorporation" does apply to other sources, in particular to those that reintroduced the methodology of focus groups to the social sciences. Morgan concludes with a discussion of how focus group methodology became accepted and applied outside of academia prior to making a return to academic disciplines.

Justin Huft concludes the issue with an analysis of the history of psychotherapy and a possible future sociology of that field. The author sketches out three eras of research on mental illness that were organized, respectively, around etiology, diagnosis, and treatment, while arguing that sociologists have paid relatively little attention to this area. Huft speculates on possible reasons for this inattention and presents a research agenda for a sociology of therapy. The author concludes by identifying several possible benefits from the proposed approach.

Readers might be surprised to learn of some of the cross-national connections described in the papers, and perhaps especially by the links between Chicago and China. A key figure in that case was Robert Park, who visited China during the 1930s and shared the "Chicago approach" with colleagues there, perhaps especially with regard to urban sociology and field methods. During the period of roughly the 1920s through the early 1940s, a considerable number of Chinese-born students received training at the University of Chicago, including, of course, Paul Siu. It might be tempting to frame these interactions in terms of domination and "coloniality," but the article by Sinha and Lakhnani points out that the presentation of "Chicago" ideas to people such as Fei Xiaotong did not lead to their automatic and uncritical adoption. It is actually far easier to make a case that the official adoption of Marxism by the Chinese Communist Party, and its imposition on the social sciences following the 1948 revolution, is an instance of western coloniality, though self-chosen by the ruling group. Faced with this reality, Fei Xiaotong and other social scientists had to struggle to gain some measure of autonomy for their fields. The recent national celebration of the 200th birthday of Karl Marx, led by Xi Jinping, the General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, suggests that the struggle for intellectual and professional

autonomy is not yet complete. This is an ongoing issue that should be of concern to all sociologists, not only with regard to leftist regimes such as those in China, North Korea or Nicaragua, but also with regard to authoritarian regimes on the far political right, as well as the more theocratic regimes in nations such as Afghanistan. The more that politics intrudes into, and coerces academic life, the harder it will be for sociologists to speak with their own authentic voice.

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