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Sociology Engaged in Social Justice

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Abstract

This article expands on my presidential address to further bolster the case that sociology has, from its inception, been engaged in social justice. I argue that a critical review of our discipline and our Association's vaunted empiricist tradition of objectivity, in which sociologists are detached from their research, was accomplished by a false history and sociology of sociology that ignored, isolated, and marginalized some of the founders. In the past half-century, scholar-activists, working-class sociologists, sociologists of color, women sociologists, indigenous sociologists, and LGBTQ sociologists have similarly been marginalized and discouraged from pursuing social justice issues and applied research within our discipline. Being ignored by academic sociology departments has led them to create or join homes in interdisciplinary programs and other associations that embrace applied and scholar-activist scholarship. I offer thoughts about practices that the discipline and Association should use to reclaim sociology's social justice tradition.

Keywords

historical sociology, scholar-activist, exclusion, politics, knowledge production, social justice, engaged sociology

We are doing sociology at a time when authoritarian heads of states have been elected around the world; empires are arising, borders are hardening; people are torn from their homes to become stateless refugees; and racism and xenophobia are all over social media. We have a U.S. president who refers to

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Mexican migrants and refugees as rapists, criminals, and drug dealers (Machalowski and Solop 2019). Trump has referred to African countries as "shithole" nations, advocated for more immigrants from Norway, and argued that after seeing America, immigrants from Nigeria would never "go back to their huts." The president's racist comments about Blacks, Latinos, Native Americans, Muslims, and Jews have emboldened public activities by neo-Nazis and white supremacists (Graham et al. 2019), as well as white women and men who call the police on Black people engaged in everyday activities, placing them in harm's way. In a rally in Panama City Beach, Florida, Trump joked about shooting migrants at the border (Farzan 2019). Three months later, a white nationalist Trump supporter drove 650 miles to El Paso, Texas, with the intention of killing as many Mexicans as possible: on August 3, 2019, he killed 22 people and injured 24 others (Arango, Bogel-Burroughs, and Benner 2019). Trump's disdain for people of color is further evident in his administration's refusal to allocate relief funds and send workers to Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria or to the Bahamas after Hurricane Dorian (Mansoor 2019).

Our annual meeting took place in a comfortable space, while concentration camps spread along our southern border, where children fleeing global warming, gangs, and repressive states in Central America are sleeping on concrete floors. Trump has returned us to shameful periods in our country's history: parents and children are separated, children are sexually and physically abused in detention, women are sexually abused by border agents, and families sleep on the dirt in fenced cages (Hutzler 2019). ASA met in 2019 in the city of immigrants, near the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island, while the administration vilified asylum seekers. Between October and December 2018, the denial rate of asylum cases was 19 percent, and "that figure had grown to 45 percent by the first quarter of fiscal year 2019" (Schacher 2019:4). Although migration rates have dropped, Trump refuses to consider evidence-based data in developing immigration policy (Hesson 2019).

In the three years he has been in office, Trump has supported the nomination of judges and Cabinet Secretaries who oppose gay and transgender rights, dismantled civil rights legislation concerning voting rights and affirmative action, and curtailed enforcement programs and consent decrees related to discrimination. Trump has a personal history of sexist and misogynist behavior and has made disparaging remarks about people with disabilities. His administration has eroded legislation protecting employees by sex, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation in the workforce (Green 2019; Greenhouse 2019); rescinded Title IX guidance clarifying protections under the law for transgender students; and rescinded 72 guidance documents outlining the rights of students with disabilities (Balingit 2017). The divide between the rich and the rest of society has increased as a result of tax cuts for millionaires, billionaires, and multinational corporations (Appelbaum 2017). Our fragile inventory of social safety-net programs continues to shrink as this and previous administrations ended subsidies for certain health care plans, disability programs, and social security.

Trump's denial of climate change will be a lasting crime against humanity. His administration has rolled back crucial federal efforts established by the Obama administration to cut greenhouse-gas emissions: it has limited regulations on power plants and vehicles and made public lands available for fossil-fuel development (Popovich, Albeck-Ripka, and Pierre-Louis 2019). Just eight months after Obama signed the Paris Agreement, Trump announced the U.S. withdrawal, claiming unfair environmental standards harmed U.S. business and workers (Shear 2017). Not only has this administration denied climate change, it has forcefully moved to discredit legitimate science (Jackson 2019). We have already experienced rising sea levels, vicious hurricanes, storms in the Midwest, and increasing wildland fires around the world. The administration attacks evidence-based science, it has cut research funding to NEH and NSF (Davenport and Landler 2019), and it has returned food regulation to an era similar to Upton

Sinclair's *The Jungle* (Khimm 2018). In many cases, Trump's policy rejects evidence-based social science; his supporters confuse sociology with socialism, misunderstanding both.

Attacks on science-based and evidence-based research are perhaps the central issues bringing together all the scientists in our discipline. We stand for data; we stand for evidence; we stand for critical thought; and we stand for an open and transparent presentation of research findings so they can be replicated or disconfirmed.

Under these conditions, teaching, research, and service in sociology have become crucial in equipping students, communities, and the general public with critical thinking skills to understand the dog whistles and gaslighting used by right-wing populist movements. Trump's Secretary of Education demanded that a university department advance the administration's "ideological priorities," claiming the department was unfairly promoting "the positive aspects of Islam" but not Christianity or Judaism:

> An Aug. 29 letter from the U.S. Education Department orders the Duke-UNC Consortium for Middle East Studies to revise its offerings by Sept. 22 or risk losing future funding from a federal grant that's awarded to dozens of universities to support foreign language instruction. (Binkley 2019)

Brazil's far-right president has defunded philosophy, education, and sociology programs (Redden 2019). Hungarian sociologists fear losing academic freedom as the nationalist government moves the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, including the Social Science Research Institute, under the direct control of political ministries (Abbott 2019). In these times of right-wing populist movements around the world, engaged sociology and activist research is necessary and crucial for the discipline to preserve democracy.

Engaging social justice and sociology is certainly not a new theme. Most sociologists identify social justice, social change, and a desire to make a better world as the motives behind their pursuit of graduate studies in the discipline (Margolis and Romero 1998; Peters 1991). I believe no one becomes a sociologist to hinder or harm people, or to promote injustice, yet "Social Justice Warriors" has become a term of contempt in many circles—including some of our own.

Our discipline has a long history of debating value-free objective sociology versus an engaged sociology aimed at change for a better world. Most U.S. sociology students are introduced to Weber's idea of value-free sociology as undergraduates; he argued for a detached and independent approach to research without social and political commitments. Most textbooks' interpretations are based on Weber's essay "On Science as a Vocation." However, over his career, Weber elaborated further, changing and altering his ideas to distinguish objectivity as the "accurate depiction of the facts" from value-freedom (Sharlin 1974:338). By the 1890s, Weber did not entirely separate science and politics, and his writings appear to support the view that science was devoted to improving social conditions and "should serve the nation" (Sharlin 1974:341). Later in life, his theoretical essays on social science research actively explored ways for science to serve the nation and yet be separated from political and social attitudes.

Many early U.S. sociologists attended German universities, and European sociology has long been critical of the idea of objectivity and argued that studying the natural and social worlds are completely different. Yet, American sociology adopted a "rigid empiricist tradition" (Forsythe 1973:215). In this address, I argue that the empiricist tradition of "objectivity," in which sociologists are detached from their research, has isolated and marginalized sociologists from communities that have long been the subjects (I mean objects) of research. I examine the history of the discipline and the ASA to identify the ways sociologists have been discouraged from pursuing social justice issues and applied research. I conclude with practices that the discipline and the Association can adopt to reclaim sociology's social justice tradition. Space does not permit a detailed chronology

of the tradition of scholar-activists or sociologists and their theories and research, but I identify crucial points in our discipline and Association's history. Suffice to say that American sociology has a social justice tradition that has not been fully recognized.

SOCIAL JUSTICE TRADITION OF THE DISCIPLINE

Most sociology textbooks present the men of the Chicago School as establishing the foundation for American sociology (e.g., Hinkle and Hinkle 1954). However, the men of the Chicago School ignored the empirical science and rigorous research methods being used at the Atlanta School and Hull House.[1] Even then, it was common to criticize scholar-activism or social justice sociology research for lacking "objectivity," offering a biased interpretation of data, and using research methods that were not rigorous (Morris 2017).[2] A brief overview of the Atlanta School and Hull House research demonstrates the methodologically rigorous beginnings of sociology and its strong social justice tradition.

Atlanta School

The origin myth of the Chicago School ignores the contributions that the Atlanta School and other historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) made in the development of sociology, especially W. E. B. Du Bois's theoretical and empirical work (Morris 2015; Wright 2010; Wright and Calhoun 2006). I agree with Stephen Steinberg (2016) that in *The Scholar Denied*, Aldon Morris challenged "dominant discourses in sociology that, ever since the inception of the discipline at the University of Chicago in 1892, have not only elided the groundbreaking and transformative contributions of Black sociologists, but have also provided epistemic justification for racial hierarchy."

The white founding-father narrative glaringly ignored the contributions the Atlanta School and other HBCUs made to the development of sociology, and it disregarded Du Bois's theoretical and empirical work. Recent sociological scholarship on Du Bois and the Atlanta School challenges both the discipline and the ASA's origin story of American sociology (Morris 2015; Wright 2010, 2016; Wright and Calhoun 2006).

In 1897, Du Bois accepted a position at Atlanta University and established a scientific school of sociology. Along with starting the sociology department and teaching sociology courses, he created the first sociological research laboratory (Wright 2016). Over the next 13 years at Atlanta University, Du Bois mentored the first generation of Black sociologists, including Monroe Work, Richard Wright, and George Edmund Haynes.[3] Although Work attended graduate school at the University of Chicago, he began a collaboration with Du Bois. Work published in top journals of the day and was hired as a professor at Savannah State. He later established the Department of Records and Research at Tuskegee Institute, which compiled detailed data on the lives of Blacks, including a report on lynching. Wright was the first Black student to earn a PhD in sociology at the University of Pennsylvania. He participated in research and activities with the Settlement Movement and was an avid promoter of the Atlanta conferences.

Du Bois also mentored Mary White Ovington while she researched and published a study on the economic status of Blacks in New York City and the experiences of Black women in the New York labor market. A decade prior to the first American Sociological Society conference, sociological research on science, race, and inequality was discussed, disseminated, and debated at the annual Atlanta Conferences. Over the years, the list of key scholars and leaders participating included the university presidents of HBCUs, the president of Harvard University, and leading Black and white scholars and leaders, including Walter Wilcox, Frank Sanborn, Franz Boas, Monroe Work, Eugene Harris, Mary Church Terrell, Sophonisba P. Breckinridge, Jane Addams, Florence Kelly, Booker T. Washington, and Governors Allen D. Candler and Charles William Eliot of Georgia. Even though these scholarly conferences occurred during Jim Crow, participants

generated resolutions promoting social change and social justice (Morris 2015).

Du Bois's "Philadelphia Negro" is one of the most important nineteenth-century works of American sociology; his charts and graphs made data visible in new and insightful ways. Thus, he was an important father of visual sociology; moreover, his photographic exhibit for the 1900 Paris Exposition countered the racist stereotypes many held of the Black population in the United States (Morris 2018). In his Niagara speech, Du Bois said:

> We want our children trained as intelligent human beings should be, and we will fight for all time against any proposal to educate black boys and girls simply as servants and underlings, or simply for the use of other people. They have a right to know, to think, to aspire. (cited in Torricelli and Carroll 1999:19)

Like other HBCUs, Atlanta University was under constant threat of financial collapse, which made institutional investment in faculty research and support for travel to professional meetings almost impossible and "severely limited library acquisition of basic research data materials" (Jones 1974:128). HBCUs were also plagued by heavy teaching loads, no graduate programs, and not having academic presses to widely disseminate research manuscripts. Du Bois attempted to collaborate with white universities to access their research centers' resources; however, white male sociologists were not interested in his talents or building on his research on Black communities. Du Bois ([1904] 1978:56) wrote that white scholars' lack of interest was beneath their position as educated professionals: "such an attitude is allowable to be ignorant—it is expected among horses and among the uncultivated masses of men, but it is not expected of the scientific leaders of a great nation."

Settlement Sociology

Mainstream sociology similarly ignored the contributions of settlement sociology. Mary Jo Deegan's pathbreaking book, *Jane Addams and the Men of the Chicago School, 1892–1918* (1988), published three decades ago, documented the role Jane Adams and Hull House had in developing sociology. This, too, has been largely ignored in sociological theory and methods.

Settlement sociology from 1885 to 1930 is "when sociology in the United States played a vital role in improving the lives of individuals and groups and in shaping government policies to produce a more just society" (Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley 2002:5). The College Settlements Association was organized in 1890; two years later, it established "fellowships for women who seek to pursue sociological studies in college settlements" (Woods and Kennedy [1911] 1970:2). Much of the settlements' training included studying sociology and conducting field work. Not all the settlement workers were sociologists, but many prominent residents conducted sociological research and published in sociology journals: they were members of the discipline's national professional association, they self-identified or were recognized by others as sociologists, and some were employed as sociologists. The co-founder of Chicago's Hull House, Jane Addams, "was a charter member of the ASS [American Sociological Society]" and published in the *American Journal of Sociology*, which was "the most prestigious and central journal in the new discipline" (Deegan 1988:10). Opposed to the elitism and patriarchy of academic sociology and avoiding the constraints on speech and activism in the university, Adams chose to remain outside of the academy. The men of the Chicago School, insisting on "objectivity," dismissed Hull House research as not being sociology because of its applied and social justice focus.[4]

When these women sociologists were hired by universities, their positions were rarely in sociology departments but were in domestic science, civics and philanthropy, and home studies (Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley 1998). Many women sociologists worked for city, state, and federal governments, collecting and analyzing data to develop social programs to address poverty,

Photo 1. Lewis Hine Photograph
Note: "Laura Petty, a 6-year-old berry picker on Jenkins farm, Rock Creek near Baltimore, Md. 'I'm just beginning.' Picked two boxes yesterday. (2 cents a box)." (See my report July 10, 1909.) July 8, 1909. Location: Baltimore, Maryland.
Source: National Child Labor Committee collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

delinquency, health, housing, and education. Importantly, sociologists have argued that women, including Jane Adams, Florence Kelly, Edith and Grace Abbott, Sophonisba Breckinridge, Frances Kellor, Julia Lathrop, Annie Marion MacLean, Virginia Robinson, Anna Garlin Spencer, Jessie Taft, and Marion Talbot, established a school of sociology prior to the Chicago School of Sociology (Deegan 1988, 2013; Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley 2002). However, many women who remained in the university eventually became the founders of the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy, which established clear disciplinary boundaries between settlement sociology and value-free sociology (MacLean and Williams 2012).

Not all the "settlement" sociologists were women. Lewis Wickes Hine studied sociology at the University of Chicago and Columbia University. He also chose life outside academia, teaching at the Ethical Culture School and working for the Russell Sage Foundation and the National Child Labor Committee. His photographs of immigrants at Ellis Island and child workers appear in many introduction to sociology texts. His work also contributed to the development of visual sociology, but although an important graduate of the Chicago School, he was not acknowledged because of his obvious devotion to social justice and social change. As a visual sociologist, Hine did more than make photographs, he collected ethnographic data for his journals and reports. His lantern slides and "photo-stories" were used in presentations to philanthropic organizations seeking to end the exploitation of child workers. "The *American Journal of Sociology* routinely ran photographs in connection with its muckraking reformist articles for at least the first fifteen years of its existence" (Oberschall 1972:215).

Having a close working relationship with women professionals who were involved in settlement sociology in Chicago, George Herbert Mead stands as an exception to the other white male sociologists at the Chicago School. He was an advocate of Mary McDowell's leadership in the University of Chicago Settlement House, which "was to serve as a 'window' for the new department of sociology" (Taylor 1954:32). His involvement included service (treasurer of the board of University of Chicago Settlement House from 1908 to 1921 and then president from 1919 to 1920) and research assistance for Abbott and Breckinridge's analysis of survey data. Working closely with women at Hull House, Mead helped establish the Chicago Bureau of Social Research (Deegan 1988), which "trained staff

Photo 2. Ida B. Wells-Barnett
Source: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs.

in research methods to conduct" studies on migrant workers and unemployed men and women (Taylor 1954:34). He shared Lewis Hine's, Jane Addams's, and the Settlement Movement's quest for pragmatism, progressive reform, a social democratic version of socialism, a commitment to nonviolence in the struggles for social justice, and humanitarian objectives. In addressing social problems, such as the women workers' labor strike, the scientific method was used to reach practical working solutions for social reform (Deegan and Burger 1978). As Shalin (1988:927) wrote, "By the end of the 19th century, Mead emerged as a 'radically democratic intellectual,' a reformer deeply involved in progressive causes, and a budding academic searching for a theoretical rationale for a far-reaching yet peaceful reconstruction of American society."

Ida B. Wells-Barnett, another important scholar-activist engaged in social justice, worked with the Settlement Movement, founded a black settlement house, and called on Jane Addams for support in reaching interracial alliances (Giddings 2008). Wells-Barnett is best known for her international and national anti-lynching campaign. She produced the first systematic study on lynching, published as *The Red Record: Tabulated Statistics and Alleged Causes of Lynchings in the United States, 1892–1894* (1895) and *Southern Horrors* ([1892] 2017) (Deegan 1991). She wrote:

> The student of American sociology will find the year 1894 marked by a pronounced awakening of the public conscience to a system of anarchy and outlawry which had grown during a series of ten years to be so common, that scenes of unusual brutality failed to have any visible effect upon the humane sentiment of the people of our land. (Wells-Barnett 1895:9)

She explained her choice to use the *Chicago Tribune* as her main data base as follows:

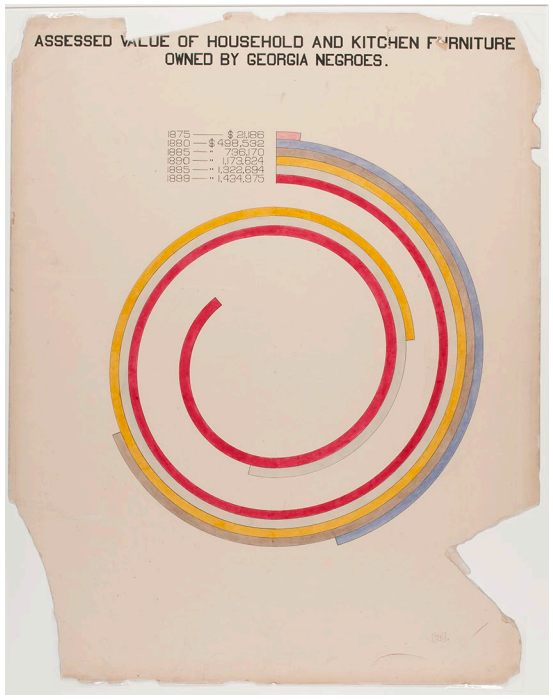

Photo 3. "Assessed Value of Household and Kitchen Furniture Owned by Georgia Negros"
Note: Chart prepared by Du Bois for the Negro Exhibit of the American Section of the Paris Exposition Universelle in 1900 to show the economic and social progress of African Americans since emancipation.
Source: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs.

> The purpose of the pages which follow shall be to give the record which has been made, not by colored men, but that which is the result of compilations made by white men, of reports send over the civilized world by white men in the South. Out of their own mouths shall the murders be condemned. (Wells-Barnett 1895:17)

Wells-Barnett meticulously gathered data on the "nature of the crime of the victim, the state where the lynching occurred, the sex and age of the victim, and the race" (Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley 1998:162). Her thorough analysis debunked the myth that lynching resulted from Black men raping white women, but "rather was an excuse to get rid of negroes who were acquiring wealth and property" (Wells-Barnett 1895:64). The beginnings of her conceptualization of race, class, and gender is found in these lynching studies, along with her methodological contributions to sociology.

As Deegan and others argue, generations of women sociologists were gradually erased from our origin story, particularly the men and women sociologists conducting empirical studies that were critical, reflexive, and activist sociology. Their theoretical and "methodological pioneering" empirical studies have largely been deleted from our courses on introduction to sociology, research methods, urban sociology, immigration, social problems, social movements, and social change (Deegan 1991; Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley 1998).

Settlement sociologists taught in various departments in the university, published in academic journals, and participated in sociology conferences, but their major goal was to reach the general public, structure government policies based on principles of social

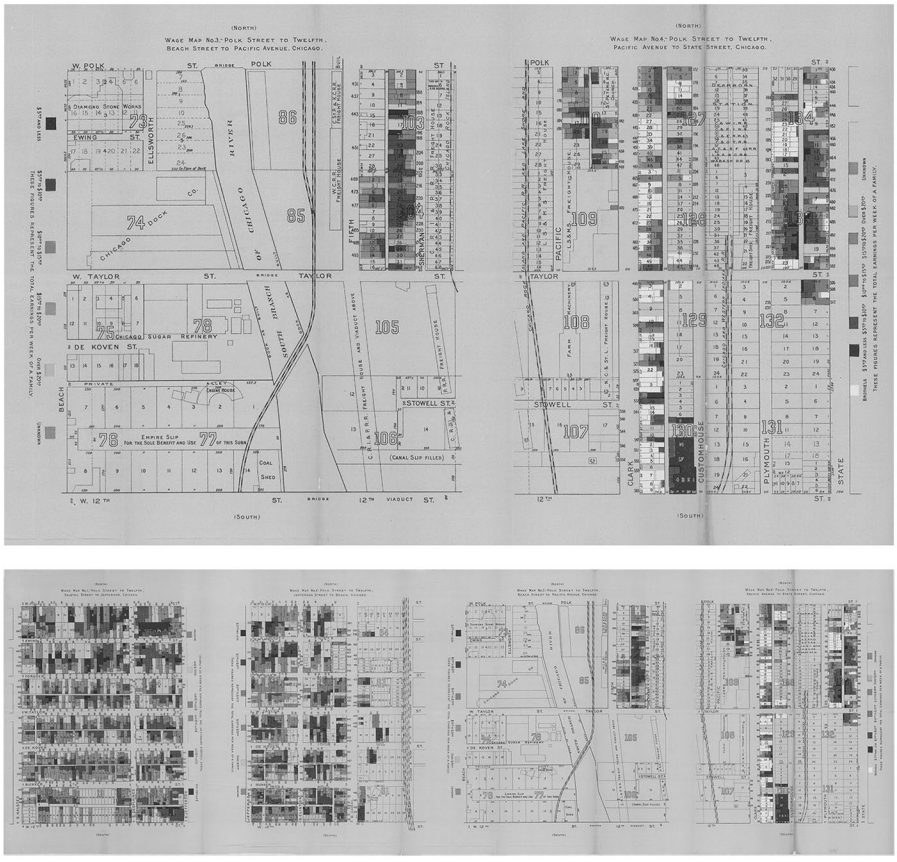

Photo 4. Wage Map
Note: No. 1[-4], Polk Street to Twelfth (Chicago). Detached from: Hull-House maps and papers . . . New York: Crowell, 1895.
Source: The New York Public Library believes this item is in the public domain under the laws of the United States.

justice, and advocate for social justice. However, their goals were sometimes framed in racist beliefs about the superiority of white civilization, such as in the writings of Charlotte Perkins Gilman (Deegan 1991; Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley 1998) and Beatrice Forbes-Roberston Hale (Newman 1999): "Gilman held primitives responsible for white women's relegation to the home . . . patriarchy was an invention of the primitive, and sexual differences were a constraining legacy that would have to be overthrown if the white race were ever to advance beyond its primitive heritage" (Newman 1999:133). Hale, another early feminist sociologist, also advocated racist assimilationist ideologies; she viewed sexual differences among white men and women as "a negative vestige of their primitive past" (Newman 1999:139).

Revisiting Sociology's Origin Myth

Both Du Bois and Addams developed quantitative and qualitative research methods that influenced the discipline for decades. Du Bois began publishing "a body of empirical studies during the first decade of the twentieth century" (Morris 2015:113). Under Addams's editorship, the residents of Hull House coauthored the first sociological book that introduced "the methodology mapping demographic information on urban populations according to

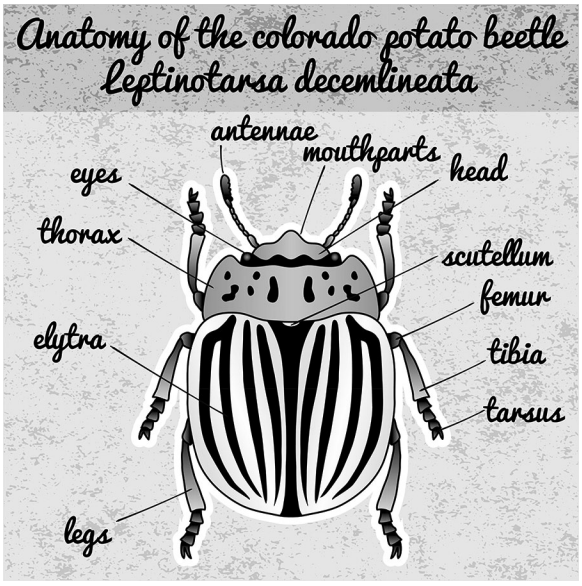

Photo 5. Colorado Potato Bug
Source: Shutterstock (stock-vector-insect-anatomy-sticker-colorado-potato-beetle-leptinotarsa-decemlineata-sketch-of-colorado-353120732).

Photo 6. "A Man was Lynched"
Note: Flag announcing another lynching. 'A MAN WAS LYNCHED YESTERDAY,' is flown from the window of the NAACP headquarters on 69 Fifth Ave., New York City in 1936. – Illustration.
Source: Royalty-free stock illustration ID: 242290540.

their geographic distribution" (Deegan 1988:55) and "the use of mapping as a statistical technique to reveal patterns of social groups" (Deegan 1988:62). The tradition of scholar-activists understood that "advocacy was informed by scholarship; one role gave direction to the other" (Robbins 1974:77).

Early in its history, the Chicago School adhered to a rigid definition of value-free sociology. Robert E. Park was an avid supporter of a sociology that "was an objective science whose mission was to formulate natural laws determining human behavior" (Morris 2015:112). In training graduate students, Park discouraged them from engaging in activism. "Park told them flatly that the world was full of crusaders. Their role instead was to be that of the calm, detached scientist who

investigates race relations with the same objectivity and detachment with which the zoologist dissects the potato bug" (Smith and Killian 1974:197). Contrast this to Du Bois's statement: "One could not be a calm, cool, and detached scientist while Negroes were lynched, murdered and starved" (Morris 2015:114). The Chicago School's influence on the discipline is evident in the fact that "separate but equal" in *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896 "went unchallenged by the early sociologists. . . . Most of these early sociologists displayed strong humanitarian sentiments, but their goal was to establish an objective, value-free sociology, practiced by scientists who would study, but not attack or defend, the prevailing social system" (Smith and Killian 1974:193). Du Bois, in contrast, embraced the idea that sociology could "be utilized as a liberating force" (Morris 2015:66); the beginning of American sociology was thus scientifically rigorous and advocated social justice. Du Bois, the activist-scholar, established public sociology and the public intellectual.

The early history of sociology was tarnished by gender- and race-segregation that relegated Black women and men sociologists to HBCUs and women sociologists to women's colleges or government agencies. Race and gender segregation also undermined access to foundation boards and administrators who held the purse with research money. Funding agents and white scholars thus served as professional gatekeepers, limiting or eliminating funding for research projects considered to be controversial or socially or politically sensitive. The next generation of Black sociologists were more successful in obtaining foundation funding—provided that they were supervised by white social scientists like Robert E. Park and did not engage in critical research (Stanfield 2011).

Critical Sociology

Before the 1950s, few white male sociologists supported a sociology for social justice. One of the first was C. Wright Mills, most widely known for his critical and radical perspectives that "(1) persisted in revealing the underside of U.S. society in the hope of fomenting structural change, and (2) relentlessly attacked the mainline and what he regarded as the 'complacent' sociology of the 1950s" (Treviño 2012:1). Early in his career, Mills was influenced by pragmatism, particularly Mead and the notion that theory must always be adapted toward action. Mills's (1959:188) career was framed by his concern that the "social structure of the United States is not an altogether democratic one." Along with democracy, he embraced an egalitarian humanist vision and sought a broader audience than other sociologists. Mills used both quantitative and qualitative methods in his early work, but he later rejected quantitative methods for its methodological fetishism, which missed the "big questions," and its impersonal approach and detachment from the subject. He disdained Talcott Parsons's grand theory, which he viewed as legitimating the power structure and forms of domination, as well as incorporating conservative approaches to understanding the United States. His analysis confronting Parsons's abstract empiricism, and Parsons's garbled writing, was the subject of an entire chapter in *The Sociological Imagination*. However, the major attraction of *The Sociological Imagination* was its demonstration of tools to understand the relations between "personal troubles and public issues" that could be used to analyze social structure (Treviño 2012). Mills sketched a framework for "a politically aware, self-reflective and publicly accessible intellectual culture" (Kemple and Mawani 2009:228).

Frequently referred to as "the prophet of the New Left," Mills's publications *Listen, Yankee: The Revolution in Cuba, The Causes of World War Three, The Sociological Imagination*, and "Letter to the New Left" called academics away from "civic apathy and [to] take political responsibility for their lives and become revolutionizing agents" (Treviño 2012:174). Mills's critique of mainstream sociology's political complacency, the discipline's maintenance of the status quo, and its failure to analyze U.S. imperialism was a

life-time endeavor. His writings influenced young intelligentsia in South Korea, Cuba, Japan, Turkey, and Mexico.

Mills served as a rallying point for British and U.S. new leftists, primarily white male public intellectuals and graduate students, but he missed the opportunity to acknowledge the political base of women, the poor, and people of color. In an unpublished dissertation on Mills, R. A. Gillam (1966:76) quoted Mills as claiming, "I have never been interested in what is called the Negro problem. I have a feeling that if I did, it would turn out to be 'a white problem'—and I've enough of these on my hands just now." Mexican Americans who read his sexist and racist commentary on the Zoot Suits riots, "The Sailor, Sex Market, and Mexicans" (Mills 1943), were unlikely to read more of his work. This is also true for his book *The Puerto Rican Journey*, about which Treviño (2012:111) concludes, "Mills posture vis-á-vis Puerto Ricans, both islanders and migrants, was elitist at best and racist at the worst." Expecting Mills to condemn U.S. imperialism in Latin America during an interview in Mexico City, Latin American intellectuals were surprised when instead of holding imperialism responsible as the major source of poverty, Mills rebuked them and advised them to examine their own power elite (Treviño 2012).

Another major social justice sociologist was Alvin W. Gouldner. Unlike Mills, Gouldner (1970:399) acknowledged the importance of the civil rights movement as "training ground, inspiration, and stimulus to the New Left." Gouldner also criticized Parsons's functionalism, which he characterized as value unfree, and he demonstrated that structural functionalism was loaded with conservative values, including its misrepresentation of poverty in urban ghettos. He pointed to the misrepresentation by sociologists who ignored the plight of Blacks by solely focusing on the middle-class rather than the majority of individuals living in or close to poverty. Conservatives interpreted the decline of race riots[5] and lynching as "rapid social progress taking place" (Gouldner 1970:49). Rather than considering the revolutionary opportunity for social change resulting from marches, demonstrations, protests, and militant organizations, conservatives only saw a disruption to the social order. Gouldner's (1970:53) critique of value-free sociology challenged dominant methodological and theoretical assumptions in the field:

> [T]he academic social sciences are the social sciences of an alienated age and alienated man. From this standpoint the possibility of "objectivity" in, and the call to "objectivity" by, the academic social sciences has a rather different meaning than that conventionally assigned. The "objectivity" of the social sciences is not the expression of a dispassionate and detached view of the social world: it is, rather an ambivalent effort to accommodate to alienation *and* to express a muted resentment of it.

Gouldner reasoned that scholars working in the mainstream failed to examine their assumptions and presumptions; dissidents, in contrast, developed their argument from the evidence gained from struggle. He advocated *reflexive* sociology as the foundation for "a positive vision of sociology and society" (Calhoun and VanAntwerpen 2007: 385), which "is a conception of how to live and a total praxis" (Gouldner 1970:504). Gouldner was reinforcing Mills's position that the aim of sociological knowledge is to be relevant to people's "interests, hopes, and values"; sociological knowledge should assist individuals in understanding their position in the world and enable them to control it rather than to be controlled. He maintained that sociology needed to close the gap between the discipline and the general public by working to develop sociology that gives people the knowledge required to address social problems (Galliher and Galliher 1995). *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology* became "'a kind of rallying text' for a new generation of politically engaged

critical sociologists" (Calhoun and VanAntwerpen 2007:384).

Both Mills and Gouldner were critical of government and foundation funding; they expressed concern over how it set research agendas and goals. In the 1950s, Mills's critique included the relationship between the CIA-funded Committee for Cultural Freedom and three mainstream sociologists—Edward A. Shils, Seymour Martin Lipset, and Daniel Bell. Mills punctured their argument that "political philosophies as fascism and socialism had become irrelevant in the postwar period" (Treviño 2012:22). Concern about the political motives of funded research was tied to Mills's (1959:101) criticism of abstract empiricism and the ongoing development of a bureaucratic social science, which was already evident in the media, armed forces, and universities:

> [The] new social science has come to serve whatever ends its bureaucratic clients may have in view. Those who promote and practice this style of research readily assume the political perspective of their bureaucratic clients and chieftains. . . . In so far as such research are effective in their declared practical aims, they serve to increase the efficiency and the reputation—and to that extent, the prevalence—of bureaucratic forms of domination in modern society.

Mills (1959:80) and many other critical sociologists were appalled by those who put sociological research in "direct service to army generals and social workers, corporation managers and prison wardens." In the 1960s, renowned sociologists participated in the counterinsurgency program, "Project Camelot," which collected data for the U.S. military in planning, influencing, and predicting social developments in numerous countries in Latin and South America, the Middle East, Far East, Europe, and Africa. Sociologists in opposition to such research programs argued that the military-industrial-academic complex was fraught with problems and was an imperialist attempt to control international policy while doing nothing to address social inequality and political alienation (Rohde 2013). The concern over universities' involvement with military research radicalized many sociology graduate students at the time and continues today (Brown 1988; Smart 2016).

Changing of the Guard

White radicals in sociology engaged the writings of Mills and Gouldner, but there is no avoiding the reality that white males dominated professional associations, academic departments, and professional publications, which resulted in the male European and white standpoint of sociology. Many of us would agree with Stephen Steinberg's (2016) summary: "Since its inception, sociologists have unconsciously practiced a white sociology." What this meant for scholars of color was captured in James Moss's (1971:122) essay "In Defense of Black Studies":

> The sociology that I learned, and the concepts I internalized, were all cast within the framework of white perceptions and white interpretations. Indeed, while many will dispute this, the sociology I brought away with me from Columbia was the sociology of the white experience with its Anglo-Saxon and Teutonic roots. It certainly did not, nor does it now touch, except peripherally, upon the sociology of the black experience either in this country, or in Africa or the Caribbean. Nor do I think that the experience has been substantially different for most black scholars in America.

As the chair of Black Studies at San Francisco State College, Nathan Hare (1970:5) described one dilemma as "uniting the Black academy with the street." In 1968 to 1969, the Black Student Union, the Third World Liberation Front, and faculty of color organized a strike at San Francisco State College to protest systematic discrimination. This year marked the 50th anniversary of the College of Ethnic Studies at San Francisco State University. This is also the 50th anniversary of the

Chicano Moratorium, the indigenous Alcatraz Occupation, and the Stonewall Riots. The establishment of the College of Ethnic Studies marked a time when many sociologists of color created or found an academic home to do community-engaged research and teaching and to be scholar-activists. Many race, ethnic, and gender studies programs incorporated the tradition of Black sociology: activism, social justice, empirical-based research, and serving as public sociologists.

Sentiments expressed by Addams, Wells, Du Bois, Mills, Gouldner, and other scholar-activists have been adopted by generations of sociologists of color, women sociologists, and others who acknowledge their positionality in doing sociological research, teaching, and service. In his chapter on Charles S. Johnson in *Black Sociologists: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, Richard Robbins begins by noting Everett Hughes's essay on "dilemmas and contradiction of status," in which he argued that race or sex may trump professional position in others' view of a person's primary characteristics. Robbins (1974: 57) applied this to the situation of Black sociologists:

> Given the depth and pervasiveness of racism in the United States, if a man or woman is a historian and black, a sociologist and black, then he or she is compelled to work out a distinctive role balance between scholarship and advocacy, between creativity and commitment. . . . Therefore, the black social scientist owes it to himself and the black community to fashion his own sense of balance inside the work itself—objective, scholarly analysis of the racial situation, its history and its structure, and passionate advocacy of freedom, justice, and group identity.

Many sociologists from the generation of the Civil Rights Movement, Black Power Movement, Chicano Movement, and Third World Student Movement agreed with Marx's 1885 statement that "[t]he philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various points; the point, however, is to change it."[6] Marxian sociology was not "value neutral" but engaged social struggles: oppression, exploitation, and colonialism (Murphy 2013). Both Black sociologists and insurgent white sociologists posed questions about the power structures they encountered in academic departments: "What does it mean to be Black and a sociologist?" and "Is it possible to be a radical and a sociologist?" (Smith and Killian 1974:212). Joyce Ladner's (1973:xxvii) answers to these questions also apply to Latina/o, indigenous, Asian Pacific American, and LGBTQ sociologists:

> Black sociology must become more political than mainstream sociology has been. Black sociology must also develop theories which assume the basic posture of eliminating racism and systematic class oppression from the society. The myth of "value-free" sociology becomes relevant to the Black sociologist, because he must become "pro-value," by promoting the interests of the Black masses in his research, writings, and teachings.

Beginning with Du Bois, critical race scholars have continued to challenge the myth of value-free sociology. "Scientific research does not exist in a vacuum. Its theory and practice reflect the structure and values of society. . . . The control, exploitation and privilege that are generic components of social oppression exist in the relation of researchers to researched, even though their manifestations may be subtle and masked by professional ideologies" (Blauner and Wellman 1973:314–5).

Other sociologists of color instrumental in founding alternative homes in the university were Frank Bonilla and Jaime Sena Rivera. In 1970, these sociologists were appointed by James Blackwell, the Chair of the Committee on the Status of Racial and Ethnic Minorities in Sociology, to serve as members of the first governing board of the Opportunities Fellowship Program, known today as the Minority Fellowship Program. Frank Bonilla received his PhD in 1959 at Harvard and Talcott

Parsons supervised his dissertation. He held positions at MIT, Stanford University, and the City University of New York, where he established the Center for Puerto Rican Studies. Jaime Sena Rivera received his PhD in Sociology at the University of California-Los Angeles. He was a member of *La Junta de Sociológicos Chicanos*, the Chicano caucus in the ASA, which became "a precursor National Caucus of Chicano Social Scientists" (Soldatenko 2009:198). Along with former political science colleagues from graduate school, Rivera chaired the first meeting of the National Association of Chicana/o Scholar Activists in 1973, which set up a coordinating committee that eventually became the National Association of Chicana/o Studies. Puerto Rican, Chicana/o, and Central American Studies continue to be fields in which many sociologists conduct their scholarship and teaching.

Although ASA has elected three women of color sociologists over the past decade, each of us spent most, if not our entire, academic careers outside of sociology departments. Evelyn Nakano Glenn (2007:217) compared the similarities of defining and mapping a discipline with defining and mapping citizenship: "Both involve matters of recognition and membership, that is, who belongs." She continued by interrogating boundary-drawing and exclusion of what is not included in sociology. Similar questions and concerns were voiced by the women of color sociology graduate students I interviewed in the 1990s (Romero 2000, 2017).

Given the discipline's exclusion of activist and political issues, as well as the refusal to structure traditional departments around newly emerging scholarship on race, gender, and sexuality, many diverse sociologists abandoned sociology departments and found academic homes in interdisciplinary programs (Glenn 2007). As a result of sociology being conducted in African and African American Studies, Latino/a Studies, Asian Pacific American Studies, Caribbean Studies, Puerto Rican Studies, Indigenous Studies, Women and Gender Studies, and Sexuality Studies, interdisciplinary approaches and concepts are finally being incorporated into sociology. LGBTQ sociologists are changing previous constructions of sexuality and gender. As more scholars of color enter the discipline, we have seen transformations in the areas of race and ethnicity, immigration, and criminology. Teaching and research on race and ethnicity in the discipline is finally addressing the significance of power and addressing domination, subordination, subjugation, and white supremacy after decades of using the assimilation and acculturation stages that Park proposed (Jung 2009).

The gaze of white male sociologists has been replaced by an increasing number of scholars engaging in sociology as a project of social analysis in justice and "from the standpoint of the oppressed" (Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley 1998:161). Instead of ignoring the role of white supremacy in immigration legislation and law enforcement or forcing graduate students to frame their immigration research using assimilation models, scholars are using intersectionality, critical race theory, and other critical frameworks (Romero 2008). In studying racial groups, faculty find it more difficult to defend using whites as a comparison group, particularly when working with graduate students of color. More sociologists are addressing racial discrimination, colorism, human rights, and state violence. Sociological studies on whiteness are building on the work of Du Bois (Morris 2015; Twine and Gallaher 2008). However, these transformations still are not reflected in the composition of faculty or curriculum in PhD sociology departments. Sociology departments are still not racially integrated and remain predominately white (Romero 2017). One reason is that although the number of faculty of color increases, many are choosing departments other than sociology as their academic home. The research in these new programs and departments is solid. We are seeing more new theories, analyses, and data returned from the interdisciplinary programs to change sociological theory and methods. Graduate students are deciding between sociology and

interdisciplinary programs. We need to ask, "What is the impact of scholars leaving sociology (and ASA)?"

I now turn to ASA's role in contributing to the empiricist tradition of "objectivity," which functioned to isolate and marginalize groups, particularly scholar-activists, working-class sociologists, sociologists of color, women sociologists, indigenous sociologists, and LGBTQ sociologists.

AMERICAN SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

The ASA, like the Chicago School, ignored the Atlanta School and the sociology being conducted in the Settlement Movement. In our professional organization, elitism dominated and embraced sociology as a "scientific profession" rather than producing useful knowledge for social change. One consequence has been ASA's inability to contribute applied research to evidence-based social policy. As Michael Schwartz (2017:52) pointed out, "[t]he founding of the American Sociological Society thus became the moment when the exclusion of Du Boisian sociology—and all activist sociology that sought to design and implement 'schemes of social betterment'—became officially implemented." Not only were Du Bois, Wells-Barnett, and most of the sociologists in the Settlement Movement not invited to participate in the founding convention of the American Sociological Society, but bylaws were passed to essentially exclude scholar-activists (Rhoades 1981).[7]

Elitism and Inclusion

From its foundation, ASA's tradition of elitism marginalized sociologists who are not straight white males. There are numerous examples of anti-Semitic sentiments by ASA presidents. In Edward Ross's (1914) writings we find claims that Jews had an inclination for cunning criminality. When asked for an assessment of Louis Wirth's research at Tulane, William Ogburn wrote, "He has a very keen mind. He is a Jew, however," and in later correspondence, he asked, "Why do I have to be so damned nice to the Jews if I do not enjoy them" (Galliher and Galliher 1995:28). Former ASA president Talcott Parsons (1942) characterized Jews as aggressive and oversensitive to criticism in his essay, "The Sociology of Modern Anti-Semitism."

Gender inclusion has also been difficult for the Association and has only improved in the first two decades of the twenty-first century. ASA did not elect its first woman president until 1952, Dorothy Swaine Thomas. It is interesting to note that her presidential address was titled "Experiences in Interdisciplinary Research." She was married to William I. Thomas, who served as ASA president in 1927, which may have been an advantage that helped gain support for her nomination.[8] The next woman was not elected until 1973 (Mirra Komarovsky) and 10 years later, Alice S. Rossi was elected ASA president (Roby 1992). There does appear to be a shift toward accepting women as candidates for president, as eight white women, one African American woman, one Asian American woman, and one Mexican American woman have been elected in the past two decades.

Under Alice Rossi's leadership, the Women's Caucus presented several resolutions to Council that were passed. One resolution was to conduct a survey of graduate programs. When the Committee on the Status of Women was created, the Women's Caucus met and began organizing itself into the Sociologists for Women in Society (Bernard 1973; Skipper, De Walk, and Dudley 1987). In 1978, ASA passed a referendum to move the 1980 Annual Meeting from Atlanta to New York in support of the Equal Rights Amendment, and they decided not to meet in states that did not ratify it. In the early 1980s, ASA initiated data collection on the participation of racial minorities and women in governance. ASA affirmed the civil rights of gays and lesbians in 1979. In 1991, "ASA passed a resolution opposing the continued exclusion of gays and lesbians from the military based on their sexual orientation" (Rosich 2005:113). In 1995, ASA adopted the policy to only book Annual Meetings in locations that provide legal protection against discrimination. In 2004, the membership

approved the member resolution to oppose the ban on gay marriage.

The history of Black sociologists in the Association details the longest struggle for inclusivity. Black sociologists have been members of ASA for decades, but they were not elected officers and many "concluded that membership without a voice or membership without power is indeed empty" (Blackwell 1974:349). The first Black sociologist to be elected ASA president was E. Franklin Frazier in 1948, the 38th ASA president. ASA did not elect its next Black sociologist as president until 1980. James E. Blackwell (1974:344) described the lack of action taken by the ASA to include Black sociologists:

> During the early period, when the ASA was itself a loosely organized body, no significant steps were taken by the organization either to increase the number of blacks among its total membership or to incorporate its few black members into its structure or to enable them to play leadership roles. However, there is evidence that the most persistent objective of black sociologists regarding the association is and remains assimilation into the mainstream of the organization. . . . In 1934 while the ASA was holding its annual meeting in Atlantic City, Charles S. Johnson, who had already distinguished himself as a scholar/teacher and who would attend annual meetings of the association for more than thirty years prior to his death, was subjected to categorical treatment (discrimination) by the hotel management. He was ordered to use the rear elevator when entering the hotel. He refused and, consistent with external image of learned organizations in general, the American Sociological Association established a new policy on convention sites. The policy mandates that the organization would not hold its annual meetings at any locale which discriminated against any of its members.

Blackwell's recollection does not correspond to the "official" ASA history listed on their website, which dates the decision not to meet in hotels that practiced racial discrimination to 1946 rather than 1934. However, it does *not* appear that the decision was seriously applied in 1934 or 1946, because the issue of racial discrimination at conference hotels emerged again in 1961 at the Chase-Park Plaza Hotel in St. Louis. After negotiations with the hotel, ASA passed the following tepid resolution:

> The Association recognizes the difficulties of policy changes in the race relations area. Therefore, it especially appreciates the constructive change instituted by the Hotel's management in regard to the swimming pool. And the Association hopes that other luxury hotels in the U.S. will follow the leadership and example of the Chase-Park Plaza, thereby avoiding embarrassment and conflict in the use of their accommodation. (Rhoades 1981:56)

At the 1968 ASA annual meeting, the Caucus of Black Sociologists made several resolutions to ensure their inclusion into the Association's governing body.[9] They pushed to establish the "position of Executive Specialist for Minorities and Women," "the appointment of a Committee on the Status of Racial and Ethnic Minorities in Sociology," "institution of a Minority Fellowship Program," and "establishment of the Du Bois-Johnson-Frazier Award Section Committee of ASA" (Conyers 1992:51). In response to the lack of inclusion, the caucus founded the Association of Black Sociologists in 1970.[10]

Although we adopted a diversity statement in 1995, the controversy over racial inclusion in leadership positions remains an ongoing issue. Questions concerning ASA's commitment to racial inclusion emerged over the selection of the *ASR* editor in 1999. In an unprecedented action, Council rejected the Committee on Publications' (COP) rank-ordered recommendation for editor. The editorial proposal ranked highest was submitted by Walter Allen, a professor in African American Studies and Sociology at UCLA. His editorial board comprised a racially diverse group of

senior sociologists. COP publicly objected to Council's decision, and members supporting COP and those supporting Council's decision attended the 1999 Business Meeting to voice their opinion. In the end, Council prevailed and selected Charles Camic and Franklin D. Wilson as *ASR* editors. President Feagin appointed a subcommittee to review the editorial process, which recommended that the editorial selection process maintain the principle of confidentiality. Council created the Task Force on Journal Diversity to examine the degree to which ASA publications met members' interests in focus and methodology, and to identify gaps and diversity among authors, editorial boards, and editors (Rosich 2005).[11] Although many members have pointed to the increasing number of sociologists of color recently elected as ASA president, I think it is much too soon to talk about a racial shift in the ASA leadership.

Social Class and ASA

In the commentary on the Town Hall meeting in Seattle that was published in *Social Problems*, Aldon Morris (2017:207) raised another troubling perspective:

> [T]he top ranked departments—20 to 30—exercise enormous power relative to the 200 other departments. The majority of ASA's leadership, authors, and editors of its prestigious journals hail from elite departments. . . . Elite departments open doors for certain scholars to advise powerful actors.

"Elite" schools have their own problems with race, social class, and gender, and the domination by the elite schools raises a new issue of "social class" in academia. The prestigious private and state colleges and universities have enormous endowments and other resources at their disposal. They can host journals, which is an increasingly expensive undertaking. They offer faculty development grants to support research and can "cost share" research proposals. They also have undue influence in most of the professional organizations across the sciences and humanities.

As president of ASA I have been approached by members and section officers expressing concerns about Association practices. In one attempt to address an issue, I was berated for 10 minutes by another elected officer who told me to ignore the concern because "I could not respond to every issue." As I continued to push, I was told by ASA staff that the person representing the section affected was "difficult," which was used as the explanation to convince me that the issue was unworthy. However, if "being difficult" disqualifies one from ASA membership, I don't believe we would have any members. Over the years as secretary and president of ASA, I have observed the unequal treatment of members who get their issues and concerns raised to the governing body and those who fail. I have yet to observe ASA staff respond to a request from a member at an elite university by attacking the person as "difficult." It is absolutely critical to remember that most ASA members are not in top-ranked departments; moreover, we have been footing the bill with our membership dues for decades. It is not unreasonable to demand that the leadership begins to resemble the membership and to expect the ASA executive office to respond to the concerns of *all* members.

The issues of racial, gender, and sexual inclusive membership and leadership, and criticism of "apolitical" sociology, have led to frequent calls for a more critical and accessible sociology that reaches non-academics in the larger public and is inclusive of voices erased and silenced (Peters 1991). The Sociology Liberation Movement used the slogan, "Knowledge for What?" to highlight the need to use sociological knowledge to benefit the poor and powerless (Brown 1988). Alfred McClung Lee's 1976 conference theme was "Sociology for Whom?" which he followed up with a book on the topic. Joe R. Feagin's 2000 conference theme was "Social Justice and Sociology in the 21st Century," and Michael Burawoy's 2004 theme called for establishing "public sociology," that is, a sociology that transcends the academy.

Another measure of inclusion is the diversity of award recipients. Although I have

observed more awards being given to scholars outside elite universities, I know we have not leveled the playing field. Prior to this year, only three of the 27 recipients for the Jessie Bernard career award were women of color. Only six of the 40 recipients of the distinguished scholarship award have been women and only four have been African American. None have been Asian Pacific American, indigenous, Mexican American, Central American, or Puerto Rican. Only six of the 32 recipients of the Cox-Johnson-Frazier Award are women.

Not until 1980 did ASA create the annual teaching award for "outstanding contributions to the undergraduate and/or graduate teaching and learning of sociology." Our community college members are engaged in the most teaching and learning of undergraduate sociology in the country, yet only two of the 38 recipients of the teaching award have been from community colleges. Furthermore, many community college faculty provide graduate students with teaching experiences by hiring them as instructors. Yet, this training is not acknowledged by the discipline or the Association. We all know that the nature of work in the university business model has created a tiered workforce. At the top, still, are tenured faculty, although our ranks are thinning rapidly; at the bottom are adjuncts who are paid by the course and offered no benefits; in between there is a growing "middle-class" of casual labor who have renewable three-year contracts and a benefits package. We have never explored options to create partnerships between faculty in graduate programs and community colleges (Strong 2019), much less conducted research on PhD sociologists working outside the academy.

I now examine ASA's controversial history over welcoming sociologists who advocate for a sociology engaged in social justice and activism.

Social Justice and Activism

The ASA was founded in 1905, and I would argue that many times in our history, we sociologists could have affected public policy in a positive direction. Just as tension exists between value-free science and scholar-activism in the discipline, the struggle is evident in the Association. Beginning with the Chicago School, which staked a position as professional sociology, there has been conflict over the Association's mission to the public, the discipline, and its members. In the 1930s, ASA committed itself to "emphasizing scientific sociology rather than applied sociology" (Rhoades 1981:24). A memorandum distributed at the 1931 Annual Meeting stated their position as follows:

> While the ultimate purpose of science is its utility for mankind, it is equally true that science can develop only in accordance with the facts of nature, whatever may be its practical application. Hence the scientist *qua* scientist should not be influenced by the practical significance of his work, whatever he may think, say and or do in other capacities. (Rhoades 1981:24–25)

In 1931, in response to elitism, ASA president Luther Bernard pushed to sever control from the University of Chicago's sociology department. This included establishing a separate Association journal, the *American Sociological Review* (*ASR*). In addition, Bernard advocated for (1) open committee meetings, (2) a new constitution, (3) unrestricted membership, (4) more women on the programs and on Association committees, and (5) that the Association provide more leadership (Galliher and Galliher 1995).

The break from the Chicago School also meant the *American Journal of Sociology* was no longer considered the official Association journal (Bernard 1973). However, ASA members at elite universities pushed against social activism and humanism, which lead Bernard to resign from the Association in 1938.

The elitist class within the ASA still advocated eliminating all non-scientific activities, limiting membership to individuals interested in science, and focusing solely on programs and publications devoted to science. Only

members with a PhD or equivalent professional degree in sociology or a closely related field were eligible to be fellows. Fellows were the only members eligible to hold elected office, become a member of the Council, or chair a standing committee. In addition to stratifying members, the ASA expressed disdain for sociologists engaged in social justice. In the end, the Association did not gain enough support to establish a new fellow membership category until 1959.

In the depths of the grueling depression, when Americans were fleeing the worst economic disaster in our history and fascism was rising in Europe, the ASA statement bemoaned consequences for not adhering to "pure" science:

> The public is given the impression that the Society is a religious, moral and social reform organization rather than a scientific society. A more serious result is that in the program of . . . sociology as a science of society is almost smothered under the discussion of practical social problems. (Rhoades 1981:25)

The failure to address major issues of the day was evident: in "a 1953 recording containing advice from 20 former American Sociological Association (ASA) presidents, only Harry Pratt Fairchild mentioned a concern for social justice" (Galliher and Galliher 1995:27). To his everlasting credit, Fairfield was the only former president to address the major issues of anticommunist hysteria and political oppression of the early 1950s. The communist hysteria in the United States also kept our discipline from attending to Marx's contributions to sociological theory for another two decades.

Probably the most divisive issue to date occurred in 1967 at the Annual Meeting in San Francisco. The Sociology Liberation Movement (SLM) proposed a resolution to condemn the Vietnam War, which passed at the Business Meeting. Having met the required number of signatures, Council sent out a mailed ballot, but members voted against the resolution as an official policy of the Association (Brown 1988). The resolution was reintroduced at the 1968 Business Meeting and was defeated again. A general melee and shouting match ensued between pro- and anti-war sociologists. The Executive Council responded with the following statement: "The ASA should not as a scientific and professional organization express an official policy statement on political issues" (Forsythe 1973:223). ASA did "urge President Johnson to give all disciplines equal deferment status in the Selective Service System" that same year (Rhoades 1981:76). In 1969, Council "censured and condemned those persons—members and non-members—who disrupted the presidential address and plenary session" (Rhoades 1981:60) the previous year. However, "Council transferred the 1969, 1972 and 1976 Annual Meetings out of Chicago because of the treatment (that) anti-war demonstrators received during the 1968 Democratic Convention" (Rhoades 1981:60).

SLM's criticism of sociology was fueled by the strong rejection of abstracted empiricism, structural functionalism, and the discipline's claimed "value neutrality." Meanwhile, sociologists had been hired by corporations, the military, and the social control agents of the state (Brown 1988). ASA's stand against SLM is extremely significant, particularly in light of the Association's decision to never mention, much less censor, the politics of sociologists like James Coleman, Jessie Bernard, Neil Smelser, Lewis Coser, and many other members of ASA who had willingly sold their services to Project Camelot to study and provide information on revolutionary movements for counterinsurgency programs (Horowitz 1974). Project Camelot demonstrated the Association's contradiction in its claim "to scientific objectivity, and to related ideals like value-neutrality and professional autonomy" (Solovey 2001:172).

Another consequence of ASA's reluctance to engage current social issues was the 1951 creation of the Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP), which embraced a "sociology in the development of social action programs that promote social justice" (Galliher

and Galliher 1995:9). Jessie Bernard (1973: 774) recalled that members "objected to the elitist direction the ASA was following, its lack of interest in social problems and issues, its antiseptic 'line' on research, its cronyism, and its complacent acceptance of the increasing trend of putting sociological research at the service of business and industry."

The result was the silent migration of sociologists away from ASA to other associations, because "the ASA is neither as intellectually robust nor as professionally diverse as it might otherwise be" (Hill 2007:132). Throughout the second half of ASA's history, many have argued "that the structure and constraints of the ASA, as an organization, are not congruent with the particular needs and goals of all sociologists as sociologists" (Hill 2007:133). I believe the tension continues to be reflected in members' concerns that the ASA has not been successful in disseminating research findings to the larger public and that the discipline has not been among the leading social sciences in contributing to the development of policies and programs for city, state, and federal government. In addition, ASA appears extremely slow, cautious, and conservative about what issues the Association will take a public stand on, join other associations' positions on, or which resolutions presented by elected officers or the members will even be moved forward for a vote.

In the mid-1980s, the ASA began organizing responses to issues with the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) and other national and international learned societies. Unlike the resolution proposed by the Sociology Liberation Movement, these are requests for support from national or international scientists or ASA presidential initiatives. An example of an international request is ASA's endorsement of the "Seville Statement on Violence" in 1991 (Rosich 2005:113). This statement refuted the claim that war and other forms of organized human violence are biologically determined, inherited from our animal ancestors, genetically programed in human nature, or part of human evolution. An example of an ASA presidential initiative is President Gamson's "initiative on Genocide and Human Rights," which involved a Spivak workshop to address "the need to 'mobilize social science associations and funding organizations to respond to situations of genocide and mass deaths'" and primarily focused on the Bosnia-Serbia conflict (Rosich 2005:81).

Perhaps the most significant resolution to pass in recent history is the 2003 members' resolution against the War in Iraq. Sociologists and Political Scientists Without Borders / *Socilólogos Sin Fronteras* is an international organization with national chapters advocating human rights and working with other social scientists, NGOs, and activists. Similar to the SLM anti-Vietnam War movement, they presented their resolution against the War in Iraq that had been signed by 3 percent of the members. Rather than voting on the resolution, Council published the resolution and the members voted. The resolution passed by 66 percent of our membership. Today, the by-law provision that members' resolutions proceed to a vote as soon as a petition gathers at least 3 percent of the voting members' signatures has been crucial in maintaining ASA as a members' organization rather than centralizing all power in the executive office and Council (Rosich 2005).[12]

Council has passed several resolutions members proposed at the ASA Annual Business Meeting, including advising the U.S. government to ban discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, protesting violence against LGBTQ individuals, supporting the rights of nonmarried domestic partners, and opposing the death penalty (Rosich 2005:12). Member resolutions pertaining to Association activities that have been approved by Council include "banning the Central Intelligence Agency from access to ASA employment services at Annual Meetings" and "calling on ASA to only use airlines that have collective bargaining arrangements" (Rosich 2005:12–13). In 2004, the Caucus of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Sociologists, the ASA Family Section, and the

Sexualities Section obtained the 3 percent of ASA voting members needed to submit a resolution opposing a U.S. Constitutional amendment prohibiting same-sex marriage. Seventy-nine percent of ASA membership opposed such legislation.

Over the past two decades, ASA has been involved in cases of sociologists detained in Egypt and China and called on "the U.S. government to strengthen its resolve to protect the safety and well-being of scholars engaged in scientific research in countries where basic freedoms do not exist, and to speak out assertively in support of academic freedom" (Rosich 2005:81). More recently, ASA has signed with other associations to support Brazilian and Hungarian sociologists and urged "China to drop charges against the leaders of Occupy Central and Umbrella Movement" (ASA 2019). Nevertheless, the Association has taken a particularly cautious approach in selecting which human rights and international issues to respond to. Most of the issues accepted are narrowly defined as defending scholars from persecution, opposing the restriction of freedom of speech, and submitting briefs summarizing sociological knowledge related to court cases.

The ASA has sections on the sociology of religion, and data on relations between church and state. We have another section on "Peace, War and Social Conflict," and we have data on violent nationalism and resistance to genocide. We have whole bodies of data on the effects of prison and punishment. We have studied mass shootings and we have data on guns, violence, alienation, racism, and powerlessness. We study human responses to disasters in a world where both disasters and knowledge of disasters are becoming more common. Without question, sociologists have data, a lot of it conclusive, on these issues. Yet in the public market of ideas, our data are seldom heard. In more than a century and a half, sociology has matured as a science. That does not make us always right, it means we present our data and hypotheses in an arena where other experts can evaluate, refute, or reinforce our findings. We need to make our scientific voice heard. This could not be more important at a time when facts have been decried by politicians as "fake."

ASA's difficult history with scholar-activism and its elite tendencies are certainly important to consider in a time when the Association continues to experience declining membership. Although there is some overlap between SSSP, SWS, and ABS with ASA, many members of these groups have no interest in being a member of ASA. The Association is also less attractive to the many sociologists of color who have made their academic homes in critical race studies, or women and LGBTQ sociologists in gender and sexuality studies.

It is time for ASA, as well as the discipline, to reclaim its position as a science of society and its social justice traditions. What would that project involve?

Reclaiming Our Social Justice Traditions in Sociology

To begin such a project, we must reclaim our social justice traditions in sociology, which means rewriting Black sociologists back into our history, acknowledging their theoretical, methodological, and empirical contributions. The same must be done to include the men and women sociologists involved in the Settlement Movement. As we rewrite these sociologists back into history, we need to document the influence that a humanist scientific agenda has had on sociological knowledge. We need to recognize that many of our heroes and heroines in sociology have not always advocated for the dispossessed or have denied agency to marginalized groups, and some perpetuated patriarchy and white supremacy. To claim this history is to acknowledge that our origin story is also one of a race-, class-, and gender-segregated discipline. It is not enough to rewrite these sociologists back into the sociology of race or sociology of gender. They need to be recognized in all the subfields they contributed to, including theory and methods. We must acknowledge that from the beginning, American sociology was a scientifically

rigorous field that embraced social justice and the activist-scholar, as well as establishing public sociology and the public intellectual.

Honoring W. E. B. Du Bois as a founding father of American sociology and acknowledging the later generation of Black male sociologists is also not enough. Black women sociologists Anna Julia Cooper and Ida W. Wells-Barnett also need to be rewritten back into sociology. To accomplish that, we need to acknowledge the work of later generations of Black women sociologists. It is sloppy history to identify Patricia Hill Collins as the only Black feminist. Feminists have ignored entire generations of Black feminist sociologists, such as Delores P. Aldridge, Jacquelyne Johnson Jackson, La Francis Rodgers-Rose, Joyce Ladner, Doris Wilkerson, Vivian V. Gordon, and many others. Thus, the discipline's new origin story means anyone who claims the sociology of family as an area of expertise must read Ladner's (1977) *Mixed Families: Adopting across Racial Boundaries*. To understand the sociology of gender, one must cite Ladner's (1971) *Tomorrow's Tomorrow: The Black Woman* and other works written by her generation of pioneer sociologists and activists.

An ugly part of American sociology's history has been erased—its roots in colonialism should not be forgotten. American sociology has failed to account for the fact that migration from poorer countries to richer countries occurs in response to empire and colonialism (Go 2016, 2017). Too many sociologists received research grants and built careers by "othering" and turning their focus away from inequality and injustices of colonized indigenous communities: Native Americans, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Caribbeans, and Pacific Islanders. Since the 1970s, sociologists have employed an assimilation model to explain the plight of refugees who fled U.S. imperialism in Vietnam, Central America, and the Middle East. Instead of researching colonialism, or the structure of race and inequality in the United States, way too many sociologists created measures for capturing stages of assimilation, naming deviant lifestyles, traditional family values, extended families, or oppositional culture as the sources of poverty, health problems, or unemployment. These evidence-based findings are built on the assumption that social conditions only change through assimilation rather than political struggle. Rather than dividing peoples according to social mobility and SES, we need to understand the different distribution of rights and privileges, of citizenship, and the politics of race, class, and gender in maintaining or diffusing the structures of inequality and domination (Glenn 2011; Jung 2009).

From the Chicago School to the present, sociology has offered up tools to rationalize and legitimate social inequality (Lee 1988). Another forgotten history is the "sociology departments" established by companies, or the state, to Americanize immigrant workers to maintain the social hierarchy, and to discourage labor strikes and rebellion against inequality. For instance, the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company (CFI) built dozens of company towns and maintained a "sociology department" to Americanize the European immigrant and Mexican American work force. Dr. Corwin, the director of the Sociology Department, developed the curriculum "around cooking, hygiene, and other domestic skills because he believed that most of the children were destined to become miners or the wives of manual laborers. . . . Corwin believed that by developing their domestic skills women would reduce drunkenness, which he defined as the major social problem in the coal camps" (Romero 2002:111). Corwin defined drinking as a social problem, rather than a coping device for men who worked and lived in a polluted company town, were paid in scrip, and were kept in debt peonage. For decades, sociologists have contributed to the assimilation project of managing and controlling workers and their families (Calhoun 2007).

All knowledge production is socially situated, subjective, and historically located. For most of the history of American sociology, the researcher's and theorist's standpoint has been implicitly or explicitly white heterosexual middle-class males. Reclaiming the tradition

of social justice in American sociology requires acknowledging the discipline's colonial roots and its service as an instrument of the state, and recognizing that the tent is large enough for many sociologies, including those engaged in decolonizing the discipline. Decolonizing involves excavating the standpoints previously suppressed or rendered invisible while creating an environment for other standpoints, world views, interests, and concerns to engage in knowledge production that promotes social justice (Go 2017).

The ASA offices are in Washington, DC. American sociology thus speaks from the center of the empire that includes upward of 800 military bases around the world. The United States has taken a commanding position on lines of digital communication, and it assumes the right to use any resources to maintain its position, regardless of social or environmental consequences. This empire has been in constant warfare—some hidden, some open—since the beginning of WWII. Half of the federal budget is spent on the Department of Defense. Sociologists need to also see the world from the margins and from multiple perspectives. Such a project involves challenging universal narratives and questioning ossified ways of thinking, allowing other possibilities to emerge. Inside the empire, distortions and exclusions are produced in every aspect of knowledge production. We need to begin viewing the world from the peripheries and seeing it from multiple perspectives (Connell 2007; Steinmetz 2013).

Inclusive sociology challenges universal narratives and questions ways of thinking, so that other possibilities can emerge. In the discipline and the ASA, the question "Is another sociology possible?" can no longer be ignored. Recently, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2017:185) wrote, "I firmly believe that another sociology is possible. Another way of doing sociology is possible because critical, engaged, and indeed, more 'political' sociologists are the majority. We might not be at Harvard, Princeton, Wisconsin, Columbia, Michigan or Chicago, but we have power in our numbers." Our colleagues, many of them situated in critical race, gender, and postcolonial studies, are engaged in changing and blurring disciplinary boundaries.

Identifying the ways we organize ourselves in hierarchical strata of tenure track and nontenure track positions, research universities versus teaching colleges or community colleges, teaching versus research or service, empirical research versus applied research, and the standards we use to evaluate our colleagues for raises, tenure and promotion, funding, and awards—all of these practices frame the context in which we make and teach sociology. To nurture a sociology engaged in social justice for a better world and replace master narratives, our everyday practices need to change. In her article on (re)making sociology, Joey Sprague (1998) asked, "How are we making sociology?" The question reminds us that we need to attend to the practices used to produce and reproduce ourselves. How do we reproduce hierarchy in the discipline and the Association? Inherited capital is obtained by receiving one's PhD from an elite university, which is not common knowledge for first-generation students who are not mentored. Social and cultural capital is later used to gain entrance into high-status departments with low teaching loads, access to prestigious university presses, graduate research assistants, and increased opportunities for securing grants (Ray 2018). The sorting and selecting process also functions as hidden curricula to impose and reinforce ideological compliance, which establishes additional barriers for keeping interdisciplinary research at the margins of the discipline (Steinberg 2007).

The institutional practices of doing sociology affect the nature of sociological knowledge.[13] We must recognize the harm that exclusion and elitism have done to the production of knowledge—to what is considered "sociology." As Morris (2017:208) noted, "[s]cholars from resource-poor institutions are unlikely to present at our conferences" and "this lack of contact leaves both elite and non-elite scholars intellectually impoverished because they cannot mutually enrich each other's sociological imagination." The

hierarchy of outsider and insider sociologists is reproduced through everyday practices in our universities, departments, conferences, publishing, and associations (Treitler 2019). "To decolonize means to reverse this tide of bureaucratization" and "obsessive concern with the periodic and quantitative assessment of every facet of university functioning" (Mbembe 2016:31). Being reflective of our own social stratification and inequality in the discipline and the Association is a vital beginning to nourishing a sociology engaged in social justice for a better world.

Doing sociology at this crucial time of our history, we need to be social activists and sociology must be engaged in social justice. I agree with Margaret Abraham (2019:6) who wrote,

> As sociologists we have an ethical and professional responsibility to use our sociological imagination, the array of professional tools at our disposal, and to partner in addressing the many obstacles that challenge our world. . . . There still exists a gap between the sociological imagination and an actual transformation of society.

If there are future American sociologists, they will judge us harshly if they read sociologists arguing for an abstract quantitative social science that tabulates data but is detached from social policy. Detached from the climate crisis of rising waters, burning forests, and violence toward refugees' seeking shelter. Detached from an empire bankrupting itself in foreign wars while its homeless citizens die on the streets of glittering cities. Detached from technologies of social control that make finger prints and mug shots quaint. Detached from growing inequalities when the top 5 percent of households own 35 percent of the nation's wealth. Detached from mass shootings facilitated by a culture that venerates guns—mass murders that appeared aimless at first but are increasingly fueled by hate against immigrants, Black, brown, or gay people. Detached from K–12 schools and state colleges and universities being systematically defunded, student debt out-stripping credit card debt, and the "privatization" of a U.S. public school system that John Dewey once proclaimed was the "engine of democracy." Detached from the fact that our home is on fire. Most of us make our living in academia and are aware of the "business models" in higher education that threaten academic freedom. Sociological data is wasted if our studies fail to affect public understandings of social issues or if research is not applied to improving social conditions.

Instead of framing the ASA as a professional and bureaucratic organization for establishing standards that legitimate the status quo, our Sociological Association must remain and strengthen itself as a democratic members' collective. We must continue to serve sociological teaching, service, and research through data creation, analysis, hypothesis production and testing, and present our findings in a public arena where they can be confirmed or disconfirmed. Most social science should help educate social policy, if it serves other interests, business or government, it should make that standpoint clear. The ASA should be welcoming to practitioners and researchers engaged in applied projects addressing social issues, and it should incorporate interdisciplinary knowledge in preparing students and professors to meet new national and international challenges for transforming our world. Our ASA dues and participation must be used to serve scholars and faculty in all educational institutions—from the most elite to your local community college offering Sociology 101. Our discipline and association can overcome its tainted history.

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Notes

1. Albion Small essentially erased applied sociology from the discipline (Sica 1989).
2 The lack of empirical evidence in articles published by sociologists outside the Settlement Movement or HBCUs is demonstrated in Mary Taylor Blauvelt's (1901) article, "The Race Problem: As Discussed by Negro Women," which is only one among many publications.
3. Black sociologists traditionally identified as the first generation—Charles S. Johnson, E. Franklin Frazier, and Oliver Cox—were all trained at white universities and had white mentors in the 1920s and 1930s.
4. However, Deegan (1988:12) notes that E. A. Ross recommended Addams's writings to graduate students as "the best sociological books to read" and Charles Cooley cited her seven times in *Social Organization*.
5. It is important to remember that the term "race riot" abruptly flipped its meaning. Before the 1960s it referred to outbreaks of racial violence when white mobs attacked Black neighborhoods, murdering and burning everything and everyone in sight, as occurred in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in 1921. In the 1960s, the term was applied to riots in the Black ghettos when African Americans began to attack white-owned businesses in response to events like the bombing of black churches and police violence (e.g., Birmingham in 1963 and Harlem in 1964).
6. The 1960s saw an explosion of Marxist studies. In 1967, Easton and Guddat published the first English edition of *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society* (Marx 1818–1883) (from which this quote was taken). To explore the ripples renewed interest in Marxism made in the sociological pond is far beyond the scope of this address. Suffice it to say it spurred Marxist sociology, which is now an active ASA section, and inspired theoretical and methodological work in all branches of the social sciences and humanities.
7. As Michael Schwarz quipped, if women and people of color had participated, they would not have chosen a name with such a silly acronym.
8. The election of Dorothy Swaine Thomas was not a turn away from elitism or racism in the discipline. One need look no further than the ethical problems in her Japanese and Resettlement Study (JERS). She hired interned Japanese American students to serve as participant observers while they were dependent on "Thomas and other white researchers for academic opportunities" (Inouye 2012:324), thus ensuring their compliance.
9. To understand the level of racism and elitism apparent among ASA members in the late 1960s, I recommend reading Ernest Van den Haag's (1969) letter in response to the Black Caucus's recommendations, which was published in *The American Sociologist*.
10. The Section on Racial and Ethnic Minorities was started in 1981; the Asia and Asian America Section began in 1986. As mentioned earlier, the Chicano Caucus also formed in 1970 but did not become the Latina/o Section until 1994. I was elected as the first chair.
11. The journal *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* was not initiated by the Committee on Publications (COP) and is a section journal. Council recognized the need for such a journal and did not want ASA to repeat the same mistake as they did in rejecting the Sociology of Sex section's journal, which became *Gender & Society*—a highly profitable journal. COP has not taken much initiative over the decades to identify gaps in ASA journals.
12. "With the rise of the ASA executive office, the ASA president has become much less responsible for ordinary bureaucratic tasks and typically concentrates his or her energies on chairing the Program Committee and presiding at the Council meetings" (Hill 2007:133).
13. Lee (1988:166) reminds us that "[p]eople are often unaware of their sexism, their class-oriented values and ethnocentrism and racism, but those bias are costly to all of us."

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