Message from the Chair

Neil Gross, University of British Columbia

With the ASA meetings in Chicago only a couple of months away, it’s time for us to get out an issue of Timelines, the History of Sociology section’s newsletter. As everyone involved with the section knows, we are a small operation, with fewer than 200 members. That means we are entitled to only one section-sponsored session at the meetings. Last year’s session in San Francisco, an author meets critics panel on Stephen Turner’s recent book on the history of U.S. sociology, drew great interest. Hoping for similar results, this year I’ve also put together an author meets critics panel. Our focus this time around will be Daniel Huebner’s book, Becoming Mead: The Social Process of Academic Knowledge (University of Chicago Press, 2014). It’s a very stimulating piece of writing, and Randall Collins (Pennsylvania), Gary Fine (Northwestern), and Natalia Ruiz-Junco (Auburn) have agreed to offer comments. Iddo Tavory (NYU) will run the session; maybe we can encourage him to offer a few reflections of his own. The session will be held on Saturday the 22nd at 10:30. Please join us, and if you can, read the book yourself in advance of the session. To lay some of the groundwork for the discussion, for this issue of Timelines Laura Ford and Matt Desan interviewed Dan about his work.

Later that day, at 2:30, we’ll hold our combined council and business meeting, during which we’ll present our section awards. We will not be handing out a Distinguished Publication Award this year. But we have award winners in both the Lifetime Achievement and Graduate Student Paper Award categories. I’m delighted to announce that Hans Joas is the recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award. His probing and wide-ranging scholarship is known to us all, and has clearly made a major impact on the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2
The award committee, chaired by Ed Tiryakian, singled out for special praise in its report Joas’s work on the American pragmatists in general and Mead in particular. But they noted as well that Joas’s vast corpus also includes incredibly insightful commentary and historical observations on many other schools and figures, from Parsons to Habermas, Troeltsch to Scheler and beyond.

The Graduate Student Paper Award this year goes to Álvaro Santana-Acuña of Harvard, for his paper “Outside Structures: Smithian Sentiments and Tardian Monads.” The committee for this prize, chaired by Larry Nichols, found the paper extremely well-done and thought-provoking.

Let me take this opportunity to thank members of all the prize committees for their hard work, and Martin Bulmer, the incoming HoS chair, for staffing the committees and overseeing their operation.

We will also, during the business meeting, have the somber job of remembering HoS colleagues who passed away this year. The person who comes immediately to mind is Don Levine. Don served on the Lifetime Achievement Award committee before becoming too ill to continue with his work. Ed Tiryakian has agreed to say a few words about Don, who himself received the award a few years ago. Please let me know if there are other historians of sociology we should be remembering during the meeting.

Then, Saturday evening, we’ll have a joint reception with the Theory section. The reception will be held off-site, just a couple of blocks from the conference hotel at Roosevelt University. Roosevelt holds an important place in the history of American sociology as the home, for many years, of St. Clair Drake. So it seemed entirely appropriate for us to have our reception there, rather than in a stuffy hotel meeting room. Please join us at 6:30 for snacks, drinks, and good conversation. The location of the reception will be listed in the ASA program, but if you want to note it now it’s Roosevelt University, Room 418 Wabash Building, 425 South Wabash Avenue.

I look forward to seeing you in Chicago!
2015 History of Sociology Award Winners

**Lifetime Achievement Award**
Hans Joas, University of Chicago

*Award Committee Members:*
Grégoire Mallard (chair), Graduate Institute for International and Development Studies, Geneva, Switzerland
Donald N. Levine, University of Chicago
Edward A. Tiryakian, Duke University

**Graduate Student Prize**
Álvaro Santana-Acuña, Harvard University

*Award Committee Members:*
Lawrence T. Nichols (chair), West Virginia University
Anthony J. Blasi, University of Texas at San Antonio.
Kim de Laat, University of Toronto
Cedric de Leon, Providence College
Laura Ford, Baldy Center for Law & Social Policy, SUNY Buffalo Law School

**Distinguished Publication Award**
Not Awarded

*Award Committee Members:*
Jennifer Platt (chair), University of Sussex, UK
Christian Fleck, University of Graz, Austria
Marcus A. Hunter, UCLA

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**Conference: Pragmatism and Sociology**

August 21, 2015, Franke Institute for the Humanities at the University of Chicago, 1100 E. 57th St., Chicago.
[http://sociology.uchicago.edu/pragmatismconf/](http://sociology.uchicago.edu/pragmatismconf/)

*This day-long conference brings together some of the leading sociologists in the United States to discuss the place of pragmatist philosophy in their work and in contemporary sociology.*

9:00 am - 9:20 am: **Welcome**, Christopher Winship

9:20 am - 10:40 am: **Panel 1: Theory and Evidence**

Richard Swedberg (Cornell): "The Pragmatist Use of Diagrams to Theorize: Charles Peirce and Beyond"
Isaac Reed (Colorado-Boulder): "The Pragmatics of Explanation in Sociology"
Stefan Bargheer (UCLA): "The Pragmatist View of Science"
John Levi Martin (Chicago): "What Sociologists Should get out of Pragmatism"

11:00 am - 12:20 pm: **Panel 2: Agency and Action**

Iddo Tavory (NYU) and Stefan Timmermans (UCLA): "Peirceian Considerations for a Theory of Action"
Ann Mische (Notre Dame): "Teleologies in Contention: Re-casting Futures in Public Deliberation"
Andrew Abbott (Chicago): "Pragmatic Sympathies and the Emotions of Groups"
Mario Small (Harvard): "Pragmatist Action and the Mobilization of Networks of Support"

1:20 pm - 2:40 pm: **Panel 3: Methodological Implications of Pragmatism**

Paul Lichterman (Southern California): "Ethnographic Claims-making in Communities of Inquiry, or, the Collective Collegial Subconscious"
Neil Gross (British Columbia) and Hannah Waight (Princeton): "Dewey's Views of Social Science"
Christopher Muller (Berkeley), Josh Whitford (Columbia), Christopher Winship (Harvard): "Pragmatism, Action and Maps"
Matthew Desmond (Harvard): "Poverty, Power, and Pragmatism"

3:00 pm - 4:20 pm: **Panel 4: Pragmatism and Fields of Study**

Adam Seligman (Boston): "Knowledge and Belonging"
Dan Huebner (UNC Greensboro): "Pragmatist Perspectives on History in Mead and Dewey"
Steven Hitlin (Iowa): "Social Psychology as the Most (Least) Pragmatist Sociological Subfield"
Christopher Winship (Harvard): "Inchoate Situations and Extra-Rational Behavior"

4:40 pm - 6:00 pm: **Panel 5: Valuation**

Phil Gorski (Yale): "On Valuation"
Nina Eliasoph (Southern California), Jade Lo (Southern California) and Vern Glaser (Southern California): "Structured Ambiguity: How Institutional Logics Work in Everyday Life"
Dan Silver (Toronto): "Sociological Aesthetics from the Point of View of Dewey and Langer"
**Becoming Mead: An Interview with the Author**

**Daniel R. Huebner, University of North Carolina, Greensboro**

**Interview by Mathieu Desan and Laura Ford**

**Note from the Editors:** As discussed by Neil Gross in his Message from the Chair (page 1), this interview with Daniel Huebner is intended to lay groundwork for discussion, and to stimulate intellectual appetite, for an “Author Meets Critics” session at the ASA Annual Meeting in Chicago. This session, scheduled for Saturday the 22nd at 10:30 a.m., will highlight the contributions of Daniel’s book, *Becoming Mead: The Social Process of Academic Knowledge* (University of Chicago Press, 2014). This will be HoS’s only section-sponsored session at ASA, and we hope it will be well-attended. The interview was conducted in March 2015 by email exchange.

MD: *Your book is in a tradition of studies on individual scholars by social scientists—Neil Gross’s Richard Rorty (2008) and Marc Joly’s Devenir Norbert Elias (2012) come immediately to mind. Though your approaches differ, one thing that distinguishes these works from straight intellectual biography is an explicit and self-reflexive effort to theorize the social production of knowledge. Indeed, you suggest that your study is less about Mead per se than Mead as “a problem of knowledge” (p. 4). Can you elaborate what you mean by this? How did this orientation shape the development of your project, from its conceptualization to the way you approached archival research?*

DH: This project came together when I saw that I could combine my interest in the sociology of knowledge with my frustration trying to make sense of the various versions and interpretations of Mead. The formulation of Mead as a “problem of knowledge” was my way of bringing these interests together, to set up an encompassing object of study that could satisfy both empirical and theoretical questions. The particular strength of this formulation, I argue in the text, is that it provides an orientation that challenges problematic distinctions – between Mead’s knowledge of himself and others’ knowledge of him, between scholars’ work to understand Mead and my attempt to understand their work – by posing all of these as problems of knowledge production that may be empirically investigated with a common set of concepts and documents. The study draws theoretically from contemporary work in the sociology of knowledge and other literatures to make the argument that all of these problems arise in processes of social action. From this perspective we can investigate how these various forms of action are related to one another empirically over time. For example, how did Mead’s work with students inform both his understanding of himself and his work as well as shape the later interpretations his students made of him? Ultimately, I am led to argue that such a formulation allows us to consider how, far from being a peculiar case, the “problems” of Mead reveal something intrinsic to the social enterprise of scholarship, in which we necessarily work with interpretations of one another’s ideas in the practical contexts of our scholarship. Along with
this, I make the case that we can approach historical documents in a way that relates them to social action, not just as leaving durable traces of action that they accompany, but also as intrinsic parts of the actions that they help to structure and connect. In this way documents become a vital resource for studying processes of social action outside of our immediate observation. Archived documents raise their own sets of problems that the researcher must work through, and this only further reinforces the notion that such problems are an intrinsic aspect of scholarship worth investigating.

LF: One important message of your book relates to the methodological challenges of historical research. The social “objects” and “relations” about which we seek to have knowledge were socially active and moving, as are we when we are trying to know them. And with historical sources, those objects and relations are mediated by the interpretive activity of third parties. Given such radical social complexity, even in primary historical sources of the highest-caliber provenance, what do you see as best practices for validating knowledge claims in historically-oriented social science research?

DH: I like this formulation. It really captures a sense of the dynamic complexity that I think we as social scientists face. What we should bring to this is an approach that does not just pay lip service to this complexity, but addresses it head on. For me, this means approaching claims made and sources of data with a kind of principled doubt, a skepticism informed by our understanding of the messiness of the object of our study, and with techniques that do not over-simply or close off the analysis of those complexities. I try to be cautious about using clever phrases, because I am always suspicious that they merely label rather than analyze problems, and I try to avoid narrating historical processes from the perspective of our present understanding of their outcomes, because it encourages skipping the convolutions and ramifications of history that we should also seek to explain. When handling archival sources, or any others, I think we should seek to “triangulate” our data, so to speak, by finding multiple sources of documents with different perspectives on a common set of phenomena, because even the best archival documents are selective and ambiguous. I have also tried to maintain a suspicion that there are always more data somewhere, which both facilitates my work to find documents and also humbles my claims based on the documents I have found. None of this gives a magic bullet to data collection or its interpretation, and I certainly do not claim to have the key to solving the problems of research. Instead, I take the approach that we should be frank about the hard work that goes into research, acknowledge that the problems we face are intrinsic to the enterprise of research such that they cannot be easily sidestepped, and recognize that because our arguments are never completely unimpeachable we are all the more responsible to make them as clear and well-documented as we can.

MD: You write that "Mead is known in a discipline in which he did not teach for a book he did not write"(p. 3). As such, his case is a particularly fertile one for ex-
amining the production of academic knowledge as a collective social action process. Your study is not just about the search for influences in Mead’s thinking, but more profoundly about the construction of what we understand to be Mead’s thought. Your approach is obviously useful for understanding other examples of scholars who became known largely through lecture notes or other fragmentary texts (e.g. Lacan, Saussure), but how do you see it fitting with cases in which there is a more traditional pattern of scholarly output and in which the subject is more present in shaping their reputation?

DH: I try to make the case that none of the problems that we face in understanding Mead are fundamentally unique to this case, and instead that they are intrinsic to the organized processes of scholarship, itself. Interpretation of other authors is an essential part of this social enterprise of scholarship, the way in which it builds upon itself. We could even say that the very reward structure of academia depends on us each wanting to be interpreted, to have knowledge made about us, so to speak. What makes Mead a particularly good case through which to examine these issues is the extensive documentation available to the researcher and the acuteness of the interpretive problems that social scientists have faced in relation to his ideas. While I point out that there are clear ways to apply this approach to other problematic foundational authors and texts, the larger point is about the broader ongoing social processes of scholarship. The pragmatist in me says that none of our interpretations are unimpeachable, nor should we expect them to be. They are made in the context of practical expectations and constraints and serve us for practical purposes. This is no less true of our interpretations of our contemporary colleagues – and our own work – than of our foundational texts. I write about how students make sense of their teachers in the contexts of their own practical concerns, how citations signify positions within social relationships and not just factual content, and how an individual’s published scholarship is not a perfect mirror for their intellectual or social concerns, for example – all topics that do not depend on the problems of interpreting fragmentary, posthumous texts of major authors.

LF: I was struck, especially in the early chapters, by the extent to which your empirical, processual approach tended to mute Mead’s religious, political, and ethical commitments. They came through obliquely in the quotes from speeches and testimony, but they were not always easy to identify. In the typical biography, much more of this motivational interpretation is supplied, and this helps us to believe we are understanding a character, even if this understanding is (in reality) illusory. Your unwillingness to supply motivational labels was fully in keeping with your stated methodological commitments, and it left a powerful (if somewhat eerie) impression in your narrative. But I am left wondering if, in fact, we might need motivational “labels” in order to understand and interpret social action? A more general but related set of questions would be the following: Having completed this study of Mead’s social persona,
would you be willing to say that you understand him? What does this lead you to conclude about the possibilities for understanding (and interpreting) social action and relationships?

DH: I think the book is full of motivations and commitments. However, I do not write about motives in a way that considers them stable, consistent, individualized forces that push actions along—motives viewed as “independent variables,” so to speak. Motives are far more interesting when considered in the context of social situations. When people are presented with possibilities structured by concrete situations and bring with them an array of often ill defined and potentially contradictory impulses shaped by previous experiences, how do they act? My emphasis is precisely on the social process of acting in situations, where imputing a strong, fixed, or causal notion of motives hinders analysis more than it helps. So, for example, I write about George Mead’s interest and investment in the social problems of colonial Hawaii and his attempts to investigate them and to write about them. These activities are clearly motivated by intellectual and ethical concerns, and more immediately by family ties through his wife, Helen Castle, daughter of white American settlers who made a fortune in Hawaiian sugar and shipping. I rely on previous biographical work done on Mead to help explicate his commitments. However, what I think is more interesting is not, for example, that he was democratic in outlook, but what forms that supposedly stable commitment took over the course of his 30 year engagement with the problems of Hawaii, and how it was related to the various contexts in which he found himself. We find that commitment to democratic ethics is not an unambiguous and context free motivator, and that Mead’s actual situated actions take forms that are much more interesting—and ethically problematic—than could be adequately explained by an account that relies over-much on labeling motives. This example of Mead’s engagement with colonial Hawaii further illustrates the dangers of a strong motivational approach when we consider that this aspect of his biography was almost completely unknown to previous writers on Mead. In this light, previous attempts to provide unambiguous labels for Mead’s motivations appear all the more fictionalized, because they work from only selective data and because they must be reinterpreted and reshaped in order to make sense of actual practices. My own attempts to label his overarching motives would necessarily suffer the same fate. This, again, is intrinsic to the attempts to make sense of one another, and taking this seriously means drawing out empirical interconnections between motivations and situations rather than foreshortening our analysis with easy labels.

MD: A key concept for you is "intellectual projects" (pp. 141-176), which you differentiate from Gross’s (2008) concept of “intellectual self-concept”. Could you elaborate on this distinction, particularly as it relates to Mead?

By intellectual project, I mean a collective undertaking of scholarship (or other knowledge-making endeavor)
that brings individuals together around common plans and goals. As implied by the word “project,” they are projective rather than retrospective, meaning that these projects incorporate an anticipation or future-orientation and can be multiple and overlapping as they develop over time. And because they are collaborative, they tend to be experienced as intersubjectively meaningful, and are likely to be influential in potentially different ways for the self-understandings of each of the individuals involved. I indicate in the text that this concept builds on, rather than contradicts, a growing body of literature that examines the importance of personal and emotional ties for intellectual movements – from Neil Gross, Randall Collins, Michael Farrell, Michèle Lamont, Andrew Abbott, and others. What is unique to my formulation of the concept of intellectual projects is that it emphasizes particular kinds of concrete social relationships organized around the endeavor to accomplish intellectual tasks over a course of time, and so gives the researcher an empirical starting point that is specifically sociological and consonant with pragmatic social action theory.

It should be pointed out that Gross does much the same in his book on Richard Rorty, which has a strongly sociological and processual form of analysis. What I try to point out, however, is that a formulation like Gross’s “intellectual self-concept” can be easily mistaken for an individualistic starting-point, and one that seems to emphasize retrospective efforts to rationalize one’s own intellectual trajectory. More practically, a notion of “self concept” seems to direct the historical researcher to seek out narrative accounts written by the individual in question while “project” directs the researcher to seek out a broader range of documents that are implicated in meaningful social actions.

This notion of intellectual project helps solve problems for my analysis. First, it provides a common ground where the words and actions of an author (such as Mead) do not have to be treated as ontologically different from those of their interpreters, but are instead interconnected in concrete social endeavors including classroom instruction, research projects, or departmental planning. This gets us away from an ethically charged view of Mead’s interpreters as errant commentators isolated in time and space from Mead’s sacrosanct work, and instead treats Mead and his interpreters as social actors attempting to accomplish an overlapping set of tasks in concrete situations that bring those actors together. Second, this notion helps to explain the emphatic, but nevertheless inconsistent, advocacy that some of Mead’s students, especially Charles Morris and Herbert Blumer, brought to their own work. Through their interactions with Mead, in which he gave them clear expressive support, they gained a sense of participating in especially meaningful collective endeavors that extended beyond the bounds of Mead’s lifetime. Although they had different interactions with him, they could each – with justification – argue that they were pursuing and extending Meadian projects in ways he would have understood and condoned. These projects are, in a sense, my basic units of analysis, and by connecting or articulating these various projects I trace the empirical processes of social ac-
tion through which understandings of Mead develop.

LF: In many ways the institutional, academic world of Mead seems very different from our own. Undergraduate teaching, for example, seemed to be intrinsic to Mead’s intellectual project, in a way that is often no longer the case, and the world of academic publishing also seems quite different. Has the writing of this book caused you to see the academic enterprise differently? Do you think it will change the way you do sociology, and, if so, how?

DH: In writing this study there were times when I was researching academic conferences of the early twentieth century while attending one a century later, or writing academic prose about how people wrote and published in other times and places. There are many similarities between the academic world of the US in the early twentieth century and ours, but the more I worked, the more I was struck by the particularity – or perhaps peculiarity – of these institutional arrangements with regard to one another. Practically, this diversity of possible academic folkways has led me to be more aware of the concrete, specific relationships that make up the contemporary academic environments I encounter, and to be, I think, less idealistic about academia as some universal, self-same structure. In fact, this very set of questions – what are different institutional configurations in which knowledge may be produced, how do they produce differences in what counts as knowledge, and how are these institutions transformed into one another – is key to the research projects I am building now.
As researchers, we tirelessly work on our biographies. We continuously forge our careers and improve our CVs, trying to match appropriately with research subjects, collaborations, publications, research stays, and all kinds of formal and informal memberships. Throughout our academic life, these efforts are constantly assessed and classified, be it in everyday interactions, or in the peer review of journals and funding agencies (Lamont 2009, Hirschauer 2010, Angermuller 2013). (E)valuation in these scenarios, however, usually aims at rather context specific aspects, focusing on compatibility with a department, the orientation of a journal, or a discussion at a conference. Little research has been done, however, on the ways that careers are judged as a whole, even though our research biographies determine who we “are” and who we are perceived to “be” in a very comprehensive and existential way.

Academic obituaries are a rich source of sociological information to gain insight into the holistic evaluation of biographies for this undertaking (Fowler 2005, 2007, Tight 2008, Macfarlane and Chan 2014). Published in academic journals, authored by a community spokesman who is duly mandated to make the final judgment on a deceased member, obituaries expose systems of values, qualities, and merits that integrate a school, community, or discipline (Bourdieu 1988: 210-225). Since it is usually researchers of merit who are acknowledged with an obituary in the first place, this textual genre provides insight into the extent to which recognized biographical work is not only honored, but also assessed against the backdrop of a shared system of academic virtues.

In order to illustrate the insights obituaries can provide, I will briefly discuss some aspects of obituaries in US Sociology from the 1960s to the 2000s. This discussion draws on initial results from a project – “The Discursive Construction of Research Biographies” – that I am conducting as an Alexander von Humboldt research fellow at the University of Warwick, UK, and at Northeastern University.

Obituaries draw together different, sometimes unrelated and accidental stations of a life course to construct a coherent biographical artifact that makes sense as a linear trajectory. As these meaningful units are constructed, authors set the tone for the ways in which research careers are depicted by using certain biographical narratives. Overall narrative tones can ascribe to a research biography a sense of luck and coincidence, of constant struggles against various obstacles, or of light-hearted academic joy and enthusiasm. In US Sociology over the past decades, the narratives of research biographies have undergone some considerable changes. The single domi-
nant form of biographical narrative in the 1960s is one of devotion, of a lifelong and comprehensive, hardworking commitment to the academic cause. A sociologist, for instance, may be praised as a “tireless and unselfish servant of our discipline, ever ready at the cost of personal sacrifice to devote himself whole-hearted to the extension of its interests” (Blumer 1967: 103). Narratives like these represent a meritocratic ideology, where successful academic careers are made by restless work and diligence. Intriguingly, the prevalence of meritocratic accounts decreased dramatically between the 1960s and the 1980s, and even further to the present. They have been overtaken by narratives of predetermination, where the decisive factor for academic honors is not diligence, but a seemingly inevitable destiny of academic success. These accounts of the academic life course may depict the research career as a “calling” that announced itself “after reading James S. Coleman” (Morgan 2002: 5). Narratives like these do not follow a meritocratic ideology, but one of natural talent or genius that will eventually find its way. The shift from narratives of diligence to narratives of predetermination, from accounts of merit to accounts of a natural talent, is put into context by the fact that the exact same trend is discernible in other US disciplines like History or Physics. A comparison between countries, however, shows that narratives of predetermination actually decreased over the same period of time in German Sociology. Here, the dominant trend for biographical narratives is to increasingly acknowledge social origin, highlighting for instance that the deceased’s “development into a Sociologist reflects the precarious position of his parental home after its social descent” (Rehberg 2003: 819).

Apart from revealing biographical narratives, the (e)-valuation of research biographies also highlights which qualities and merits distinguish a research biography as honorable and highly legitimate. Of course these attributions can change over time, and in US Sociology it is two trends that are particularly striking. In the 1960s, societal engagement is a quality very frequently highlighted in depictions of research biographies. What distinguishes the deceased are political merits, a certain political stance, their work being considered not only academic, but also socially involved. This societal involvement may be symbolized by highlighting “vigorous participation in the affairs of the wider society”, or praising a decedent for applying his “sociological knowledge to social issues, and [for using] his involvement in social and political action to broaden his sociology” (Stryker 1968: 60). Attributions of societal engagement have, however, lost their distinctive quality and decreased sharply since the 1960s. Again, this development is in tune with other disciplines in the US, where societal engagement either never played a role (Physics), or is less frequently attributed today (History). As before, the construction of legitimate research biographies follows a reverse pattern in German Sociology, where the ascription of societal engagement as an honorable merit has in fact become more common. Research “at the crossroads of science and politics”, in-
volving “politics on the basis of scientific insight, and research with political relevance” (Lepsius 1990: 598), is a merit more frequently mentioned over the course of time.

The second dominant trend characterizing attributions of merit in US Sociology from the 1960s to the 2000s concerns the question of internationality. Honorable merits and qualities can be more or less internationalized, depending on the relevance of international institutional positions, like visiting professorships, international academic merits and recognition, or personal attributions like cosmopolitanism. A deceased sociologist, for instance, may be honored by highlighting that her “reputation as a sociologist [...] was international” (Killian 1965: 30), or that “he travelled and lectured extensively in the United States, Britain, and Europe” (Collins 1986: 38). In an increasingly globalized academic world, however, internationality is today not a merit frequently attributed in obituaries for US sociologists. To the contrary, ascriptions that symbolize internationality have decreased since the 1960s, and are non-existent in the sample at hand by the 2000s. Putting this development into context, US History and Physics display a relative absence of attributions of international merits as well. As was the case with all trends discussed so far, a comparison between countries reveals that internationality is becoming more and more prevalent in biographical constructions in German Sociology.

The selected aspects characterizing the (e)valuation of research biographies in US Sociology provide insight into the symbolic practices involved, and the underlying systems of professional virtue sociological communities share. As a contribution to a sociology of valuation and evaluation (Lamont 2012), my research is of relevance for various strands of sociology of science and higher education.

The three trends highlighted in the construction of legitimate research biographies in US Sociology indicate three basic points. First, the way biographies of outstanding merit are narrated and thus assessed is of interest for research on social inequality in academia. It is well established that academic careers are not shaped by hard work or “natural talent” alone (Hermanowicz 2012). The way sociologists depict the most successful careers of their own tribe, however, suggests that these insights have not yet been incorporated into the body of qualities and virtues that informs the (e)valuation of research biographies. Second, the degree to which societal engagement is attributed in order to honor academic careers can add a new dimension to recent discussions on the “social impact” research is expected to have. While the social embeddedness of universities indisputably influences their knowledge production (Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff 1997), “impact” as an assessment category of higher education policy is met with suspicion (Benneworth 2015), and the actual career relevance of societal engagement is controversial (Ćulum, Turk, and Ledić 2015, Watermeyer and Lewis 2015). Lastly, globalization is seen as a major trend, if not imperative, in higher education in general and academic careers in par-
ticular (Altbach 2013). At first it seems counter-intuitive that this is not reflected in the way biographies of outstanding merit are composed in a discipline like US Sociology. Perhaps it is a position in the global academic center (Heilbron 2014) that allows US Sociology to avoid this imperative.

References


Masters without Masterpieces: A brief reflection on Russian sociology

Daria Dimke, *European University of Saint Petersburg*

Laura Adams, *American Association for the Advancement of Science*

Igor Kon was a sociology rock star. His elective course on the sociology of personality at Leningrad State University in 1966 was overflowing the auditorium not just by a little, but by a lot. In his memoir, he recalls how more than a thousand people crowded into a room meant for five hundred. “The seats were occupied two hours in advance, and audience members -- not just students but also faculty -- stood in the stuffy room pressed closely against each other, completely silent.” But he adds modestly, “Of course, I can’t take all the credit. The students of the sixties were passionate in their demand for information about themselves and their society” (Kon 1994, 177).

The image of a Soviet sociology classroom overflowing with eager learners is not one that most people have of the intellectual environment on the other side of the iron curtain. If Kon and his colleagues were such stars, why have we not heard more about them? What has been their contribution to sociological theory and methodology? While Kon and his contemporaries are far from unknown in North America, the paradox that this brief reflection examines is that Soviet sociology produced masters but no masterpieces. Most scholars in the West do not know Kon’s theories because theory building was not one of the foundations of Soviet sociology. Instead, Kon and others practiced what we would recognize today as a form of public sociology, where the sociologist’s obligation is to society, to disseminate information to the public, and at the same time to resist ideological blinders. As such, the work they produced at the time derived its meaning entirely from the actions of the sociologist in this particular social and political context.

How did a scientific community arise that was not based on texts and their interpretation and application? The majority of Soviet sociologists of the sixties believed in the utopian project that the Soviet Union was trying to bring about. The culture and political opportunity structure of the post-Stalin period allowed a dialog to develop between the authorities and the intelligentsia that institutionalized the discipline of Sociology in Soviet academic life (Weinberg 1974, 40-41). Sociologists of the sixties considered their work as instructions which the authorities should use to improve the situation in the country. Boris Firsov, in his reflection on this era, points out that this hope that the results of their research would somehow influence the state policy did not seem naïve to them: “The wish to include sociological information in the outline of party and state governance was quite natu-
The meaningful scholarly act came not from revealing the truth, but from legitimating that truth by transferring social facts out of the informal field (e.g., kitchen talk) into the formal field (in print) by means of sociological methods, such as opinion polling and time use studies. Soviet sociologists aimed their work beyond their academic field and even reproached their colleagues for a lack of the “love for people” if they were mainly interested in “typology, ideal types, taxonomies, representative samples, clusters and other ideal constructions” (Ianitskii 2001, 210). Their notions about what sociology meant were not connected with the academic community or the production of academic texts, but rather were a form of public sociology.

Now that the particular truths about Soviet society are gone, and the system that hid the truths is gone, what is left are the sociologists and their publics. Most well-known Soviet sociologists published their memoirs. Furthermore, their students and other fans have collected and published large amounts of material on the oral history of Soviet sociology as well as collections of administrative documents related to the institutionalization of Soviet sociology. Many of these texts continue to exist in print today and are consumed both by the previous generation and the new.

Table 1: the number of citations since 2004 of books and articles of select “masters” of Soviet sociology, by year of publication of the book or article cited

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<td>Zaslavskaia</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>23</td>
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<td>Osipov</td>
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<td>Iadov</td>
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</table>
A look at The Russian Index of Scientific Citation (RINTs) shows that Soviet sociologists are not associated with a classic master work that lays out their fundamental theoretical perspective or which serves today as a model for further research. With one exception (see below), their early empirical and theoretical works are more or less forgotten and instead the spotlight in Russian sociology today shines on their post-1990 commentaries on sociology itself. Table 1 shows the number of cited works by these authors from each five year period in which they were published.

Usually we would expect to see older works having much higher citation numbers than newer ones, but here the sharp uptick in numbers after 1990 reflects the popularity of the memoir genre that dominates these authors’ work in that era, as well as perhaps the new generation failing to see the relevance of the Soviet era work for their own time.

The main exception to this neglect of Soviet era research is telling. *Man and his Work in the USSR (Chelovek i ego rabota v SSSR)* by A.G. Zdravomyslov, V.A. Iadov and V.P. Rogin (1967), and the subsequent papers by V.A. Iadov and his colleagues on the sociology of labor, continue to be heavily cited in the post-Soviet era (121 citations). In 2003 Iadov and Zdravomyslov released a revised edition called “Man and his Work in the USSR and after” (272 citations), which had a new section offering a reinterpretation of the older results, a previously unpublished account of a comparative study of labor values of Soviet and US workers, a replication of the original study after Perestroika, as well as sections with the authors’ recollections of the emergence of their masterpiece.

Whereas Western histories of sociology tend to review and contextualize the development of theory, paradigm shifts, changes in scholarly discourse, and so on, textbooks on the history of Soviet sociology present themselves as histories of the relationship between *sociology and power*. In other words, the history of Soviet sociology is not a history of texts and ideas, but rather a history of individuals and social institutions – the story of the “masters” and their struggles to live their professional ideals under politically repressive conditions.

**Works Cited**


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Dimke and Adams, continued

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The book The Return of Martin Buber deals with national and social thought, and especially with sociology, in Israel, through the prism of the legacy of world renowned philosopher Mordechai Martin Buber (1878-1965). The book traces the whereabouts of “Buberian thought” in the social and national theory in Israel, with a focus on the discipline of sociology, since the formative stage of the pre-state Jewish community in Palestine in the first half of the 20th-century, through the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 and its consolidation in following decades, and up to the present crisis of secular Israeli nationality in the second decade of the 21st century. It is an interdisciplinary study of intellectual history that involves philosophy, sociology, and an investigation of Israeli cultural history, and German, American and post-modern and post-colonial influences on it.

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2014 History of Sociology Award Winners

Lifetime Achievement Award

Steven Lukes, New York University

Award Committee Members:
Charles Camic (chair), Northwestern University
Vera Zolberg, The New School
Kristin Luker, University of California, Berkeley

Graduate Student Prize

Ben Merriman (University of Chicago), "Three Conceptions of Spatial Locality in Chicago School Sociology (and Their Significance Today)"

Award Committee Members:
Peter Baehr (chair), Lingnan University
Marcus Hunter, Yale University
Mikaila Arthur, Rhode Island College
Robert Owens (student member), University of Chicago
Eleni Arzoglou (student member), Harvard University

Distinguished Scholarly Publication Award


Award Committee Members:
Silvia Pedraza (chair), University of Michigan
Nico Stehr, Zeppelin Universitaet
Julie Zimmerman, University of Kentucky

The following is the text of Silvia Pedraza’s presentation of the History of Sociology Distinguished Scholarly Publication Award at the 2014 Annual Meeting of ASA in San Francisco—Editors’ note.

One book is about a key figure in the late 19th – early 20th centuries: Durkheim. The other is about a key figure in the late 20th – early 21st centuries: Bourdieu. This makes them a very good pair, also, as they take us back to the origins of sociology and forward to our own day.

Both books are intellectual biographies that tell us a great deal about how these two giants – Durkheim and Bourdieu – related to the political events and intellectual currents of their times, and how confronting these shaped their sociological perspectives. The history of Sociology has been greatly enriched by both these intellectual biographies.

Marcel Fournier is a professor at the University of Montreal. He based his biography on a large body of materials – letters, interviews, archival data, and scholarly publications – that had not been available to Durkheim’s previous biographer, Steve Lukes, 40 years ago. As Professor Edward Tiryakian, who nominated the book, pointed out, not only was this new data but it particularly illuminated the last period in Durkheim’s life, when he was greatly concerned over the fate of Jewish Russian immigrants and the role of the modern university.

Originally published in French in 2007 by Librairie Arthème Fayard, Polity Press has done a large service by
giving English-only readers this translation by David Macey, thus making it available to them.

Fournier not only engages in a detailed progress of Durkheim’s life from his childhood home to his becoming part of the intellectual elite at the Sorbonne and finally to the tragic ending of World War I. Fournier really made me feel that I was getting to know the man, Emile Durkheim, in flesh and blood, and how he and his family reacted to the winds of change that buffeted him. Like his family and friends, in the end I felt quite sad at his death and his humble burial. But the focus is not only on his life. It is particularly interesting that Fournier focuses on the intellectual times in which he lived.

No book is flawless, however, and neither are these. The Fournier book is much too long – over 800 pages – a daunting length that made carrying it around this summer like having to lug bricks. People asked me whether I could not get a Kindle version. So I think Professor Fournier and Polity Press should do an abridged version no longer than 400 pages. A more manageable book would make a greater impact in our discipline, as it would more readily lend itself to course adoption.

David Swartz is Assistant Professor at Boston University. His major argument in this book is that we should regard Bourdieu not only as a sociologist of culture, where he has clearly made his mark, but also as a sociologist of politics.
and a political sociologist. This Professor Swartz demonstrates admirably well. The book is tight, very well organized, and very well argued. One simply never has any doubt as to the points being made and we learn how central politics was in Bourdieu’s life.

Yet, like all books, it also is not flawless. I would have liked the real Bourdieu to have more voice in the book, through his letters, newspaper pieces, and presentations, not just the academic pieces – for Bourdieu to be more a flesh and blood man. Swartz also situates Bourdieu well in the intellectual issues of the times. He also explains well how Bourdieu’s political and sociological choices were the results of the events he lived through (Algeria and the war of independence from colonialism; the 1968 student revolt in Paris; the anti-globalization movement beginning in the late 1990s). On all of these crucial historical and political moments, I would have liked to have heard his voice more than we heard it in the book. I wanted more detail on the pain of those intellectual and emotional confrontations, on the difficult decisions he must have faced.

But there is no doubt that Swartz makes us realize that Bourdieu’s contributions to sociology are quite large and, as our contemporary, he particularly speaks to the issues intellectuals confront today. This book makes all of this available to an American audience that does not know it and that, to date, has pigeonholed Bourdieu only as a sociologist of culture. Without doubt, he is also a political sociologist and should be taught as such, as Swartz will have us do.

With both books, I enjoyed learning a great deal about my discipline – past and present.

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Buber emigrated from Germany to Palestine in 1938, and had become a leading figure in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Buber was a pioneer of Israeli sociology, but was deposed from the sociological canon in the 1950s and remained excluded from it for several decades. His fate has started to transform recently, and he enjoys today a "return" and revival.

What are the foundations of Buber's national and social thought? What was his role in sociology? Why was he deposed from the canon and why is he brought back there recently? These questions are tackled by locating them in the changing national culture and academic culture of Israel. The book shows how the place of Buberian thought changes is tandem with the transition of the hegemony in Israel from an initial socialist communalism, to a secular statist, and as of recently to religious nationalism.

In the spirit of German culture of the turn of the century, Buber was an ardent supporter of the face-to-face pre-modern "community" -- the Gemeinschaft; and an ardent opponent of modern anonymous "society" - the Gesellschaft. His stance thus resonated with the spirit of the pre-state Jewish community in Palestine, which was in part socialist and communal. This was the era when Buber acted as a social philosopher, and was nominated as the first Chair of the department of sociology when it was established in 1947/8.

But this romantic approach of Buber did not resonate with the following era - that of establishment and consolidation of a centralized modernizing state, with its etatist ruling ideology ("mamlachiyut"). In 1950 Buber retired from the Chairmanship and the office passed to his student S.N. Eisenstadt (1923-2010), who was then 26 years old. Eisenstadt reshaped Israeli sociology and dominated over it for the next three decades. He reoriented Israeli sociology in the direction of American modernization theory. Under Eisenstadt's rule, Buber was excluded from the sociological canon.

Buber was absent from the sociological canon for about three dec-
News, continued

ades. But a sharp change is noticeable since the 1990s. The figure and thought of Buber started moving back to the canon and towards its center. The book attributes this return of Buber to the crisis of Israeli secular national identity. This crisis has political and cultural dimensions, as well as an intra-social-scientific one. It is suggested that the legacy of Buber functions as a bridge between the declining state-centered and secular political identity and the emerging ethno-communal alternative ones.

The book is innovative in the following senses. First, it is the first book about Buber that is focused upon his place in the arena of Israeli social sciences (rather than reading him as a philosopher or theologian). Second, the book uses Buber’s place in the social scientific field as a pivot for the analysis of major paradigmatic shifts in the field: from the German anti-modern orientation towards an American modernization orientation, and finally towards contemporary post-modern and post-colonial critical approaches towards modernism. Third, and importantly, the book offers a critical perspective on Buber which is opposed to the common interpretation of him. It is most common to regard Buber as a major thinker of the Left (which he indeed was); yet this book highlights the deep underlying layer of his thought, which was Volkisch, organicist, nationalist and religious, and anti-modern in the spirit of the conservative German culture of his time. Thus the book exposes a rift inside Buberian thought between humanism and conservative romanticism.

The book is published in Hebrew and is planned to be translated to English. For details contact uriram1@gmail.com.


This edited book has chapters by leading senior rural sociologists about their careers. The emphasis was on “candid accounts” rather than third person academic discussions. This is relevant to the history of sociology as a discipline since few sociologists know very much about the ways in which rural sociologists have been studying a set of important questions related to economic and social development, the bio-physical environment, and agricultural production and distribution. Rural sociology has changed significantly in the last few decades, in part because of an expanded use of the Neo-Marxian and Neo-Weberian political economy and comparative historical research paradigms used in classical and contemporary sociology.

An introductory chapter by Stephen Turner puts the history of rural sociology into perspective. The historian for the Rural Sociological Society, Julie Zimmerman, further extends and deepens Turner’s analysis. Bakker has an introductory chapter detailing the general thrust of the book.

From the Introduction:

Indeed, it is clear in these narratives that the interplay between context and career is both bi-directional and ongoing. Consistent with Turner’s explication of the earlier context in which these scholars are partially embedded, most describe interests that are oriented toward social justice. Motivated by these interests (and others), the scholars’ contributions to rural sociology include efforts aimed at improving the agro-food system and bio-physical environment in North America and globally. The authors discuss explicit and implicit research theories they have constructed to help them to explain the phenomena they have experienced. For example, they discuss the environment (e.g, Reimer); obesity and food (Winson), social class in different regions (Lobao), and many other specific topics. ...

It should be said that the discipline of rural sociology, although established in the 1930s as a separate discipline, has many intellectual roots in an amalgam of disciplines and fields, as well as political movements. One example is the work of the Marxist writer Chayanov (1966). He had a theory of the “self exploitation” of the labor of family members on the family farm. Another key thinker in the Marxist tradition was (and is, intellectually) Karl Kautsky ([1899] 1988). The significance of Kautsky’s work has not always been recognized, in part due to cleavages within Marxist circles (Blackledge 2006). It was only after selections from his famous book on The Agrarian Question were translated (Banaji 1976) that my generation of graduate students became aware of his work and its more general relevance. In an early essay (Bakker 1981) I also argue in favor of “Bringing Weber Back In” to theoretical discussions in rural sociology, so I was gratified when reading the complete translation of Kautsky’s seminal work to see that he cited early work by Weber on migrant labor in Prussia (Weber [1892]1984). Weber’s importance for rural sociology and Agrarsoziologie has been emphasized by Honigshem (1946, 2000) and by Munters (1972). The work of the famous Canadian student of political economy, Harold Adams Innis ([1930] 1962) cannot be fully understood apart from the ways in which both the Marxist and non-Marxist “Liberal” “political economy” traditions evolved in different paths in England, Germany, Austro-Hungary and Europe generally.


Stephen Harold Riggins (Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John’s, NL) is currently writing a history of the Department of Sociology at Memorial University of Newfoundland. The emphasis in on the contributions to the department by American-born and American-educated sociologists. An unusual number of graduate students from the universities of Minnesota and Brandeis have taught at Memorial.

W.G. Smith was born in (then) country of Newfoundland in 1873. He immigrated to Canada in the 1890s to attend the University of Toronto, where he was influenced by the Social Gospel Movement.
News, continued

After spending about 15 years teaching experimental psychology and social psychology in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Toronto, he was appointed a professor of sociology at Wesley College (now the University of Winnipeg).

The university's first sociologist was Donald Willmott, who was awarded a Ph.D. degree from Cornell University in sociology and East Asian Studies. He was born in China, where his parents were missionaries, and was a Chinese-English translator for the American army in World War II. In the 1950s he felt he was black-listed by the American government for his support for the Communist government in China and immigrated to Canada.

Recent Publications


HoS Sponsored Event-Related Publications

The June 2015 issue of The American Sociologist features six articles connected with HoS’s 2013 Symposium, Reenvisioning the History of Sociology, together with editorial comments by Larry Nichols and reflective comments by the Symposium’s organizers, Michael Bare and Laura Ford. The six Symposium-affiliated articles are as follows:


