



Contemporary **Sociology**

A JOURNAL OF REVIEWS

**A Symposium on
Public Sociology:
Looking Back and Forward
Featuring essays by
Kenneth C. Land,
Pepper Schwartz, Judith Blau,
J. Steven Picou, and
Douglas Klayman**

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Contemporary Sociology

A JOURNAL OF REVIEWS

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TRANSITION ADDRESS

Contemporary Sociology's editorial offices are moving: the new editor will be Alan Sica, beginning officially with the January 2009 issue (Vol. 38, No.1). After August 1, 2008, please send all books, reviews, and correspondence to the new editor, Alan Sica, to the following address:

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EDITORS' NOTE: PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY: LOOKING BACK AND FORWARD

As we conclude our term as Co-Editors of *Contemporary Sociology*, we are pleased that this issue takes us back to where we began—with a focus on public sociology. In our proposal to serve as Co-Editors of *CS*, we wrote the following:

We plan to develop a series of special discussions to systematically highlight the ways in which sociology can inform public debate and public policy. We are not alone in our perception that many public policy issues cry out for sociological analysis. And good scholarship frequently does exist to address contemporary social problems. Unfortunately, all too often sociological discussions and public policy debates remain disconnected. We hope to rely upon symposia to focus attention on recent books that contain interesting theoretical frameworks and empirical findings that bear on public policy discourse. Doing so involves showcasing sociological work with clear policy implications (i.e., work on health care reform, labor unions, immigration, crime, human rights, issues of war and peace).

These symposia would serve dual functions. On the one hand, they would remind sociologists (the regular readership of *CS*) that policy relevant work is important to the discipline. On the other hand, these essays should be of interest to either the larger public or some professional niche within it.

With this in mind, during our three-year term as Co-Editors we have published symposia in *CS* that speak to a range of important issues, including: "Is Labor on the Move Again?"; "Religion and Society"; "Taking a Look at Surveillance Studies"; "States and Development"; "Understanding Political Islam in a Post 9-11 World"; "Thinking About 'Natural Disasters' in Sociological Terms"; "Morality Battles: Looking Back to Look Forward"; "From Telegraph to Hypermedia Campaigns"; "Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: A Challenge for Scholarship"; "Lessons of Welfare Reform?"; and the "The

Politics of Immigration." We hope that, in some small way, through the development and publication of these (and other) symposia, the gap between basic and engaged/applied/public sociology is diminished. And, in the process, we hope we have contributed to larger discussions about the extra-academic purposes of sociology.

In this final issue we take a step back from particular public issues and focus on public sociology more generally. To do so, we secured review essays from five sociologists. Kenneth Land sets the stage for the symposia with a review of two books titled *Public Sociology*, one authored by Ben Agger and one edited by Dan Clawson, Robert Zussman, Joya Misra, Naomi Gerstel, Randall Stokes, Douglas L. Anderton, and Michael Burawoy. Reviewing these books, Land asks provocative questions—like "So what is new here?", "What is all the fuss about?", and "What are the broader implications for sociology?" By way of addressing these questions, he writes: "What always impresses me about sociology as compared to other disciplines such as economics and political science is that sociology must necessarily be a 'big tent' discipline." And, for him, this "big tent" is well-equipped to incorporate a plethora of contributions. In her review of the same two books, Pepper Schwartz, a recipient of the ASA's "Award for Public Understanding of Sociology," asks an equally provocative question: "Do we want to create a professional space for people who translate sociological perspectives and findings to various audiences for policy, personal, or political impact, or does the profession just accept the fact that some sociologists will inform the public about issues and values they support, but not give 'credit' or positions for this effort?"

The next three symposium review essays focus on particular sociological projects that fall within the domain of public sociology. In her essay aptly titled "A Better World. Possible? But of Course!" Judith Blau reviews four books connected to the World Social Forums, whose participants produce work with an eye

toward framing proposals for a better world. In addition to reviewing four books that examine globalization in one way or another, Blau makes links between the Forums and public sociology. In the process, she emphasizes that "the Forum has become extremely successful" as a form of public sociology and that these particular books encourage students to think creatively about social change. In contrast, in his review of three books on environmental sociology, J. Steven Picou, the 2008 winner of the William Foote Whyte Award given to individuals who have made notable contributions to sociological practice, laments that "unlike their counterparts in England and Europe, American sociologists, with few exceptions, are not easily spotted in the public sphere." Consistently, he titles his essay "In Search of a Public Environmental Sociology: Ecological Risks in the Twenty-First Century." This search, from his point of view, could not be any more important: "The twenty-first century poses many challenges to the human community. However, none of those challenges are more daunting than those posed by environmental hazards and risks." Thus, he calls for the delineation of an "applied environmental sociology that must inevitably be linked to a more public explication of environmental risk." Continuing with a focus on applied sociology, in the final symposium review essay, "Creating Sociological Awareness: Public and Applied Sociology," Douglas Klayman reviews three seemingly unrelated books: *Terrorism and the Politics of Fear*, by David L. Altheide; *Resistance, Repression, and Gender Politics in Occupied Palestine and Jordan*, by Francis S. Hasso; and *Unchosen: The Hidden Lives of Hasidic Rebels*, by Hella Winston. Empirical diversity aside, according to Klayman, each of these books "employs variations of applied sociological research methods combined with an approach that has recently been labeled public sociology." From his point of view, these are "exemplary works of public sociology" that effectively incorporate the theoretical and methodological tools of the discipline in a way that denies the critique of public sociology as a partisan and unscientific enterprise. Finally, six other essays accompany our symposium on public sociology. They cover a range of topics and noteworthy books from across the discipline, from

domestic violence to the everyday rituals of the training regime associated with boxing, to computational and mathematical modeling, to the status of the university writ large.

In closing, now is an appropriate time to thank all of those who have contributed to *CS* during our term as Co-Editors. To begin, the previous editors of *CS*, Robert Perrucci and JoAnn Miller deserve considerable credit for handing us a journal in good shape and ensuring that the hand-off was seamless. Likewise, the ASA Executive Office and the ASA's Publications Committee provided an appropriate balance of support, oversight, and free reign while the School of Social Sciences and the School of Social Ecology at the University of California, Irvine provided financial support and an increasingly valuable commodity—office space—for our work. Also, we would like to thank our colleagues near and far who served on our editorial board for helping us process over 2,600 books, solicit 2,727 reviews (with 1164 acceptances), and produce three volumes of *CS* that contain 18 issues, 17 symposia composed of 62 symposium essays, 64 review essays, and 896 regular reviews. Related, of course, we very much appreciate the hundreds of reviewers who took the time to contribute their expertise in service to the discipline by submitting publishable reviews to *CS*. More locally, the *CS* staff at UCI deserves a special thank you for doing the day-to-day work required to produce a professional journal every two months. We appreciate the Managing Editor and the Assistants Editors doing their work with professionalism, pride, competence, and good will. In particular, Jenny Fan, our Managing Editor, deserves the bulk of the credit for keeping the office running smoothly, keeping us organized, and ensuring that every issue came out on time and under budget. It's cliché to say, but it's true: she's a joy to work with and we could not have done it without her. Finally, we want to congratulate Alan Sica, the new editor of *CS*. We are pleased to transfer the journal to him. Anyone who knows Alan knows the journal is in very good hands.

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A SYMPOSIUM ON PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY

Whither Public Sociology?

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Ben Agger's book is largely a critique of contemporary professional sociology as practiced by most mainstream sociologists who do research in conventionally accepted ways and publish this research primarily for other sociologists to read in peer-reviewed sociology journals. Agger applies the tools of discourse analysis to this task, in particular to the analysis of a number of articles published in the *American Sociological Review*. His critique is extensive. For him, the "monster in the story . . . is called Method" (p. 2); even more, "the problem with the discipline isn't professionalism but positivism" (p. 274); sociologists engage in "secret writing" (chapter 1 and throughout) designed to be unintelligible to outsiders; "the discipline is controlled by major departments in large state universities, especially in the Midwest, in which the discursive style of de-authorized quantitative empiricism holds sway" (p. 29); professional scientific sociology consists of writing for career (p. 27); method becomes the main text of journal articles (chapter 4), which resulted in an unnecessary mathematization of the discipline; the outcome is that whereas "English has become exciting, sociology has become drab, with its prosaic rituals and pedestrian Midwestern empiricist departments, driven by scientism" (p. 241).

This is the second edition of Agger's book. The first was published in 2000 and Agger indicates in the preface to the second edition that he "should have suspected that 'public sociology' would become a brand, a convenient slogan or label endorsed by even mainstream sociologists!" In fact, chapter 9 of the second edition is devoted to the question, "Has Mainstream Sociology Gone Public?" In this chapter, Agger states that Michael Burawoy "employed the term 'public sociology' strategically to advance his candidacy for the ASA Presidency and thrust his own department into the vanguard of a public sociology

Public Sociology: From Social Facts to Literary Acts (second edition), by **Ben Agger**. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007. 316pp. \$27.95 paper. ISBN: 9780742541061.

Public Sociology: Fifteen Eminent Sociologists Debate Politics and the Profession in the Twenty-First Century, edited by **Dan Clawson, Robert Zussman, Joya Misra, Naomi Gerstel, Randall Stokes, Douglas L. Anderton, and Michael Burawoy**. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007. 275pp. \$21.95 paper. ISBN: 9780520251380.

movement" (p. 268). Agger critiques Burawoy's four-fold table of sociologies (described below) and, in particular, takes issue with Burawoy's distinction of critical sociology from public sociology. The reason is that, for Agger, public sociology must be critical sociology. That is, sociology "is public if it embraces Marx's eleventh thesis on Feuerbach, which merges theory and practice . . . [and] must want to change the world, and it must recognize that it is already changing the world by intervening in it. Finally, a public sociology addresses itself to various publics, to which it doesn't condescend but seeks to mobilize" (p. 270).

What a critique! Is there any salvation at all for those of us hopelessly mired in the pedestrian empiricism of Midwestern departments? I have several thoughts.

To begin with, Agger knows very well that a sustained critique could similarly be constructed with respect to the fads, foibles, and limitations of critical sociology. But let's take his critique at face value and admit that it is good for those who practice professional sociology to engage in some reflexive thought and study of our day-to-day activities, taken-

for-granted assumptions, research practices, discourse styles, and icons. There is no doubt that sociologists are liable to go overboard in the ritual forms of expression; this criticism applies equally to any systematic, organized “professional” human activity. These points are well-taken. Note, however, that I cannot expect any grace from Agger for conceding anything to his critique, unless I buy into his vision of public sociology lock, stock, and barrel. For, according to Agger, to concede some validity to the critique, but not to go all the way, is a form of what Herbert Marcuse called “repressive tolerance” that “allows the dominant culture or core to use a few examples of negativity in order to demonstrate its tolerance, openness, pluralism” (p. 142). This does not appear to be very collegial or open to dialogue. One should realize, however, that Agger felt (p. 45) that he was treated poorly, and with the same type of absolutism, early in his career by his “positivist” sociology colleagues at SUNY-Buffalo who did not respect his interest in the work of Derrida and similar scholars.

What are the broader implications for sociology? Does Agger’s critique mean that professional sociology is completely lost and worthless? Hardly, and, in fact, he states as much at various points in the book. But for Agger there is more excitement in English departments and conferences than in sociology departments and conferences. Suffice it to say that this is not true for all of us. Does his critique mean that none of the articles published in peer-reviewed sociology journals are of broader public interest? My experience and that of many other sociologists suggests that this is far from the case. Indeed, I have been struck by observing occasions on which some political administrations (e.g., the Reagan administration in the early 1980s) thought they could do quite well without sociology, only to discover later that they needed us after all.

One important structural and cultural context that is missing from Agger’s critique of the turn towards “method as the main text” in sociology since the 1960s is what has happened in other disciplines across academia, including, in particular, other social science disciplines such as economics, political science, psychology, and geography. It also ignores the tremendous advancements that have occurred in the disciplines of statistics

and computing over the past 40 years. It should not be surprising that many sociologists, who are expected to analyze and interpret complicated datasets, have extensively used these advances, as have their colleagues in neighboring social sciences. The point is that much of what Agger ascribes to the internal dynamics of sociology during this time period is due, at least in part, to broader trends in other academic disciplines.

Because this is a second edition of a book largely written in the 1990s, it is perhaps not surprising that it seems “so twentieth century.” What I refer to here is Agger’s extensive critique of evil “positivism” versus good “non-positivism.” Yes, there may be some sociologists remaining today who buy into the original early-twentieth century positivism program, but probably not many. Twenty-first century philosophy of science is that of scientific realism, and variations thereon, such as Gorski’s constructive realism (references are not included due to space limitations, but are available from the author on request). From a scientific/constructive realism point-of-view, science, like other human activities, seeks to make sense of the observed world and to reveal the underlying structures of the world that generate different outcomes under different conditions. Note that this perspective is consistent with Charles Lemert’s approach. Lemert is viewed favorably by Agger and quoted below; I really like this statement and repeat it here, as it is relevant to the topics discussed:

There are many different kinds of sociologies, some of them academic ones, but the most important ones are the sociologies whereby people make sense of their lives with others. Literally speaking, sociologies are nothing more than logics of social things. Though some persons are specially trained in the logic, or science, of social things, even this qualification begins where it begins for us all. Advanced education is not required for a person to recognize the truth of some things. (P. 245)

From this perspective, which is consistent with a scientific/constructive realism point of view (although Lemert did not put it in those terms), explanations of social things, be they those of ordinary folks or those of professional sociologists, are construed as cognitive

devices/linguistic representations, of which causal mathematical/statistical models are one category, as recently noted by Land and Fararo. So, let's move beyond the tiresome, unproductive positivist/nonpositivist and quantitative/qualitative debates of twentieth century sociology. All of us, from "the person in the street" attempting to make sense of her daily life to sociologists studying ethnographic records of such efforts and/or analyzing complicated theoretical models or quantitative datasets from social surveys, are trying to understand the logics of social things. All have something to contribute.

The book edited by Dan Clawson and associates is quite different from Agger's. It is a collection of essays by 15 well-known sociologists. I found all of the essays worthy of careful reading and reflection. As I read the essays, I wanted to spend an extended period in conversation with each author to discuss each page of their essay. Space limitations of this review, however, will not allow me to give each author that depth of attention.

This volume, sponsored by the American Sociological Association, commences with an introductory essay by Robert Zussman and Joya Misra. They review the 2004 ASA Presidency of Michael Burawoy, his presidential address "For Public Sociology," the tireless efforts he devoted to promoting the concept, and briefly summarize the following essays. After this introduction comes a reprint of Burawoy's presidential address. This is followed by 14 essays authored by Alain Touraine, Sharon Hays, Judith Stacey, Patricia Hill Collins, William Julius Wilson, Lynn Smith-Lovin, Arthur L. Stinchcombe, Douglas S. Massey, Frances Fox Piven, Immanuel Wallerstein, Orlando Patterson, Andrew Abbott, Evelyn Nakano Glenn, and Barbara Ehrenreich. The volume concludes with a rejoinder essay by Burawoy.

So, what is public sociology, according to Burawoy? What is all the fuss about? Burawoy argues that public sociology engages diverse publics, reaching beyond the university to enter into an ongoing dialogue with these publics about fundamental values. This public sociology is distinguished by its use of reflexive knowledge and its appeal beyond the university. Public sociology includes what Burawoy terms "traditional" public sociology, sociology written for a general public audience that is wider than the discipline. This is

the sociology of press reports on our research articles, of opinion-editorial pages, of widely read "tradebooks" such as David Riesman's classic *The Lonely Crowd* (1950) and Robert Bellah and colleagues' *Habits of the Heart* (1985). It also is the purview of the American Sociological Association's new journal, *Contexts*. Public sociology also includes teaching, especially teaching that engages students to help them understand their own experiences and develop a "deeper understanding of the historical and social contexts that have made them who they are." But Burawoy privileges his notion of *organic public sociology*. This is sociology in which "the sociologist works in close connection with a visible, thick, active, local and often counterpublic" (p. 28). This sociology engages the labor movement, neighborhood associations, communities of faith, immigrant rights groups, and similar organizations to "make visible the invisible, to make the private public" (p. 29).

So what is new here? Basically, Burawoy is concerned, as are many, with the politically rightward drift of American society during the past three decades—the "privatization of everything" (p. 27), the assumption that "the market solution [is] the only solution" (p. 27) to everything, "market tyrannies" (p. 256), the "despotism of states (camouflaged as democracy)" (p. 256), and so forth. In response, he advocates that, in addition to all of the other stuff that sociologists do, we should get out there and actively engage in real, often local, organization "for the defense of humanity—a defense that would be aided by the cultivation of a critically disposed public sociology" (p. 57). That is, we should not just report our conceptual innovations and research findings (our instrumental knowledge) to such organic publics, but also engage them to facilitate their questioning of society and its values. And, if life is too full of obligations for those of us already deeply embedded in professional, policy, or critical sociology, then we should work to create a space for the presence of organic public sociology in our departments and in our professional associations, starting with the American Sociological Association.

It likely will not surprise readers to note that the 14 sociologists who contributed commentaries on Burawoy's thesis have a diverse array of reactions. What always impresses me about sociology as compared to other disciplines such as economics and political science

is that sociology must necessarily be a “big tent” discipline. I will hazard the proposition (my apologies, Ben, if this sounds too “positivistic”) that this is due to the diversity of the subject matter of sociology—all of social life—and the structural force towards isomorphism of the diversity of a discipline and its subject matter. Accordingly, economics, with its focus on rational choice market transactions and prices, as Burawoy puts it, “is as close as the social sciences get to what we might call a paradigmatic science, dominated by a single research program (neoclassical economics)” (p. 53), whereas sociology, which studies all of social life, is multi-paradigmatic with a range of subject matters that is virtually boundless. Thus, even though we have our tribal wars in which some of us try to impose our paradigms and methods on others, the force towards isomorphism of sociology with its subject matter will always be with us and guarantee a diversity of points of view on questions such as whether and how to do public sociology.

In his rejoinder essay at the end of the volume, Burawoy argues that sociology in the United States has spanned three waves over the past 150 years, each wave reflecting broad societal responses to three waves of capitalist market expansion. Sociology “was born as a utopian project during the nineteenth century; it was disciplined into a science during the course of the twentieth century; and now, in its third wave, it harnesses that science to its earlier moral concern in order to give vitality to public sociology” (p. 241). Burawoy situates the commentators in this volume within these three waves (note, however, that the commentators might not agree with Burawoy’s classification scheme, nor with how he characterizes their positions). First, there are the defenders of the second wave, the professional-policy nexus, including Smith-Lovin, Abbott, Stinchcombe, and Massey. Then, there are the challengers of the second wave, the critical-public nexus, including Touraine, Collins, Stacey, and Wilson. Those who ride the third wave, subjugating policy to public sociology, include Piven and Hays. Third are commentators who address the relation of third-wave sociology and the social sciences, including Ehrenreich and Glenn. Wallerstein would have sociologists work in the three functions he identifies—analytical, moral, and political—simultaneously, and Patterson both

challenges the second wave and rides the third wave. In fact, one thing that struck me about Burawoy’s four types of sociology is that several commentators argue that they, in fact, often are indistinguishable. In his presidential address, Burawoy himself states “any given piece of sociology can straddle these ideal types or move across them over time” (p. 43).

I have three observations. First, returning to Lemert’s statement quoted earlier, we need to recognize that there indeed are many different kinds of sociologies. Every person who manages to function in society on a day-to-day basis must attempt to represent the logics of social things in one way or another, often using common cultural/linguistic representations. Some of these representations may include concepts that originated in organized sociological scholarly work and that now are part of common culture such as “self-fulfilling prophecy,” “class conflict,” or “unintended consequences.” In this context, we have to ask: What is it that scholarly sociology, the sociology that most professional, policy, critical, and public sociologists practice on a full-time basis, has to contribute beyond that of the “person on the street”? We think we have a lot to contribute, albeit with many diverse interpretations of what it is that we can contribute. But, while our two neighboring social science disciplines against which Burawoy inveighs, namely economics and political science, in recent decades have succeeded in gaining solid bases for their leading public commentators in institutions (e.g., think tanks) outside of academia, sociology largely has not. This is a structural weakness that Burawoy does not address and that we need to think seriously about redressing. Let’s face it: Commentators and other representatives who are “mere academics” are easier to dismiss than scholars who are based outside the university and who, unconstrained by the requirements of university life, can ply their commentary and/or participatory trade on a full-time basis. The implication is that perhaps we need to work towards the creation of think tanks outside the universities that can serve as bases for public sociologists.

Second, implicit in Burawoy’s advocacy of organic public sociology is the presumption, as Abbott most clearly points out in his essay, that sociologists who engage therein will do so from a politically left as opposed to a politically right orientation. While this presumption

may apply to a majority of sociologists, as Abbott notes, it cannot be assumed to apply to all and under all circumstances. There is a related point here. One of the reasons for the success of conservative political parties and groups over the past three decades is their willingness to listen to, and use, the theories, research methods, and information about society that sociologists and related social scientists have generated.

Finally, we need to recognize that, just as ordinary folks are affected by the social and historical contexts in which they live, so are sociologists. Like Burawoy, many of us have been amazed by how conservative and privatized the political preferences of the Baby Boomers became over the past three decades. We naively thought that if we just gave as many folks as possible a college education they would turn out to be liberally-oriented, public-spirited individuals who would defend humanity by supporting collective efforts to help everyone to deal with the dysfunctions of technological change, globalization, and the marketization of everything. Well, we did succeed in dramatically increasing the proportion of the population with college degrees. But the Boomers drifted right. Why? We tend to forget that the early Boomers came of age facing two substantial economic recessions in the 1970s, the decline of the old industrial economic base, and a deteriorating international competitiveness of the U.S. economy. Along came Ronald Reagan, with an army of enthusiastic followers supported by the conservative think tanks organized in the 1960s and

1970s, promising a new day for America. The Boomers bought into it, and many, at least those with college and professional degrees, prospered in the 1980s, the 1990s, and the early 2000s.

Will the trends established by the Boomers persist forever? Maybe, but maybe not. Some of my colleagues, applying methods that I have recently developed with Yang for studying time periods and birth cohorts as contexts in hierarchical age-period-cohort models to political party choice in the National Election Studies from 1952 to 2004 have, indeed, corroborated our informal observations by finding that, net of individual-level characteristics and statuses that affect political party choice and net of the levels of popularity of different elections (that is, net of time period effects), Boomers indeed have had a statistically significant cohort tendency towards voting for conservative candidates. Again, without refined statistical analyses, most of us think it is inevitable that this tendency will continue with subsequent birth cohorts indefinitely into the future. But this study also finds that the most recent birth cohorts, the Echo Boomers, the children of the Boomers, who are just beginning their voting histories, have a net cohort effect (that is, to be clear, net of time period and age-specific effects—the tendency of younger voters to vote more liberally than older voters) towards voting for liberal candidates. So maybe, just maybe, our all too human tendency to project linearly into the future may be wrong.

The Contested Territory of Public Sociology

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I hardly know how to begin this review. It is going to be almost entirely negative and I generally only accept an assignment if I think I am going to be able to say all kinds of good things about the work. I accepted this review assignment because I thought it was on an important topic that I could support in principle. I felt I should do the review because I had been given an award for the public understanding of sociology from the ASA, and so I felt obliged to honor that award by dutifully commenting on two books that seemed to speak to the issue of accessible information. How hard could it be? They even had the same title: *Public Sociology*.

Let this be a lesson to you and to me: Don't judge a book by its cover. Oh when will I remember that everything my mother told me was right!

The first book is *Public Sociology: Fifteen Eminent Sociologists Debate Politics and the Profession in the Twenty-First Century*. The biggest problem with this book is that it has eleven eminent sociologists too many. I mean, puleeeze. We have the original ASA address by Michael Burawoy, which has several interesting theses about public sociology and it spells out his ideas about how to incorporate different kinds of sociology into the future of the discipline. We have fifteen essays, count 'em, fifteen, with positions that basically range from Public Intellectuals are needed and wanted to Public Intellectuals are fine if they don't change the style, positivist roots, prestige structure, or aims of the profession. Everything that can possibly be said to address Burawoy's Presidential speech is said, and by the last chapter, which I can't believe any reader except a reviewer would get to, the overkill is pungent. I don't believe it's the authors' fault. You can't blame the authors for being redundant—or predictable. They were picked because they would react according to their own place in the sociological stratification system—and, well, how much is there really to say? Still, almost all of the commentaries are well done—it is just collectively, overdone.

Public Sociology: Fifteen Eminent Sociologists Debate Politics and the Profession in the Twenty-First Century, edited by **Dan Clawson, Robert Zussman, Naomi Gerstel, Randall Stokes, Douglas L. Anderson** and **Michael Burawoy**. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007. 286pp. \$21.95 cloth. ISBN: 9780520251380.

Public Sociology: From Social Facts to Literary Acts (second edition), by **Ben Agger**. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007. 336pp. \$27.95 paper. ISBN: 9780742541061.

I am not going to comment on each essay—then we would be talking about sixteen essays and I would be compounding the problem—plus, Burawoy has had enough ego stroking and/or battering. You will just have to read the book if you want more commentary than you ever dreamed of on Burawoy's position. But I will say, after reading all the different comments, there seems to be one main concern that weaves its way through the various authors' central nervous systems and provokes passionate commentary, and that is, how do we feel about tinkering with the organization and evaluation of professional sociology (to use Burawoy's term) as it stands today? Of course, usually, the people who want change are already doing it. The issue here is: do we want to create a professional space for people who translate sociological perspectives and findings to various audiences for policy, personal, or political impact, or does the profession just accept the fact that some sociologists will inform the public about issues and values they support, but not give "credit" or positions for this effort?

Some of the invited commentators are passionately on opposite sides of this question. What scares and divides them? It's not the public sociology that includes talking about your findings in court as an expert witness, or even pontificating about general topics on

television. There seems to be some general support for applied and even political uses of basic research when it bears upon a current social issue or problem. Where people get worried—or impassioned—is when we come to the part of Burawoy's schema that is titled critical sociology.

Burawoy has a four-part quadrant that he explores: professional sociology, policy sociology, public sociology, and critical sociology. The first is basically what the field coheres around now: positivist production, both qualitative and quantitative. The second, produces knowledge for a customer—the federal government, a Gallup poll and analysis, a pharmaceutical company. The third, public sociology, speaks directly to “publics”—various kinds of groups, either randomly gathered (such as a television watcher or a non-disciplinary conference) or sorted by common interest—such as people working on issues of welfare reform, children's rights, or emerging Asian economies. Critical sociology is a little more vague, but it seems to incorporate both those people who are “reflexive,” those who openly question the assumptions and underlying politics of the discipline and people who are politically aligned activists, who see sociology as a way of confronting injustice or power or elites and changing the social structure and cultural values. They may also do research to support their passionate commitments, such as sociologists who are union activists and chronicle the effort of a corporation or industry to undermine collective bargaining.

It is this last category that causes many sociologists' hair to stand on end—although honestly it didn't change my hairdo at all until I read the second book, *Public Sociology* by Ben Agger. If this book had been voluntary reading, I would have put it away forever after about three pages. Alas, for me and the author, I could not do what we both would have preferred me to do.

I actually had to delay this review for a few weeks just to quiet down enough to write a civil response. Dr. Agger has written a very grumpy book and he made me very grumpy too. He is ticked off at just about everything about sociology—and his own vision of public sociology is quite specific to his own politics both within and outside of the profession. While I am sure he will think this review of his book is mostly based on his politics—actually,

I have to say it is mostly a howl over his writing style. I get angry when every page is full of dense invented words and full of insider jargon, especially when he has the nerve to insist upon accessible writing from others.

When I initially saw his first chapter, “Sociology as Secret Writing,” I smiled, thinking I had found a fellow traveler. I hate when sociology can only be read by people dedicated enough to try and figure out what all the pretentious jargon is really trying to say. But that adjective doesn't begin to do justice to describing Dr. Agger's approach. “Inner Circle Compulsive Grandiosity” might be a better phrase. Let me defend that statement.

I guess if you are a postmodernist, you really don't want to talk to people who don't accept your secret language. You say “narrativity” instead of speaking in the first person; you say “polyvocality” instead of, I think, different points of view; you say, “language game” instead of talking about people who use value laden words that shape perspective and argument; and “authorality” instead of speaking in the first person and putting forth your views and feelings; “literariness” instead of writing with style and metaphor and dramatic words; “deprivilege” instead of undermining the credibility of established authority or power; and my personal favorite, “aurality”—which, I think, means listening. Who is this language useful or accessible to, except maybe those who attend the Postmodern English Language convention?

I have to admit that the author is inventive. There are a lot of interesting borrowed or made-up words in this book. But it has a cultish feeling to it, and I am not fond of cults. As I read the author, the subtext is “accept me, my world view, politics, activism, contempt for the profession as it presently exists, adopt my language, speak to me in our secret tongues, and damn what I damn—and then you will be doing public sociology.” This author believes people will only do public sociology when they do critical sociology since he believes the two are inextricably linked. Then, you must also write in the first person, (or with a clearly stated personal agenda), make no great claims for your data and findings, eschew the norms of academic publishing, review, style, footnotes, etc., and go out and fight the bad guys with a passionate pen. Sure, you may not get or keep a job—but there will be a few places that will

have you—and together, acolytes and guru, you will reform sociology and, although even the author considers this unlikely, insert this new politicized and literary approach to sociology as the dominant theme of the profession.

Perhaps I've got this wrong—but I don't think so. The author says the same thing, over and over, in essentially the same way, for 285 pages. If I were incensed at nothing else, I would be upset at the sheer contempt the author shows for the reader—which is me in this case. I get it, I get it!

Perhaps Agger can't stop harping on his main points because he is so angry he wants to make sure we are converted to his point of view. He is reasonably upset at insider networks that scratch each other's backs and published work that claims to be value-free science but really is heavily weighted by the author's politics and values. The very idea of scientific sociology pains him and he is furious that sociology is written in a style that tries hard to look as if no individual human being wrote it. With the exception of his tirades against some quantitative methods, I think he has valid points, for example, on how certain areas of sociology exaggerate the worth of their own member's work and form a self-satisfied cabal of scientific validation. I agree that much, perhaps most, sociological writing gives gravitas to minor findings and concentrates too little on the importance of the question and too much on methodological sophistication. What startles me and antagonizes me is when he does exactly what he criticizes others for doing! After fastidiously and tediously looking at the way footnotes and acknowledgements appear in books and journal articles in order to use them as a way of finding out what status circles the author aspires to be placed in, and to see who the author has rewarded as a mentor (in hopes of getting similar kudos from them in return), he does exactly the same thing! He lauds Lemert and Feagin numerous times, and they return the favor by giving positive reviews on the back cover of the book. He extols Mills, Wittgenstein and Marcuse as if they were religious figures, but Derrida even more so. Every so often in the book, there is also a little train of approved names in the profession. Often, they are the same names, just on different pages.

As I read this book, the words of one of the commentators in the Burawoy book came

back to me. It was Lynn Smith-Lovin's caution that perhaps we feel comfortable about activist sociologists because we are mostly "homogenous in our values." Another commentator follows this thought up by asking us what if some of these public intellectuals were fascists, or some other form of political activism most of us would loath. It could happen. Most sociologists, however, feel it is unlikely because we presume that political positions come from data and data are created out of honest methodological attempts to understand what is going on and even what should go on.

But what if a public intellectual emerges who doesn't respect the rules of gathering evidence? What if the public sociologist does not create a public sociology that is supported by sociological training? I don't know why, but I kept thinking of Agger's book as I thought about this possibility. I support the idea of public intellectuals within our profession, but I support it for myself and others because I trust that the reading of others' work, and peer review and systematic methodologies we use do in fact take us to reasonable, if not the same, positions. It is when we have no professional process, no inductive or deductive method—and more responsibility to our values than our best attempts at producing sociological insights and good data—that I worry. And that is exactly the process and constraints that Agger seems to want us to drop.

Now I know I have been harsh. Too harsh really since I am sure that Agger is a man who wants to understand and fight injustice and make the profession more honest, less ritualistic, more open and more relevant. Burawoy and his commentators are concerned sociologists, struggling with the question of what makes the profession useful and effective in the "real world." They are all people who take moral positions some place in their lives. The assembled group is just divided on where values and morality intersect with science (a word Agger disowns and vigorously flings into some kind of hell) and how professional credit can and should be given. I presume that everyone is trying to do good work and make the world better. I can support differences in what public sociology is, could be, or should be. It is not an insignificant issue and I hope some book comes out to show what it actually looks like—not just what its reward structure should be in the discipline or whether

being a public intellectual is an extension of good work as opposed to a substitution for it. In both these books there was precious little description of what good public sociology was or could be. Hays, Wilson, Collins, Massey, and Patterson give some passing examples. Shouldn't there be more?

Those are the books I was looking for. For example, in the Burawoy book, I would have liked case studies showing how the application of say, Barbara Reskin's work on equal pay for equal work, made a difference when she did expert testimony, or how the impact of Dan Chirot's work on genocide was integrated with his work with the Red Cross or governmental commissions. I might have liked to see how people doing applied work, say like Andy Beveridge's demographic work for the *New York Times*, affected the kind of stories or analysis that appeared in the mass

media. Or, how Jeffrey Swanson's work on the mental health profession or Ross Koppel's investigation of hospital technology and medical error has affected practice and policy. This was the kind of book I was hoping to read—perhaps with analysis at the end of each article about the conundrums of combining research and activism, policy work, or working with the media, a legal team, or a for-profit company.

Last but not least—one parting shot. Could we start by asking sociologists who aspire to a larger audience (either within the profession or for the general public) to make books that are shorter, readable, less redundant, less ideological, and less pretentious? I see a strong skeleton of a book in each of these tomes, dying to get out, but smothered before it had a chance to live. Think about it.

A Better World. Possible? But of Course!

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The 7th World Social Forum (WSF) was convened in Nairobi in January 2007, and the 8th will be in Belem, Brazil in January 2009. From its very beginning, the WSF's motto has been, "A Better World is Possible." The 1st U.S. Social Forum (USSF) was held in Atlanta in June 2007, with the motto, "A Better World is Possible—A Better U.S. is Necessary," and sociologists gathered in New York City for the 101st American Sociological Association meetings in August 2007, under the banner, "Is Another World Possible?"

Why the question mark? No sociologist, at least no American sociologist, neither could—or should—be tempted in the slightest to consider (or ponder) the possibility that the American Sociological Association would, or should, ever, or did, indulge in escapist fantasies of quixotic idealism or flights of rapturous utopian thinking!! Speaking for myself—as both a loyal ASA member and a Forum aficionado—I was happy and remain so with the query—the question mark—that 6,025 of us intellectually embraced at the 2007 New York City meetings. Under review are books about the WSF, whose participants frame pro-

Another World is Possible: Popular Alternatives to Globalization at the World Social Forum, edited by **William F. Fisher** and **Thomas Ponniah**. London, UK: Zed Books, 2003. 364pp. \$29.00 paper. ISBN: 1842773283.

A Possible World: Democratic Transformation of Global Institutions, by **Heikki Patomäki** and **Teivo Teivainen**. London, UK: Zed, 2004. 242pp. \$34.00 paper. ISBN: 1842774077.

The Rise of the Global Left: The World Social Forum and Beyond, by **Boaventura de Sousa Santos**. London, UK: Zed Books, 2006. 222pp. \$31.00 paper. ISBN: 1842778013.

Global Revolt: A Guide to the Movements against Globalization, by **Amory Starr**. London, UK: Zed Books, 2005. 264pp. \$27.00 paper. ISBN: 1842774832.

posals for a better world, without question marks.

Before reviewing the four books, prefatory comments are in order, partly to clarify the link between the Forums and public sociology, and partly to provide a background because the Forums are much more heterogeneous than any social or political movement that readers might suppose. Any public sociologist will feel quite at home at one of the Forums. As Michael Burawoy, Frances Fox Piven, and Herbert Gans have stressed, and earlier C. Wright Mills did, public sociologists engage plural publics. Any sociologist who attends a Forum will learn valuable lessons about *plural publics*, how they interact, and how they amplify their *plural* voices, and also learn valuable lessons about broadening the base for advocacy. Additionally, Forums provide spaces for dialogical critiques, often highly original ones, of imperialism, hegemony, capitalism, and neoliberalism. This is not inconsistent with the intellectual responsibilities of the public sociologist who, as Michael Burawoy describes, needs to defend "civil society against market tyranny and state despotism, and thus, the abrogation of labor rights and social rights" (2006:17).

Any Forum is a microcosm of the world's social movements, trade unions, NGOs, indigenous, and other minorities. Here are a few examples of participating groups: Via Campesina (International Peasants Movement), Abahlali Base Mjondolo (Shack Dwellers of Durban), Zapatistas (EZLN), Landless Brazilian Movement (MST), Landless Indian Movement, Mahila Milan (Pavement Dwellers of Mumbai), Chipko Movement (an Indian environmental movement), SAM (an indigenous Malaysian group), IWHC (a Brazilian Feminist Network), Jubilee (Third World debt cancellation coalition), People United for Environmental Justice, The Third World Institute, ATTAC (*Association pour la Taxation des Transactions pour l'Aide aux Citoyens*, "The World Is Not For Sale"), Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), and the Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE).

It is important to be very clear that the Global South (that largely energizes the WSF) is on the front line of all that ails the planet these days. First, wealth is extremely skewed: two percent of the world's population, virtually all from the Global North, owns half the world's wealth. Second, the poorest countries

in the world are carrying annual debt loads that greatly exceed their annual revenues and exceed their capacity to provide even minimally for their populations. Third, desertification, dramatic declines in arable lands and rainfall, and other adverse trends associated with global warming, have and will continue to have the most severe impact on poor countries. Fourth, it's been the Global South that has struggled most against neoliberal policies and practices of the world's three financial institutions, private banks, and multinationals. Yet, it is important to also stress the declines in the Global North, and in particular in the U.S. Forty-seven million Americans are without health insurance; around 1.35 million children are homeless each year; last year 38 million Americans were food insecure; one in eight young black males between the ages of 25 and 29 are now behind bars; young Americans experience skyrocketing tuition costs; and rising numbers of Americans have declared personal bankruptcy.

Whether as a movement, as some maintain, or as a space, as others do, the Forum has become exceedingly successful. It is neither complicated nor esoteric, as its 2001 Charter of Principles clarifies:

[The World Social Forum] is an open meeting place where social movements, networks, NGOs and other civil society organizations opposed to neoliberalism and a world dominated by capital or by any form of imperialism come together to pursue their thinking, to debate ideas democratically, to formulate proposals, share their experiences freely and network for effective action . . . it has taken the form of a permanent world process seeking and building alternatives to neoliberal policies. The World Social Forum is also characterized by plurality and diversity, is non-confessional, non-governmental and non-party. It proposes to facilitate decentralized coordination and networking among organizations. . . . The World Social Forum is not a group or an organization. [*Approved and adopted in São Paulo, on April 9, 2001*] (*Foro Social Mundial*, 2006)

The WSF has taken place mostly on an annual basis since January 2001, usually at the time of the World Economic Forum held in Davos,

Switzerland. It convened four times in Porto Alegre (2001, 2002, 2003, 2005), once in Mumbai (2004), once as a polycentric in Bamako, Caracas, and Karachi (2006), and once in Nairobi (2007). There are plural Forums in 2008, and then returning to Brazil in January 2009. Depending on location, recent Forums have attracted anywhere between 66,000 (Nairobi) and 155,000 (Porto Alegre, 2005). Delegates come from around 110–149 countries, and again, depending on location, around 110 to 125 organizations register, and the number of workshops have varied from 1,296 in Nairobi in 2007 and 2,300 in Porto Alegre in 2005. An important part of the process has been to have regional and specialized forums, including a European Social Forum, a World Trade Unions Forum, a Forum of Sexual Diversity, the Boston Social Forum, and, most recently, the U.S. Social Forum held in Atlanta in July 2007. But the real successes of the WSF, as Immanuel Wallerstein (2007) points out, are not the actual events, but rather “the creation of networks, which the WSF is singularly equipped to construct at a global level.”

Four books are under consideration. I will begin with those by Starr and Santos, who provide analyses of the Forum, and then discuss the edited volume by Fisher and Poniah, that includes many snapshots of the Forum, and, finally, the volume by Patomaki and Teivainen, who describe the World Social Forum as it relates to the expansion of global civil society.

Sociologist Amory Starr provides (in her words) “a guidebook” to the growing revolt against globalization and in her expansive framework she draws from a variety of movements and campaigns that touch down at each Forum while in the interval expand and flourish. These include, just to give two examples, the food sovereignty movement launched initially by Via Campesina to protect the rights of farmers to produce their own food and the rights of consumers to decide what they consume, and the indigenous movement in Chiapas, Mexico, which through documentaries, teleconferences, and blogs demonstrates how indigenous knowledge and agriculture can be preserved. This peasant movement, launched by the Zapatistas, has clarified how it is possible to maintain solidarity in the face of sometimes brutal oppression, and it has set important precedents with regards to gender

equality, web technologies, and the articulation of political theory. All this while promoting indigenous practices and culture.

Her premise (which I have downplayed, but she shares with others including Sen, Kumar, Bond and Waterman [2007]) is that the WSF is a political program. Starr traces the various political strands and controversies within the WSF, including alter-globalization and anarchism, and illustrates various forms of protest (legitimate, confrontational, violent, and sometimes funny and frivolous). At the end she draws from her own materials and discussions to sketch what participatory democracy might look like. A strength of this volume is Starr’s engaged, lively, and effervescent style. She is a good ambassador for the Forum and it is likely she will win over Americans who are somewhat skeptical to begin with.

Boaventura de Sousa Santos’s aims, he writes, are to expand peoples’ knowledge and understanding of the WSF, and to highlight its role in emerging global left politics. Sociologist Santos is also a good ambassador for the WSF. He develops a theoretical framework that is an alternative to Marxism as well as liberal social science. He starts out by proposing that global left politics and its epistemology are opposed to competition, neoliberalism, exclusion, discrimination, and cultural domination. Yet, this global left is not simply critique and opposition but rather, as he puts it, “a critical utopia” or “the radical critique of present-day reality and the aspiration to a better society” (p. 11).

Then he critiques the logic of the dominant, Western epistemology as monocultural and restricted in the following ways: (1) its logic of schism (the divide between science and the humanities); (2) its linear logic of time and progress; (3) its naturalization of categories and hierarchy; (4) its logic of dominance and universality, and; (5) its logic of capitalist productivity and efficiency. He juxtaposes these expressions of the dominant epistemology with five “ecologies” that emerge at the WSF: (1) that of many knowledges and the incompleteness of any knowledge; (2) the ecology of temporalities, or the plurality of time rules; (3) the ecology of recognitions that accompanies diversity and pluralism; (4) the ecology of trans-scale, which involves linkages between the local and the global; and (5) the ecology of pro-

ductivities, or the multiplicities of aspirations, for land, for housing rights, for historical territories, for fishing rights, and, in general, for peoples' control over their own lives and livelihood. Thus, the ecologies that have emerged at the Forum as ways of knowing make up an epistemology of enlargement and openness, quite in contrast to the Western one that is based on exclusion and hierarchy. Note especially that the WSF epistemology is grounded in peoples' lived experiences.

Aside from these contrasts between the dominant and the emerging epistemologies, he also provides an analysis of the divergences and possible cleavages within the Forum process, including those of reform vs. revolution, socialism vs. social emancipation, the state as enemy vs. the state as ally, national vs. global struggles, direct vs. institutional action, and the WSF as a space vs. the WSF as a movement. Santos also describes the organization of the Forum, as it has evolved from Porto Alegre in 2001, as Polycentrics in 2006, and as specialized and regional forums. Regardless of the venue, participation is based on the joint principles of equality and difference, which he summarizes as "we have the right to be equal whenever difference diminishes us; we have the right to be different whenever equality decharacterizes us" (p. 119). Thus, Santos brilliantly captures the WSF as representing an alternative worldview, logic, and epistemology, and an alternative that is comprehensively inclusive.

In *A Possible World: Democratic Transformation of Global Institutions*, Heikki Patomäki and Teivo Teivainen lay out an array of possibilities spawned in the spirit of the Forum. Heuristically, they juxtapose a "conservative approach" with a "transformative approach." The former is the perpetuation of the status quo, including domination by powerful interests and established identities. A transformative approach, as they explain and develop it, allows for thoroughgoing reform of existing international institutions and the creation of new ones that promote fairness, accountability, and democratic processes. They start, appropriately, with the United Nations, and after providing an insightful critique of the UN, propose a People's Assembly (UNPA), a forum for "debate and review" that would function as a body parallel to the General Assembly, with members representing districts of about "6 million people." This is an idea

that has been tried on a smaller scale. For example, a Peoples' Assembly was launched in 2006 in Brazil and after taking off at the grassroots level, the process culminated in a national assembly in Brasilia with 8,000 participants (Osava 2007).

After providing an excellent overview of the two oldest Bretton Woods Institutions—the World Bank (WB), International Monetary Fund (IMF)—and the World Trade Organization (WTO), they review the broad range of systemic and mounting problems the three together pose for poor countries. To anyone who is trying to sort out the controversies about these three institutions, I can recommend no better summary and analysis than theirs. Their main criticisms of these institutions include lack of transparency, undemocratic decision making, and their failure to protect Southern countries. Another substantive chapter focuses on international courts.

In Part II of their book, Patomäki and Teivainen offer a wide-ranging and comprehensive assessment of alternatives in the spirit of "a better world is possible," giving the WSF much credit for providing the spaces that are necessary for thinking about and developing alternatives. Their proposals include a "global truth commission" to advance reconciliation processes, a world parliament, global referenda, debt arbitration to relieve the burdens on countries in the Global South, global taxes notably on foreign exchange transactions ("the Tobin tax"), pollution, and arms sales. Their book uniquely connects the themes of the WSF with topics that are taught in U.S. sociology departments relating to globalization, global governance, and political sociology.

Another World is Possible by William F. Fisher and Thomas Ponniah is a marvelous collection of documents that together capture many of the themes of Forum meetings. One of their purposes is to show how the WSF is not only a countervailing force against neoliberalism, war, and militarism, but provides opportunities in every country and internationally to reconstitute a political Left, not, as is now the case, social democratic parties that support capitalism, war, and repression. The volume starts with an excellent essay by the editors, and is divided into the following sections: Part I. The Production of Wealth and Social Reproduction; Part II. Access to Wealth and Sustainability; Part III. The Affirmation of

Civil Society and Public Space; Part IV. Political Power and Ethics in the New Society. The volume concludes with The Social Movements Manifesto and the WSF Charter of Principles.

The editors preface each section with a useful essay outlining the issues and the context for the documents. Some of the documents are written by individuals and based on their presentations at the Forum and others are documents prepared by NGOs, such as the World March of Women and the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights. Another wise decision on their part was to include "conference syntheses." For example, one of these chapters is a distillation of a conference that was hosted by the Network for Alternative and Solidarity Economy, with participants from a variety of other networks including the Latin American Women's Network for Economic Change and the Rural Coalition of Mexico and the United States. In this conference synthesis, the discussion leader, Sandra Quitela (from the Institute of Alternative Policies for the Southern Cone) describes the questions that were considered, and gives an overview of the issues, and provides strategies for future alliances. This chapter, and other similar ones, are amazingly helpful because they provide a glimpse into very specific topics that are launched at the Forum and then are spun out through global networks.

I highly recommend all of these books, and because they will encourage students to think creatively about social change, I recommend them as texts in courses on globalization, social movements, and sociology of politics. Additionally, the Santos volume would work well in theory courses. It is important to stress that the arguments about neoliberalism these authors make or assume are likely to be shared by many U.S. sociologists. However, what these authors do that most Americans cannot, including well-informed economists critical of neoliberalism such as Joseph Stiglitz, is to provide sophisticated critiques from the perspectives of its victims.

I would like to conclude with an ethnographic observation, perhaps biased by my own perspective, although I do not believe so.

Western commentators are writing for intellectuals, and underplayed in all these books, with the possible exception of Fisher and Ponniah, is that "rights-talk" is the dominant "street-talk" at the WSF. The largest venue at the Nairobi 2007 Forum was the immense tent of the Human Rights Caucus. In the tent, there were dawn-to-dusk workshops on topics as diverse as food rights, housing rights, women's rights, the rights of the homeless, the rights of nomads, and so on and so on. These topics were linked by such themes as grass-roots empowerment, worker ownership, and self-determination.

It is the case, I believe, that Forum participants come together from all over the world for the reasons laid out by these authors, specifically because they are opposed to neoliberalism, corporate practices, and imperial wars. Yet, what they all share, whether trade unionists, nomads, urban slum dwellers, Dalits, or peasant farmers, is the understanding that a better world is a world with rights for everyone. Human rights are collective goods and collective struggles, and Forum participants are determined to make them collective realities. This is thrilling!

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In Search of a Public Environmental Sociology: Ecological Risks in the Twenty-First Century

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The twenty-first century poses many challenges to the human community. However, none of these challenges are more daunting than those posed by environmental hazards and risks. Environmental degradation, community contamination, and ecological disasters will increasingly cause social problems by disrupting communities, families, and individuals and exacerbating historical patterns of social inequality. In turn, these trends will generate new forms of social disorganization and personal distress. European social theorists, such as Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck, have addressed these untoward characteristics of late modernity by specifying new collective risks that signal transglobal, transgenerational, uninsurable, irreversible, and manufactured consequences that seriously threaten the future of the human community by undermining "ontological security" (Giddens 1990; Beck 1992). American sociologists, most notably Kai Erikson and Charles Perrow, have documented the dire social consequences of disastrous environmental degradation in terms of "collective trauma" and "normal accidents" (Erikson 1976; Perrow 1984). Indeed, the ongoing disaster we have come to know as "Hurricane Katrina" reawakened the sociological community and the general public to a host of anthropogenic environmental risks that increasingly threaten the vulnerable social fabric of the modern world (Picou and Marshall 2007).

How should the social sciences, in general, and sociology, in particular, respond to these inevitable catastrophic environmental risks? At present, there seems to be little concern with risk within our emerging models of both "public" and "applied" sociology. In order to go beyond these models, sociology's understanding of environment-society relationships needs to be reframed and the potential contributions of public sociology for identifying and mitigating the disastrous consequences of ecological risks should become an area of inquiry for sociological practice. A public environmental sociology would promote,

The Quest for Environmental Justice: Human Rights and the Politics of Pollution, edited by **Robert D. Bullard**. San Francisco, CA: Sierra Club Books, 2005. 393pp. \$18.95 paper. ISBN: 9781578051205.

Volatile Places: A Sociology of Communities and Environmental Controversies, by **Valerie Gunter** and **Steve Kroll-Smith**. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 2006. 241pp. \$34.95 paper. ISBN: 9780761987505.

Precautionary Politics: Principle and Practice in Confronting Environmental Risk, by **Kerry H. Whiteside**. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2006. 182pp. \$20.00 paper. ISBN: 9780262731799.

explain, and communicate the potential risks and dangers of catastrophic environmental degradation to the public sphere through sociological theories and methods (Burawoy 2005; Calhoun 2007). On the other hand, applied environmental sociology would focus on client-centered applications for reducing real time and future environmental risks.

Unlike their counterparts in England and Europe, American sociologists, with few exceptions, are not easily spotted in the public sphere. While public sociologists in America are difficult to spot, applied sociologists enjoy a long and rich history in the United States, from James Coleman's earlier work on school desegregation to Katherine Newman's contemporary work on rampage shootings, sociologists have contributed to our practical knowledge of social issues. It appears that now is the time to ask, where is public environmental sociology?

To my knowledge, there is no formal delineation of such public applications in environmental sociology. However, one can argue that forms of public environmental sociology

exist to varying degrees, flying “under the radar” so to speak, in a number of research areas falling under the purview of environmental sociology. The books reviewed in this essay provide a basis for delineating an applied environmental sociology that must inevitably be linked to a more public explication of environmental risks. Furthermore, each book identifies potential “portals of entry” for generating a public sociology that would potentially lead to practical applications for responding to environmental racism, community contamination, anthropogenic disasters, and the promotion of effective environmental policy.

In addition to global warming, large-scale industrial production systems have resulted in the toxic pollution of numerous local environments. In the early 1970s, with the emergence of environmental sociology as a legitimate and worthy area of inquiry, researchers became focused on the politics of pollution and the inequality of exposure to toxic chemicals. The Environmental Justice Movement, spawned by convincing empirical evidence, expanded traditional sociological research on inequality and racism. Indeed, viewed as a variant of environmental sociology, this area of sociological inquiry has provided strong evidence of successful achievements in both public and applied spheres. Robert Bullard's edited volume, *The Quest for Environmental Justice: Human Rights and the Politics of Pollution*, clearly illuminates an expanded understanding of the social stratification of environmental risk. The chapters in this volume detail the beginning of the Environmental Justice Movement in Houston, Texas and Warren County, North Carolina, where challenges to the siting of toxic waste facilities uncovered a regional pattern of environmental racism. From these initial struggles, the Environmental Justice Movement has gained legislative support in the United States and spawned over 1,000 grassroots organizations throughout America and in 17 foreign countries. Given that Professor Bullard's research generated an entire field of study, his most recent compilation of readings synthesizes major issues from this line of research over the last 25 years. The book is divided into four sections, which address the “Legacy of Injustice,” “The Assault on Fence-Line Communities,” “Land Rights and Sustainable Development,” and “Human Rights and Social Justice.” These

sections are comprised of well-written chapters on community mobilization for social justice, sustainable development, and public recognition of the inequities of toxic contamination.

Most important for public environmental sociology, the Environmental Justice Movement has generated academic and advocacy structures that have produced an area of research and policy, which has virtually been transformed into a global social movement. The inequities in environmental risks are documented for disadvantaged people and, most importantly, an action-oriented sociology emerges that focuses on reducing the inequalities of ecological pollution. Viewed from this perspective, public environmental sociology requires the involvement of sociologists as sources of information for legislative lobbyists and legal consultants. In this case, the collaboration of sociologists and attorneys documented throughout *The Quest for Environmental Justice* eventually revealed the power of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and President Clinton's Executive Order 12898 for challenging and eliminating a manufactured form of blatant racial discrimination.

In *Volatile Places: A Sociology of Communities and Environmental Controversies*, Valerie Gunter and Steve Kroll-Smith argue that communities are “ground zero” for environmental troubles. With a few exceptions, it is in the context of community life that people struggle with the dilemmas of human-environment relationships. And struggle they must. Drawing on William James's idea of the “forced option,” Gunter and Kroll-Smith argue that most environmental troubles compel people to respond; sitting on the sidelines is not an option.

Dozens of case studies are organized around three types of conflict: conservancy and preservation disputes, siting disputes, and exposure disputes. Following an introductory chapter titled, “When Communities and Environments Collide,” Gunter and Kroll-Smith develop six chapters, each focusing on some dimension of the almost inescapable community discord that follows differences over preservation and conservation, the proposed location of built environments that modify, if not pollute, ambient ecospheres, and the outright pollution of air, water, and soil. Among the dimensions of conflict discussed are the ways history complicates the present, the

problems of trust and betrayal, and the dilemmas of uncertain knowledge. The incendiary question of fairness is also treated in a separate chapter, as are the complicating politics and actions of oppositional groups. A final chapter discusses the intriguing idea that environmental variables themselves may, at times, shape the contours of community conflict.

Applied sociologists have served as facilitators in these conflicts by connecting groups within contaminated communities, providing outside contacts for assistance to the community victims and designing and implementing intervention programs to reduce collective trauma (Picou 2000). However, these critical issues have yet to become the subject of public discourse.

Although not specifically designed as a text in public or applied environmental sociology, Gunter and Kroll-Smith demonstrate numerous opportunities for the exercise of applied sociological principles in the resolution of local conflicts as communities struggle to adapt to diverse environmental troubles. The role of the applied sociologist in these socially contested, adversarial events range from the collection and analysis of data to statements of expert opinion regarding risk, justice, and dysfunctional social and health impacts. Gunter and Kroll-Smith provide a number of practical applications that are not only informative, but also provide facilitation, guidance, and direction to communities, groups, and organizations involved in contested environmental issues, thereby providing a context for a public environmental sociology.

Nonetheless, our search for a public environmental sociology must go beyond pollution issues that are associated with contaminated communities and the unequal structural distribution of toxic wastes. As European social theorists have effectively communicated, the urgency of "new" environmental risks to their public, the potential for the failure of common assumptions associated with science-based risk management in the United States looms highly probable. Kerry H. Whiteside, in his most informative book, *Precautionary Politics: Principle and Practice in Confronting Environmental Risks*, clearly captures this issue when he writes:

As one approaches policy debates over environmental risk, it is best to be aware that the term scientific sometimes serves

as little more than a rhetorical device designed to give certain political preferences the mantle of rational superiority to alternatives. (P. 59)

Whiteside notes that modern environmental risks deal directly with the identity of nature, the role of science, neoliberal economic policies, citizen participation, social learning (reflexive modernization, *à la* Ulrich Beck), and trans-global catastrophes. Although my earlier delineation of applied environmental sociology as a series of facilitative roles for applied sociologists involved in community contamination issues is certainly a legitimate direction for development, an expansion of these concerns to the public sphere requires a consideration of the relationship of the politics of environmental policy; that is, the precautionary principle as a concern of sociological practice.

The precautionary principle provides an alternative to science-based risk assessment, i.e., it "represents a reasoned effort to take account of the complexity of the process—social as well as scientific—through which environmental problems become known and hence become subject to regulation" (p. xi). The precautionary principle is a "household word" in Europe, but has been actively rejected and dismissed on all fronts by the Bush Administration (pp. 62–65). Through a case study of agricultural biotechnology, Whiteside provides a meticulous comparison between the European Union and United States regarding use of the precautionary principle. Nonetheless, Whiteside locates traces of precaution in selected U.S. government policies (e.g., the discovery of BSE [mad-cow disease] in one Canadian cow) and suggests that recognition of the principle's meaning is growing in the United States, particularly at the state level. By demonstrating that science-based risk assessment is inherently political, Whiteside offers a deliberative precautionary alternative that is based on a public participatory social learning model.

Interestingly, environmental sociology in Europe and in the United States also reflects two distinct approaches, which roughly parallel Whiteside's analysis of the precautionary principle. Environmental sociology in the U.S. has developed from an empirical social problems perspective, while in Europe, environmental sociology has reflected theoretical con-

siderations of risk and modernity (Cohen 2000). However, this European variant is not just abstract theoretical analysis, this version of "risk theory" also encompasses what in German is referred to as *zeitdiagnostisches Soziologie*, or what can be translated as "down-to-earth sociology" (Alario and Freudenburg 2003:195). In short, environmental sociology in Europe, although often described as "theoretical," has functioned as "public sociology" more so than environmental sociology in America, which has primarily functioned as professional sociology. The implication of this observation for our search for a public environmental sociology suggests that a more discursive expression of environmental policy issues by environmental sociologists in the United States is needed. This public expression should take the form of a "down-to-earth" environmental sociology that communicates the moral and social challenges that ecological risks pose for future social policy and the long-term survival of the human community.

In summary, applied environmental sociology does exist in several forms in the United States. The Environmental Justice Movement and the study of contaminated communities reveal that many sociologists and social psychologists have enacted applied roles, serving as facilitators, advisors, researchers, and expert witnesses. This is applied environmental sociology on a case-by-case basis. An expansion of these forms of sociological practice needs to occur. A more policy-focused environmental sociology needs to involve more public constituencies in the twenty-first century. Such a public environmental sociology would ask serious questions and influence policy decisions concerning the many challenges ecological risks pose for the twenty-first century. Environmental and applied sociologists need to address the challenge of creating a new paradigm of inquiry that will inform public consciousness and impact environmental policy. Like the Envi-

ronmental Justice movement in the United States and *zeitdiagnostisches Soziologie* in Europe, this new public environmental sociology must demonstrate the importance of sociological knowledge for reducing future ecological risks. To ignore this challenge will result in dire consequences, both locally and globally, for the human community.

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 Creating Sociological Awareness: Public and Applied Sociology

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Introduction

The following review essay focuses on three books that demonstrate how the complexity of socio-cultural issues can be broken down into specific patterns of behavior and symbols that define and give meaning to human activity, attitudes, social structures, and gender identity. Each employs variations of applied sociological research methods combined with an approach that has recently been labeled public sociology. Sociologists for many years have successfully balanced the application of scientific rigor with sociological theory as the foundation for exploratory investigations into a range of social problems in order to create a more informed populous and to facilitate social change; public sociologists seek to reach out to multiple publics in a manner that both facilitates an understanding of sociological subject matter and instills a sense of empowerment and awareness among members of disenfranchised groups (Klayman 2007). Despite critics' somewhat obtuse descriptions of this hybrid sociological practice, public sociology incorporates the theoretical and methodological tools of the discipline. It is not, as some would have it, a partisan unscientific enterprise (Deflem 2005).

Several well-known books by public sociologists, including Steven Fraser's (1995) *The Bell Curve Wars: Race, Intelligence and the Future of America*, Massey and Denton's (1993) *American Apartheid* and Ehrenreich's (2001) *Nickel and Dime: On (Not) Getting By in America*, influenced the popular socio-political discourse at the time of their publication. These, as well as many other works of public sociology, have tempered the neoliberal rhetoric championing cuts in welfare and other social programs, the devastating impact of urban isolation and poverty, and stereotypes of the working poor. As exemplary works of Public Sociology, these books "spoke" to people at both ends of the economic spectrum and elucidated complex social problems.

Terrorism and the Politics of Fear, by **David L. Altheide**. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2006. 254pp. \$29.95 paper. ISBN: 0759109192.

Resistance, Repression, and Gender Politics in Occupied Palestine and Jordan, by **Frances S. Hasso**. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2005. 216pp. \$24.95 paper. ISBN: 0815630875.

Unchosen: The Hidden Lives of Hasidic Rebels, by **Hella Winston**. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2004. 216pp. \$23.95 paper. ISBN: 9780807036266.

Why Public Sociology?

The current presidential administration is an obvious example of the need for a sociology that reaches beyond the confines of academe and informs the voting public about the problems associated with social policies that are ideologically conceived, rather than those that are systematically designed and theoretically grounded. What the George W. Bush administration lacks in strategic and intellectual capacity is more than made up for by an adroit ability to create and distribute misinformation to the American public. The administration does this with pinpoint accuracy. From policies associated with the administration's domestic agenda to foreign policy, ideological propaganda is used to sway an increasingly uninformed voting public that has been characterized by researchers as largely ignorant of, and disinterested in, mainstream political issues—a phenomenon that no doubt contributes to low voter turnout in national elections (Federal Election Commission, Office of the Clerk, U.S. Census Bureau 2007). Even more shocking is the finding by political scientist Michael Delli Carpini (1996), that virtually no relationship exists between the political issues that low-knowledge voters say matter most to them and the positions of the candidates they voted for. This finding exemplifies one of the most important objectives for

the public sociology movement, which is to elucidate complex socio-political issues for consumption by multiple publics with the goal of creating a more informed voting public. The unfortunate pervasiveness of misinformation in American society and the resulting ignorance of American voters bring to mind that "the tyranny of a principal in an oligarchy is not [as] dangerous to the public welfare as the apathy of a citizen in a democracy" (Montesquieu 1750). Because purposefully misinforming American voters is a political tactic that works for mainstream political candidates, it must be countered by a public sociology that is theoretically and methodologically sound, and that effectively conveys information to a broad audience.

The three books reviewed in this essay attempt to explain the complex labyrinth of contradictions that characterize three different cultures that have participated in and/or have been affected by the protracted conflict in the Middle East among Palestinian social movement ("resistance") organizations and Israel, and more recently, western democracies. All three tackle exceedingly complex and related, if not interdependent, subject matters. Although they vary in terms of their depth, use of empirical information, and sociological theory, they speak to broad audiences using compelling analyses, coherent prose, and detailed descriptions of socio-cultural conflict, ideology, and insularity.

David Altheide's *Terrorism and the Politics of Fear*, a fine exposé on the perpetuation of fear among Americans by political elites, mass media, and the "military-media complex" (p. 89), appositely exposes several social institutions that purposefully misinform and manipulate public opinion. The author's reasoned and coherent prose, lucid theoretical explanation, and well-constructed examples of the media's influence on popular culture, politics, industry, and the formation of ideology, are both appealing and accessible. In a sense, David Altheide's book is a basic meta-ideology for the masses; it explores the structure and manifestation of ideologies related to the social construction of fear in a way that will no doubt resonate with non-academic readers.

Altheide's hypothesis that "fundamental changes in the mass-mediated world cannot be understood without careful consideration of culture and the symbolic construction of meanings that are produced by a few and

shared by many" (p. 8) is so well-articulated that academic audiences may find it unnecessary to read past the introduction, as most will instantly draw parallels between the theory of *Social Constructionism* and the social reality created by the media and other tools of mass communication, with particular emphasis on the subject of the sociology of knowledge. But those who are not sociologically inclined will likely be compelled to read Altheide's explanations of how this process works in American society. Altheide states that "powerful people in the United States thought it was perfectly appropriate to invade Afghanistan and then Iraq as part of the war on terrorism after the attacks of September 11, 2001. It did not matter that there was no evidence that Iraq was involved in the attacks on the United States or that it had any weapons that could harm" (p. 2) the United States. Altheide also recounts the silly display of pseudo-patriotism when President George W. Bush, standing on the bow of the *Abraham Lincoln* pronounced that major combat operations in Iraq have ended, under the now infamous "Mission Accomplished" (p. 3) banner. Through the use of this and many other such examples, the author demonstrates how fear is used to influence electoral politics and more generally, public opinion. Altheide also describes how the process of the social construction of fear controls public opinion and behavior, entertainment format (e.g., the television show *24*), and consumerism (e.g., "Government and business propaganda emphasized common themes of spending/buying to 'help get the country back on track'" [p. 2]), thus subjectively creating a social reality that meets political, industrial, and ideological goals.

For Altheide, fear is a state administered tool of social control that is used to moderate social behavior, public opinion, and cultural discourse. It is described throughout the book as a dialectical concept that creates ambiguity, chaos, and the perception among people that state control over almost every aspect of society is indeed necessary in order to stabilize the threats articulated by the mass media. Furthermore, fear is a semantically ambiguous concept that becomes clear only through further elaboration and specification by those in power. In the case of *Terrorism and the Politics of Fear*, a combination of the political power structure, municipal agencies, and the media are responsible for defining the reality

of the social order in ways that influence broad sociological themes. For example, "crime entrepreneurs," mainly law enforcement agencies, play a large role in getting out the message about fear of crime through the local news media" (p. 34). This, combined with the diffusion of fear through news headlines and articles prepared and disseminated by the mass media, create a distinct semantic that is, according to Altheide, tied to the economic interests of the military industrial complex, economics, and the new focus on home security. Even more striking is the convincing case Altheide makes for the significant influence of the mass media on social institutions and structures as "media logic becomes a way of seeing and interpreting social affairs. . . . But at the same time, there is a concern that media can and will distort what they present" (p. 57) using a "problem frame" (p. 61) that provides new information within a familiar context.

Terrorism and the Politics of Fear presents research findings that show a "clear media presence and impact on cultural symbol systems (i.e., typologies) from which societal members draw to make sense of routine and extraordinary events" (p. 64). Sometimes these cultural symbol systems (p. 64) become *indigenous typologies* that are socially constructed to provide meaning to the complexity of certain aspects of day-to-day dialogue and activities. "The interaction and shared meanings of news workers who follow the entertainment format and audience members who 'experience' the world through these mass-media lenses promote sufficient communication to achieve the news organization's goals of grabbing the audience while also enabling the audience member to be 'informed' enough to exchange views with peers" (p. 64). When mass media depicts a breakdown of social control, "we can expect those agents (of social control) to present dramaturgical accounts of their resolve and success in order to increase the citizens' confidence in them" (p. 65). The author's analysis in chapter 5 ("Consuming Terrorism") describes how the terrorist attacks of 9/11 were used to bolster public support for the state apparatus rather than a thoughtful, articulated response to the attacks. "While the military-media complex familiarized audiences with coalitions against evil, the collective response to the terror attacks was framed as a

communal patriotic experience that provided opportunities to 'come together' and be 'united'" (p. 92).

Terrorism and the Politics of Fear is a lucid, if not detailed account of the social construction of fear and its influence on American social institutions and structures. It is unfortunate, however, that Altheide repeats these themes so many times that even the least well-informed reader may find the author's explanations in which the social construction of knowledge has been the obvious culprit in the proliferation of misinformation, somewhat limiting. Even I began to wonder what would have happened if the media avoided any mention of terrorism after 9/11? Would Americans still be fearful of another terrorist attack? Could the attack on Afghanistan be justified on the grounds that the Taliban was harboring the leader of Al Qaeda, the group responsible for the attacks on the World Trade Center? Are the United States's ephemeral efforts to secure its airports, shipping ports, and the Internet justified on the grounds that another devastating attack *is* likely to occur? Are the more tangible realities of the failure and overall mismanagement of the Iraq war, preexisting inequities in the United States' Middle East foreign policy and foreign aid, and the United States' relationships with the Saudi and Israeli governments other factors that should instill fear in ordinary Americans? Indeed, there *are* other ways to explain Americans' fear of terrorism. Fortunately, David Altheide's book explains the most relevant source of misinformation and anxiety among Americans since September 11, 2001.

Francis S. Hasso provides insight into the often misunderstood Palestinian role in the Palestinian/Israeli conflict and the intraparty tensions among organizations engaged in the Palestinian resistance movement. Her account of the development of the Palestinian political party apparatuses and the role of women and gender politics in countering patriarchal impulses and authoritarian ideologies is particularly useful as it illuminates a variety of sociological complexities that the author describes in detail using interviews and observations of the Jordanian and Occupied Palestinian Territories Democratic Fronts (DF), the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), and the Palestinian Federation of Women's Action Committees (PDWAC).

But where *Resistance, Repression, and Gender Politics in Occupied Palestine and Jordan* is most useful as a work of public sociology is in its analysis of the role and influence of women in movement tactics, leadership, and political organizing, and in understanding women's gendered subjectivities within the context of severe gender inequality, poverty, and repression by their own patriarchal culture. Hasso describes women who believe in the cause of Palestinian sovereignty, willingly accept leadership positions within the resistance movement, establish women-led organizations that provide social, educational, and occupational services, and engage in dangerous militant tactics. Yet, these very same women fight an internal battle against the male-dominated network of resistance organizations in Palestine and Jordan in which they suffer myriad patriarchal indignities and the eventual demise of a once vibrant woman-led resistance movement.

Hasso also explores the historical factors that contributed to resistance movement tensions between the Palestinians and Arab States, which were largely due to the existence of two social movement frames or ideologies: pan-Arabism and Palestinian Particularism. According to Hasso, pan-Arabists view Arab and Israeli boundaries as European colonial creations that carry no historical or cultural meaning for Palestinians or Arabs, and therefore should be disavowed by all Arabs. Pan-Arabists also view the Palestinian resistance movement as one of Arab regional survival and expansion, rather than a struggle for Palestinian liberation. Alternatively, Palestinian Particularists seek to focus the struggle for liberation on Palestinian resistance and eventual liberation, rather than a regional movement that favors the liberation and eventual domination of the region by Arab states.

The author hypothesizes that the popularity of pan-Arabism eventually dissipated due in part to the widespread belief among leaders of the Palestinian resistance movement that pan-Arabists sought to expand their Arab state boundaries into Israel and the Occupied Territories rather than resist the Israeli occupation of Palestine. Hasso explains that pan-Arabist leaders were increasingly faced with reconciling support for Nasserist pan-Arabism with the desire to liberate Palestine through armed action against Israel. Unfortunately,

Hasso's discussion of this clash of ideologies does not include an historical-cultural explanation of how these competing systems of ideas emerged, including the values and norms that influenced the political attitudes and behaviors of movement leaders and members, and the existence of any variant strains of these two schools of thought. Nonetheless, excerpts from interviews with movement leaders, vivid descriptions of the Palestinian struggle and political isolation, combined with the author's extensive knowledge of the resistance movement, provides for a truly compelling read.

The book's most noteworthy contribution to the existing literature on the subject of the Palestinian resistance movement and gender politics is a detailed account of the inner machinations and political and military objectives of resistance movement organizations within the context of the rise and eventual demise of a Palestinian women's movement. The author sheds light on the use of traditional patriarchal ideology as a political tactic used by the Jordanian government to repress movement activity. As she explains, the Jordanian government assimilated Palestinian tribes using a reinforced form of patriarchal organization that, according to Hasso, had a sedative effect on men who might otherwise have resisted the regime, thus demonstrating how gender and sexuality are at the center of Palestinian politics. While male activists in the Occupied Territories thought of themselves as sons in a patriarchal system under the Israeli occupation, the Jordanian government limited mass organizing through social programming, including employment and higher education subsidies; Jordanian security services were also empowered to prohibit political activism and restrict the creation of businesses established by known members of the Palestinian resistance movement. In contrast, Palestinians in the Occupied Territories united against a foreign military occupation while Palestinian laborers and leftist university students engaged in guerilla warfare that, in essence, deemphasized the role of women and created a heightened awareness of Palestinian nationalism and Islamic tradition.

The unique circumstances of Palestinian women and their efforts to engage in the Palestinian resistance movement is relevant to a better understanding of modern social movements including the American civil rights

movement in the 1960s, the Women's Emergency Brigade during the Flint Michigan Sit-Down Strike in 1937, and the 1909 Labor Movement Strike, among dozens of other women-led social movements that achieved their objectives. Hasso's detailed descriptive analysis is thought-provoking but does not offer an explanation for the deleterious consequences of patriarchy and traditional Islamic ideology on the advancement of the Palestinian resistance movement.

Hella Winston's ethnographic study of Hasidic Rebels follows the lives of young men and women whose interests in secular culture led them far afoot of the "modesty" (p. 1) of their own people and who are deeply troubled by an acculturative stress that has them searching for both social solidarity and a more stimulating intellectual, social, and spiritual existence. Using a participant-observation ethnographic methodology, the author travels with, interviews, and becomes part of the lives of several Hasidic men and women as a friend, guest, and confidant of Hasidic Rebels who struggle with a profound compassion for their faith and an intense desire to escape from it.

The *Unchosen* begins with a lengthy introduction that describes the author's attempt to gain access into the Satmar Hasidic community in New York City. The story begins at the home of a Hasidic woman named "Suri" where the author dines with several Hasidic women and is impressed by their "warmth and openness" (p. 14). Winston connects with Suri on the basis of their mutual experience as the children of Holocaust survivors and seems pleased that her conversations with Suri and her friends result in an admission by Suri that Hasidic women "are very secretive" (p. xv) and that "there is a lot of hypocrisy here among Satmar women, and a high rate of suicide" (p. xv). The author offers no empirical evidence of higher than average suicide rates among Hasidic women, yet expounds on the subject by admitting that she has not "heard or seen any information on that" but if "it's not [true], I wonder whether this is [Suri's] way of trying to communicate something about the degree of unhappiness she, or some of the other women she may know, might have experienced" (p. xv). Rather than offer a brief empirical exploration of the prevalence of suicide among Hasidic Jews, the author simply speculates about the veracity of "Suri's" state-

ment leaving the reader unclear as to the prevalence of such maladaptive behavior among the insular Hasidim and its association with Hasidic rebelliousness.

Throughout the book, several young "Hasidic Rebels" are made into martyrs, unhappy with their way of life and likely to utter phrases such as "Hasidic craziness" (p. 52), visit *massage parlors* to have sex, and learn about other religions or the social and sexual freedoms of popular culture icons by surfing the Internet, reading magazines, and engaging in relationships with non-believers. "Yitzchak," a religious scholar and feminist who is described as a "Rock Star" within the Hasidic community, spends evenings visiting secular bookstores and socializing with non-Hasidic Jews. He resents the fact that he is unable to tell his students what he thinks about Hasidic culture and feels that he is forced to be a member of a group to which he no longer belongs. There is little difference among the many profiles of the "Hasidic Rebels" described in the "Unchosen," as "Yossi," "Dini," and "Malki," among others, are similarly frustrated, alienated, and disenchanted by their culture's overwhelming social restrictiveness.

Unchosen attempts to uncover the paradox of Hasidic Rebels but does not attempt to understand the causes and correlates of the rebellious behavior, the reasons why some Hasidic Jews seek to disengage from their own culture while many others do not, nor the impact of role strain on the emotional well-being of the characters profiled throughout the book; any of the latter issues would have been a more coherent and sociologically compelling subject matter than the anecdotal descriptions of child abuse, drug and alcohol abuse, and restrictive cultural mores. As importantly, Winston's descriptions of *most* Hasidic rituals are unquestionably negative, evidencing a palpable disregard for the importance of cultural relativity in sociological research.

The *Unchosen* lacks a discussion of the *hidden* socio-cultural framework of Hasidic Jewish culture presented without idiomatic expression and the author's obvious efforts to overdramatize the plight of Hasidic Rebels. While the dramatic descriptions of the Hasidic lifestyle humanize the key characters in the book, there is no interest on the part of the author in describing how the entrenched,

intensely religious, complex, and articulated cultural ideology and way of life of Hasidic Jews continues to survive the encroachment of popular culture. In fact, the reader is led to believe that Hasidic Jewry is dissipating due to its antiquated lifestyle and the growing number of Hasidic Rebels seeking liberation in the secular world—two themes that have no basis in reality.

Throughout the book, the author appears to be searching for a compelling way to engage the reader by exposing what she apparently considers to be the failures of a more than 300-year-old culture, but instead offers the following admission of her own cultural ethnocentricity: "Indeed it was hard for me to reconcile [the Hasidic lifestyle] with what I had always admitted about [Judasim]—namely, its profound insights into human psychology and social life, its wisdom about how to treat others and behave in the world" (p. xix). Later the author admits that "the nature of my inquiry required that I focus most of my attention on those Hasidim who are in some way dissatisfied with their lives" (p. xxiv) and admits that she did spend time with many Hasidic people who expressed a very positive affiliation with their religious community. Unfortunately, she does not use her interviews with those who embrace their way of life to facilitate a better understanding of why some Hasidic Jews reject their culture. Indeed, the answer may lie in the author's own ideological biases.

Conclusion

In Patricia Hill Collins's (2007) *Doing the Sociology That Had No Name*, the author describes the "importance of connecting scholarship to broader audiences" (p. 101). For Collins (2007), public sociology "constitutes a constellation of oppositional knowledges and practices. If American society were just and fair, if the American public were fed, clothed, housed, educated, employed, and healthy, there would be no need for public sociology" (p. 105). Despite sociology's obvious historical connection to civic engagement, its *influence* over socio-cultural and political discourse via efforts to inform and empower the oppressed has been severely limited.

As described in this review, David Altheide's *Terrorism and the Politics of Fear* suggests a way out of the propagandized social order through "good investigation and clear lan-

guage about the context, nature, and consequences of certain [policy] changes" (p. 220) and "investigative reports, movies and television programs that dramatize the injustice and oppression that result from this expansive [form of social] control" (p. 220). Francis O. Hasso's *Resistance, Repression, and Gender Politics in Occupied Palestine and Jordan* provides a comprehensive view of Palestinian social movement organizations, gender identity, cultural conflict, and state-mandated oppression through which the American public can begin to view the Palestinians as something more than religious fundamentalists. Her descriptions of the modern-historical circumstances of the Palestinian resistance movement and its relationship with Israel and surrounding Arab states are clearly meant to define the Palestinian cause as one that is autonomous, plagued by both internal and external conflict, yet socially cohesive. Hella Winston's account of Hasidic Rebels and their apparent desire for a secular life is peculiar. It is no doubt the most accessible book of the three, yet it lacks a counterfactual, and a socio-historical and theoretical explanation in which the author *could* have offered greater insight into this small, insular religious sect. In the end however, Altheide, Hasso, and Winston conclude that there are no easy answers for the disempowered, misinformed, and those highly susceptible to the propaganda of well-financed political campaigns and the United States government, which create fear, isolation, and alienation among American voters.

The three books in this review shed light on important sociological issues in a way that can educate and empower the disenfranchised with detailed, yet lucid information on very complex political, social, and cultural dynamics. In the words of Sharon Hays, "If we aren't doing public sociology, we're just talking to each other. To claim to study society and to say that you needn't bother to make your work relevant or accessible to social members—well, that seems to me just plain insane" (p. 84). Public sociologists like Hays believe that sociologists should not only engage in the intellectual pursuit of knowledge through innovative approaches to theoretical analysis and sociological research methodology, they should also engage in public discourse in order to raise awareness of social injustice and inequality, and the impor-

tance of civic engagement to a functional democratic society. Though only recently labeled, public sociology is our disciplinary heritage and should remain an important part of the larger sociological community.

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