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The Sociological Perspective

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> A commonly accepted definition of sociology as a special science is that it is the study of social aggregates and groups in their institutional organization, of institutions and their organization, and of the causes and consequences of changes in institutions and social organization. (Albert J. Reiss, Jr. 1968:1)

Within the contemporary context, sociologists are interested in human social interaction as people take one another into account as each behaves toward the other. Sociologists also take into analytical consideration the systemic units of interaction within social groups, social relations, and social organizations. As stated by Reiss (1968), the purview of sociology extends to

> Governments, corporations, and school systems to such territorial organizations as communities or to the schools, factories, and churches . . . that are components of communities. . . . are also concerned with social aggregates, or populations, in their institutional organization. (P. 1)

Sociology is, as Touraine (1990) suggests, an interpretation of social experience and is thus a part of the reality that the practitioners of the discipline attempt to observe and explain. To these areas we can add that sociology is a discipline that demystifies its subject matter, and it is, as Dennis H. Wrong (1990:21–22) notes, a debunker of popular beliefs, holds skeptical and critical views of the institutions that are studied (Smelser 1990), and challenges myth making (Best 2001).

The early history of sociology is a history of ideas developed in the European tradition, whereas the sociological approach of the last 150 years involved the development of concepts, methodology, and theories, especially in the United States (Goudsblom and Heilbron 2001). As American sociologists trained in the traditional theory and methods developed during the first eight decades of the twentieth century, we acknowledge our intellectual debt to the European founders. But beyond an earnest recognition of the classic work of the early founders, including Auguste Comte, Émile Durkheim, Alexis de Tocqueville, Frederic LePlay, Marcell Mauss, Max Weber, Karl Marx, and Harriet Martineau, most of whom were attracted to the European environment that included the liberalism, radicalism, and conservatism of the early to mid-nineteenth century (Nisbet 1966; Friedrichs 1970) and to what C. Wright Mills (1959) refers to as the *sociological imagination* that "enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society" (p. 6), our approach to sociology is deeply embedded with and indebted to those individuals who established the Chicago, Harvard, Iowa, and Berkeley schools of thought. Similarly, as practitioners, our approach to the discipline of sociology

is reflected in these distinctive American scholarly perspectives.

The American tradition of sociology has focused on social policy issues relating to social problems, the recognition of which grew out of the dynamic periods of social transformation wrought by the Industrial Revolution, the Progressive Era, world crises engendered by war, worldwide population shifts, increasing mechanization, and the effort of sociologists to create a specific niche for the discipline within a growing scientific community. This effort occurred first in North America and Western Europe and then, similar to cultural transitions of the past, within a global context. In every instance, the motives embedded within a science of society lie in the attempt to understand and offer proposals for solutions to whatever problems gain significant attention at a particular point in time.

In a most interesting work, Goudsblom and Heilbron (2001) pose that sociology represents a great diversity, or what some analysts may refer to as fragmentation, because the discipline grew as a part of the processes affecting societies and cultures worldwide throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Thus, as we move well into a new era and a new stage of academic development, it remains important that we recognize the sociological heritage as identified and discussed by these analysts. The five stages that sociology has experienced to date are (1) the prediscipliнary stage prior to 1830, further identified as "protosociologies"; (2) the formation of the intellectual discipline, 1830–1890; (3) the formation of an academic discipline with diverging national traditions, 1890–1930; (4) the establishment of an international academic discipline, 1930–1970; and (5) a period of crisis, fragmentation, and attempts to develop a new synthesis, 1970–2000 (Goudsblom and Heilbron 2001:14574–80).

Consistent with the fifth stage, for almost four decades we have been witness to major changes in the substantive topics that undergo sociological inquiry both in the United States and, given the influence on the discipline by Canadian, European, and Scandinavian scholars, internationally. Among the areas more fully developed that might be identified as fragmentation are many of the most interesting sociological topics, including deviant behavior, the family, religion, gender, aging, health, the environment, science and technology, among so many seemingly unrelated topics. The unique conceptual paradigms of sociology serve as a template or pattern for seeing the social world in a special way. Every discipline and, indeed, every occupation employs templates or patterns to see and accomplish things in a unique fashion. Disciplines such as sociology rely on intellectual templates based on certain conceptual schemes or paradigms that have evolved through the development of a body of knowledge in those disciplines. Thus, the content of this two-volume reference reflects this rich legacy and current emphases within sociology. We have also asked the contributing authors to consider the prospects for sociological inquiry during the early decades of the twenty-first century, thus making the above-cited categories of the phases of development of the discipline of sociology most germane.

THE EARLY SOCIOLOGY

In its early era of the mid- to late nineteenth century, sociology was understood to represent anything relating to the study of social problems. Indeed, it was thought that the methods of the social sciences could be applied to social problems and used to develop solutions (Bernard and Bernard 1943). In focusing on such substance, O'Neill (1967:168–69) notes that periodicals of this early period had a sociological section in which news items relating to family matters, poverty, and labor often appeared. These early social scientists did not hold any special talents other than their training in theology. This situation was similar in the United States as well. It is not difficult, then, to imagine that, as Bramson (1961) notes, "For many American sociologists these problems evoked a moral response" (p. 75). Thus, the process of solving the problems of society was attempted by application of the conventional morality and the validation of Christian principles of piety rather than reform or progress.

Sociology was born as a result of a process, a process that directed a method of inquiry away from philosophy and toward positivism (MacIver 1934). Sociology was the result of a process caused by two major forces—namely, the Industrial Revolution and the French Revolution. The events, changes, and ideas that emerged from these two revolutions are found in the nineteenth-century thought pertaining to social order (Eisenstadt 1968). Following in the wake of the Age of Reason and the Renaissance, according to Nisbet (1966), this was a period of word formation:

> Perhaps the richest period of word formation in history . . . which were either invented during this period or were modified to their present meanings: industry, industrialist, democracy, class, middle class, ideology, intellectual, rationalism, humanitarian, atomistic, masses, commercialism, proletariat, collectivism, equalitarian, liberal, conservative, scientist, crisis . . . [among others]. (P. 23)

These were words that held great moral and partisan interest in the European economy and culture; such passions were identified with politics as well.

Identified with European conservatism, which became infused by and with science, the visionary perspective promoted by Auguste Comte during the 1830s in his six-volume *Positive Philosophy*, later translated from the French and condensed into two volumes by Harriet Martineau, was based on the medieval model of European society.

This model of family, community, authority, tradition, and the sacred became the core of scientific sociology that was to serve notice that a science of society was essential to provide for more than commonsense analysis and to reestablish social order (MacIver 1934). Although unsuccessful in his quest to secure a professorship, Auguste Comte was a positivist, mathematician, and promoter of the scientific identity of the engineering profession (Noble 1999). Comte argued that positivism and the still-to-be-identified area of "sociology" would serve as a means of supporting his intention to create a unique perspective of human relations and a system to reestablish the social order and organization of society. Reestablishment of this new social order was to proceed in accordance with the positivist stage of evolution with its ineluctable natural laws that could and would be established through engaging the scientific perspective. Along with the arts, the science of sociology, according to Comte, was to emerge as the queen of the sciences, the *scientia scientorum*, and would ultimately supplant biology and cosmology.

If the restoration of order in French society was a preoccupation for many early-nineteenth-century scholars, including Auguste Comte, it was also the case, as Bramson (1961) notes, that

> many of the key concepts of sociology illustrate this concern with the maintenance and conservation of order; ideas such as status, hierarchy ritual, integration, social function and social control are themselves a part of the history of the reaction to the ideals of the French Revolution. What conservative critics saw as resulting from these movements was not the progressive liberation of individuals, but increasing insecurity and alienation, the breakdown of traditional associations and group ties. (Pp. 13–14)

For social scientists of the early nineteenth century, many of the problems of the time were much more well defined than is the case in the contemporary experience.

Comte was fervently religious, and he believed those interested in science would constitute a "priesthood of positivism" that would ultimately lead to a new social order. According to Noble (1999),

> A theist in spite of himself, Comte declared that the existence of the Great Being "is deeply stamped on all its creations, in moral, in the arts and sciences, in industry," and he insisted, as had previous like-minded prophets since Erigena, that all such manifestations of divinity were equally vital means of mankind's regeneration . . . Comte was convinced that people like himself, science-minded engineering savants occupied with the study of the sciences of observation are the only men whose capacity and intellectual culture fulfill the necessary conditions. (P. 85)

The legacy of this enthusiastic perspective is that sociology has been at the heart of the positivists' contribution to the understanding of the human condition. It was also to serve in part as a basis for the reactions of conflict theorist Karl Marx, especially as these writings referred to the religious *opiate of the masses* deemed by Comte as critical to the reorganization of society (Noble 1999:87). The discipline continues to present an array of perspectives that have served to stimulate much controversy within both society and the discipline (see Turner 2001).

Although the sociological legacy of Harriet Martineau is substantial, as outlined by Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley (1998), it was Martineau's effort to translate and condense Auguste Comte's six-volume magnum opus into a two-volume set of writings published in 1853 that allowed this important work to be available to the English-speaking world. Interestingly, Comte's English translation came after Martineau's sociological contributions, the richness of which was finally recognized by feminist researchers during the 1980s and 1990s. Martineau engaged in "participant observation" of the United States during the mid-1830s and subsequently published the two-volume *Society in America* (1836/1837), which is based on this excursion to the North American continent. Because of this experience, Martineau was able to lay the foundation for her treatise on research methodology in *How to Observe Morals and Manners* (1838).

THE FOUNDATION OF SOCIAL SCIENCE: STATISTICAL STUDIES

Perhaps it is ironic that the distinctive difference between the European theoretical sociology and the empirical sociology practiced in the United States was advanced by events in Europe. Indeed, the origin of empirical sociology is rooted in Europe. Statistical studies began in the 1660s, thereby preceding the birth of all of the social sciences by a couple of centuries. The early statistical gatherers and analysts were involved in "political arithmetic" or the gathering of data considered relevant to public policy matters of the state, and as noted by Reiss (1968), the gathering of such data may have been accelerated to meet the needs of the newly emerging insurance industry and other commercial activities of the time. But it was the early work of the moral statisticians interested in reestablishing social order in the emerging industrial societies that was to lay the quantitative foundation for the discipline, especially the early scientific work of the French sociologist Émile Durkheim (Whitt 2001:229–35).

The second stage in the early history of quantification may have been related to the development of probability theory, the rise of the insurance industry, other commercial activities, and political necessity (Lecuyer and Oberschall 1968; Reiss 1968). English political arithmeticians, including John Graunt and William Petty, were destined to be followed by the efforts of the moral statisticians who engaged in data gathering in Belgium and France. Indeed, as early as 1831, the Belgian Adolphe Quetelet and the Frenchman Andre Michel de Guerry de Champneuf, in building on the early efforts of the practitioners of the "political

arithmetic" that first began in the 1660s, were engaging in the government-sponsored data-gathering activity pertaining to data on moral topics, including suicide, prostitution, and illegitimacy. Such activities would prove quite instrumental in the establishment of the empirical social sciences. Even many of the methodologies developed during this same era of the early nineteenth century, as well as awareness of important ecological methodological issues such as statistical interactions, the ecological fallacy, and spuriousness, were developed by early moral statisticians such as Andre-Michel de Guerry and Adolphe Quetelet. Later, the work of Henry Morselli, Enrico Ferri, and Alfred Maury during this same century were to serve well the needs of aspiring European sociologists and even later members of the Chicago School of Sociology (Whitt 2001:229–31).

THE RISE OF AMERICAN SOCIOLOGY

> American sociology is one of the intellectual creations that has most deeply influenced our century. No other society (*the American*) has been more actively involved in understanding its own organizational change for the sake of knowledge itself. (Touraine 1990:252)

The birth of the social sciences in general and of sociology in particular is traced to the liberal democratic ideas generated by the British social philosophies of the seventeenth century—ideas that later were to be enhanced by the French Enlightenment of the eighteenth century and then transformed in the United States where these ideas served as the foundation for practical democratic society. The rise of American sociology can be traced to the early-nineteenth-century social science movement, a movement that by the mid-1800s became a new discipline that was widely introduced into college and university curricula. The movement also led to the establishment of a national social science association that was to later spawn various distinctive social sciences, including sociology, as well as social reform associations (Bernard and Bernard 1943:1–8).

Although the promotion of the social sciences in the United States began as early as 1865 with the establishment of the American Association for the Promotion of Social Sciences and then, in 1869, creation of the American Social Science Association with its association-sponsored publication the *Journal of Social Science*, prior to the 1880s there had been no organized and systematic scientific research in the United States. This was the case simply because, as Howard W. Odum ([1927] 1965:3–20) noted, there was no university per se in which research as a scientific pursuit could be conducted. It is within the context of the movement to organize such a university that sociology and many other social sciences were embraced as viable academic disciplines, thereby allowing systematic research to be conducted in a rigorous manner. This also was a period of great emphasis on pursuing answers to new research questions through the evaluation of knowledge and the employment of methodological and statistical tools within an interdisciplinary context. Indeed, L. L. Bernard and Jessie Bernard (1943) posit that the vision of the founders of the American Social Science Association was "to establish a unified science of society which could and would see all human problems in their relationships and make an effort to solve these problems as unified wholes" (p. 601).

Thus, the social sciences in general and sociology in particular owe a great intellectual debt to the American intellects who studied at length with the masters of Europe. Included among these are notables such as William Graham Sumner, Lester Frank Ward, Albion Woodbury Small, Franklin Henry Giddings, John William Burgess, Herbert B. Adams, Thorstein Veblen, Frederick Jackson Turner, James Harvey Robinson, George Vincent, Charles Horton Cooley, Edward Alsworth Ross, George Howard, Frank W. Blackmar, Ulysses G. Weatherly, John R. Commons, and Richard T. Ely (see Odum 1951, [1927] 1965); each of whom were well versed in scholarly areas other than sociology, including history, theology, economics, political science, and statistics. With the decline of the social science movement and its national association, the general discipline that emerged from the remains of social science was in fact sociology (Bernard and Bernard 1943:835).

The development of an intellectual and academic American sociology, like sociology in any part of the world, was and continues to be dependent on the social and political conditions of the country. In the United States, a liberal political climate and, in the aftermath of the Civil War, the advent of a system of a mass public education system, American sociology flourished. Thus, in countries in which the structure of the system of higher education was open to free inquiry, research was supported by private foundations and government contributions (Wright 1895), and the university was organized albeit loosely, sociology, subject to the polemics of its status as an academic science, gained entry if not acceptance among university faculty. Where education was available to the elite rather than the masses, sociology was less apt to flourish (Reiss 1968).

Another important factor is that American sociology arose basically without roots other than the growing influence of the social science movement in the United States and the emphasis on the virtues of science that permeated the intellectual and social environs of this same period. As noted by Neil J. Smelser (1990:49–60), American sociology did not experience the yoke of either European feudalism or any peculiar intellectual history. Rather, sociology came into being within American higher education during the 1880s and only after several other disciplines, including psychology and economics, had been accepted within the academy. Attempts among adherents of these other disciplines led to the establishment of the scientific theme within the social sciences. Early sociologists embraced this same scientific theme.

A second factor that had a profound effect on the early adherents of the sociological perspective is the social reform theme of the 1890s. The legacy of these two themes—namely, scientific respectability and social reform—became the dual platforms on which the unique American sociological perspective was to be based.

Although there was a great, direct influence of European thought, research, and the philosophy of the British Social Science Association on sociology to focus on attempting to solve America's problems (Odum 1951:36–50), the rise of American sociology, at least during the first half of the twentieth century, was concomitant with the most dynamic period of technological, economic, and social reform changes ever recorded. In this context, Howard W. Odum (1951:52) views sociology as a product of the American social and cultural experience and places sociology's heritage to be as "American as American literature, American culture, and the freedoms of the new world democracy" (p. 3). American sociology is thus part European and part American. Indeed, American sociology was envisioned early on as a social science that could and would assist policymakers and concerned citizens in creating the "American Dream."

Consistent with this ideology, Odum (1951:59–60) identified three unique American developments, each of which influenced the direction of American sociology throughout the entire twentieth century. The first of these developments is the symbiotic relationship between the discipline and the American society and culture. The ideology that focused on the American Dream and its realization had a great influence.

The second development, according to Odum, is the emphasis on moral development and the motivation to establish ethics as a component of the educational curricula, American literature, and the social sciences, especially as these relate to ethical conduct, social justice, and public morality. Within sociology, this orientation is found in the application of sociological principles into economic and organizational behavior and the founding of the American Institute of Christian Sociology.

Finally, Odum (1951) notes, the American experience led to a research emphasis on social problems of a moral and economic nature. In an effort to better understand these social problems, sociologists organized the systematic study of issues such as waves of immigration, the working class, public disorder, neglect of children, violence toward women, intergroup conflict, urbanism, alcoholism, suicide, crime, mental illness, delinquency, and poverty (see also Fine 2006). This was the application side of sociology that held important social policy implication. However, there was also an early emphasis on a "general sociology" as opposed to a "special sociology" as was found at the more elite institutions of higher learning. Clearly, this difference foreshadowed the pure versus applied dichotomy that has generated so much discussion within the discipline (see Odum 1951:51–74).

Because of the important influence of the social science movement in the United States, there is some disagreement pertaining to who the founders and members of the first generation of American sociologists are (see Odum 1951, [1927] 1965). But publication of Lester Ward's book *Dynamic Sociology in 1883* does appear to mark the beginning of American sociology (Bramson 1961:84–85). On the other hand, there does not seem to be any disagreement as to the purpose of the American founders, and that was to establish a scientific theoretical base. Later, at the University of Chicago the goals were to establish a relationship between sociology and the classical problems of philosophy by focusing on process issues relating to elements of social control, such as conflict, competition, and accommodation (Kurtz 1986:95).

American sociology emerged concomitant with the challenges to legal philosophy and the discussion of questions relating to myriad questions that arose as the effects of industrialization were observed Calhoun (1919). Such questions have their focus on marriage, divorce, immigration, poverty, and health and how to employ the emerging scientific model to topical data that had been gathered by the nineteenth-century moral statisticians.

Leon Bramson (1961:47–48) observed that the most interesting aspect of American sociology in the first half of the twentieth century is that when affected by European theories of mass behavior and collective behavior, American sociologists, in their haste to establish a role for sociology in America, either transformed the meaning of the concepts to meet their needs or created new concepts to apply to the more liberal American social and political context. American sociologists, according to Bramson, also applied European theoretical concepts such as social pathology, social disorganization, and social control to the data referring to the American experience without regard for whatever special conditions should have been accounted for or even possible theoretical distortions; this issue is also discussed by Lester R. Kurtz (1986:60–83) in his evaluation of the Chicago School of Sociology.

Albert J. Reiss, Jr. (1968) notes that the first formal instruction of a sociology course in the United States was offered by William Graham Sumner, a professor of political and social science at Yale University, during 1876. The first, second, and third American Departments of Sociology were established at Brown University, the University of Chicago, and Columbia University, respectively (Kurtz 1986:93–97). Between 1889 and 1892, 18 American colleges and universities offered instruction in sociology, but in 1893, the University of Chicago was the first to develop a program that led to the granting of a Ph.D.

Despite the recognition of the emerging field of sociology as a distinctive area of inquiry, the focal point of a religious orientation and perhaps fervor expressed by social commentators in their discussions and analyses of the social issues that were to constitute the purview of sociology also engaged the attention of other early practitioners of the discipline. The social problems identified in the wake of expansion of the American West and the building

of the railroads included issues relating to "the influx of immigrants, the rise of the factory system and the concentration of people in big cities. These comprised the now familiar catalogue of crime, delinquency, divorce, poverty, suicide, alcoholism, minority problems and slums" (Bramson 1961:75).

Alfred McClung Lee (1978:69) notes that ever since that time, sociologists have been attempting to divorce themselves from an ancestry that is historically rooted in the clergy, the police, utopian ideologues, social reformers, conservative apologists, journalistic muckrakers, radical thinkers, agitators, and civil libertarians.

Given the moral tone of much of the writing of many early American sociologists, it is noteworthy that in articulating the six "aims" of the *American Journal of Sociology* established at the University of Chicago in 1895, the scientific view of sociological concern so clearly defined several decades later by E. A. Ross (1936) was not so clear to many if not all of the moral philosophers of this earlier period. Witness the following comments offered by the founding editor of the *American Journal of Sociology*, Albion W. Small (1895):

> Sociology has a foremost place in the thought of modern men. Approve or deplore the fact at pleasure, we cannot escape it. . . . To many possible readers the most important question abut the conduct of the *Journal* will be with reference to its attitude toward "Christian Sociology." The answer is, in a word, towards Christian sociology sincerely deferential, toward "Christian sociologists" severely suspicious. (Pp. 1, 15)

These comments were of particular significance given that the *American Journal of Sociology* was not only the first journal of sociology created anywhere, but it was also, until 1936, the official journal of the American Sociological Society. Thus, the influence of both the Chicago School and the large number of contributions by its faculty and students to the *American Journal of Sociology* placed the work of the Chicago School at the forefront in shaping the early direction and substance of American, Canadian, and Polish sociology (Kurtz 1986:93–97). This was especially true in the subareas of urban and community studies, race and ethnic relations, crime and juvenile delinquency, deviance, communications and public opinion, and political sociology.

Leon Bramson (1961:73–95) identified three important phases in the rise of American sociology. The first period began in 1883 with the publication of Lester Ward's *Dynamic Sociology* to about 1915 or 1918 with the publication of Robert E. Park's essay on the city and/or the end of World War I, respectively. During this period, the founders began their earnest quest to establish the theoretical foundation as it related to the American experience focusing on "a liberal sociology of change and process, rather than one of conservation and equilibrium" (Bramson 1961:85).

This focus on change and process became even more evident during the second stage of American sociology, identified as the period between the two world wars. This was a period of academic expansion, with major increases in faculty and students, but even more important, led by sociologists at the University of Chicago, this was a period of specialization and the beginning of differentiation within sociology as the quest to develop a viable methodology began in earnest. This also was a meaningful period during which sociologists worked to establish the scientific status of the discipline and to earn respectability and academic legitimization. It was also a period during which many of the conceptual problems of sociology first began to emerge as its practitioners developed an increasingly complex technical vocabulary, a vast array of classification schema, and other abstract systems categories of thought. Perhaps assuming the need to compensate for a past that included so many nonscientifically moral reformist-oriented representatives of the discipline, sociologists responded during this phase of development by creating complex theories that, for an extended period of time, were not only unintelligible to the layperson, but also the abstract nature of these grand theories exceeded the ability of social scientists to create methodologies appropriate to empirically test these theoretical models (Lee 1978). But despite this theoretical/methodological problem, this second stage of sociological development was also one in which much substance was created.

The history of sociology in America from prior to World War I to approximately the mid-1930s is, according to Kurtz (1986), a history of the school of thought promoted by the University of Chicago. If the second phase of American sociology is to be distinguished as a period dominated by the Chicago sociologists, it is also one that led Pitirim Sorokin to observe that American sociology was emerging as a distinctive brand:

> The bulk of the sociological works in America are marked by their quantitative and empirical character while the bulk of the sociological literature of Europe is still marked by an analytical elaboration of concepts and definitions; by a philosophical and epistemological polishing of words. (Cited in Bramson 1961:89)

The period is characterized by a marked increase in the development of new and expanding methodologies and measurement. These new techniques included a plethora of scales intended to measure the theoretical concepts developed previously.

As noted, Goudsblom and Heilbron (2001) identify five phases of development of the discipline that cover the period prior to 1830 to the very end of the twentieth century. But the third phase of the development of American sociology, identified by Bramson (1961) as covering the period from 1940 to 1960, is noteworthy because this was a period during which the development and adoption of theories of the "middle-range" advocated by Robert K. Merton led to even greater specialization and differentiation of the discipline. In turn, sociologists began to develop ever-expanding areas of inquiry. Robert K. Merton

([1957] 1968), who wrote in reaction to the abstractness of the previous dominant position of the functionalist school of sociology, stated that theories of the middle range are

> theories that lie between the minor but necessary working hypotheses that evolve in abundance during day-to-day research and the all-inclusive systematic efforts to develop a unified theory that will explain all the observed uniformities of social behavior, social organization and social change. (P. 39)

The all-inclusive efforts refer, of course, to the contributions of Talcott Parsons in *The Structure of Social Action*, originally published in 1937, and in 1951 with the appearance of *The Social System.*

The third phase of development can be characterized as the most enthusiastic period during which greater emphasis was placed on the application of sociological knowledge. As the field expanded, new outlets for sociological studies and knowledge were created, sociologists found employment in nonacademic settings such as government and business, and the new specialty areas of interest reflected the changes in American society, including a growing rise in membership in the middle class, the expansion of the suburbs, more leisure time, and the growth of bureaucracy. In lieu of the previous sociological interest in the reform of society and the more traditional social problems orientation of the discipline, the new sociology opted to leave such concerns to the social work profession and to special studies programs such as criminology. Thus, specialty areas emerged—areas such as the sociology of marriage and the family, and aging (later to be defined as gerontology), industrial sociology, public opinion, organizations, communications, and social psychiatry (later called mental health). From this point forward, the continued rise to respectability of sociology is attributed by analysts such as Robert Nisbet (1966) to the public recognition that societal problems are more integrative in nature than previously thought. This may also serve as a partial explanation for why the discipline is viewed by some as fragmented.

THE SUBSTANCE OF THE SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

The logic and ethos of science is the search for the truth, the objective truth. Thus, the most fundamental problem the social scientist confronts, according to Gunnar Myrdal (1969), is this:

> What is objectivity, and how can the student attain objectivity in trying to find out the facts and the causal relationships between facts? [That is,] How can a biased view be avoided? The challenge is to maintain an objectivity of that which the sociologist is a part. (P. 3)

Although the sociologies of the United States and Europe differ in perspective, both attempt to answer similar albeit distinguishable questions. In his discussion of "the two faces of sociology," Touraine (1990:240) states that these differences lie in the scholarly research response to two problems: (1) How does society exist? (2) How are culture and society historically created and transformed by work, by the specific way nature and its resources are put to use, and through systems of political, economic, and social organization? Because the intellectual legacy of American sociological thought has been shaped to a large extent by the historical experience of creating a nation in which the rights and the will of the American people have been dominant, American sociologists have long focused on "institution" as a central concept and the significance of efforts of reform movements within the American society to affect its social organization. Thus, the substance of American sociology has been on topics such as the family, social organization, community, the criminal justice system, and law and society among the numerous institutional-level areas of inquiry that are evaluated within the context of yet another American theoretical focus—namely, the emphasis on theories of the middle range. European sociologists, on the other hand, tend to focus on the second question while emphasizing the concept "revolution" in their analyses. Thus, even when similar topics such as social movements serve as the focus of inquiry, the American and European sociology responds from a different perspective (Touraine 1990). To understand the importance of this difference in perspective between the two sociologies, Alain Touraine (1990) poses the view that American sociology has a symbiotic relationship between culture and society, whereas European sociology integrates society and its history. Americans sociologists focus on society; the European sociology is focused on the rich history that serves as the backdrop for any attempt to understand social change.

Because the American experience is predicated on building a nation through the rule of law; the concepts of individualism, capitalism, and territorial conquest; and the attempt at integration of successive waves of immigrants to the North American continent, American sociology began its rise in prominence through an elitist intellectual process that dominated the academy during the early formative years of the discipline. Thus, it is perhaps ironic that an American sociology housed within the university setting would assume a critical teaching and research posture toward an elitist system of institutions that the early sociology assisted in creating. Within the context of certain kinds of social problems areas, such as ethnic studies, discrimination, and segregation, sociology and sociologists have been able to exert some influence. But in other important areas within which issues relating to elitist society may be involved, such as social class relations and economic and political power, the official and public perceptions of the efforts of American sociologists may not be as well received.

Many analysts of the past can be called on to render testimony in support of or apologize for the past efforts of sociologists to provide useful information, but none is

perhaps more relevant than the following statement offered by George A. Lundberg (1947): "Good intentions are not a substitute for good techniques in either achieving physical or social goals" (p. 135). During the 1960s and 1970s, sociology, psychology, and other social science undergraduate job candidates customarily responded to interviewer queries with "I want to help people." Similar to those who attended graduate school after World War II, these individuals were influenced by the potential of sociology to make a difference. But good intentions aside, the real issue is, How do we go about assisting/helping people? Perhaps the more educated and sophisticated we become, the more difficult are the answers to social problems and social arrangements that are deemed inappropriate or at least in need of some form of rearrangement. That is, the more we believe we already know the answers, the less apt we are to recognize the importance of the sociological perspective. Within this context, sociology necessarily must adhere to and advocate the use of the methods of science in approaching any social problem, whether this is local or international in scope.

Sociology has utility beyond addressing social problems and contributing to the development of new social policy. Indeed, the sociological perspective is empowering. Those who use it are in a position to bring about certain behavior in others. It has been said that "behavior that can be understood can be predicted, and behavior that can be predicted can likely be controlled." It is not surprising that sociologists are often used to help select juries, develop effective advertising campaigns, plan political strategies for elections, and solve human relations problems in the workplace. As Peter Berger (1963) phrases it, "Sociological understanding can be recommended to social workers, but also to salesmen, nurses, evangelists and politicians—in fact to anyone whose goals involve the manipulation of men, for whatever purpose and with whatever moral justification" (p. 5). In some ways, it might be said that the sociological perspective puts one "in control."

The manipulation of others, even for commendable purposes, however, is not without critical reaction or detractors. Some years back, industrial sociologists who worked for, or consulted with, industrial corporations to aid them to better address problems in the workplace were sometimes cynically labeled as "cow sociologists" because "they helped management milk the workers." Knowledge is power that can be used for good or evil. The sociological perspective is utilitarian and empowering in that it can accomplish things for whatever purposes. Berger (1963) goes on to reflect the following:

> If the sociologist can be considered a Machiavellian figure, then his talents can be employed in both humanly nefarious and humanly liberating enterprises. If a somewhat colorful metaphor may be allowed here, one can think of the sociologist as a *condottiere* of social perception. Some *condottieri* fight for the oppressors of men, others for their liberators. Especially if one looks around beyond the frontiers of America as well as within them, one can find enough grounds to believe that there is a place in today's world for the latter type of *condottiere.* (P. 170)

Responding to the question, "Can science save us?" George A. Lundberg (1947) states "yes," but he also equates the use of brain (the mind) as tantamount to employing science. Lundberg also posed the following: "Shall we place our faith in science or in something else?" (p. 142). Physical science is not capable of responding to human social issues. If sociologists have in a vain effort failed to fulfill the promise of the past, this does not indicate that they will not do so at some future time. Again, as Lundberg (1947) heeded long ago, "Science is at best a growth, not a sudden revelation. We also can use it imperfectly and in part while it is developing" (pp. 143–144).

And a few years later but prior to the turmoil that was to embroil the decades of the 1960s and 1970s, John Madge (1962) urged that a century after the death of the positivist Auguste Comte (now 150 years later) the structure of sociology remains incomplete. However, Madge recognized and demonstrates in *The Origins of Scientific Sociology* that sociology was slowly gaining in maturity and with this growth was on the verge of or within reach of achieving the status of a science. But it is also important to keep in focus the goals of science as articulated by Gunnar Myrdal (1969)—more specifically, "The goals of objectivity and effectiveness in research are honesty, clarity, and effectiveness" (p. 72). If the results of sociological research have been less than to the liking of policymakers and government and corporate leaders, then yet another of Myrdal's insights is especially germane. That is,

> Research is always and by logical necessity based on moral and political valuations, and the researcher should be obligated to account for them explicitly. When these valuations are brought out into the open any one who finds a particular piece of research to have been founded on what is considered wrong valuation can challenge it on that ground. (P. 74)

There are other reasons as well, reasons that complicate the delivery of the important message promoted by the discipline's practitioners, for as noted by Joel Best (2003:11), sociology "is a perspective built on relativism, built on the recognition that people understand the world differently." Indeed, many years earlier George C. Homans (1967) observed,

> If some of the social sciences seem to have made little progress, at least in the direction of generalizing and explanatory science, the reason lies neither in lack of intelligence on the part of the scientists nor in the newness of the subject as an academic discipline. It lies rather in what is out there in the world of nature. (P. 89)

Such statements lie at the heart of the epistemological debate that began in the 1920s (see Reiss 1968:10–11) and

continues into the modern era. Despite the vastness of sociological inquiry, it is obvious that a strong orientation toward the scientific study of human behavior, social interaction, and organizations continues and that this scientific focus is predicated on the assumption that such study is possible because it is based on the examination of phenomena that are subject to the operation of universal laws, a point not lost in the minds of the discipline's founders. The counterpoint that the social sciences are cultural sciences and thereby fundamentally different from the physical sciences and also subject to different methodology and other evaluative criteria is representative of a long-standing European influence that also began in the 1920s.

Given the diversity and fluidity of the topics addressed and the levels of theories employed by sociologists, it is not surprising that many others do not agree. The counter-argument is based on the premise that given the circumstances behind the evolution of science and the support it received in the past and the more repressive attention it receives in the contemporary experience from powerful interest groups, objective social science and the establishment of universal laws that are based on such inquiry may not be possible (see Turner 2001).

Whether or not one argues that the study of human society is unique, it is still extraordinary given the vast array of extant theories used to express the human experience and capacity. Witness the statement of one contemporary analyst who, in an intriguing assessment of the contemporary American "wilding" experience, wrote,

> Sociology arose as an inquiry into the dangers of modern individualism, which could potentially kill society itself. The prospect of the death of society gave birth to the question . . . what makes society possible and prevents it from disintegrating into a mass of sociopathic and self-interested isolates? This core question of sociology has become the vital issue of our times. (Charles Derber 2003:18)

Only in part is Derber referring to the American experience. His assessment also speaks to the experience of Western Europe. Much social change has taken place, and the efforts of sociologists to describe and explain this change and to draw upon these insights to develop predictive models has led to a diversity of theories. Indeed, over time, the scientific paradigm shifts more generally described by Thomas Kuhn ([1962] 1970) are obvious in our discipline (see Friedrichs 1970). There have been, there are at present, and there undoubtedly will be future paradigm shifts within this evolving and apparently expanding discipline of sociology, many of which will focus, as has been the case in the past, on the social change process. And for all the so-called objectivity of a scientific sociology advocated by analysts such as George A. Lundberg (1947), the development of which is so eloquently described by Leon Bramson (1961)), sociologists have been involved in social activism and social engineering, that first occurred during the embryonic years of the discipline's development (Volkart 1968). Such activism occurred again during the 1960s and 1970s, in many social justice areas, and in occupational settings such as those of the criminal justice system.

At present, sociological inquiry represents a vast array of topics and offers many competing theoretical models while its practitioners attempt to make sense of a rapidly changing world. For all its middle-range theories and studies that reflect the efforts of those dedicated to cumulative knowledge, it is also important that we recognize that the building of a paradigm as well as challenges to an extant paradigm are not relegated to the gathering of information alone. Indeed, if sociology is to advantage itself in the twenty-first century, it may be imperative that a dominant paradigm begins to identify the kinds of community needs that it can usually serve, for as Joseph R. Gusfield (1990) so clearly notes, sociology has been at odds with and a critic of the classical economic and individualistic interpretations of American life. Thus, whatever issues sociology may need to address at this juncture, perhaps we are hampered only by the limits of the sociological imagination. Again, the following comment by Homans (1967) is noteworthy:

> The difficulties of social science lie in explanation rather than discovery. . . . Our trouble has not been with making discoveries but with organizing them theoretically—showing how they follow under a variety of given conditions from a few general principles. (Pp. 79, 105)

The present diversity of the discipline welcomed by so many social critics also serves as a barrier to the creation of a dominant theoretical paradigm. Without this focus, sociology remains in the minds of many of the discipline's representatives a less-than-coherent discipline. Perhaps this is not different from the struggle of the 1960s as described by Gouldner (1970), a period that also was far less than organized and coherent and certainly far less civil in disagreement. It is important that sociologists take stock of their trade and question in earnest the utility of the work we do. As noted by Herbert L. Gans (1990),

> By and large, we sociologists have been too distant from the society in which we operate and in which we are embedded, which funds us even if too poorly and which influences us surely more than we influence it. We are too busy trying to understand how that society functions . . . that we rarely think about our own functions—and dysfunctions. To some extent our failure to do so stems from a typical professional blindness, which results in our inability to distance ourselves sufficiently from ourselves and our routines to look systematically at what we are for and to whom. (Pp. 12–13)

Not all may agree, of course. Indeed, sociology in the United States and in Europe has been a critique of modern urban life with its emphasis on the individual, capitalism, and bureaucracy. In some instances, this critique of American society has been radical and reformist in its

thrust (Gusfield 1990:31–46). And although American sociology had been shaped in part by psychology in establishing its methodology during the first two-thirds of the twentieth century, especially through a common social-psychological area (see, e.g., Reiss 1968), it can be safely stated that American sociology has been transformed during the latter decades of the twentieth century.

THE PASSION FOR SOCIOLOGY

Sociologists may be accused of engaging in an affair with their work. Witness the stirring comments of one colleague:

> I fell in love with sociology when I was twelve. . . . Sociology was my savior. It saved me from the vexing confusion caused by my once despising the mundaneness of everyday life and deeply loving and admiring my people. It stabilized me by articulating the dedication that I felt for social justice. (Shahidian 1999:303–04)

We share this passionate approach to social science based on the insightful development of theory and empirical research, an approach that has, in turn, led to a vast array of subject matter. Note the other 105 chapters represented in this two-volume *Handbook.* In light of these impressive contributions, the only aspect of this endeavor that may seem perplexing to some is that as we move further into the twenty-first century, there are those who continue to believe in and practice the scientific method; there also are those who argue that if the logic of science and the methods of scientific objectivity are to be carried to an extreme, sociology will lose or has already lost its humanistic perspective and, with this loss, the inclination toward active community involvement through social policy advocacy and practical intervention. As Peter L. Berger (1963) phrases it,

> At the same time it is quite true that some sociologists, especially in America, have become so preoccupied with methodological questions that they have ceased to be interested in society at all. As a result, they have found out nothing of significance about any aspect of social life, since in science as in love a concentration on technique is quite likely to lead to impotence. (P. 13)

This dichotomy certainly is a matter of considerable debate, but perhaps most advocates and active practitioners of the discipline would fall somewhere in between these two orientations (see, e.g., Reiss 1968:10–11). In this regard, we are also optimistic that the sociological imagination will continue to be an important part of the work of sociologists as they take into consideration "a quality of mind that will help them to use information and to develop reason in order to achieve lucid summations of what is going on in the world and of what may be happening within themselves" (Mills 1959:5).

THE FUTURE OF SOCIOLOGY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

More than 170 years ago, sociology began to emerge from its philosophical and biological roots to it current status as an important social science. Early sociologists achieved renown based on their interest in providing information useful to appraise social policy issues. However, in the contemporary instance, there are strong indicators that sociology has not achieved the eminent position envisioned by the founders. Note the less-than-enthusiastic assessment offered by Black (1999):

> The problems endemic to the discipline of sociology include the lack of a paradigm, disciplinary fragmentation, and the irreconcilability of science, ideology, and politics . . . and the lack of an occupational niche—[all these] place sociologists in the position of having constantly to defend the profession. (Pp. 261, 263)

Thus, as we move well into the twenty-first century, it is clear that sociology is engaged in yet another struggle to (re)identify itself. Perhaps such a struggle is to be expected of any science of human behavior. And nowhere is this situation more contentious than in the responses of representatives of the discipline to the question as to whether sociology is or is not yet considered an activity worthy of the label "scientific activity."

At the center of this struggle lies the heart of any discipline—namely, sociological theory. Among the eminent theorists reporting on the status of sociology in this *Handbook* are individuals who represent the very best of what the discipline has to offer. That the message is suggestive of a continuing debate within the discipline is both disheartening and encouraging. It is disheartening in that after a period of more than 175 years, representatives of the discipline should be able to exclaim with great pride the accomplishments of so much activity instead of debating their scientific worth. It is encouraging because the current debate over the theory and the substance of the work sociologists engage in can only lead to the exploration of new and challenging frontiers. But the substance of sociological inquiry also represents a matter of contention for many research- and practitioner-oriented representatives of the discipline. Some contemporary analysts who have observed the developments within the academy during the past several decades call for a critical reevaluation of that which sociologists identify as the substance of research and understanding. Sociology has given birth to and generated intense interest in many areas of study that are no longer identified with the discipline. Because the specific subareas developed by sociologists became well accepted as legitimate applied disciplines within the academy, independent, overlapping units within the academy have been created.

If the 1960s represent the *golden era* of sociology, it is also a period, as described by Turner and Sica (2006), that

is "remembered as a time of violence, massive social change, and personal transformation" (p. 4). The period had a profound effect on an entire generation of students, many of whom were instrumental in creating the new sociological emphasis that today is criticized for its diversity, the lack of continuity, and a failure to develop a unified paradigm. Whatever reservations that may continue to exist as we progress well into the twenty-first century, these can be hailed as a challenge. Thus, at the same time that community involvement and applied research are increasingly being devalued in the academic world, there is a distinct pressure, according to Harris and Wise (1998), for sociologists to become increasingly involved in the community and society.

This call to establish a public sociology may well combine with the three types of knowledge identified by Burawoy (2005)—the professional, critical, and policy-specific databases. In each of these areas, the initiative would be consistent with enthusiastic proclamations of the past. George A. Lundberg's (1947) *Can Science Save Us?* serves as but one important example of those who promoted the application of social science insights to solve social problems. Of course, one major difference between the time when Lundberg wrote and now is that we are not rebounding from the tragedy of a world war. Indeed, it was during the post-World War II period and during the subsequent several decades that American sociology assumed its theoretical and empirical dominance (Odum 1951), especially in the area of deviant behavior (see Touraine 1990). Yet another important difference between then and now, as Harris and Wise (1998) suggest, is that sociologists need to be perceived as problem solvers rather than as social critics, and similar to the pleas of Marion Talbot (1896) at the end of the nineteenth century, much of the sociological may necessarily become interdisciplinary in nature. This perspective is supported as a portion of a more scholarly editorial philosophy articulated by Wharton (2006:1–2). Most noteworthy for our purpose are points three and four:

> (3) Be aware and reflective about the . . . broader contributions to scholarship, policy, and/or activism . . . ; (4) produce useful knowledge—not merely in the applied sense of solving problems, but knowledge that is useful as *basic* research that can help people better understand and transform the social world. (P. 1)

These same kinds of issues—social activism and public policy research—were recognized at the end of the nineteenth century as strengths of the new discipline.

Thus, there appears to be hopeful as well as worrisome aspects of sociology at the end of the twentieth century (Lewis 1999). But this kind of enthusiasm and concern appears to be periodic throughout the history of the discipline as sociologists attempt to both define and then redefine the parameters of what some argue is too extensive a range of topics to allow practitioners of the discipline to be definitively identified (Best 2003). Witness the statement attributed to one of the coeditors of this *Handbook* who, in the early 1980s, wrote the following:

> Future prospects for sociology(ists) no doubt will depend upon our ability to identify and respond to community needs, to compete for funds available from nontraditional sources, to work in applied areas, and to establish creative problem-solving strategies. The challenge before us should generate a healthy response. (Peck 1982:319–20)

Since that time and in the wake of a declining influence of the social sciences, there has been a response as evidenced by the many new areas of inquiry, many interdisciplinary in nature, that currently curry attention from sociologists. Indeed, there does appear to be a fragmentation, but this so-called fragmentation is consistent with an assessment offered by Beck (1999), "Sociology today, as throughout its history, is not unified. . . . we have never been able to sustain . . . unanimity and consistency for very long. Thank goodness" (p. 121).

Perhaps we do not engage in "normal science," at least not in the sense that Thomas Kuhn ([1962] 1970) refers to it. That is, academic sociologists continue to function quite well even though they are outside the single frame of reference that usually serves as the paradigmatic foundation for the physical sciences. Normal science is rigid, but it is also burdened by uncertainty and inconsistency, as Friedrichs (1970) observes. In the case of sociology, this is found in the diversity of theoretical models and topical areas. Although some analysts lament the current state of the discipline, Jacobs (2004) recently observed that "some might view this diversity [of topics] as evidence of excessive fragmentation, (but) there are important theoretical connections" (p. v). Of course, the substance of manuscripts submitted for possible publication, the rubrics under which the research can be categorized, is quite different from the search for a common sociological paradigm. To wit, classic studies do exist, but none serve to forge a single paradigm. Thus, the future of the discipline will depend, as usual, on the contributions of those who may be relatively silent in the wake of less-than-acceptable "scholarship," as suggested by Lewis (1999), but who nonetheless commit themselves to excellence by producing significant contributions to theory and application (see, e.g., Rossi 1999) that should, in the long run, counter the myriad productions that are less significant. Concomitant with this effort will be an increased awareness of and involvement in the applied and an earnest effort to again be a viable force in the policy-related aspects of sociology and society. In other words, we believe there will be a reawakening of and involvement in those aspects of sociology that served the discipline well during its early years of development in the United States (see Ross 1936) even as the applied social work-oriented practitioners broke away to form their own professional association (Odum 1951; Rossi 1999). Indeed, there exists a need for answers

to myriad policy-oriented questions as well as applied concerns at all governmental levels.

But in the end, sociologists may, as Beck (1999:123) suggests, go where they go, where they want to go. This may again mean that sociologists will abandon important areas of inquiry that they helped to establish, leaving the sociological legacy to others. Sociologists will also move to create other areas of inquiry while questioning past and present assumptions and knowledge claims in an ongoing quest to better understand social arrangements and to engage in, as Beck (1999) observes, "life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness, and the sociological imagination" (p. 124). To this we can add the quest to establish the meaning of social justice in a rapidly changing democratic society.

Thus, contrary to dubious predictions of an ominous obscure future, the content of this *Handbook* attests to a much more positive and grand future orientation within the discipline that will include much more than the rigorous efforts to clean up conceptual problems that sociologists are supposedly noted for. Moreover, the epistemological debates of the past will undoubtedly continue as Turner (2001) and Best (2003) suggest, but in so doing, the future of academic sociology will again be broadened. This expansion will again, we think, involve the applied aspects of the discipline and engagement of the public through active involvement of sociologists in the four traditional areas—namely, through a public sociology with an emphasis on further development of the profession and a critical civic activism with the intent to broadly influence social policy. Moreover, the increasing influence of European sociology in the global community will undoubtedly continue; this influence is not only important, it is most welcome. Given the above, it may well be that another call to arms will result. There has been a movement, albeit a small movement, among highly regarded intellectuals (the National Association of Scholars) to enhance the substance and quality of academic teaching and scholarly activity. This, too, is welcome in sociology.

The world that engages a scientist, as noted by Friedrichs (1970), is one that emerges from a scientific tradition, along with its special vocabulary and grammar and environment. Sociology's laboratory is the social world and on occasion its practitioners are criticized by those who argue the arcane nature of all that is considered scientific. If the normal science, as described by Thomas Kuhn ([1962] 1970) and Robert W. Friedrichs (1970), is to be realized within the discipline of sociology, then it may depend on efforts of young sociologists (see, e.g., Frickel and Gross 2005) who may capture the essence of such a paradigm in a general theory of scientific/intellectual movements. Such work may also serve to stimulate more thought as to the requisite initiatives essential for subsequently developing the kind of intellectual movement that will define once again, and actively promote, the substance of the sociological perspective.

If the emphasis of American sociology at the beginning of the twentieth century was unsophisticated, armchair science that "featured the study of general society and the 'system' of social theory, it reflected not only the almost universal philosophical approach but also the consistency of the best minds in interaction with European philosophy and American higher education" (Odum 1951:421–22). In the mid-twentieth century, sociology, similar to other social and physical sciences, struggled to determine whether the future of the discipline would continue to pursue a general systems theory of society or whether the discipline's practitioners would develop more theory and then relate these theories to research and the scientific method (Odum 1951:422). At this critical midpoint of the century past, and in recognition of the importance of the discipline, Odum (1951) wrote that there is

> the extraordinary need in the contemporary world for a social science to seek special knowledge of human society and welfare and meet the crises brought on by science and technology, so often out of perspective to human relations, and so to provide the basis for not only a social morale in an age of science but for societal survival as well. (P. 3)

At the end of the twentieth century, these comments rang clear, and as we move forward and well into the greater twenty-first-century experience, Odum's words seem no less germane today than in the past.

Toward establishing the prospects for the future of this great academic discipline, we hasten to add how critical it is and will be to again acknowledge the important work of the founding mothers and fathers of sociology. Thus, at the end of the twentieth century, the state of sociology may have been debatable, but during the initial decades of the twenty-first century, sociologists will undoubtedly take up the challenge to pursue answers to vexing social problems that are, as Fine (2006:14–15) states, embedded with complex, dynamic, interconnected social systems. Some of the solutions to be tendered in the near future may not serve well the needs of all citizens, but these should nonetheless address policy issues relating to social freedom, social justice, and social equality while recognizing that such policies determine the behavior of those actors whom sociologists are intent to study. Herein American sociologists may now have achieved the requisite disciplinary maturity to employ the kind of *sociological imagination* envisioned by C. Wright Mills (1959) half a century ago. Such a sociology would, in the tradition of Europe, encompass a biography and history within society, thereby allowing sociology to represent not only a scientific enterprise but also to serve as a sensitizing discipline that allows us to continue to view the world in a new and interpretive fashion.

Finally, in some peculiar ways, the vexing problems that capture our attention during the early portion of the twenty-first century parallel those of the early twentieth century; this is true at all levels of society and perhaps even more so within those sectors that heretofore were barricaded from a critical analyses. The actors may have

changed but, in general, the public concerns regarding the kinds of behavior tolerated and considered to be appropriate tend to remain the same. And as the moral entrepreneurs of the twenty-first century push their agendas, the new prohibitionist movements continue to capture the attention of policymakers, which may of necessity be cause for some sociologists at least to revisit many of the same topics that held sway in the past. Thus, we will continue to use templates in our lives to understand the world, physical and social, in which we exist. The sociological templates derived from the many conceptual constructs available provide us with a unique and perceptive perspective. As sociology further develops, new conceptual constructs will be added and will contribute to its unique perspective, thereby enhancing our ability to better analyze and understand human social behavior.