TIMELINES

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FROM THE SECTION CHAIR

The essays offered here were produced by History of Sociology (HoS) Section members in response to a request in April 2020 from *Footnotes* asking all Section chairs to solicit contributions from their members "focusing on an insight or insights your area of scholarly research can offer to advance understanding of the social dynamics around COVID19. "

A request like this, of course, presents particular challenges—and opportunities—to HoS as by its very nature the subfield of the history of the discipline has all of sociology as its province and nothing sociologists have considered interesting is alien to it or beyond its frame of reference. There is also the challenge described by **Christian Dayé** (see p. 10) notes, "Writing history is always an exercise in self-reflection, and self-reflection is something that in times of emergency usually has to withdraw from the front stage until things have gone back to 'normal.' The actual pandemic forces people around the globe to re-order their priorities, and reflecting on the historical development of a social science discipline is unlikely, on first view at least, to contribute to solving the pressing problems of the day." But opposing these challenges, the invitation offered the particular opportunity to show that history does teach, indeed, perhaps, as Thucydides suggested, teach by example and from this angle historians of the discipline do have something to say. Faced with this opportunity, I asked members to respond to the question, *"how [might] a study of the history of sociology . . . inform the discipline's responses to the current crisis."*

Twenty-two members of our small Section (as we are classified by ASA) responded to this call—some with brief suggestions on topics to be researched, some with recommendations of key works in the history of sociology, and some (eleven members) found time to send developed comments. The word-limits imposed by *Footnotes* made it impossible to do justice to the richness of the responses, and the more developed comments brought a particular combination of insight, urgency, and clarity that I felt Section members would want to read. Hence, this special issue.

Respondents suggested various crises as reference points,

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including the 19th century cholera epidemics, the African American experience of post-Reconstruction terrorism, the visible gulf between rich and poor described by Beatrice Webb as "poverty amidst riches," the Dreyfus Affair, the Great Depression, the rise of fascism and the subsequent movement of population that the intellectual emigres represented, World War II itself, the Cold War, the Trump Presidency--and some took the tack of commenting directly on the Covid pandemic. Several respondents (**Cynthia Deitch, Gary Fine, David Smith**) suggested an exploration of sociological action in other health crises—the 1918 flu pandemic, the AIDS epidemic, or, the polio epidemics. My admittedly preliminary research did not find contemporary sociological studies of the 1918 flu—suggesting perhaps that sociologists of that period defined the problem as a medical emergency rather than a social problem. This possible perception, though without reference to that earlier pandemic, is a concern in a prescient warning issued in 1987 by Richard Berk (with Alice Rossi, Nancy Stoller Shaw, and Karolynn Siegel) "Anticipating the Social Consequences of AIDS—A Position Paper" which cautions sociologists that "In short, medical technology will not soon provide an answer. If the AIDS epidemic is to be contained, therefore, people in high risk groups must change their behavior." This article from *The American Sociologist* provides a possible standard for historians to assess sociology's ultimate response to AIDS.

Some respondents recommended key works dealing with sociology in a time of crisis: **Charles Camic's** "On Edge: Sociology during the Great Depression and the New Deal" (*Sociology in America—A History* edited by Craig Calhoun 2005) recommended by **Patrick Fontane**; **Anne Rawls'** 2018 study "The wartime narrative in US sociology, 1940–1947: stigmatizing qualitative sociology in the name of 'science,'" recommended by **Gary Janowski**; **Roger Bannister's** chapter *Sociology Responds to Fascism* (edited by **Stephen P. Turner and Dirk Käsler,** 1992), recommended by **Michael Schwartz; Joyce Williams** and **Vicky MacLean's** 2016 volume *Sociology in the Progressive Years: Faith, Science, and Reform,* recommended by **Patricia Lengermann**.

From the total responses three general themes emerge: one, crises may be seen as moments of high energy in societies—for good or ill; two, for ill, crises have heightened sociologists' concerns about the status (or lack thereof) of their profession and exacerbated divisions within sociology, ironically, by the issuance of calls for unity based in the exclusion of "bad sociology"; three, for good, crises have forced the development and refinement of methods of social research, opened spaces which allowed for the emergence of American sociology, and given rise to new propositions in sociological theory.

The following reflections on the history of sociology and its lessons for the discipline—and the society—in the time of Covid-19 are reprinted as they came to me in response to my call for help occasioned by the *Footnotes* appeal; this issue reflects my hope that we might begin to use the newsletter to share ideas in various stages of development. Perhaps we can translate into a permanent feature of the Section, the opportunity to think aloud and to risk the accusation of "didacticism" in the pursuit of lessons from the history of sociology. *Gillian Niebrugge-Brantley*

Cholera, Social Statistics, and Covid-19 Stephen Turner

Historians of early academic sociology are often bemused by the presence of courses on sanitation in the sociology curriculum, but there is an important reason for this, which holds lessons for the present. The great triumph of the nineteenth century was sanitation, and it continued to be a central concern of the social survey movement. The great scourge of the nineteenth century was cholera, whose history is intimately bound up with the social statistics precursors of sociology. William Farr, who was a key figure in the statistical study of cholera, was quoted by the redoubtable Marion Talbot in her article on "Sanitation and Sociology" in the AJS, on which she served as an editorial board member.

Farr was the Superintendent of the Statistical Department of the Registrar General's Office in Britain, and one of the most powerful figures in the large world of nineteenth century "statistics," which comprised official statistics and statistical studies of social life—the precursor to academic sociology. He was concerned with, and modelled, the distribution of cholera deaths in London, and was a major influence on policy. He constructed beautiful visual models of the statistical distribution of cholera, showing clearly that, in London, the higher your elevation the safer you were from cholera. This fit nicely with the prevailing theory of cholera—that it was air-borne and miasmatic.

Farr was sincere, competent and serious, in addition to being powerful. He was concerned with the social aspects of cholera. He noticed that the poor were disproportionately affected. But he was wrong, and for a revealing reason: miasma was not how cholera was transmitted. In the most famous episode in the history of epidemiology, a young medic named John Snow was hired by one of the units of the London agglomeration in which cholera was especially severe. Snow noticed the anomalies in the miasma theory, of which there were many. He worked on one in particular: that people in adjacent houses, served by different water companies, had drastically different rates of death from cholera. He determined that the key source of cholera was in drinking water. And in a famous episode he removed the handle of the Broad Street pump, the source of water for many of the victims of the disease.

The problem was spurious correlation. Farr's models were right: the account of transmission was wrong. The pumping system for water in London allowed impurities in water to settle. These contained the cholera "flux," which was deadly. Yet some water companies had cholera-free water sources. So the statistical pattern was determined by the sinking flux, not miasma. There is a lesson here that continues to be relevant. The anomalies matter. Mode of transmission matters. Statistical models are not enough, and easily go wrong when the underlying theory is wrong. Spurious is an occupational hazard for statistical modelers. In this case it was a life or death hazard for the poor Londoners at lower elevations.

The coda to this story is interesting. Farr resisted these results, but when the London pumping systems changed the statistical patterns on which his model rested also changed. He first acknowledged that water might have been a contributing factor—a normal response for a statistical modeler. But experiments conducted in 1866 attempting to show the diffusion of the cholera flux in air forced him to concede that any such effect was negligible. The statistics had not lied, but the model and its emendations, which were based on assumptions of the same kind that modelers today employ, led him astray. There is plenty to be learned from this episode, but the main thing is this: an impressive model with faulty assumptions can be deadly. Many of the models employed in social science cannot be subject to the kind of experimental test that convinced Farr to recant. Modesty is in order. But with epidemic disease, understanding the mode of transmission is key. And this is the very thing that policy and science have failed to get a clear understanding of in the coronavirus crisis.

Talbot, Marion, Sanitation and Sociology, *American Journal of Sociology* v. 2, no. 1 (July 1896) p. 74-6.

Turner, Stephen. 1997. "Net effects": A Short History. *Causality in Crisis*, edited by Vaughn McKim and Stephen Turner. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 23-45.

Turner, Stephen. 2004. Speaking Truth to Bureaucratic Power: Three National Responses to Cholera. *Technikolgenabschätzung: Theorie und Praxis* 3(13): 57-62. http://www.itas.fzk.de/deu/tatup/inhalt.htm

Post-Reconstruction Terrorism 1877-2020 Patricia Lengermann

In the continuing crisis unleashed by the 1876 withdrawal of Federal Troops from the former Confederacy, African Americans made a perhaps surprising and certainly insightful and inventive turn to sociology. They sought from this new science an epistemologically sound method for gathering and presenting empirical evidence that would arouse public opposition to "Jim Crow" segregation, voter repression, race rioting, lynching and the racist ideology of black biological and cultural inferiority. *The need to not only speak truth but to be seen as speaking truth* undergirded W. E. B. Du Bois's remarkable achievement in the *Atlanta University Studies* 1897-1924, in requiring a methodological statement and, thus, making it the first sociological journal "to institutionalize the presentation of a methods section in its research publications" (Daniels and Wright 2018).

What we see in the rise of "a Black sociology" is the development in the United States of a critical conflict theory and of a school of sociology shared by academic and applied sociologists alike. Indeed, earlier in the same decade that Du Bois is writing *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899), journalist and anti-lynching crusader, Ida B. Wells in an effort marked by the same concern with methodological transparency he will insist on, opens her anti-lynching study *A Red Record* (1895) with an invocation of sociology and a description of methodology: "The students of American sociology will find the year 1894 marked by a pronounced awakening of the public conscience to a system of anarchy and outlawry which has grown during a series of ten years........The purpose of the pages that follow shall be to give the record which has been made not by colored men but that which is the result of compilations made by white men ... From the record published in the Chicago Tribune .... the following computation of lynching statistics is made." Wells goes on to give a chilling recital of the crimes for which African Americans were being lynched in the South as reported in the *Tribune*. The driving force of these early efforts at Black Sociology is epitomized in a phrase from Du Bois in *The Philadelphia Negro*, repeated by Daniels and Wright in the title of their article **"**'An Earnest Desire for the Truth despite Its Possible Unpleasantness': A Comparative Analysis of the Atlanta University Publications and *American Journal of Sociology*, 1895 to 1917. " African Americans hoped the truth would set the nation free from the vicious racism that divided it and turned to sociology as a source of methodologically transparent truth claims. This concern continues to this moment as the Sociology Department at Howard University marks its 100th anniversary, an event commemorated in a recent article by today's Department graduate students, reflecting on that founding: "The motto of Howard University, 'In Truth and Service,' is embodied by its scholars, students, and faculty. A century ago, Dr. Kelly Miller 'established the Department of Sociology to uncover the truth about the 'race problem' in the United States. Since 1919, the mission of the department has been 'to prepare students to analyze, transform, and overcome conditions of oppression, exploitation and injustice' (Howard University 2020)(Gatewood, Rodriguez, Plaisime, 2020).

Daniels, Kalasia S. and Earl Wright II. 2017. "An Earnest Desire for the Truth Despite Its Possible Unpleasantness: A Comparative Analysis of the Atlanta University Publications and American Journal of Sociology, 1895-1917." *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*

Gatewood, Britany, Alexandra Rodriguez, and Marie Plaisime. *2020.* "Truth and Service: The Hundred-Year Legacy of Sociology at Howard University," *The Sociologist* (https://thesociologistdc.com/all-issues/truth-and-service-the-hundred-year-legacy-of-sociology-at-howard-university/)

Social Solidarity in Crisis—from Dreyfus to Covid-19 **Steven Lukes**

Under the dire circumstances of the covid crisis social solidarity takes the unanticipated, paradoxical form of 'self-isolation' and what is called 'social distancing,' exhibiting fear of contact with friends, neighbors and strangers. The distancing is actually physical with a social goal: it is practiced in collective self-defense to restore the social solidarity that renders individuality possible, providing the social framework, social norms and social bonds that will enable people to live their normal individual lives, as before.

But what was normal before? And what will look normal afterwards, when the crisis finally abates? Which individual lives did the social solidarity of recent times enable to flourish and which others did not in consequence? Though the virus itself is blind to social divisions, the crisis itself has vividly distinguished the privileged and sheltered from the exposed and endangered, above all those 'essential' workers, black and other minority communities, the poor, the aged, the chronically sick, the homeless, the incarcerated and detained. Suddenly, as during Hurricane Katrina, the truly vulnerable become visible to all.

So it is time to think about social solidarity, which is why Durkheim is the classical sociologist for this moment. His entire life's work consisted in seeking to understand it and explore its mechanisms. His inaugural lecture at the University of Bordeaux was on 'Social Solidarity' and his first book, *The Division of Labor in Society*, advanced his famous distinction between mechanical and organic solidarity. The first sustains collective identities, common sentiments and shared beliefs; the second unites ever more interdependent people across and despite their divergent life courses, values and interests. It was in 1898 in his essay 'Individualism and the Intellectuals' that he deepened that latter idea by asking how a complex modern society can survive a crisis. A society, he came to see, 'cannot hold together unless there exists among its members a certain intellectual and moral unity.'

The crisis was the Dreyfus Affair, which polarized France between those adamantly opposed to questioning the army and the Church, who condemned Dreyfus, seeing them as pillars of national unity and those, like Emile Zola, outraged at the conviction of the innocent Jewish captain falsely accused of betraying his country. Durkheim turned the anti-Dreyfusard argument on its head, arguing that national unity in an advanced, heterogeneous society demands a society-wide commitment to individual rights, holding ‘the individual in general’ to be sacred, by according a kind of ‘religious respect’ for ‘the human person, wherever it is to be found, and in whatever form it is incarnated.’ ‘The idea of the human person,’ he wrote, ‘given different emphases in accordance with the diversity of national temperaments, is…the sole idea the sole idea that survives, immutable and impersonal, above the changing tides of personal opinions, and the sentiments which it awakens are the only ones to be found in almost all hearts.’ ’This ‘religion of humanity whose rational expression is individualist morality’ was ‘the only system of beliefs that can ensure the moral unity of the country.’ Its ‘motive force’ was ‘not egoism but sympathy for all that is human, a wider pity for all sufferings, for all human miseries, a more ardent desire to combat and alleviate them, a greater thirst for justice.’ And Durkheim contrasted individualism thus understood with another kind of individualism, typified for him by Herbert Spencer and those he called ‘the economists’: ‘that narrow commercialism that reduces society to nothing more than a vast apparatus of production and exchange.’

The crisis Durkheim addressed was local, while the pandemic we face is global, and yet we can see two striking parallels. In both cases we can see intense polarization tearing at the social fabric in France largely driven by antisemitism. In Trump’s America and pre-Brexit Britain the pandemic invaded societies whose civic morale was already sapped by exceptionally bitter political hostilities. And in both cases the proposed remedy lies in the rejection of the market fundamentalism that in the United States has wreaked social devastation and promoted unbridled inequalities.

And yet the Durkheimian secular religion of individualism, if it is to prevail in the world after the pandemic, will need to go far beyond the liberalism and the socialism that went before. It will need really to take seriously the sacredness of individual lives, extending ‘religious respect’ to all those defined by social categories that have hitherto functioned to exclude them from it. On the most optimistic assumptions, people will learn from the current crisis that the interdependence of organic solidarity demands recognition of everyone, including all health workers, from doctors to those who dispose of dead bodies, the delivery man and the cashier in the grocery store.

“The Social Problem” 1890-1910—Sociology as a Solution

Vicky M. MacLean, Gillian Niebrugge, Joyce E. Williams

For a moment crisis propelled sociology to a prominent place in public opinion and policy making, when the discipline became identified in popular thought with the social settlement movement that arose to address what the late 19th century called “the social problem”—the growing gap between rich and poor, produced by rapid economic change that brought unprecedented material abundance to a growing sector of the population while consigning to horrific poverty those whose labor produced that abundance. Attempting to bridge class differences, settlement “residents,” typically privileged class members, many first generation college-educated women, chose to reside in poor areas of the city,

participating as neighbors in its life and problems. Settlements became a vast sociological enterprise—community activism, research, public policy formulation, lobbying, and social theory.

Three qualities explain the popularity of this early effort at public sociology. One, social settlements were widespread, expanding from a single settlement in 1886 to 413 by 1910, with representation in all sections of the country, enlisting thousands of local citizens as residents and volunteers. Two, the settlements "delivered the goods," serving as reliable sources of both aid and information, dealing with crises similar to Covid 19—smallpox, typhoid, the 1918 flu pandemic--frequently as first responders. Their neighbors were the most vulnerable populations–new immigrants and relocated African Americans, living in deplorable, crowded housing. When disease struck, settlement house residents came to the rescue, filling the void between families and scarce health care providers. As public sociologists, they collected, studied and analyzed data; presented findings (*Hull-House Maps and Papers* [1895] and *City Wilderness* [1898]), and initiated remedial action, demanded city or state intervention. Nobody knew the poorest neighborhoods of American cities better than settlement workers.

A third factor was Hull House leader Jane Addams, repeatedly voted in opinion surveys as among the most admired Americans "for her practical sociology." The movement's major theorist, she analyzed the social problem as a "maldistribution" of socially produced goods and services, leading to poverty at one end and over-abundance at the other; the solution was for the society to embrace of a common ethic, "social ethics," which was she insisted not an not a philanthropic sentiment but a realistic sociological assessment of what would let society surmount the current crisis, an ethic based in the proposition "*The good we secure for ourselves is precarious and uncertain… until it is secured for all of us and incorporated into our common life.*"

The Rise of Fascism and American Sociology – A Memoir and a Commentary

Jack Nusan Porter and Michael Schwartz

[Jack Nusan Porter made a personal statement in a series of email responding to the question, what can the history of sociology teach us about this current crisis. His memories, which he shared online, inspired a number of comments, of which Michael Schwartz's particularly draws lessons from the history of sociology.--Editor]

If we look at the history of the world and of my own people--the Jewish people--we can gain some lessons on how to survive. First we believed in science; we believed in medicine; we believed in rational reasons for terrible events; we did NOT believe that the devil did it; or some people (like Jews or other scapegoats) "representing" the devil did it; and we did not believe in wild rumors. We believed in rational and scientific answers.

At the same time, we believed that faith and community would keep us safe and help us survive. I survived the Holocaust with my parents, thank God; we survived the Nazis, the DP camps, the arduous ship that brought us to America; we survived tough times here as refugees; we survived the polio epidemic that I know affected several of my professors like Richard Schwartz; we survived flu epidemics; then the AIDS epidemic. So we will survive this pandemic which in some ways is more widespread and more powerful than the ones I just mentioned.

It is at this time that I remember my teachers and colleagues who survived the Shoah and who helped build this section on the history of sociology and I wish they were alive to help us cope: Werner Cahnman, Lewis Coser, Hugo Englemann, and others.

May their memory be a blessing to us all and an inspiration.

Also another aspect of this is the case of Talcott Parsons. Marty Oppenheimer and I wrote several articles in Sociological Forum and he in another journal about Uta Gerhardt's book "Talcott Parsons and National Socialism"--sadly, not only did Parsons have a kind of gentlemanly attitude toward Jews but he helped bring over Nazi collaborators to help fight Communism and the Soviet Union; he brought them to the RRC, the Russian Research Center at Harvard. Clyde Kluckhohn was also part of the center.

Ironically, I, as a child survivor, am at that very center, now called The Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, and vastly different than during the days of Professors Parsons, and then later Pipes, Goldman, Ulam, and other Cold Warriors at Harvard and elsewhere.

It's sad because otherwise Parson was a kind and tolerant man I understand but then I did not know him personally. I only met him once as a grad student at Northwestern in 1971 and he signed one of his books. He was like a God but as we learned…with feet of clay.

Stay safe.

But specifically, what can the history of sociology teach us about how to survive this pandemic?

These emigres were escaping from fascism in Europe but ironically, they found racism and xenophobia here. Yet, they used their tools as social scientists to eradicate these evils. For example:

Many of these teachers taught at traditional Black colleges. After fleeing the Nazi regime, Jewish scholars (estimates upward to fifty intellectuals) found a home at these colleges.

For example, Prof. Borinski taught at Tougaloo University in Mississippi. While an Albert Einstein was very well-known, people like Borinski were not and most sociologists today do not even know his name. But thankfully, a book by Gabrielle Simon Edgcomb, and later a movie, "From Swastika to Jim Crow," brought their stories to light.

Several well-known Black leaders were mentored by these emigres: sociologist Joyce Ladner, former Surgeon-General Jocelyn Elders, Milwaukee activist Joyce Mallory, and artist John Biggers. (Source: Heather Gilligan on timeline.com, February 10, 2017.)

*Werner Cahnman (1902-1980) came from a distinguished Jewish family; his father and mother were leaders in the Munich community before the war. In 1938 he was taken to the Dachau concentration camp but luckily survived and moved first to England and then to America in 1939. He was first a visiting Ph.D. at the University of Chicago and then taught sociology at Fisk University, Atlanta University, and for many years at Rutgers University. He was co-founder of the Committee on Sociological History and on the board of

The Journal of the History of Sociology that I founded in 1978. After retirement, Werner was instrumental in having the US government pressure European countries to preserve Jewish sites such as synagogues and cemeteries.

*Theodor Adorno and the Frankfurt Institute and School. Adorno was much more well-known, especially for his pioneering study of the "authoritarian personality", a direct result of his experience with Nazis and their followers. What shocked Adorno and his team was that he found the exact same results in America. This was so shocking that he did not want to publish the results.

*Hannah Arendt. She was one of the most famous of the refugees.

One could go on and on and in fact many books and articles about these emigres have been written We can learn how to survive this pandemic and other crises from these brave men and women in the history of sociology.

May their memory be a blessing and an inspiration.

Just a postscript to Jack's eloquent testimony to the resilience of oppressed people in times of crisis. During World War II when so many people were protesting against FDRs ban on Jewish refugees (just like Trump's current ban) the president of the American sociological association (yes ASS!!!) used his presidential address to denounce the efforts to lift of relax the ban. Based on the undisputed (among the white establishment) assertion based on Sumner's racism: that the oppression in Europe was necessary and inevitable, and the exclusion here was also necessary and inevitable And that forcing a change in policy would make things worse. When a handful of the assembled protested he used the protest to "prove" that such reform efforts were ruled by irrational passion

I think we as sociologists interested in learning from history should work hard to make sure that this time the profession is fighting FOR the most victimized and not against them

For those curious about the pro-fascist presidential address, the President was George A. Lundberg, Bennington College. The Presidential address is attached, But the real source for the despicable relationship of North American sociological establishment towards fascism and Nazism is recorded in Roger Bannister's wonderful chapter in the (equally wonderful) volume, *Sociology Responds to Fascism* (edited by Stephen P. Turner and Dirk Käsler, Routledge 1992).

Of all the (many) important refugee sociologists, I would nominate Ernst Borinski at Tougaloo College as perhaps the most consequential. (See, e.g., Cunnigen, Donald, "The Legacy of Ernst Borinski: The Production of an African American Sociological Tradition," *Teaching Sociology* 31 (October 2003): 397-411.)

Sociology in the Cold War

Christian Dayé

Writing history is always an exercise in self-reflection, and self-reflection is something that in times of emergency usually has to withdraw from the front stage until things have gone back to “normal.” The actual pandemic forces people around the globe to re-order their priorities, and reflecting on the historical development of a social science discipline is unlikely, on first view at least, to contribute to solving the pressing problems of the day.

However, societal crises bring a transformative energy to the social sciences that likely disrupts established structures. During the first years of the Cold War—the period that I use as example here—the increased demand on behalf of decision-makers for social science expertise completely changed the rules of the game for careers in sociology. Suddenly, there was money outside the established academic structures: jobs at think tanks, government agencies, or private (polling) businesses (Igo 2007) promised not only high salaries, but also contact to those in power.

At the same time, the shape of sociological knowledge changed. The demand for social science expertise in the early Cold War nurtured processes that had been underway already twenty years earlier: increasing quantification, an instrumental understanding of the role of theory, and a growing dislike for research results the use of which was not immediately visible. These movements of thought matched well with the rhetoric of technical controllability and modifiability of the world which built the core of the coeval image of the natural scientists, this social figure that continued to attract rising public attention and awe.

While the demand created by the Cold War was not the ultimate cause for the tensions that characterized US sociology in the 1950s and 60s but rather their catalyst, these tensions grew to engender massive cleavages in the field. These cleavages manifested themselves in heated controversies about the epistemological nature and societal role of the social sciences, debates that, for instance, took place within the NSF (Solovey 2013), among research groups at universities (Cohen-Cole 2014) or at think tanks (Rohde 2013; Dayé 2020), and of course also in publications (Haney 2008). The most recurrent allegation in these controversies was that the other side was doing “wrong” or “unethical” social science, and it appears that the resulting trenches were never closed. For a time, they were hidden by the enthusiasm surrounding the influx of people and resources (Turner and Turner 1990), but they soon turned out to be pitfalls for anyone who did not take enough care.

Can a similar thing happen with sociology today? Can the CoViD-19 crisis catalyze controversies within the discipline that hitherto tried to avoid? Most probably, yes. Politization or “post-normality,” value-neutrality and objectivity are issues that are not solved but cooking, sometimes at a slow, sometimes at a rapid boil (Turner 2014). Will the CoViD-19 crisis lead to increased quarrels amongst sociologists? Will one side accuse the other of running blindly after the money and jumping the gun without proper in-depth study? Will the other react with the allegation that the accusers fail to live up to the social responsibility of sociology in such time of crisis? Very likely indeed. Will this open a renewed debate on the shape and responsibilities of sociology? Perhaps. Will the contested issues be solved to an extent that re-unites the discipline? Most likely not.

Will all this have other than destructive effects? Certainly. Sociologists will find themselves in new collaborations, confront new approaches in fields they are not acquainted with and receive considerable stimulus from these interdisciplinary encounters. But these developments may just turn out to further contribute to the detrimental tendencies that exist within the discipline. Maybe we are approaching the end of sociology as a discipline. If it finds no path to unity, other forms of organizing social scientific knowledge will finally prevail.

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Solovey, Mark. 2013 *Shaky foundations: The politics-patronage-social science nexus in cold war America.* Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick (2013)

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History of Sociology and the Covid-19 Virus: Durkheim (and Garfinkel)

Anne Rawls

In *The Division of Labor* (1893) Durkheim argued that modern sciences and occupations were developing based on specialization and practices related to specialization that are known only to practitioners. This, he said, marked the difference between a modern form of social order in which science and occupational progress were possible, and a traditional social form based on shared belief. This much misunderstood distinction offers a key to understanding what is happening to the US in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic. The election of Trump and the Covid-pandemic both owe much to a deep mistrust of experts and science by Trump and his followers that has been growing for decades. Pronouncements about science by Trump supporters, like John Cornyn of Texas who recently Tweeted that “models” are not the scientific method, make it clear that many ordinary Americans are confident that they know enough to judge the work of scientific experts. This belief based confidence has brought us climate deniers, pseudo-economics and threatens the overall solidarity of a modern society whose economy and industry are actually based on specialization and the need for professions to regulate their own specializations and practices.

Durkheim had warned that a clash between the two forms of social organization – one belief based, the other based on secondary groups of experts – would be a danger to modern society. The difference between the kind of social order required by differentiation and specialization was, he argued, leading to a new form of society he called organic – in which the role of government is to support the free exercise of expertise, leaving regulation to the groups of experts themselves (which he called self-regulation). Durkheim advised the formation of a program of public education that would educate citizens about the difference between the two social forms and make sure citizens understood the moral and structural implications of the modern form. This project was undertaken to some extent in France. But, it never happened in the US – and now we find ourselves being governed by people who put beliefs – both personal and religious – above the scientific and occupational practices of experts.

There is also a connection to Garfinkel, who was at the time working with Parsons to bring Durkheim's insight into American social theory. In the 1950's Garfinkel recognized that there was a tendency in social science to treat even scientific models in ways that replicated the belief based tendencies of the past. In other words, social theory often – then and still – assumes that beliefs and attitudes stand at the center of a modern social order. For Durkheim and Garfinkel they don't. Pointing out that an airplane mechanic is smart enough not to expect actual airplanes to be exactly like the models of airplanes they were shown in mechanic school (an insight gained during Garfinkel's wartime research), he pointed out that social scientists, by contrast, often complained of the "real" world that it was not as well organized as their models – faulting the real world for being messy – and persisting in arguing for the superiority of clear rational models. Natural scientists have not made the same mistake, although they also have troubles rectifying models. The failure to clearly theorize the role of expert practices in sciences and occupations – the constitutive practices that only the experts understand – has left science in a weak position as ordinary citizens fault models for not being perfectly circular like beliefs.

As both Durkheim and Garfinkel argued the only way to strengthen the science is to get out in the field (or in the case of the airplane mechanic, into the airplane) and see how the thing actually works. Real actual empirical data – and accepting that empirical data can correct the model only within the context of a particular expert practice – is the only solution.

The current crisis is the one Durkheim and Garfinkel both warned about – where simplistic versions of science are tested against theories and beliefs – rather than empirical evidence; one in which people believe that a consensus of beliefs is necessary to hold a society together – rather than recognizing that we have reached a stage of social development in which secondary groups and secondary social interactions have developed their own basis of expertise – their own ordinary interactional expectations – with their own supporting constitutive practices that cannot be judged by outsiders or on the basis of belief and consensus.

COVID-19: a global 'Civilising Offensive'

John Goodwin, Laurie Parsons and
Henrietta O'Connor

An almost universal response to the COVID-19 pandemic by governments and health organisations has been prioritisation of and advocacy for increased personal hygiene, particularly handwashing. The process-orientated sociology of Norbert Elias, and related conception of 'civilising offensives', can be an instructive lens through which to view these responses. The aim of a process-orientated analysis is to explore the inter-related transformation of social and psychological processes over the *long term* (Mennell, 2015). This approach asks how social habitus adapts in order to meet the specific physical and social needs within changing social, cultural and historical conditions (Baur and Ernst, 2011). Civilising offensives, relatedly, refers to the short-term, purposeful interventions of powerful groups (including the state) designed to change behaviours and social habitus as quickly as possible in order to 'solve' a particular problem (see Powell, 2013). The assumption behind these is that the powerful groups who instigate them have access to a specialist knowledge. They 'know' how to behave, 'know' what is best for 'us', especially as compared to 'them'. The impact of civilising offensives plays out in relationships on a global and local scale. Using this as a lens to view the COVID-19 responses, two discussion areas emerge – 'othering' and individualisation.

Do I know how to wash my hands properly? This is the question many 'everyday citizens' have been asking themselves in the last month. The UK's NHS instructs '*wash your hands with soap and water often – for at least 20 seconds*', the WHO advises '*protect yourself, Clean your hands regularly; Wash your hands with soap and water, and dry them thoroughly*'. The US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention similarly states '*clean your hands often….with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after you have been in a public place*'. The message is now familiar, the advised practices are becoming habitual. As Anthony Fauci, Director of the US National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases suggests '*you say, what are the things you could still do and still approach normal? One of them is absolute compulsive hand-washing*'. This guidance issued by governments and health bodies is designed to enact an immediate change in behaviours of those 'others' who did not previously understand the significance, or enact the appropriate practice, of handwashing. The response to COVID-19 by the multinational Unilever (who produce soaps and cleaning products) in conjunction with UK Aid, exemplifies this. The £100 million initiative is '*aimed at raising awareness and changing behaviour*' to enable '*access to basic handwashing products, such as soap,*' and for those who '*are not aware of the urgent need to change their behaviour*''. With Unilever clearly mindful of market penetration for their products, the messaging and associated imagery are clear – those in the poorest parts of the 'global south' are in greatest need of intervention. The implication is that those 'others' who lack the social habitus of Western Industrialised economies need to be educated to adopt more 'civilised' forms of habitus.

These kinds of civilising offensives around personal hygiene to preserve 'population health' are nothing new. In 1800, Balbirnie writes 'philosophy of epidemic cholera' designed to 'disarm terrors' of cholera in England. His pamphlet aides the identification of symptoms and provides practical advice on treatment and prevention. Key to this is a change in social habitus and personal hygiene practices; '*every person ought to know that, with proper precautions and self-management, he [sic] may escape the epidemic…Be scrupulously clean in person, house and habits…Once or twice a week, besides, the whole body should be thoroughly washed with tepid water and soap*' (Balbirnie 1800: 40-41). This guidance parallels contemporary responses to COVID-19, particularly echoed in the recent comments from the US Surgeon General on disparities in infection rate for BAME communities. In this advice individuals are accountable for disease control and, accordingly, morally responsible too. Seventy years after Balbirnie's pamphlet, Colburn (1876: 200) writes '*dirt blunts the sensibilities, and that clean hands and clean faces go far towards engendering clean thought*'. In this way 'individual failings' become a scapegoat for the systemic failures and prevailing inequalities left unaddressed by governments and nation-states.

Whilst such civilising offensives emerging from COVID-19 may be an attempt to 'manage the known unknowns' (Dingwall, 2013), they seem unaware of past critiques of large-scale disease control. Balbirnie's (1800: 3) condemnation of previous approaches to cholera epidemics was, '*the blind empiricism that has usurped the place of science, and dictated the measure of treatment*'. This could equally have been written in 2020, with 'modelling' driving government understandings of the pandemic. Seemingly, little thought is given to how these can have what Mills (1959) might describe as an obfuscating effect which distorts everyday realities of inequalities. As Goudsblom (1977: 6-7) reminds us, 'in sociology we are dealing with people' not abstract systems or obfuscating models.

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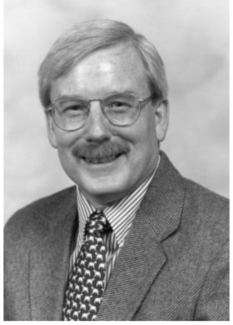
NOTES TOWARD A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON COVID-19

Michael R. Hill



For some time, I have advised students new to sociological thinking to begin with the inescapable fact of our human embodiment and that doing so necessarily entails confronting our embodied capabilities, constraints and vulnerabilities (Hill, 2004). My grounding in this approach derives in significant part from Erving Goffman's (1971: 7) characterization of an individual pedestrian as "a pilot encased in a soft and exposing shell, namely his clothes and skin," together with my subsequent attempt to locate pedestrians crossing the street at a traffic intersection within a comprehensive physical-behavioral-normative system (Hill, 1979). Historically and with the benefit of hindsight, I have also come to see human embodiment as fundamental to Harriet Martineau's foundational sociological insights, including her explications of deafness (1834), direct observation (1838), disability and death (1844), infectious diseases (1859, 1869), and occupational health (1861).

The perspective of embodiment is at no time more cogent than now in the midst of social challenges such as homelessness, war, starvation, racism, sexism, homophobia, terrorism, and, yes, the Covid-19 pandemic. As we know, we are all physically vulnerable, some more, some less, to this new virus. Illness is a human vulnerability, as is the ultimate, inescapable vulnerability: the finality of death. Unlike an advancing army or an onrushing tornado, we cannot see this virus with our naked eyes; this is one of our embodied constraints. Indeed, this virus can be spread person-to-person by friends, neighbors, strangers and family members who neither show nor experience any symptoms. Thus, this is the type of undetected threat that Niklas Luhmann (1989) underscored when he pointed to the hard reality in ecological communication that we cannot see what we cannot see, and this makes Covid-19 and similar lethal viruses particularly daunting for embodied humans.

We also possess astonishing capabilities, compared with the other mammals in the animal kingdom, including the capacity for medical research, technological innovation, and coordinated social action. We have at times directed these capabilities toward ameliorating our embodied constraints and vulnerabilities. With electron microscopes, we can augment our visual capability to actually see the Covid-19 virus, at least in laboratory settings, and we have developed tests to verify its presence/absence in ourselves. We have learned how the virus efficiently transmits itself from person to person and how, through the surprisingly low-tech expedients of social distancing, frequent hand-washing, and wearing face masks, we can disrupt its spread. Tests will hopefully soon identify persons with antibodies and the prospect of an effective vaccine lies eventually within reach. (It's worth noting, of course, that even with vaccines, that at least 12,000 to as many as 50,000 or more Americans currently die each year from influenza, according to the Centers for Disease Control). As a species, we will likely weather the Covid-19 pandemic, much as humankind has survived bubonic plague, Ebola, smallpox, SARS, the Spanish flu, AIDS, polio, MERS, etc. I say likely (rather than with absolute certainty) because we do not yet know if Covid-19 (or one of its cousins) will at some future point mutate, becoming much more lethal, much more easily transmitted, and/or much more silently infectious and undetected overconsequentially longer — and collectively fatal — periods of time.

As noted above, one of our important capabilities is our capacity for coordinated, institutionalized social action. Our national government received/generated several early warnings about Covid-19, thus potentially setting the stage for coordinated actions in the public health arena that could have, if the warnings had not been ignored or downplayed, significantly reduced the severity of the Covid-19 outbreak in the United States (Lipton, Eric, David E. Sanger, Maggie Haberman, Michael D. Shear, Mark Mazzetti and Julian E. Barnes, 2020). Failing to act in a timely manner was a collective/corporate mistake, one that can be repaired or left unaddressed in the face of future ecological threats. We shall see what unfolds. The many state governors who mandated closures of non-essential businesses, banned social gatherings, and told us all to "stay at home" provide positive examples of coordinated social action, but ones that also provoked unintended negative consequences, including: mass unemployment, disrupted schooling, widespread economic dislocations, food shortages, upswings in spouse and child abuse, etc. The long-term systemic effects of these immediate social responses, both positive and negative, will become manifest and better understood in the years to come.

An important point I make with students is that sociology tries to understand the myriad ways that we collectively deal with our embodied capabilities, constraints, and vulnerabilities in a "hyper-modern" (Giddens, 1985) world where the rate of technological innovation and the lethal character of human-made weaponry are always accelerating. Our major social institutions— language, religion, economics, science, family, education, law, polity — provide the interconnected pathways, often convoluted and contradictory, through which we confront the public issues (as C. Wright Mills (1959) so aptly named them) that become recognized as "social problems." Perceived deficiencies in public health systems around the world are now emerging as "problematic." Disease has been a constant companion of humankind, but the accelerating rapidity with which infections (as well as information and misinformation) can spread globally from nation to nation is relatively new. The technology of mass air travel, long seen as progressive is also consequential in terms of environmental pollution and as a vector for infectious diseases. The ultimate "social distancing" at the international level is the closing of national borders, something few of us want for any prolonged period of time. Yet, short of nostalgically embracing an earlier era of slower travel and reduced international economic interconnectedness, we stand collectively and increasingly exposed to a variety of global environmental/institutional threats like Covid-19 (as well as rampant, misinformed conspiracy theories and virulent political ideologies) that may well catch us blind-sided in unexpected and horrific ways in the decades and centuries ahead.

How do we prepare for such an open, unpredictable future? With humility, adaptability, an increasingly wizened sense of humor and a deepening appreciation of the absurd. It also helps if we cultivate lively sociological imaginations (Mills, 1959) to counter the massive, opportunistic onslaught currently being mounted by the mental health industry toward the medicalization of ordinary worries, commonplace disappointments, normal frustrations, reasonable doubts, and healthy fears. Alone by ourselves, this is a time to reflect on our communal rituals. Does the temporary suspension of school, religious services, family vacations, concert tours, sporting seasons, yoga classes or countless other missed events *really* provoke such scarring existential angst that professional counseling is required? What is *really* important, the life-changing obligations made between two people entering a committed partnership, or the postponed ceremony itself? Is missing one's graduation *really* important, more so than giving grateful thanks every day for the education one has received and the friends one has made? Are skipped birthday parties *really* the tragedies that youngsters are encouraged to sorrowfully lament by television interviewers and helicopter parents? Let us quietly reflect, let us think, let us take this time to revisit and retool the core values of democracy, humanity and cooperation. Yes, we are all embodied humans and we all will die, some sooner, some later, some with dignity, some in squalor, some with purpose, some needlessly, some with vision and self-understanding, some in ignorance, despair and disillusion, some with massive unearned advantages, others amid grossly inequitable deprivations. Covid-19 brings to light not only our embodied vulnerabilities but also the irrationalities, arbitrariness, contradictions, imperfections, cruelties and potential virtues of the coercive, regulatory social institutions comprising the societies wherein we all are born, live, and must inevitably die.

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