THE PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY DEBATE

ETHICS AND ENGAGEMENT

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Introduction

Burawoy's "Normative Vision" of Sociology

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This book invites sociologists and sociology students to consider what is at stake in debates about public sociology. What kind of sociology are you committed to, and how do your sociological commitments inform sociological practice? This book explores the normative dimensions that ground or shape sociological inquiry and its practice in the public sociology literature. Normative commitments have a variety of valences and dimensions; they concern questions of the good, the moral, the ethical, and the political dimensions of normative statements (Woodiwiss 2005, 5).

The normative component of sociology and its practice has various dimensions; a normative position is a socially determined perception that enriches our capacity to make judgments as people but also as sociologists, including the very sociology that we choose to practise. This practice can include ethical, moral, and political statements. Those statements that are grounded by the normative dimensions of sociological practice are ones that tell us what *ought* to be or *should* be the case in the social world. Subsequently, ethical judgments (what one ought to do or should do) made by sociologists have commitments that lie in the normative dimension of sociological practice, such as when a sociologist makes recommendations for social change. Statements that concern how or that sociology ought to work towards ending human suffering constitute normative recommendations.

A recent sociological research study published in the peer-reviewed journal *Social Science Research* provides a concrete example that highlights

the various dimensions of normative statements. In the article, author Mark Regnerus (University of Texas at Austin) (2012, 752) argues that there are "consistent differences" between "children of women who have had a lesbian relationship and those with still married (heterosexual) biological parents." While Regnerus is careful not to explicitly suggest "that growing up with a lesbian mother" causes less than desirable outcomes in child development, his conclusions about same-sex marriage and heterosexual marriage suggest that "the empirical claim that no notable differences exist must go" (766).

The publication of this article caused considerable controversy. A *New York Times* article (Oppenheimer 2012) reported, "Two hundred scholars signed a letter attacking his paper and the journal." Further discussions emerged regarding the ways that cultural or religious values influence scientific research. What we draw attention to are the normative implications of sociological research. How do we, as sociologists, evaluate the research and make recommendations therein? How do values play into scholars' and news media's response to Regnerus's conclusions? We contend that these are the issues that highlight the following dimensions of the normative commitments of sociology:

1 The sociologist's ethical obligations: Should sociologists, based on these scientifically valid and representative data, have a duty to act against homosexual couples raising children?
2 Normative sociological judgments: Should homosexual couples be able to raise or have children if these children *might* suffer potential harms?
3 The influence of obligations and judgments on our political projects: Does sociology as a discipline have a duty to make policy recommendations that forbid or encourage same-sex couples to raise children in light of these data?

The answers to any of these questions are complex and illustrate the importance of examining the normative commitments of the discipline of sociology more broadly. (We do not endorse the above recommendations. The Regnerus conclusions are meant to highlight what is at stake when social science data are linked to normative statements.)

Recent debates in the sociology literature concerning public sociology, popularized by Michael Burawoy's work on the subject (2004, 2005a), have normative underpinnings, asking what role sociology should play in the broader social sphere and how its research may be used (or should not be used) to make desirable and viable social change. At the core of the public

sociology debates are questions concerning the normative dimensions of sociological practice: how and under what circumstances should (or shouldn't) sociologists advocate for social change? And how does our research translate into social transformation, or not? Responses to these questions, including those that range from lukewarm to heated, can be located in the "well over 100 essays" scattered throughout books and journals written by sociologists around the world on public sociology (Burawoy 2009, 450).

Public sociology and its corresponding debates are engaged with the normative, moral, ethical, and political valences of the discipline. Essential to its approach, public sociology, as conceived by Burawoy and others, deals with questions of the moral worth of sociological knowledge and seeks to correct social conditions identified as social problems using political intervention. The central aim of public sociology is to correct – that is, to make better social conditions for the betterment of humanity. Such "corrections," however, are guided by normative assumptions and serve as a reflection of the moral standards of a given point in history. We can engage with the public sociology debates, for example, by addressing the theory behind the argument and examining the practical action of public sociology (for a good example of public sociology in action, see Nyden, Hossfeld, and Nyden 2012). Engaging the literature of public sociology, this book explores the theoretical debates of public sociology and examines the normative foundations of ethical judgments made by sociologists. This volume raises questions about and considers some of the normative features of the debates. How and why, for example, do we do sociology? And how do these processes inform our ethical judgments as a discipline, particularly as they relate to formulating a stance for (or against) making recommendations for social or political change? Exploring how normative commitments underlie sociological statements and decisions in the field of public sociology is a basic goal of this book. We, of course, do not mean to imply or suggest that there is an absence of discussions about the normative in the public sociology literature (these discussions are paramount). Our task, rather, is simply to make discussions concerning the normative valences of the discipline of sociology its core premise. To do so we first consider Burawoy's 2004 presidential address to the American Sociological Association (2005a) in relation to the normative dimensions of sociological practice.

In his address, Burawoy introduces his version of public sociology by dividing the discipline into four categories of sociological practice: professional, critical, policy, and public sociology. These four categories have unique research questions and approaches; each approach constitutes different

commitments for sociological practice. This is the fourfold division of labour for sociological thought and practice, Burawoy (2005a, 15) unapologetically tells us, and it is his "normative vision" of the discipline. While Burawoy concedes that public sociology has no inherent or "intrinsic normative valence" (8), the practice of sociology is nevertheless "nothing without a normative foundation to guide it" (16). Although some scholars agree with this normative vision and others do not, these debates indicate that the normative dimensions of the discipline are both important and contested commitments that are foundational to sociological practice.

Of particular concern for us is that, while the practice and teaching of public sociology continues to expand, we feel that renewed interest in debates surrounding its practice can refocus scholastic and practical attention upon the ethical commitments that doing any version of sociology (be it professional, critical, policy, or public) entails. Our purpose here is not to provide a comprehensive or robust overview of the public sociology literature. Rather, we aim to further explore how one's sociological commitments raise additional questions about how one can (or cannot) make ethical judgments regarding the translation of sociological research into recommendations for social change.

Here, we draw from the works of Burawoy and others to refocus attention upon the normative implications of each of these four forms of sociological practice. We then anchor each chapter in the context of the ethical foundations that underpin the four forms of sociological practice in an effort to bring to the forefront some of the concerns of these tensions in the public sociology debate.

Assessing the Normative Underpinnings of the Public Sociology Debates

Each form of sociological practice, as conceived by Burawoy (2005a), is guided not only by its perspective on the nature of social reality and its subsequently informed research program but also, importantly, by its normative commitments and assumptions. These commitments can be located in the "fundamental character of our discipline," which, according to Burawoy (2005a, 11), consists of the cooptation of Alfred Lee's (1978) "knowledge for whom?" and Robert Lynd's (1939) "knowledge for what?"

Taken together, Burawoy argues, these two questions organize the discipline into four sociologies that are instrumentally guided by the auspices of either (1) the production of knowledge for the sake of an end goal (e.g., for

the category of professional sociology, this is knowledge for the sake of knowledge, while for policy sociology it is the production of knowledge for a client) or (2) the production of knowledge for the sake of its usefulness in generating change (be it disciplinary, e.g., critical sociology, or the broader social world, e.g., public sociology). While Burawoy (2005a) calls this second classification "reflexive," because, he says, "it is concerned with a dialogue about ends" (11), we note that the endeavour of reaching these ends (i.e., change) nevertheless remains an instrumental and normatively grounded task.

Burawoy's 2004 presidential address presented a call for sociologists to unite under "a shared ethos," one that underpins the "reciprocal interdependence of professional, policy, public and critical sociologies" (2005a, 15). While this "call to arms" seeks to clarify the place of sociological knowledge and understanding in the broader academic and everyday worlds, it also produces conditions for new questions to emerge. How do sociologists make ethical judgments concerning the relationship between sociological research and its methods and making recommendations for social change? And under what conditions (if any) should sociologists intervene in political and social change?

Responses to such queries are always driven by our normative assumptions of the social world – that is, what ought to be and what should be. For instance, Burawoy's very own disciplinary (i.e., Marxian) commitments inform his perspective (see Nielsen 2004), when he indicates that sociologists should intervene when the "invasion of market forces" (Burawoy 2005a, 21) give rise to "market tyranny and state despotism" that threaten the "interests of humanity" (24). For Burawoy (and those in agreement with his position), this line of reasoning extends to sociologists who understand that their efforts must have a moral obligation to stop the proliferation of social problems, injustices, and inequalities for the sake of the betterment of humanity. We may be, nevertheless, left uncertain by what is meant by "humanity" (see van den Berg, Chapter 2, this volume).

Two basic questions guide the conceptual theme of this volume: How do we, as sociologists, study, know, and learn to recognize what these "interests of humanity" are? And how do we know what is best for humanity? These questions, we contend, ask how our sociological research and our commitments to practising a specific kind of sociology are linked to our ability to make ethical judgments – real, desirable, and viable recommendations for social change. It is our sociological practice that grounds our ability to make

political or policy statements, and our sociological practice is the groundwork for how we, as sociologists, understand the social reality in which we may wish to intervene.

Consider an excerpt from Charles Ellwood's book *Sociology and Modern Social Problems* (1910, 218):

> Popular education on the old lines can never do very much to solve the negro problem. This does not lead, however, to the conclusions that all training and education for the negro race is foredoomed to failure. On the contrary all the experiments of missionaries in dealing with uncivilized races has led to the conclusion that an all-round education in which industrial and moral training are made prominent can relatively adjust to our civilization even the most back-ward of human races.

How are the interests of humanity, in this case the lack of morals of the "most back-ward of human races," learned, identified, and designated for correction? How did Ellwood, a professor of sociology at the University of Missouri, arrive at this determination in the early twentieth century? And how do contemporary sociologists like Burawoy and others then determine what is best for humanity in the present (or future, as the case may be)? Perhaps to better understand this ongoing process we might inquire as to how normative judgments are both encouraged and implied in the debates about the practice of public sociology. If we are to preserve the foundations that produce the possibility for the production of sociological knowledge at all, such questions precede the possibilities and challenges of sociology as well as the consideration and deliberation of its use for generating social change.

This volume engages with questions surrounding the relationship between sociological research and generating normative, political, or policy recommendations, inquiring into the relationship between doing (sociological) description and making prescriptions (for social change). Investigating and elucidating the relationship between the study of the social world (and its various phenomena) and the ethical, moral, and normative commitments that emerge in the execution of any political project, advocacy, or activism is necessary to provide a decisive rationale for proceeding prescriptive statements.

As Burawoy and others suggest, sociologists are already engaged with the communities that they study in various ways, be it in producing disciplinary knowledge about their socially constituted troubles, critically assessing

their foundations for the production of that knowledge, providing policy recommendations to clients, and engaging with publics. To elucidate the nature of the relationship between sociological research and recommendations for social change, sociologists must explicitly examine the grounds upon which desirable and viable normative judgments can be made.

The debates over public sociology vary historically. For instance, Canadian sociology differs from its US counterpart (Helmes-Hayes and McLaughlin 2009), and other national sociologies differ dramatically from that of the United States (Burawoy 2005b, 2008, 2009). But the underpinning of ethical obligations and the moral good and relevance of doing (public) sociology and sociological research is a consistent theme across the literature. These questions have a history that dates back not only to the beginnings of American sociology (e.g., Chicago School) and Canadian sociology (e.g., see Helmes-Hayes, Chapter 7, this volume; Helmes-Hayes and McLaughlin 2009) but also to the development of the object and task of sociology, particularly in the works of Saint-Simon, Comte, Marx, Weber, and Durkheim (see Hanemaayer, Chapter 1, this volume).

While the purpose of this book is not to provide a history of ideas regarding the status of morality and its place in sociological thought, we do want to emphasize that the discipline has inherited a professional obligation (or normative question) to concern itself with the relationship between the production of sociological knowledge and its use for generating social change, as exemplified by the public sociology debates. This question is not so easily navigated, however, as we have seen with the hot and cold endorsement of Burawoy's call for sociology to take bolder action to become involved in problems of social justice. The nerve that appears to have been struck by Burawoy's statements on public sociology demonstrate the contested nature of the relationship between sociological research and the grounds upon which recommendations can be made, whether sociological description makes it possible, or if it is the duty of sociology to make prescriptions for the betterment of humanity. The chapters included in this volume engage with issues of knowledge production and social change.

Public Sociology: An Opportunity to Debate Research and Recommendations

The idea for this volume crystallized during the spring of 2010. The *Canadian Journal of Sociology*'s 2009 special issue on public sociology, "Public Sociology in Canada: Debates, Research and Historical Context," stoked the flames of our collective enthusiasm for the subject. While our

individual interests in public sociology differ, we realized that a comprehensive work that set out to interrogate the normative dimensions of doing public sociology was lacking. We see the need to develop the theoretical relationships among ethics, perspective, and practice in order to consider how these relations contribute to one another, and how debates about the "status" of public sociology have emerged from this process. We find it somewhat troubling that the practice of public sociology, in its various forms, forges ahead of such concerns, many of which remain unquestioned and unresolved.

We surely do not need to convince readers of this book of the fact that public sociology is more popular than it has ever been. Various texts have taken up the public sociology debate, producing numerous scholarly articles and special edition journals devoted to the subject (e.g., see *Social Problems,* 2004; *Social Forces,* 2004; *Critical Sociology,* 2005; and *Canadian Journal of Sociology,* 2009). Additionally, several edited volumes have also focused specific attention upon public sociology (e.g., see Agger 2007; Blau and Smith 2006; Clawson et al. 2007; Jeffries 2009; Nichols 2007). Other books, such as those aimed at undergraduate students, encourage and promote the development of public sociology (see Nyden, Hossfeld, and Nyden 2012).While these texts invariably advance the debate, no one collection of articles or edited volume has directed sole attention upon or raised questions about the normative commitments that doing any version of sociology entails.

To reiterate, we do not mean to suggest that ethics is absent from the debates. In fact, the notion of ethics is in many ways central to the ensuing debate. The necessity of instituting a form of value-laden sociology as a disciplinary practice to directly contrast with the existent and rigid model of objective sociology is one of Burawoy's basic positions, as expressed in his 2004 presidential address and reiterated elsewhere in his published work (see Burawoy 2005a, 2005c, 2005d, 2006, 2009).

Proponents of public sociology continue to implement its practice with increasing frequency. For instance, the foreword to a more recent "how-to" public sociology manual endorsed by Burawoy and directed primarily at undergraduate students reads, "Public sociology. It has been done. It is being done. And you can do it" (Nyden, Hossfeld, and Nyden 2012, xiii). Public sociology has even moved beyond debate and practice to include international university undergraduate and graduate programs that offer courses, certificates, specializations, and even degrees, including a PhD (e.g., George

Mason University). This institutionalization, of course, does not mean that the moral issues of the debate have been resolved.

Some have accepted Burawoy's "normative vision" while others have challenged or dismissed it. Abbott (2007, 197), for instance, calls Burawoy's description of sociology a "moral enterprise" whereas Goldberg and van den Berg (2009) suggest the promotion of public sociology is "morally dubious" (765), while others have simply stated that "public sociology is not for me" (Nielsen 2004, 1619). Despite these and other such statements, Burawoy (2007, 244) argues that even those "who make no mention of the division of labour [fourfold typology] or who seek to abolish it nevertheless reproduce its elements," a conviction that suggests that the normative commitments of sociology are an essential part of the fabric of our discipline.

It has been suggested that the very "disciplinary core" of sociology appears to be at stake in the nature of the public sociology debates (Brint 2005, 48). The relationship between sociological research and recommendations – description and prescription – continues to be a prescient issue in the discipline because to abandon our sociological principles in favour of prescribing moral judgments is to abandon our disciplinary ethos. For our discipline to "flourish," we need to inquire into the basis upon which normative recommendations can be made, otherwise, in the words of Burawoy (2005a, 8), "why should anyone listen to us rather than the other messages streaming through the media?"

The chapters in this volume engage questions surrounding the nature of sociological research and its relation to ethical judgments, an implicit conversation that is ongoing in the public sociology literature. The struggle over the definition of sociology ensconced in the "public sociology wars" (Burawoy 2009) can be reconceptualized as debates over the relations between the divisions within the discipline, on the one hand, and how each has its own commitments to the question of description and prescription, on the other hand. Regarding the latter distinction, no single volume has collectively addressed this vantage point. Whether one ought to behave like a public sociologist, and what exactly this means, are important questions to consider more seriously. The basic aim of this book is to interrogate some of the ethical, normative, and political challenges that underscore the public sociology debates. We situate each chapter in relation to the normative commitments articulated in the public sociology debates and Burawoy's division of labour. Doing so helps to elucidate the normative vision Burawoy has for the discipline and its division of labour. It also helps to situate the

chapters in relation to the questions that the normative valences raise pertaining to the ethical obligations of sociology, the basis for normative judgments, and the relationship between research and recommendations for political and social change.

Overview of This Volume: The Division of Sociological Labour
To demonstrate how this book is a necessary engagement with the debates by considering public sociology and its commitments to normative practices and prescriptions, we illustrate, using Burawoy's (albeit, some suggest, problematic) division of the discipline, and show how each version of sociology grapples with the relationship between issue and intervention, description and prescription, and research and recommendations, which, we contend, relate to the normative dimensions of the public sociology debates. We detail how some scholars have defended their own type of sociology in relation to the public sociology mandate – the use of sociological knowledge for normative prescription – and show how each category conceives of the scientific and ethical obligations of the practice of sociology. It is worth repeating that our intention is not to provide an exhaustive review of the public sociology debate but, instead, to explore how such responses connect with the *kind* of sociology we choose to practise and *how* we choose to practise this sociology.

Professional
According to Burawoy (2005a, 10), all four categories in the sociological division of labour rely on the "true and tested methods, accumulated bodies of knowledge, orienting questions, and conceptual frameworks" of professional sociology. It is in the category of professional sociology where sociology derives its conceptual foundation for making sound investigations into the nature of the social world: "As sociologists we not only invent new categories but also give them normative and political valence" (Burawoy 2005c, 323). Burawoy's project aims to take the analytic and conceptual groundwork laid by professional sociologists beyond its academic relevance.

Burawoy is clear that it is our moral obligation as sociologists to give the knowledge produced by our work political use – taking our research and giving it moral traction (2005a, 2005c), no longer "abstain[ing] from political engagement" (2005f, 80). But this is no easy task, as the scientific nature of research is to describe rather than declare. On what grounds can professional sociology move beyond the scientific nature of its methods, categories, and analyses and "valorize the social" (2009, 469)?

Seeing how professional sociology provides the backbone and standards for all sociological practice (Burawoy 2005a), it would be the task of professional sociology to determine how, and if, certain concepts and categories have relevance to those publics that sociology studies. For professional sociologists, any knowledge of the normative valences of the social world or professional practice would arise from the methods, knowledge, questions, and conceptual frameworks generated by the scientific study of social reality.

But what is preferable to the public sociologist? And how do we know? Ask those who are skeptical about the role of professional sociology and its relation to public sociology and activism. Bell (2009, 102) puts it like this: "If public sociologists are concerned with the 'betterment of society,' then we must ask what is better? And how do we know? I propose epistemic implication as a method of objectively testing value judgments. Using it, public sociologists can examine proposed images of the good society and objectively evaluate the moral claims on which they are based." By using the epistemological judgments of professional sociology, we can objectively test what values ground various claims. The methods of sociology provide the foundations upon which statements presented for consideration may be critically evaluated. This sentiment is shared by others. Professional sociology is considered useful, indeed necessary, to the practice of public sociology, primarily because it "imposes" (Touraine 2007, 78) "true and tested methods" (Burawoy 2005a, 10) that "provide a theoretical lens for identifying research problems" (Hu 2009, 259). It is suggested that professional sociology is neutral in its methodological collection of data but is motivated to engage in political projects through public sociology (Piven 2007), a sociological practice committed to making social change for the betterment of humanity (see Burawoy 2005a, 2005c, 2006). Elsewhere, Blau and Smith (2006, xvii) report that "over the past decade social scientists have increasingly abandoned their claims to moral neutrality, indebted to the honesty of those who led this shift: scholars who openly advocated racial, gender, and labor justice ... [engage] issues from a perspective of responsibility and a commitment to justice, *which is to say, an ethical perspective*" (emphasis added). Burawoy and his supporters seem to agree that professional research has an important task in making moral judgments, but that it remains an ethical imperative for sociologists to concern themselves with issues of social justice. Indeed, Burawoy (2005g, 154) is very clear that we must "build up professional sociology as the moral and not just the structural core of the discipline."

Of course, others are hesitant about the role of professional sociologists in activism and social change. Massey (2007, 145) says, "sociologists should – indeed must – speak forcefully on important issues whenever they have something to say, but they should do so as individuals and not collectively as a profession." Professional sociologists would not speak from the ethos of their discipline, but they would speak as politically involved citizens. Patterson (2007, 181) describes professional engagement as "the kind of public sociology in which the scholar remains largely committed to the work but becomes involved with publics and important public issues as an expert," which sees the professional sociologist as a kind of consultant to those who seek the advice of sociology on various social issues to generate change. The disciplinary struggles over public sociology seem to rely upon the acceptance of professional sociology.

In Chapter 1, Ariane Hanemaayer asks a "guilty" question about the metatheoretical foundations of the public sociology programme: is public sociology sociological? By examining Burawoy and some of the subsequent statements about public sociology, she contends that public sociology is overdetermined by its normative valences, that Burawoy's advocacy for sociologists to make ethical judgments risks jettisoning our sociological judgments for normative ones. Hanemaayer endeavours to retrieve the sociological and metatheoretical commitments of public sociology by considering how two classical theorists (Weber and Durkheim) dealt with questions concerning the ontological and normative dimensions of sociological practice, theorizing a public sociology *avant la lettre.* By drawing on the sociologies of Weber and Durkheim, Hanemaayer demonstrates not only how the relationship between research and recommendations has been a central question for development of the discipline since its creation but also how doing sociology principled to its metatheoretical commitments allows sociologists to make sociologically sound ethical judgments about the social phenomena they study and the happenings of the social world.

In Chapter 2, Axel van den Berg asserts that the debate over the disciplinary struggles (see Burawoy 2009), particularly those concerning professional sociology, in fact lie much deeper than professional privilege. A lack of commitment to a fundamental democratic worldview is what the kerfuffle over public sociology really seems to be about. In this chapter, van den Berg, himself a self-proclaimed professional sociologist, contends that the debate is really a "fundamental disagreement over the relationship between (social) science and democracy." Professional sociology should involve the elevation and celebration of value neutrality because, van den Berg argues,

while there may be "plenty of values, or nondemonstrable judgments, that the members of the audience will have to agree on to start with, such as the existence of a shared ... reality," these agreements inform a "democratic epistemology" – one not present in Burawoy's (2005a, 24) declaration of sociology as representing "the interests of humanity." Van den Berg outlines the manner that professional sociology (short of Burawoy and his supporters) can and should remain value-neutral, rather than "overdetermined" by the normative valences of public sociology, as Hanemaayer would argue. For professional sociologists, the basic concern throughout the debates, van den Berg surmises, is that the "dubious aspects of public sociology will lead to a throwing out of the baby of inclusive methodology with the dirty bathwater of its always imperfect realization."

Critical

Burawoy's (2005f, 73) category of critical sociology "exposes and engages the assumptions, often the normative assumptions, of professional sociology." This type of sociology is charged with the task of analyzing the normative foundations that constitute the "truths" generated by the rigorous methods and scientific epistemologies of professional sociology. Critical sociology appears to be the normative underlabourer of those engaged in professional projects: "For critical sociology truth is nothing without a normative foundation to guide it" (Burawoy 2005a, 16). By doing the critical questioning of the knowledge produced by professional research, critical sociology provides the grounds upon which public sociology may be undertaken: "Critical and public sociology, on the other hand, interrogate and even call into question those very ends, the normative foundations of professional and policy sociology. Critical sociology is a normative dialogue, primarily among sociologists and conventionally directed to professional sociology, whereas public sociology is dialogue primarily between sociologists and publics about the normative foundations of society" (Burawoy 2005d, 380). Those who have taken issue with Burawoy's formulation of the critical tradition in sociology (see, for example, Morrow 2009; Feagin, Elias, and Mueller 2009) note that examination of the normative foundations of professional sociology goes for public sociology as well. It is not as simple and clear-cut as Burawoy seems to suggest. While Burawoy's categories may render professional sociology as the type that generates knowledge about the values of a society, group, or subculture, critical sociology exposes the normative commitments of any endeavour in sociological research. Any translation of these normative interests in sociology or the values of those

under study requires reflection as well, as put forth by Morrow (2009) and others. Further, public sociology, some contend, is not an exception to the rigorous questioning of the critical condition: "In the course of his analysis [Burawoy] more or less conflates the normative, the moral, and the political under the one head of the critical" (Abbott 2007, 197).

Glenn (2007, 221) also shares uneasiness about the mapping of the critical category as she points out how "power and hierarchy are embedded in the [fourfold typology]." Those who share a commitment to sociological reflexivity, one where the very values and assumptions set forth in any statement of truth are questioned, are cautious about any translation of these normative concerns to public sociology and its practice. For instance, Jeffries (2009) and Nichols (2007) each suggest that the critical commitments demonstrated in Sorokin's work offer a way to think about the ethical principles in an engagement with any kind of social change or "alternative vision of the good" that can provide a "compelling moral vision of a better world" (Jeffries 2009, 118).

Continuing this thread, others, such as Feagin, Elias, and Mueller (2009, 84), argue that the "standpoint and starting point of a critical public sociology should be the creation of a counter system framework focused on social justice and democratic group pluralism," "because societies continue to be fundamentally defined by injustices structured along class, racial, and gender lines." The research that generates knowledge about social reality has its own normative valences, and the critical tradition, according to its supporters, is not only able to expose those values and commitments, but can also provide the methods for theorizing an alternative version of those values, which can then be translated to political projects undertaken by public sociologists (see Collins 2007; Piven 2007; Feagin, Elias, and Mueller 2009).

The concern with political recommendations is one for public sociology, guided by the ethical principles and values researched and developed by the professional and critical traditions. In our discussion above, we see the hesitation to include normative recommendations as part of a sociological project as defined through professional sociology. With the critical category, however, supporters conceive of its project as elucidating the normative aspects already present in the undertaking of any sociological project, as those projects themselves have normative commitments, values (i.e., what is "worth" knowing) that can be translated to making political recommendations and proposing alternatives to the current conditions structuring any group of study (e.g., society). The relationship between sociological research

and normative recommendations is one of ethical principles: assessing the normative valences of any research problem to theorize alternative conditions to better humanity as a moral good requires a reflexive relation to the generation of any truth statement.

In Chapter 3, Scott Schaffer explores how social theorists can resume critical engagement in the everyday world. To comprehend this process, Schaffer draws on Schalk (1991) to suggest that we can learn from the intellectual engagement of Sartre, Bourdieu, and Havel to generate a basis for involvement in social action. Schaffer contends that such a task remains "just as important" in our social assessment of the proper relationship between social theorist and publics. An ardent supporter of this form of public engagement, Schaffer asserts that "left intellectuals *should* be engaged in public life in a way that speaks with those on the 'front lines' of movements for social justice and social change" (emphasis in original). While Schaffer is concerned with how "thinkers can either mobilize elements of their body of work or foster a societal position in order to serve as interlocutors in public debates," Jill Bucklaschuk contends that intervention must also include more inclusive frameworks that "explore the implications and complexities of engaging marginalized groups as publics."

At the heart of Chapter 4, Bucklaschuk considers the choice to actively include those at the fringes of society, those rendered most invisible by their temporary migrant social status. These individuals play a key role in social, economic, and political development, on the one hand, while they simultaneously lack these very same resources to be "actively involved in dialogue" in addressing matters of concern, on the other. Although Bucklaschuk believes that sociologists should and must play "an important role in exploring and collecting their experiences and bringing public awareness to the inequalities and injustices they face," she is quick to remind us that our assumptions about the ethical dimensions of our sociological statements might actually do harm as we cannot make publics "visible just because we believe they would benefit from such a process." Rather, Bucklaschuk highlights the importance of "multi-actor collaboration" in addressing the concerns of marginalized publics, and, while Bucklaschuk does not challenge the legitimacy of public sociology, as others in this volume do (see van den Berg and Hanemaayer), a consistent theme concerning the democratic engagement of knowledge creation as critical engagement is present. Critical democratic engagement can also consist of teaching practices, an area explored in Chapter 5, presented by Susan Prentice.

Prentice describes how a graduate course she organized was structured in such a way that it served as a unique space of critical sociological inquiry. Prentice asserts that "a public sociology classroom is best thought of as a critical space of 'traditional' learning and teaching." While public intellectuals have an active and critical role in different societies (see Schaffer, this volume), the same cannot be said of North America, and, therefore, "internationalizing learning and teaching public sociology," argues Prentice, remains an important endeavour. The ethical decision to "take a stand" in the classroom is an important decision that should not be taken as an opportunity to "'imprint' [one's] personal political views because such moves are irresponsible, coercive, and undemocratic in the context of a classroom." The ethical position taken by Prentice is clear: critical sociology should facilitate teaching to better "interrogate the foundations of social science inquiry, including those of public sociology itself."

Policy

Policy sociology is one in service of a client. The client guides the generation of data, often the methods desired, as well as the purpose for which the data will be used. Statistics Canada is one example of such a version of the policy sociology category. A few of the mandates of Statistics Canada are to analyze economic performance of the country and to create useful policies to maintain Canada's economy (Statistics Canada 2009). For Burawoy (2005e, 431), policy sociology "at its core [concerns] no dialogue about normative assumptions." Because any research project is undertaken to produce knowledge for the purposes and interests of a group, like the mandates of Statistics Canada, there is no space for normative or critical reflection – just for following the procedure and interests of the client.

Stinchcombe (2007, 136) notes that "the deep problem with ... policy sociology is the same as the problem of economics: its truths must be truths about the future." Stinchcombe (2007, 141) continues, "If it is true that only theory, not facts, can deal with the future and that much public discourse is about what sort of future we ought to have, how can we get out of the box of the institutionalized rigidity of our imagined futures?" In pursuing truths about that which has not yet come to pass, clients may employ sociologists as they can provide the research that policy makers can use to put forth recommendations for legislative or legal change. But the ways these recommendations are generated (by sociological principles) are of no concern to the client; it is the result that counts. There is little room for reflection in policy research, Burawoy contends: "Of course, it may not be simply the

structure of our discipline that handicaps us in the policy field, but also the messages we carry ... We must ask whether our message is also too left of publics let alone states? Can we produce the ignition to spark the conversation?" (Burawoy 2005c, 321-22).

In policy sociology, the normative dimensions exist but are determined by the interests of the client, as the client is the one who decides what the knowledge is for (in Burawoy's terms). Questions concerning how the discipline may remain ethically principled when pursuing policy work, or if policy sociology is a worthwhile endeavour, will always remain in service to another master (i.e., not the interests of "humanity" per se).

In Chapter 6, thinking through Burawoy's statements about the discipline and its thwarted relation to policy sociology, Anne Mesny explores the "distinctions between public sociology and policy sociology." She uses the policies regarding ethical conduct for research involving human participants as a starting point. In Canada, these principles were established in 1998 by the Tri-Council Policy Statement, which provides regulations that scientists should follow regarding relationships with researched human subjects. Mesny contends that there remains a "discrepancy between the ethical issues that are acknowledged" by university research policies and "the ethical issues that [scholars] actually encounter," a process that includes working with participants that are vulnerable but also those that are powerful, such as policy makers. Mesny argues that the "distinction between public sociology and policy sociology is certainly not as clear-cut as Burawoy suggests" and contextualizes these differences in terms of the usefulness of sociological knowledge, on the one hand, and for whom, on the other, and the role of university ethics boards in the process. She concludes that "conducting research that is immediately relevant for research participants should be seen as *one* type of research among other types of equally legitimate research."

In Chapter 7, Rick Helmes-Hayes, an admitted supporter of public sociology, argues that the ethos of a value-committed science was at one time a basic and acceptable practice of Canadian sociology. While Schaffer (this volume) focuses upon three non-Canadian scholars to argue that left intellectuals should critically engage with publics, Helmes-Hayes highlights the work and engagement activities of Coral W. Topping, "the first and only sociologist at the University of British Columbia between 1929 and 1954." This chapter provides an account of Topping's style as a public sociologist. Topping used public engagement but with the express commitment to bring changes in the form of policy, particularly in relation to prison reform.

To be certain, Helmes-Hayes does not suggest that Topping was a policy sociologist (nor do we) – far from it. Topping did not work for any client. Rather, he suggests that Topping's "efforts as a tireless and effective advocate" for the humane treatment of criminals and juvenile delinquents in Canada ushered in policy changes that dramatically altered "the organization and running of the nation's carceral institutions." These changes, Helmes-Hayes tells us, now serve as the "basis of Canada's current correctional system." While Topping was not a policy sociologist, his "highly moralistic" efforts as a public sociologist, Helmes-Hayes suggests, were historically not "too left of publics [or] states" (Burawoy 2005c, 321-22) to be institutionalized in the form of policy in Canada's correctional system. Indeed, as Helmes-Hayes argues, the moralistic messages that sociologists once carried were in fact "once an accepted and useful part of mainstream sociological practice."

Public

Public sociology, according to Burawoy (2005a, 5), is not the "negation of professional sociology." Rather, public sociology "aims to enrich public debate about moral and political issues by infusing them with sociological theory and research" (Burawoy 2004, 1603). The purpose of public sociology is to engage those beyond the academy to stimulate dialogue about matters of "public importance" (Burawoy 2005a, 7). Public sociology is value-laden and driven by the moral position of the sociologist. The explicit purpose of public sociology is to generate social change for the "good of humanity," even while the good of humanity may remain unclear or potentially undemocratic (see van den Berg, this volume).

There are two basic forms of public sociology, traditional and organic (Burawoy 2005a). With traditional public sociology, sociologists publish material intended for audiences beyond the academy. These publications can include books or opinion pieces in newspapers that are accessible to publics, or anything published in "plain English" (Gans 1988, 6). Publishing on the Internet in the form of blogs or even open-access journals has expanded these possibilities for sociologists (see Schneider, this volume). The organic form of public sociology occurs when a sociologist "works in close connection with a visible, thick, active, local, and often counter-public" (Burawoy 2005a, 7). Counterpublics can include groups that seek social change on behalf of human rights organizations, for example; counterpublics are making sure not to "confound human rights with the rights of states and markets" (Burawoy 2006, 4).

The tasks of the organic public sociologist, according to Burawoy (2005a), include, on the one hand, engaging in a dialogue with these groups, while on the other hand informing them of our work. The goal of this process is to make these groups visible in the public sphere in order to facilitate social change. In this way, the sociologist acts as translator of sociological research and a politically transformative liaison (Burawoy 2007). The interest of the sociologist determines not only his/her sociological perspective but also his/her organic activities.

For Burawoy (2007, 241), "sociology ... harnesses that science to its earlier moral concerns in order to give vitality to public sociology." Professional and critical sociology breathe life into the public sociology project, providing the information and normative commitments necessary for engaging in public activism and advocating for social change. The normative valences of the practice of public sociology are not intrinsic or essential (i.e., the same across all research endeavours), but public sociologists remain committed "to dialogue around issues raised in and by sociologists" (Burawoy 2005a, 8). Those who support the practice of public sociology contend that those who "pretend that politics and morality do not influence the form and impact of our research ... [are] blind to social reality. Thus, to name ourselves as public sociologists means, first and foremost, to be more *explicit* and *reflective* about what we are *already* doing" (Hays 2007, 87, emphasis in original). Given the argument set forth by Burawoy and others, public sociology and its practice bring out the normative dimensions of a discipline that already exist. The public sociologist is the translator and transformer. She translates research, developed through sociological methods, into real recommendations with the aim of transformation – namely, addressing social problems and political issues and moving towards the betterment of humanity.

Other scholars remain less enthusiastic about the normative sociological features emphasized and valorized by public sociology. Smith-Lovin (2007, 129), for instance, notes, "If we take as the core enterprise of sociology the accumulation of knowledge about social processes, the accountability to publics is a problem for scientific sociology." While acknowledging that the use of sociological knowledge ought to benefit and be accountable to those who are under research, she notes that there is some hesitation about the ability "to judge our contributions based on that relatively traditional, conservative, professional goal in order to sustain the legitimacy and internal consensus that allow us to sustain the discipline" (Smith-Lovin 2007, 132). As Bell (2009, 103) puts it, any public intervention requires a validity,

a "*reliable and valid futures thinking* and objective *value judging*" (emphasis in original).

In being accountable to publics with the goal of ameliorating their social situation, there arises one of our key questions regarding how research and recommendations are linked: by what standards can sociology make value judgments objectively? Glenn (2009, 135) provides nine "standards for distinguishing between good and bad public sociology": much of what he says "deals with how public sociologists strongly committed to their ultimate values may be able to gain a reasonable degree of objectivity about effectiveness of the different means being advocated and used for the attainment of the goals they believe in" (139). These discussions surrounding the criteria for objective and desirable intervention take the value and validity of Burawoy's normative vision of the discipline seriously. Burawoy's supporters believe sociology will foster the development of a more democratic society.

Wallerstein (2007, 174-75) reminds us that "we can never come close to ... a more reasonable accommodation of multiple readings of the good, and therefore ultimately a democratic political system if there is not greater openness in our public discussion." Wallerstein recognizes that what is good for humanity is subject to socially constituted values, but conversation about those values, as stimulated by sociology, is a worthwhile pursuit. Others, such as Patterson (2007, 176), agree: "I firmly believe that the public use of sociology, properly executed, is part of a communicative process in the public sphere that is necessarily democratic in both intent and consequence." The greatest contribution public sociology can make to the broader social world is that "it can potentially ... [develop] a more intellectually oriented public sphere" (Furedi 2009, 172). The rationale for public sociology is that sociology makes the world better by creating democratic engagements through public interaction with sociologists and education (Leonard 2009, 240; cf. Mills 1959, 187-88).

Public sociology makes no apologies for its normative commitments to making a better world, as it sees the relationship between doing sociological research and making recommendations for transforming the social world as unproblematic and, indeed, a moral imperative of the discipline more generally. As Agger (2007, 2) puts it, "my project is unashamedly normative: I contend that sociology should take the lead in building a democratic public sphere."

In Chapter 8, Christopher J. Schneider outlines how social media, and social networking sites more specifically, expand opportunities for public

sociologists in the public sphere and offer a novel way to connect research and recommendations. Schneider calls this *e-public sociology*, a hybrid of Burawoy's (2005a) traditional and organic public sociology. Traditional public sociology, for Burawoy, involves sociologists who publish their work in oligopolistic media, whereas organic public sociology includes sociologists who work face-to-face with publics. Social networking sites, Schneider argues, draw from both forms of public sociology, forming e-public sociology, which includes publishing work in accessible public spaces (traditional) as well as interacting with publics through these very same media (organic). Schneider collected data from seventy-five faculty members who responded to a questionnaire that he distributed through various listservs; while his findings affirmed that students are "our first public" (Burawoy 2005a, 7), faculty respondents interacted with the student publics beyond the university only under very limited circumstances. Schneider notes that the "unwillingness to engage with undergraduate student publics in these mediated spaces is not necessarily conducive to bringing sociological knowledge to wider extra-academic audiences," which leads him to conclude that the practice of public sociology between faculty respondents and students remains "limited" and thus not entirely conducive to Burawoy's (2005a) version of public sociology.

In Chapter 9, Phillip Vannini and Laura Milne outline a "new public scholarship" for the future because of an influx of "more students learning the language of the social sciences today than there are journalists, documentarians, think-tank researchers, and policy pundits combined." Vannini and Milne argue that a "public ethnography" is better suited than even public sociology to reach "beyond the confines of academic discourse." They define ethnography as "the in-depth study of people's ways of life, of cultures" and public ethnography as exploiting the potential of ethnographic research that focuses on "describing and understanding social life from the perspective of the people who take part in it." Vannini and Milne suggest that a "multimodal" approach is the best way to translate sociological research and to reach multiple publics. This process moves beyond both writing and interaction to include video and photography but also incorporates platforms such as social networking to help launch these projects into public spaces. Coupled with student engagement and innovative public ethnography, this process, Vannini and Milne assert, can bolster public scholarship across diverse audiences in packages that make sense to members of these audiences.

We contend that the debates over Burawoy's fourfold vision and the division of sociological labour tell us something about the normative

commitments of the discipline. To return to the question we asked at the outset: What kind of sociology are you committed to? The chapters that follow provide the reader with a range of responses that each engage with the assumed normative valence of the discipline. Our hope is that this collection will move the public sociology debates in the direction of a more focused and sustained engagement with the normative commitments of sociology. Questions that investigate what role sociology should play in the broader social sphere, and how its research may be used (or not used) to facilitate desirable and viable social change, remain important as these questions inform ethical judgments in practice, statements and recommendations for social change, and sociological engagement in political projects.

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