**Sociology, in the U.S., Since 1968**

Since 1968, the Anti-war Movement, the Black Power Movement, the Students’ Movement, the Environmental Movement, the Women’s Movement, and a host of others have challenged the status quo in sociological theory, along with sociology, the university, capitalism, patriarchy, patronage, racism, corporatism, liberalism, Fordism, Reagan/Thatcherism, Gaullism, neo-conservatisms, neo-liberalism, and even modernism.

Clearly, sociological theory became de-centered or unfocused. Functionalism was no longer sociology, nor was it clearly the hegemonic theoretical approach. Dialectical, interactive, and even phenomenological models proliferated. Conflict theory and liberal feminism eventually came to be seen as part of the problem rather than part of the solution. Even Marxism came to be seen as just another version of patriarchal, positivist science, or, at least, as just another modern enlightenment theory. The unhappy marriage of Marxism and feminism was followed by the debate between Radical Feminism, Postmodernism, and Critical Theory.

How much sense we can make of the cacophony, even with the benefit of a half-century of historical hindsight, remains to be seen. Marxists seem less antagonistic toward feminists, and vice-versa, to a lesser extent. Postmodernism seems to have run its course. Yet radicals and liberals continue to argue among themselves, rather than focusing their attention on the conservatives, who are enjoying a resurgence fueled by the fall of the Soviet Union and the War on Terrorism.

Perhaps we can begin with Marxist Sociology, in the hope of making some sense of what has happened to Sociological Theory in the U.S. since 1968.

Marxist Sociology

The Marxist Section of the American Sociological Association celebrated Thirty Years in 2004-2005. In 2004, building on Michael Burawoy’s presidential theme, the section sold t-shirts proclaiming Karl Marx, “The Original Public Sociologist.” On the back was the quote from the *Thesis on Feuerbach*, “The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it.”

In 2005, the t-shirt featured demonstrators and clenched fists, “Celebrating 30 Years[, the] Section on Marxist Sociology[,] Since 1975[, in the] American Sociological Association.” On the back was the section history, which is worth considering in some detail.

**“History of the Marxist Section**

The Fat-Cat Sociology Speech 1968

Sociology Liberation Movement 1969

Radical Caucus 1969-1975

The Insurgent Sociologist 1969-1987

Section Wins ASA Recognition 1975

Critical Sociology 1987-

Progressive Sociology Network 1992-

Studies in Critical Social Sciences 2004-

**AND THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES…”**

Beneath the united front represented by Marxist sociologists within the ASA, there are arguments as profound as what we should call the section. Some have defended “Section on Marxist Sociology” (the official name according to purists). The current chair (c’est moi) prefers “Marxist Sociology” (which will be featured on t-shirts in San Francisco in 2014). In recent years, section members have argued that we need to change the name to include Critical as well as Marxist Sociology.

Others have argued that we should merge with the Political Economy of World Systems. I have been attempting to reach out to friends who are not Marxist Sociologists, but who have hung with Marxist Sociologists and who think that Marxist Sociology is a good thing (William Julius Wilson, Frances Fox Piven, Bill Gamson, and Aldon Morris belong on this list of friends and potential “conscience constituents”).

My goal for 2014 is to open some windows without closing any doors. Instead of celebrating Marx’s words, “Je ne suis pas Marxiste,” we should instead proclaim, “Nous sommes tous Marxistes.” In this spirit, I would like to invite people whom I almost knew as an undergraduate at Santa Cruz, including Wally Goldfrank, G. William Domhoff, and even Angela Davis (who was not yet there when I graduated in 1974), to join us in San Francisco.

At the same time I recently argued that we should not award book, article, or career awards to people who are not members of our section. The opposition to this position was surprising to me, although I came to respect their position and have not pushed this issue so far. My successor may be less reticent.

Fortunately, Michael Burawoy, Myra Marx Ferree, Walda Katz Fishman, and Erik Olin Wright, are coming to San Francisco to discuss the “Past, Present, and Future of Marxist Sociology.” When I proposed this panel my intention was to focus on the history of the section, but there was disagreement and confusion about when ASA recognized the section and when we should celebrate 40 years.

Being an aging hippy, I proposed a two year celebration, beginning in 2014 in San Francisco and culminating when we arrive, “Back Home, Chicago, in 2015.” Nevertheless, the 2013 Sections Manual indicates that the section was not actually approved by ASA until 1977. The discrepancy probably refers to the difference between being granted the right to organize (1975) and then having elections, by-laws, etc., approved (1977), but there is still some research to be done on this issue.

More important, what difference does it make whether we call it Marxist theory, theories of Political Economy, or Critical theory? What about dialectical materialism or historical materialism, or radicalism?

Let us begin, inductively, by looking at theories of class and class conflict:

- Poulantzas

- Wright

- Connell (and Althusser)

- Braverman (and Baran and Sweezy)

These guys are all Marxists—right? What are they arguing about?

What about Giddens and Parkin? This is the early Giddens, before he became a Critical theorist. Isn’t he a Marxist? What about Parkin? Is this a friendly critique (like Merton on Parsons)?

How about the Marxist theories of the State?

- Zeitlin

- Therborn

- Offe and Ronge

- Frankel

These guys are all Marxists—right? What are they arguing about?

Tucker talked about the three Marx’s

- early Marx: philosophy, base for critical and neo-Hegelian theory

- late Marx: economics, base for economic determinism and structural Marxism

- middle Marx: politics, base for Historical Marxism

Tucker seems to think that we are getting along better now and that Marx spent his whole life writing Capital. Is there any reason to talk about the flavors of Marxism and the history of Marxism since Marx?