Book Review/Compte rendu

David Paul Haney, *The Americanization of Social Science: Intellectuals and Public Responsibility in the Postwar United States*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2007, 296 pp. $US 39.95 hardcover (978-1-59213-713-8)

The public sociology debate led by former American Sociological Association president Michael Burowoy has encouraged our discipline to think about its history in different ways, even though there is nothing new about sociologists writing to the public outside of narrow professional venues. From the American Sociological Association annual meeting in Berkeley in 2004 through various debates in *Social Problems, Social Forces, The British Journal of Sociology, Sociology*, and in this issue of *CJS*, Burawoy has created an intellectual stir and stimulated an enormously productive conversation among sociologists regarding the public role of the discipline. In the context of these broader debates, this first book by historian David Haney makes a valuable and thoughtful contribution to our discipline's understanding of its own history of public engagement and the dilemmas that emerge from professionalization. Well-written and carefully researched, Haney's book gives us a comprehensive overview of post-war American sociology with an emphasis on the ways that the discipline attempted to overcome its relative marginalization within the North American higher education system and broader intellectual culture. Displaying scholarship that is solid and reliable rather than provocative and groundbreaking, *The Americanization of Social Science* is useful for sociologists interested in debating our collective past and potential futures based on an understanding of the history of controversies and debates that sometimes are framed as new developments.

Throughout the world, sociology has always been "public," even in the United States where professional dynamics have been the strongest: American sociology emerged partly from networks of urban reformers, preachers, and social workers who were *primarily* concerned with public debate and social policy. Haney tells the story of how intellectuals and reformers in American sociology were replaced in the post-war period by experts and professionals, and of how the intellectuals fought back. He has produced a valuable historical overview of American sociology's post-war quest for scientific legitimacy, the institutionalization of quanti-

tative methods, the influence of theories of mass society in the 1950s, debates about sociological social engineering based on pseudoscience, and critiques articulated by Sorokin, Riesman, Mills, and Gouldner, among others. Much of the story Haney tells covers relatively familiar territory, but a number of themes and actors make the narrative come alive.

For example, there is a detailed and careful account of the career and work of Pitirim Sorokin, a Russian immigrant to America about whom Canadian sociologists are not likely to know much, even though his papers and an annual Sorokin lecture are housed at the University of Saskatchewan. Sorokin fled Russia in the wake of the Bolshevik revolution and published an enormous amount of scholarship from his base at Harvard University. Sorokin was a difficult and ego-driven individual and Haney's recounting of battles with Parsons and Merton certainly remind us of the underside of his personality. Yet Sorokin's *Fads and Foibles in Modern Sociology and Related Sciences* (1956) provided American sociology with a warning against the dangers of excessive quantification and "physics envy" that was no less powerful than that later provided by the radical populist C. Wright Mills. Rooted in broad intellectual social criticism as well as narrower professional scholarship, Sorokin (like the later American sociologist and conservative social critic Robert Nisbet), reminds us that skepticism about excessive professionalization is not inexorably wedded to the kind of left-wing politics represented by Mills. Sorokin's life and work are worth another look, especially in light of recent arguments for an exclusively left-wing public sociology that reinforce widespread public stereotypes regarding the left-wing nature of sociology. The story of Parsons and Merton is often told as a foil for a simplistic narrative of the defeat of conservative functionalism and the rise of conflict theory and feminism. Our understanding of their professionalizing project becomes far more complex when Sorokin's early, genuinely politically conservative and intellectually serious opposition to sociological functionalism is put into the picture as expertly as Haney does.

Canadian sociologists may not remember Sorokin, but we have been exposed to a large amount of writing that valorizes C. Wright Mills and his critique of excessively quantitative "abstract empiricism" and overly convoluted versions of grand theory. Haney, however, adds an enormous amount to our understanding of these debates about the discipline's quest for public understanding and legitimacy by putting Mills's contributions in the context of other mid-century public intellectuals, such as Arthur Schlesinger Jr. and David Riesman. Proponents of the liberal centre, the historian Schlesinger and the sociologist Riesman both wrote widely read and carefully crafted books of social criticism and commentary.

Schlesinger was a Presidential historian, a Kennedy Cold War liberal, and probably the most influential public intellectual supporter of what he famously called the "vital centre" in post-war American intellectual life. Riesman, a University of Chicago and Harvard professor who did not have a PhD in the discipline, wrote the best selling sociology book of all time, *The Lonely Crowd* (1950), and was the first within our field to have his picture on the cover of *Time* magazine. It is worth remembering that these two Cold War liberals both shared skepticism, even disdain, for a sociology that mimicked the natural sciences and seemed to propose an elite-driven academic form of social engineering in the tradition of Comte himself. Haney's history of American sociology reminds us that the discipline has a dilemma that one does not have to be politically radical *or* conservative to see. On the one hand, without professional closure and rigorous disciplinary standards, sociology runs the risk of being a "grab-bag" discipline without respect and power in the contemporary university. It is this problem that the grand theorist Parsons, the middle range proponent Merton and the quantitative methodologist and applied researcher Lazarsfeld addressed as they developed a vision for a professional project that turned out to be remarkably successful in post-war America. *Too much* professionalization, on the other hand, runs an equally grave risk, Haney reminds us, but he does so in a far more nuanced way than many contemporary opponents of professional sociology.

Drawing on the 1950s and 1960s era writings of Schlesinger, Haney helps us understand that contemporary concerns about excessive sociological professionalism are nothing new and are certainly not the exclusive property of French poststructuralists or radical philosophers. Articulating a critique of scientific sociology that makes contemporary postmodernist critics of sociology seem moderate, Schlesinger argued that sociology that is not written clearly in nontechnical language runs the risk of being dismissed as antidemocratic and irrelevant. For Schlesinger, sociology's professional vanity created a "remorseless jargon" that can sabotage free debate and remove social inquiry from the public sphere.

Riesman offers a model that could help, as Haney puts it, "combine the best elements of modern theoretical and empirical advancements with a more traditional emphasis on humanistic study and reflection" (p. 213). Riesman is a relatively "forgotten intellectual," and Haney's little volume does an excellent job of placing his work alongside his far better known contemporary C. Wright Mills, a more predictable example of a sociological public intellectual. Contemporary sociologists would find many similarities between the 1950s and 1960s writings of Riesman and

some of the insights of Marcuse, Adorno and Baudrillard (*La Société de Consommation* is largely based on *The Lonely Crowd*). Riesman had blinders regarding race, gender, and the American empire, to be sure, but his commitment to empirical research using a variety of sociological methods as well as his emphasis on open-minded intellectual dialogue remains relevant to sociologists today in far more direct ways than is the case with many fashionable European philosophers. Haney's history opens up new directions for contemporary sociology, which is not always true of traditional intellectual history.

There is little to criticize in the Haney volume, except perhaps the rather misleading title. Canadian scholars might want to see the professionalization of social science as an Americanization process, but similar processes have emerged throughout the world, albeit often under excessive American influence. Haney says very little about the relationship between professionalization and Americanization; the book is really about the perils of professionalization and popularization within sociology. The book is also not really about intellectual and public responsibility more broadly, even though Haney does approvingly quote and discuss a number of sociology's public intellectual social critics from the 1950s and 1960s in the United States. Nonetheless, readers interested in thinking about how Canadian intellectuals and social scientists might continue the process of professionalization while avoiding excessive insularity and pseudoscientific pretense can gain much from this brief, entertaining, and extremely illuminating first-rate intellectual history. There is a book to be written that tells the story of the public engagement of Canadian sociologists and social sciences, and young historians and sociologists interested in intellectual history could do far worse than using Haney's text as a model.

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