

## AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Tucker D. Farris for the degree of Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies in Sociology, Sociology, and Education presented on May 23, 2018

Title: Chasing the Limelight: An Exploratory, Grounded Theory Multivariate Analysis of Academic Prestige in Sociology

Abstract approved:

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The purpose of this study was to provide exploratory understanding of the nature of academic prestige in the field of sociology, and to provide insights into the history of the discipline. The primary research question was: does academic prestige act as a factor in controlling academic knowledge production in the field of sociology? It was hypothesized that sociology, following the great depression would begin expanding in terms of the diversity of specialized subfields, and that social contextual factors influenced the amount of prestige allotted to specific topical areas throughout history. A sociohistorical content analysis of conference proceedings published by the American Sociological Association was performed. A total of 2387 presentations from the years 1920-1960 were coded across six variables (region, type of university, home state of university, prestige score, gender of presenter, and thematic topic), and then analyzed with multiple correspondence analysis and descriptive statistics. It was found that sociology as a discipline has diversified as hypothesized. Academic prestige was found to have fluctuated across subfields and was mapped to highlight this phenomenon. Finally, a new conceptualization about the nature of prestige and the interactional behavior of institutions was developed from the results of the study through a grounded theory approach. Finally, predictive comments about the implications of these findings in the field of higher education were made.

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Chasing the Limelight:  
*An Exploratory, Grounded Theory Multivariate Analysis of Academic Prestige in Sociology*

by  
Tucker D. Farris

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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

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Tucker D. Farris, Author

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## Chapter 1: Introduction and Literature Review

*“I learned a long time ago that reality was much weirder than anyone’s imagination”*

*-Hunter S. Thompson*

### **Framing the Problem**

To metaphorically discuss the nature of scientific disciplines in their pragmatic operation within the community of knowledge production, one could imagine each discipline as a raucous cacophony of disjointed voices; all taking part in a continuous, active and reflexive conversation. Through the mediums of academic and popular publications, conferences and university lectures, each of these disciplines facilitates its own competitive conversation wherein old knowledge is debated, updated, or disregarded entirely. Where new knowledge is presented, dissected, and ultimately agreed upon as truth within that epistemological moment. Knowledge itself represents the deafening sound of all of these hundreds of voices speaking in the same instance. Within each discipline, there are a seemingly infinite amount of sub-disciplines that develop over the decades to provide new epistemological directions of the pursuit and production of understanding. For instance, biology is a discipline with multiple sub-fields such as microbiology, human anatomy, and zoology. These smaller disciplines’ conversations eventually feedback into the larger discussion proposed by the discipline of biology within the discourse of knowledge. Each field represents a community of scholars that are diversified further into their own research directions which feeds into the active and reflexive nature of knowledge production in that the levels at which the discourse is taking place are symbiotically diverse. They are all working to produce different understandings of phenomena, yet they are all focused on advancing the understanding of a specific field of knowledge.

Sociology is a unique discipline within this mass of conversations in that it is *very* diverse in terms of the fields and subfields within it. Since its inception in the days of Max Weber, Karl

Marx and Emilé Durkheim, sociology has taken the pursuit of understanding society and its inhabitants to a multitude of unique avenues. Even over the course of the last couple of decades, the discipline has grown rapidly (Smelser, 1999). Fields such as social psychology, sociology of culture, sociology of the family, of work, sociology of crime and even rural sociology have emerged throughout the lifetime of the discipline. This growth, and the implications of that growth will be the central focus of this thesis. As a product of this diversification, an individual sociologists no longer study society in general, but rather a compartmentalized facet of it. They specialize in areas of focus, rather than taking a holistic approach to the understanding of society as a whole as our forbearers did. This is not necessarily a negative development in the discipline, as it serves to provide specialized epistemological tools to understanding explicit features of social life. Much like the diversity of biology, the diversity of sociology allows it to be a universal discipline in terms of the areas of study it may cover. It does not serve the process of knowledge production negatively to specify and target one's area of inquiry to specific phenomena. However, where problems may arise is in *over* diversifying the discipline to the point that the conversation is so disjointed within the discourse to such a point that one can question if sociology is a unified conversation (as is biology), or if it may be in the throes of what can be described as an identity crisis (Carroll, 2013) . Emilé Durkheim additionally discussed the anomic nature of an over-specialized division of labour. It is important for those invested in the discipline of sociology to be vigilant in our handling of diversification and specialization with the intent of protecting the integrity of our work within the louder conversation of the world of knowledge.

A key problem within this phenomenon of specialization is the territorial divides it creates within the discipline and the discursive boxes that it can force our knowledge into. The sharpest division within the general theoretical framework of sociology is the macro vs. micro analytical divide in theory and practice. Following a socio-historical analysis of the discipline of sociology,

this text attempts to provide a new theoretical framework to reconcile this dichotomy. Dividing the understanding of society into macro and micro levels of inquiry and analysis is a disservice to the discipline and may lead to disconnection between sub-fields within sociology that detracts from the overall story the discipline is attempting to tell. This thesis, following presentation of the results of the study will attempt to craft a new theoretical perspective from the findings to better understand how institutions behave within society, and it will provide insight into how there is a symbiotic relationship between the macro and micro levels of society through these interactions. More importantly, this direction serves to demonstrate that micro levels of analysis can and should be applied to understanding all levels of society, and it will assert that this lens of understanding can provide a common ground for the connection and synthesis of macro and micro subfields, with the overall hope of providing a new means for unifying the voice of the discipline in the conversation.

The research question of this thesis is: does academic prestige act as a factor in controlling academic knowledge production in the field of sociology? It was hypothesized that sociology would experience what has been termed an *aesthetic dissociation* (a rapid diversification of the field into numerous subtopics) around the time of the Great Depression. A secondary hypothesis is that this occurred as institutions of sociological knowledge began to pursue academic prestige by aligning themselves in those thematic areas that were most prestigious in a given year. In essence, the researcher hypothesized that institutions of low prestige would attempt to gain academic prestige by aligning their sociological research to those fields that held the most prestige. It is the primary goal of this thesis to introduce the frameworks of social understanding that have provided insight into both macro and micro levels of social interaction, to synthesize both sides of the argument into a singular framework that illustrates how macro institutions and individual actors flow in society together, based on evidence produced from a qualitative socio-historical

analysis of the discipline itself. It is the hope that this work provides a starting point for other scholars to begin to distance themselves from the macro/micro divide, and to embrace a more universal approach to social science. It strives to inspire macro sociologists to not dismiss the study and existence of the active and reflexive self in society, while reminding the micro sociologist to bear in mind the complex structures of society and their influence on the actor's ego within their interactions.

Following the presentation of the empirical study, this work strives to meld the works of Pierre Bourdieu, and C. Wright Mills with those of the symbolic interactionists (primarily Erving Goffman) with the goal of providing a new theoretical explanation of the social phenomena observed. The study, and its theoretical accompaniment will be geared toward providing a *unified* discourse that can be discussed in macro and micro circles.

### **Aesthetic Dissociation**

The academic voice of sociology is, at this point in history, monumentally disjointed. The amount of subfields and specializations in sociology have exploded over the past century. This is not uncommon in scientific disciplines as the ever-evolving nature of those subjects of our study fundamentally requires an evolutionary degree of specialization. In order to keep with the rapidly changing social world, this diversification is not only natural, but required-to an extent. It would irresponsible for sociologists today to operate as they did in the early 20<sup>th</sup> and late 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The focal lens of our discipline has shifted, as have the theoretical, methodological, and political considerations within. This critique of sociology is not done from a traditionalist lens, the author is not living in a by-gone era of sociological practice where a return to strictly conservative structural functionalism is the holistic solution. The critique lies in the *disjointed* nature of our specialization. I argue that it has *not* undergone an evolutionary change as is required of scientific epistemologies, but rather an aesthetic diversification. In a sense, we have strayed from our roots

so far that some sociology is barely recognizable as sociological science in the ways that theorists have defined it. Durkheim's *Science of Morality*, the principle notion that *La Sociologie* exists as the science to provide understanding to those most fundamental of social questions, while providing means of bettering society, and Weber's *Verstehen*, the purpose of sociology to produce an empathic understanding of the human condition have been lost in the aesthetic fragmentation of sociology as a scientific discipline. Bourdieu said that sociology is a martial art, arguing again for its place in society as that system of thought and knowledge production that exists to provide answers to monumental social problems, and then to *actively* inspire positive change through action.

As such, sociology had historically focused on issues directly pertaining to contemporary social issues of a given historical time period. The socio-historical context and what was considered a 'social problem' dictated the direction and lenses through which sociology looked at society, and in cases, provided directions for change. In this work, I argue that sociology has undergone an aesthetic dissociation from its theoretical, methodological and epistemological roots. The distinction drawn between this type of aesthetic dissociation and the natural and epistemologically beneficial evolutionary diversification of a discipline is that I argue that traditional, healthy diversification of a discipline occurs as a response to newly emerging and necessary directions of scientific inquiry. Foucault described this process in his archaeological works, by which a discipline creates new ways of knowing through technological, social, or philosophical development. In a field such as biology, technological advancement heavily influences the development of new fields all together. For instance, with the emergence of genetic sequencing, and the mapping of the human genome, new research questions emerged, along with the *means* to answer them. As such, the field of biology underwent an evolutionary

diversification, where new fields and subfields in genetics emerged as a response to this new technological advancement.

An aesthetic dissociation is when a discipline fragments itself based on a desire for novelty in research. Sociology is a discipline with a deeply rigid hierarchy of prestige and acceptability, effectively there exists an arbitrary ranking system of what types of research are more valued than others (Hanneman 2013; Keith and Babchuk 1998; Weakliem, Gauchat, and Wright 2012). This hierarchy, which is a product of the emergence of the American school of sociology, has shaped the discipline of sociology since the early days of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Bulmer 1984). This hierarchy is speculated to be a result of Dewey's American Pragmatism, and the American meritocratic condition. American pragmatism emphasizes the *practicality* of sociological research, it is results oriented, production centered and stresses the need for tangible results that can directly benefit society (Deledalle 2002). The science of morality was corrupted by the early American sense of pragmatism, meaning that when sociology took off in the united states, it was *not* the true sociology as described by Weber, Durkheim and Bourdieu. Effectively, when sociology became Americanized, it was forced to answer more grounded and product-oriented questions (Deledalle 2002; Schneiderhan 2011). This took the shape of sociology becoming that discipline that became increasingly involved in the policy making process of the United States, almost emerging as a bank of solutions, where lawmakers could input a question such as: "how do we fix the crime problem and reduce crime rates?" fund research to answer that question, with the caveat that practical solutions must be presented and sociologists would then, in turn, complete research and frame the findings as one study as truth, and then offer solutions. We see this in the field of criminology where theories such as rational choice theory, deterrence theory and others were politically and social framed as practical solutions to the problem of crime and deviance. This nature of pragmatic research that was funded by individuals with pragmatic intentions created a



system of hierarchies in sociology that lend more credibility, prestige, funding, acceptability, and praise to those fields of knowledge that are *most* pragmatic, and most socially beneficial in the moment. This created a culture of competition in the field of American Sociology, wherein sociologists are competing for praise, prestige, status and capital through the types of work they do. In this culture, the purpose of sociological research is not to expand the conversation, but rather it is to identify some area of society that needs to be ‘fixed’ that no one has identified before, offer up novel solutions to this problem, and then publish in the hopes of standing out in the conversation. This has led to the phenomenon where, in order to attain those markers of status that allow one to be considered a successful scholar, we are forced into a mindset of chasing novelty to the point that this has become the sole focus of contemporary sociology. Thus, I present the critique that this novelty of the discipline represents the aesthetic dissociation, this need to continually search for new ways to describe social phenomena in a novel sense have all but consumed contemporary sociology. Novelty has emerged as the greatest threat to contemporary sociological science in that it has fractured us from what originally defined us as a field.

By contrast, the sociology of Durkheim, Bourdieu, and to a lesser extent, Weber represents a fundamentally different kind of sociology. Rather than focusing on those pragmatic questions of how to fix the housing crisis, or how to improve standardized tests in schools, sociologists asked bigger questions that looked at society as a *whole* object. Durkheim’s *Suicide* for instance, examined a social problem on a massive scale while simultaneously expanding the knowledge and understanding we have of the means by which society itself is constructed. Durkheim and his contemporaries did not set out to provide a study to answer a policy question, they did not search for a niche in the conversation, a specialized corner of society within which to find novelty, they saw society as a fluid and salient shared experience between individuals. It is

the pragmatic nature of American Sociology that has directly led to the single gravest epistemological flaw in contemporary sociology.

As a result of the hierarchies established in the American meritocratic system, systems of classification of social research have emerged to facilitate this meritocratic ranking. Sociology has been effectively dissected into two distinctive categories. Macro sociology, which classifies that sociology that seeks to explain ‘big groups’ and micro sociology which classifies the sociology that seeks to explore ‘small groups or individual actors.’ I would argue that this emerged as a means of streamlining the process of classifying research based upon how useful it is in terms of the results-oriented pragmatism. Epistemologically what this has done is propagated the notion that human society is clearly separated between large groups and institutions, and individuals. Society is no longer conceptualized in the fluidic sense of Durkheim’s understanding, where society was a shared experience between social groups, individuals, and institutions. Instead, the experiences of individual actors exist *independently* to the nature of social reality in contemporary sociology. Research either focuses on individuals (social psychology) or on a host of other macro issues (urban, rural, criminology, family, culture, etc.). This marginalization of the experience of the individual actor against the backdrop of macro analyses is a direct result of both this separation and the pragmatic nature of American sociology. Stakeholders care very little about identity formation in individual actors when they can care about meta-analyses of crime waves. As such, a cultural hierarchy emerges (implicitly) in the discipline where certain types of research are considered far more ‘acceptable’ and garner much more recognition. This recognition comes in the form of journal publications (Fox and Mohapatra 2007), where the most prestigious journals may opt to negatively marginalize certain types of knowledge production based on the pragmatic implications of the work. In terms of sociology faculty this reality exists in the frightening ring of the job search (Headworth and Freese 2016). An American sociologist today does not have to be

brilliant, they must be marketable. Those doing research with “real” results are prioritized over those asking big questions. Hypothetically, a specialization in theory will not get you hired, but a proposed research plan into curbing the opioid epidemic would elevate your chances above the theorist in that you produce “real results.”

Emerging from this discussion of the aesthetic dissociation of sociology, and the assertion that the pragmatic nature of American sociology has led to a harmful dichotomy of micro vs. macro, institutional dramaturgy (ID) emerges as a theoretical perspective aimed at reunifying sociology as a discipline. By ignoring the norm of the society being separate from the individual, it argues that the society *is* an individual. ID provides us a frame of methodological thinking wherein the classical sociological understanding of society can be given new life-blood in the arena of sociological thought. Given the three pillars of ID and the central argument that institutions behave in society *exactly* as individuals do, and the resulting implication that institutions (and groups as a result) may be *equally* compared to individuals provides a new theoretical direction that truly and effectively transcends the micro macro distinction. In doing research with an ID lens, we are able to address an individual’s position in society, but also society’s position within that individual, and the self and social interactions between the two actors. It allows us to contextualize the individual experience, the societal context, and the social factors simultaneously where a scientific understanding of an individual’s behavior *is* the scientific understanding of an institution’s behavior. I propose this theoretical lens as a means of addressing the aesthetic dissociation within sociology, as it is one that will unify these fragmented conversations into a singular sociological voice. A micro sociological study in one fringe sub field can be theoretical conceptualized with a macro analysis of another sociological factor, and the researchers may engage in a standardized conversation across the two vastly different areas by contextualizing the individual experience and the institutional findings as *equally representative* of

the social experience. With regards to the implications of this theory, it has the potential to begin to reconcile the identity crisis sociology is currently in the throes of and reunify its voice and usher in a new era of sociological thought that gains scientific prestige and credibility through its brilliance, rather than its pragmatic results. It has the potential to begin to set the sun on pragmatic sociology and allow sociologists to rediscover the epistemological quest that started our search for social knowledge 200 years ago.

### **The Identity Crisis of Sociology**

Given the discussion of sociology's aesthetic dissociation, it is argued that it is experiencing an identity crisis within itself as a discipline. Its voice in the conversation of academic epistemology is not a unified voice conveying knowledge of sociological importance, but rather it is akin to the unrestrained and disjointed howls of coyotes at midnight. Effectively, we as a scholarly community do not know where we are going, what our purpose is, or why we really do what we do. We are at an existential crossroads where we have begun to question what has put us here, and why, as a discipline we seem to be unable to present a unified scientific direction for ourselves. Perhaps, as some sociologists argue, this is rooted in our attempting to appear more scientific, in essence attempting to adopt as many scientific norms as possible to seem more aligned with our hard science colleagues. We try our best to hold sociology to the same standards we hold physics to as a scientific discipline, for the fact that our credibility is dependent upon that reality. It is argued that this has caused us to lose focus, and in a radical sense, some authors have argued that sociology itself is not a scientific field, or even a discipline by standard definition, and aiming to be classified as such is contributing to the identity crisis.

Sociologist William Carroll, in 2013 published an article titled: *"Discipline, Field, Nexus: Redefining Sociology."* His work is arguably one of the most monumentally important works in the

discussion of sociology's identity crisis. It provides a starting point into a reflective and critical approach to the philosophical understanding of our discipline as a whole which could almost (to contribute to the further diversification of the field) be described as the *sociology of sociology*. Carroll does not go this far, rather he offers a retelling of sociology as a nexus of knowledge, rather than a specific discipline or field. This article provides the crucial first step in understanding the need for a new theoretical direction in sociological practice. It describes in explicit detail the nature of the fact that sociology has in fact been fractured down to the point that it is unsure of how to define itself. Carroll takes a positive approach to his understanding of this fragmentation of sociology into a loosely collection of sub fields by arguing that its place in the social sciences is one of an interdisciplinary permeation that seeps into other fields and bind together scientific inquiries from other aspects of social study (Carroll 2013a). In his extolling of the possibility of a transdisciplinary nexus of critical understanding, Carrol cites globalization, capitalism, and other features of late modernity that have effectively lent to the erosion of the 'bounded society' that fluid, tangible social fact that Durkheim mandated we study in its entirety. He encourages fellow sociologists to embrace this nature of the discipline as a means of defining a new future for the practice of the science of sociology (Carroll 2013a). However, he does reference (if at least on the periphery) the contemporary existence of a fear of identity crisis.

Craig Calhoun wrote that sociology was akin to a "archipelago of poorly connected islands of specialization" (Calhoun, 1992, p. 25), while more contemporary sources describe it as existing in a perpetual state of "pluralistic confusion" (Levine 1997). These terms represent the theoretical foundation that encouraged Carrol's hand in writing, and also, the writing of this work. The sentiment that sociology is grappling with a changing world that it is struggling to find footing in is not entirely new, as critiques of the discipline dating back to the days of C. Wright

Mills call into question the nature of the discipline and its individual identity as a knowledge producing field. Bourdieu wrote of the need for reflexive sociology, a discipline that looks inward to move onward, a discipline that exists in a critical landscape, where it is questioning, constantly its purpose in order to situate itself effectively in the presentation and creation of social knowledge.

In Carroll's original essay, and in a subsequent re-visitation in 2016, he does put out the call for sociology to redefine itself in terms of its reflexive and critical metacognition (Carroll 2016, 2013a). He calls for us to align with the idealized vision of sociology put forth by Bourdieu and Mills, in that we strive for a transdisciplinary critical examination of ourselves as we strive to study and understand the intersection of history and biography in our science. This thesis attempts to take up arms in this call for action in order to provide a theoretical framework built on qualitative archival research for the continuance of sociology as this critical nexus. This thesis strives to throw off the shackles placed upon sociology by the aforementioned factors that have driven it into its current state of academic dysphoria. It does so, not by redefining sociologists understanding of their own discipline, as Carroll does, but strives to create a standardized theoretical reframing of society itself wherein sociologists may operate in the pursuit of social truths without the current constraints placed upon their discipline, based upon implications from an exploratory multivariate study.

### **Exploratory Study of Academic Prestige**

The idea of academic prestige is not in any capacity, a new one. Since the inception of higher education as a societal institution with Aristotle's *Lyceum* in Athens, attending, studying and graduating from such an institution has given one a certain degree of prestige. As

the concept of higher education spread throughout the world, different institutions began to be classified as having more or less prestige. They began to stratify into different classes of schools based on “quality” or the prestige assigned to them. Naturally, with prestige emerging as a system of stratification, institutions began to try to accumulate, produce and protect it. As a means of demonstrating the adaptability of this thesis’ newly proposed sociological theory, this review will introduce an empirical study to view prestige within the discipline of sociology specifically. The following review will present a brief overview of the background information about the nature of prestige, a sociological way to conceptualize it, a discussion of the history of the discipline and a brief discussion of social policy and its impact on academia. The primary focus of this study is to determine if academic institutions adapt the kinds of research and knowledge they produce to whatever body of knowledge is socially desirable at the time, and to determine with statistical analysis, the degree to which social the knowledge that is produced by institutions.

Contemporary society holds higher education in the form of university study to be the gateway to upward social mobility, financial success, a dream career and a marked improvement in quality of life over those not attending university (Bingham and Vertz 1983; Gump 2006; Headworth and Freese 2016; Jung and Lee 2016; O’Meara and Bloomgarden 2011; Young 2015). Within the world of universities however, not all are created equal. There exists a complicated yet entirely arbitrary “ranking system” of universities that ultimately dictates to what degree graduates can expect to reap the benefits of higher education (Bourdieu, 1984, Keith and Babchuk 1998). Take for instance, two hypothetical students. One graduates summa cum laude from a state college after first earning an associate’s degree from the local community college. The second student graduates with no honors from an ivy league university, while earning the

same degree. Within the framework of this situation, imagine they both apply for the same job, a well-paying entry level financial analyst position on Wall-Street. Which would be more likely to get that job? The straight-A student from the state school or the straight-C student from the ivy league? Given the prestige ascribed to having a degree from an ivy league, it could be argued that the second student would have a better chance of getting the position, as almost a direct function of the university they attended (Boisjolie 2011).

The social process of ascribing prestige to a university, upon further examination is an odd one. It is arguably an arbitrary value system (Bourdieu, 1997, 1984). The name of the university, and the weight it carries in the social world has no correlation with the quality of the knowledge being produced there (Bourdieu 1984a). The graduate from ivy league may be no better trained than the graduate of the state school, but her degree from the ivy league is seemingly more valuable. It is more valuable not only in that tuition costs were more, but also in the fact that a degree from the ivy league immediately translates into being a social pedigree that is “better” than any other. The Ivy League is regarded as the “cream of the crop” in terms of both its academics and the students it selects to study within (Bourdieu 1984b). The selectivity of such universities adds to their prestige, creating a veil of rarity and privilege to surround these academic institutions.

The field of sociology is by no means safe from the power plays of academic prestige (Green 2006; Hanneman 2013; Keith and Babchuk 1998; Mitra and Sarabia 2005). As a discipline, sociology has a clearly delineated position in the institutional hierarchy of value attached to fields of study (Keith and Babchuk 1998). Pierre Bourdieu defined this value attachment as “capital.” There are different types of capital per Bourdieu (1997) they are: economic capital, social capital, and cultural capital. Economic refers to value ascribed to an



individual or organization via financial power and holdings. Social capital is the networks actors belong to and the connections those networks hold and the social benefits these connects create. These connections can help to determine one's position in the social hierarchy. Social capital is in other words, is status that is ascribed to an individual actor based on the company he or she keeps. The classical example is the billionaire's son that is deposed to reap a certain amount of benefits solely from his father's status. Cultural capital is the expression of social status by means of owning the 'right possessions' to denote one's status, as well as the cultural credentials one holds. For example, owning an original Picasso painting allots a certain degree more social status to an individual over someone that owns a reproduction poster of a Picasso.

Research into the function of higher education as an institution has been somewhat prominent in the field of sociology in France, Canada, The United Kingdom and other European nations for some decades (See: (Benati and Stefani 2011; Headworth and Freese 2016; Jung and Lee 2016; Keith and Babchuk 1998; Weakliem et al. 2012; West and Rich 2012). This type of research is beginning to migrate into the American literature.

The proposed study draws on the seminal work of Keith and Babchuk (1998) which was an encompassing longitudinal study of academic prestige in sociology departments across higher education. The authors highlight the arbitrariness of the 'ranking system' of academic prestige among departments in that they open the discussion on the topic of merit. It is traditionally held that the status a department holds is reflective of the work it has done. Ergo, prestigious departments hold that title based on the work they are doing. The authors assert that this work being done is measured in the scholarship of individual members of the department. The idea that prestige comes from the work being done in the department is not a wholly alien concept, it can be easy to think that the collective works of the faculty of a department determine its prestige.

This has certainly been true within sociology as a discipline, with the university departments that house prominent scholars gaining high degrees of prestige as a result. As outlined by Bulmer (1984), the university of Chicago became one such school. Bulmer describes the university as the first “community of scholars” in the discipline (p. 3) and moves on to discuss the importance it had, not only in shaping the discipline, but the importance that still resonates today as a result of that historical clout. While it is important to understand the Chicago School and its place within the context of the history of discipline, this reality of it being a prestigious department presents a particular problem with the proposed study. That is, that there is a difference between a prestige department, and a prestigious university. This study attempts a novel approach to studying the latter through the former, which presents an interesting methodological dilemma.

This dilemma being that in the study of academic prestige across sociology, will the variable of this department vs. institution dichotomy be taken into account? The short answer is no, it will not be. This is reflected in two very concrete rationales. First, the study being proposed defines and measures prestige through the published rankings of the U.S. News & World Report (2017), which does not look at individual programs, but rather looks at universities as a whole. The second rationale is that the study does not hope to understand how prestige “works” in sociology, but rather to use the context of sociology as a discipline as a means of collecting a sample of the overall institutions. The idea in this study is to reflect the whole through examining a part, much in the same way social researchers study large societies through targeted samples (Crawley 2015). Targeting this project to the discipline of sociology from a sampling standpoint, serves to provide a wealth of generalizable data, that may reflect larger institutional patterns, and not the individual departments. That is not to disregard Bulmer’s assertions and the further implications therein, but rather that is not a focus of this work.

The proposed project, follows a novel methodological approach within the American Tradition of sociology, in that it is incorporating a statistical methodology known as “Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA)” as its primary means of assessing and representing prestige. MCA is a French methodology that does not have strong roots in the American literature and enjoys a small degree of favor in the Canadian journals. Applying it in an American master’s thesis is something that is unprecedented in that it represents a rare methodological approach. Before a discussion of MCA can begin, a brief methodological overview of the project is needed. This project serves to answer the previously stated research questions through the application of a socio-historical content analysis of conference programs from annual meetings of the American Sociological Association beginning in 1920 and ending in 1960. These programs are coded across a variety of variables from university type, prestige ranking, geographic region, global region, and the thematic area of the presentation, as well as the gender of the presenting scholar. While coding, the researcher reads individual summaries of every presentation at the conference and records the data in the categories above. The analysis performed on this data will be a “snapshot” of the foundational period of the discipline as noted by Bulmer (1984) to be the formative years of the formal social science of sociology in North America up through until 1960.

Following the coding process, Multiple Correspondence Analysis will be employed to see into the interactions between all of the variables being recorded. Khangar and Kamalja (2017) in a cornerstone article on MCA write of it being a highly useful tool for comparing multiple categorical variables and determining the relationships that exist between them. They write that MCA is a powerful data visualization tool that takes the idea of comparing variables to new levels of meaning by allowing the research to examine the interconnectivity of them. Statistically, MCA strives to understand how categorical variables (things such as race, gender, age, geographic

region, etc.) interact with each other. It is different from more traditional statistical methodologies because instead of focusing on predictive analysis, it is inferential and descriptive (Khangar and Kamalja 2017). Traditionally in American sociology something akin to a T-Test, an Analysis of Variance or a Chi-Square test would be performed on the data in order to establish causal and predictive connections between and within them. The limitation in these methods is that they do not adequately account for the variation in the social context. They are highly objective means of analysis and therefore do not have the capacity to examine the interplay between a vast number of social factors. In addition, these methods of analysis can be somewhat limited when applied to massive datasets of multiple variables. For instance, MCA studies can have as many as 16 categorical variables (Rodrigues et al. 2016) to study one phenomena. In the Rodrigues et al piece (2016) the authors examine instances of homophobic bullying in Portuguese schools they argue that MCA is the best fit of analysis because the topic they were studying was a multi-faceted social issue that required multiple variables (16 in their case) be looked at in concert with each other to determine patterns of behavior. Traditional methods would see each of these variables being individually compared to the outcome, trying to find patterns. For instance, the variables of age, gender, year of school, degree of bullying, and frequency of bullying, in traditional analyses would be compared to the variable of being a victim or not individually. Meaning gender would be assessed to determine if it increased one's likelihood of being a victim, as would the other variables on individual bases, which would then place the onus on the researcher to draw inferences.

MCA takes these 16 variables and compares them *holistically* in a visualization, so that the research may see (with a high degree of statistical validity) how *all* of the factors “play” together. This methodology was echoed for similar reasons in several other works (See: Lana et al. 2017;

Massari, Manca, and Girone 2016). MCA enjoys a global acceptance as a viable sociological tool, yet within the context of American sociology, this method is generally underused and may be considered inferior given the shift in American social science to be as objective and as mirroring of the natural sciences as possible. MCA fits adequately into this project because the very nature of it is to examine human qualities within an otherwise inhuman context (studying an institution like a person) and therefore MCA and its abilities to more closely mirror the ways social factors influence reality makes it a better choice for this project (Husson, Lê, and Pagès 2017).

The application of MCA in this study aims to provide new light on the social factors of academic prestige, both in an institutional sense, and a contextual sense. By analyzing prestige in this way, the researcher will gain valuable insights, not only in how social contexts dictate knowledge production, but in how other factors influence prestige. For instance, factors such as geographic region may emerge as strong new variables in the shaping of prestige. It may then become evident that institutions in this regard are even more like human actors in that their capital is determined by their “home” and this then opens up new lines of theoretical discussion. However, in addition to MCA, other descriptive statistical measures will be incorporated, namely descriptive statistics (Means, Medians, Modes, etc.) of the variables as these will also provide valuable insights. Understanding the mean prestige in a certain field and its changes over 90 years can be valuable in and of themselves with regards to a meta-understanding of the history of sociology. It may serve as a starting point for new research in that these exploratory inquiries are not only novel in the literature, but in the culture of American sociology. It positions this research strongly in the place to spark new discussions and conversations around the always important questions on our origins, and our future directions.

In closing, there were a great deal of unknowns in the beginning of this project. Being that it is A. part of a completely new theoretical proposal, beginning as a grounded theory approach (as laid out by Glaser and Strauss 1967) and B. that it is an exploratory analysis. This project begins without a great deal of literature support. It begins a conversation in the literature. Several in actuality, on the topics of prestige in academia, its uses, its influences, and the reasons for the forms it takes. It additionally opens the door for sociologists to begin to look at their own discipline in a meta-historical sense, to try to understand where our origins as a science lie, how they have propelled us to our current state, and where, in the future they lead us. In terms of theory development, it will be useful across a wide variety of applications. First and foremost, the findings from the study and the conceptual framework developed from them serves to illustrate to others in the discipline of sociology that the author's proposed conceptual framework can potentially be applied to future research situations and the results of these situations will possibly show promise in being novel and applicable across the field. It serves to tie the empirical results of the exploratory analyses to a conceptual framework in a way that lends both interpretation to the data and validity to the conceptual framework, chiefly the informed claim that institutions employ behavioral patterns of social interaction that are identical to the ways that human actors interact. Additional insights from the results of the study simultaneously influenced the conceptual framework as it grew and evolved (Charmaz 2006; Glaser and Strauss 1967). The study does not exist to limit the conceptual framework to one narrow scope of research questions, but to act as a supplemental support for its development, while also acting as a major tool in expanding upon its validity, claims and understandings to better add clarity and applicability to its overall presentation. It is the hope that this study leaves the reader with an idea of how the conceptual framework may be applied, and a curiosity to apply it in their own research directions, as it serves to address the overall problem the thesis strives to answer.

## Chapter 2: Methods

In order to determine the impacts of social factors in historical contexts on academic prestige, it was determined that the proceedings from the American Sociological Association Annual Meetings would provide the best historical insight into the nature of sociological knowledge production. The official programs from the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association were selected as the primary source artifacts for this project. Programs from the years 1920-1960 (with some years missing) were selected for use in this process. This was done as it detailed sociology's growth and development through a very important time in its history, where structural functionalism emerged as a prominent theoretical leaning, up until immediately before conflict theory's reemergence with Mills and others in the 1960's (Bulmer 1984). In total 2387 were coded for a sample population of [N=2387]. Academic conferences were selected as the primary subject pool for this study as they represent the process of *contributing to the conversation* where they exist as the primary means for scholars to actively participate in the practice of creating, sharing, and developing knowledge. As stated in Chapter 1, *The Conversation* is generally held in three realms: publications, conferences, and inter-university interactions. As such, in order to begin to understand sociology's conversation, this project aimed to provide insight into one of the three realms of knowledge production, while setting the stage for future research on the topic.

From the available source data, this population represents close to 100% of the total sessions held on sociology for a forty-year period in the early to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century at ASA. It does not represent 100% of the sessions held in that for years in the early history of the ASA, sessions were held by a combination of professors from universities (the vast majority of presentations

~95%) and representatives from other entities. These other entities ranged from government offices, to private polling institutions, to private think tanks, to religious institutions. For the fact that this project seeks to examine sociology as an *academic* discipline, these non-academic presentations were left un-coded in the data collection process and are effectively excluded from this analysis. What ultimately led to this decision being made was that the means of gauging academic prestige (a key variable in data analysis) were virtually nonexistent for institutions that no longer existed, or that these institutions simply had no logical point of congruence with academic presentations<sup>1</sup>. As a result, the study only focuses on presentations and sessions held and given by sociologists from universities. This work does is not 100% representative of the discipline of sociology given that ASA is only one body of knowledge production within the discipline, with nuanced selection criteria, however it provides key insights into the ways that academic prestige influences knowledge production within the discipline of sociology from a historical perspective.

#### Data Collection:

Following the collation of the sample programs (1920-1960, with exceptions), programs were coded following a codebook. Data was stored in a master excel spreadsheet and was organized chronologically by year<sup>2</sup>. Sections were coded across six variables in order to determine the impact of prestige on knowledge production, while controlling for and mediating extraneous variables such as region, etc. These variables were:

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, in 1924 at the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting, a representative from the Joeseeph and Feiss Company, a tailoring and textile company presented a conversation on *Absenteeism in American Industry* alongside sociologists from Wells College, the University of Wisconsin, and Cornell.

<sup>2</sup> *IRB approval for coding, as well as data storage were not sought due to there being no human subjects, and the artifacts being publicly available.*



1. The topic of the session (or in contemporary language, the section it falls into, such as social psychology, family, culture, urban sociology, etc.).
2. The geographic region within North America of the university being represented in the session (The region of the presenting professor's university). (REGION 1)
3. The U.S. State the university is located in (excludes international universities) (REGION 2)
4. The type of presenting university (flagship, Ivy League, public four-year, community college, etc.)
5. The "prestige score" which represents that particular institution's 2017 World News & Report ranking score (the most accurate means of measuring academic prestige)
6. The gender of the presenting scholar.

Topic:

The thematic topic represents one of the most important variables in this study in that it allows the researcher to chart the explosion of diversity in the study and presentation of sociological knowledge. Topical areas describe the *type* of sociology being done and is discerned from two components of a program: the section where the session is being presented, and the title of the session itself. For instance, in the Annual Meeting of 1923, the first section meeting was the Section on Rural Sociology, with session titles such as: "The Difference in Methods Demanded by Different Types in Elementary Courses in Rural Sociology." This session would be coded individually as a session in rural sociology. Due to the nature of the diversification of knowledge production conversations in sociology over the years, the initial amount of codes denoting topical area were relatively scant. In the aforementioned 1923 meeting, the topical areas covered were rural sociology, mathematical sociology, social work, methodology, biological sociology, eugenics,

race and inequality, and what eventually would be called social psychology (the study of social causation). In contrast, the ASA Annual Meeting of 2015 had 52 total thematic sections. As such, this measure provides insight into the identity crisis of sociology described in this thesis, and the chronological history of sociology in terms of its fracturing into dozens of sub fields of study. In the context of this study, the variable of topic provides the first part of the story of sociology, and its anomic fracture into a disjointed discipline. It also allows for empirical representation of the widening gap between micro and macro analysis in sociological knowledge production.

Topic was also selected to determine the amount of academic prestige allotted to specific types of knowledge production. Upon completion of the analysis of the data, correspondences between academic prestige and the types of knowledge that is considered prestigious showed the degree to which sociological ideas gained ‘value’ and allowed the researcher to examine chronological changes in prestige across topical areas over the entire timeline of the sample population. In essence, the correspondence between topic and prestige illustrates the evolution of the sociological discipline from 1920 to 1960. It serves to ‘map’ the knowledge produced in the field, and how much value it was allotted. Effectively, it allows the researcher to observe changes in one subfield over time for instance, this correspondence across the decades would levy empirical credibility to the claim of sociologists that social psychology (namely symbolic interactionism) has experienced a slow start, a rise in popularity, and a fall from grace (*See* Fine 1993), as well as tracking the origins and diversification of these subfields across time. This provides context and nuance to the diversification of sociology. Rather than only examining it across the variable of type which has been done exhaustively (Carroll 2013b; Hiller 2001; Puddephatt and McLaughlin 2015), examining the correspondence allows for a contextualization, and a practical theoretical framework for the active process of how disciplinary

identity crises may develop. By connecting type to prestige, the research strives to answer the question: “*why* did this happen?” Rather than simply providing a historical record of it.

### Region 1

The coding process then typifies individual sections based on the geographic region of the university presenting that knowledge. Geographic regions in North America vary heavily in cultural considerations and thus provide varying degrees of stratification in the types of knowledge produced. For instance, The cultural norms, values, intentions and interests of institutional actors in the Pacific Northwest would be expected to be vastly different than those in the South Eastern United States. As such, region (I.E. Pacific Northwest, Midwest, Western States, North East, South East, Southwest) was coded to provide an understanding of the cultural context that influences the interactions between institutions in the context of the conversation. For institutions located outside of the United States and Canada, separate codes were created to delineate them from North American institutions which were the focus of this study. The study was limited geographically given the fact that the artifacts sampled were programs of the American Sociological Association meetings, other meetings support more international communities of knowledge production within the discipline (such as ISA-The International Sociological Association).

### Region 2

In the hopes of further stratifying the data, and providing another vector of multivariate analysis, an institution’s state was also coded. This was done for the same reason as Region 1, in that it hopes to provide insight into spatial (and cultural) factors that may influence prestige and knowledge production. This region represents a variable of tertiary importance in the overall project in that it only serves to contextualize social interactions on an institutional scale in the

United States. It provides a historical chronological record of the types of research presented by every state (to be reported in a mean average of session topics from each state), as well as allow the researcher to map institutional prestige to the United States, which may provide nuanced understanding to the data implications of Region 1, as well as being a potential subset of insights to influence future research.

### Type of University

Sessions are coded individually based on the type of university presenting the session. Types were adapted from *The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (2017)*. Types of universities range from Ivy League Universities (Harvard, Yale, Brown, Etc.) to Community Colleges (which exploded in popularity following the Second World War and the onset of the Cold War (Chase-Mayoral 2017)). By incorporating the variable of type, multiple correspondence analyses will show how these (arguably arbitrary (Bourdieu 1984b, 1984a)) titles allotted to university influence not only the shape and diversification of the discipline, but also how prestige exists throughout the hierarchical structure of university types. This variable lends answers to the questions of how university ‘credentials’ may shape the types of research and knowledge focused on at these institutions, as well as what implications this may have for the discipline of sociology specifically, and the institution of higher education in general.

This variable, combined with the longitudinal and socio-historical nature of this study allows for universities’ rise in prominence to be effectively and empirically documented over the course of the 40 year study. Again, providing historically rich data that may inform future research directions beyond this study of prestige in sociology. On the broader scale of discussion pertaining to the institution of higher education, this research lends more to the conversation surrounding university credentialing, and the broader social implications that result from this hierarchal classification of universities based on measures that are again, arguable arbitrary. It

lends to a broader discussion of the formation of these hierarchies, as well as providing an active example through historical research of how they have established themselves (in the discipline of sociology) through contributions to the conversations and overall production of knowledge.

Effectively it is possible to “see” universities grow prestige across history, and the implications as to *why* this may occur are explained through the application of institutional dramaturgy as a theoretical framework.

### Prestige

Academic prestige is the cornerstone variable of this study, and as such it serves as the measure of primary importance. Academic prestige is operationally defined in this work as the: the societal value placed upon images, identities and perceptions of institutions of higher education, and the perceptions, identities, and images that are societally presented as a result of these assigned values. Prestige is measured in this study via the U.S. News and World Report (USNWR) College Rankings Report from the year 2017. These rankings are compiled and published each year and are constructed based on statistical formulas that are applied across fifteen markers of academic excellence that are measured within statistical data that is reported from universities to USNWR (US News and World Report 2018). In the year 2017, 92% of the solicited colleges and universities in the United States responded to calls for data. Data reported from universities is compared to third party sources as well as previous data to determine reliability in reporting and to limit institutional bias (US News and World Report 2018).

The variable of prestige is also measured across seven ranking model indicators. These indicators are the means by which USNWR determines the academic quality of a university. The ranking model indicators survey a variety of aspects of an institution rather than just academic excellence which provides a more holistic ranking metric for understanding the entirety of the university experience of a particular institution (US News and World Report 2018). The seven

ranking model indicators, and the weight they carry in determining academic quality (reported in percentages) are:

1. Graduation and retention rates (22.5% of total)
2. Undergraduate academic reputation (22.5% of total) (compiled from academic peer assessment surveys of faculty, presidents and administrators of universities as well as surveys of 2,200 high school counselors representing every U.S. state and D.C.).
3. Faculty resources (20% of total) (such as faculty salaries, class sizes, faculty benefits, student-faculty ration, faculty credentials, and full-time professors vs. part-time. This is based on findings that the contact between faculty and students is critical in a positive academic experience, and these factors have been determined to be influential in facilitating or negating the access of students to faculty).
4. Student selectivity (12.5% of total) (effectively average admission test scores, graduating GPA scores, and acceptance rate).
5. Financial resources (10% of total) (spending per student)
6. Graduation rate performance (7.5% of total) (predictive measure, examining how a class' performance indicators (ACT, SAT scores) at the time of admission compares to that same class at graduation. This measure is included to test predictive reliability of USNWR's gathering of incoming student college readiness data and its impact on their overall success rates leading up to graduation).
7. Alumni giving rate (5% of total) (arguably the most problematic of these ranking model indicators in that this is *heavily* influenced by a host of factors that are not directly tied to university reputation).

All descriptions of ranking model indicators adapted from U.S. News and World Report (2018).

Given the extensive methodological rigor of USNWR's data collection and presentation of academic rankings, it was selected as the sole means of determining and measuring academic rankings. The 2017 ranking scores were selected for use as they are at the time of the research, the most current findings published by USNWR. The limitation of this is that it contextualizes the prestige ranking of *every* coded university in the year 2017. Meaning that universities across the 40-year span of research are being analyzed based on their contemporary prestige ranking. While this presents issues in terms of historical contextualization, a standardized approach to prestige ranking was required to preserve the integrity of this project. To compare universities individually by year would be next to impossible without the establishment of an adaptive metric of prestige that is not reliant on rigid statistical data collection (as in the case of USNWR's report) and therefore represents a new methodological paper independent from this study. Ideally that measure would be constructed across social perceptions as well as some form of empirical standardization method for ensuring that while the metrics may be different per year, the overall ranking is comparable across decades. Future researchers seeking to establish this methodology would need ample access to historical archival records from each year pertaining to institutions in order to construct this measure<sup>3</sup>.

While this represents a methodological limitation, it does not diminish the importance of prestige as it allows for a standardized measure that is applicable *across* history. As such, the change in prestige allotted to certain regions or topics in sociology is measurable. When analyzed through multiple correspondence analysis, it is possible to see how prestige is tied with a certain topical area in sociology. This process is done by examining the aggregate of prestige scores of universities presenting on specific topics. For instance, if in the year 1930, 19 sessions on the topic

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<sup>3</sup> This could be constructed as a by-product of a Foucauldian archaeological study of academic prestige as an evolving episteme, which may be undertaken in The Author's doctoral work.

of urban sociology were presented by Harvard and Yale, that field would receive a higher prestige score for that year than another topical area that was presented on by universities with a lower prestige ranking. It is assumed for this study that the prestige associated with topical areas is directly linked to the prestige of the university presenting that knowledge. This is tied to the institutional dramaturgical strategies that govern social interactions on an institutional scale in that it reflects the ethos of knowledge being produced. Just as an individual's credentials dictate their prestige, an idea's institutional credentials dictate its prestige. As such, this standardized measure of prestige lends heavily to the discussion of the nature of the sociological identity crisis by allowing the researcher to track and chart the ebbs and flows of institutional prestige across sub fields, across history. In essence, the selection of a standardized measure of prestige means that it is possible to watch the prestige associated with certain topical areas in sociology rise and fall as time passes. The theoretical implications of these ebbs and flows are discussed in the discussion section and lend to discussions of the assumption that social desirability and social contexts influence institutional knowledge production.

#### A Note on Prestige and Type of University

The largest methodological flaw of this study was that the measuring of historical academic prestige through the implementation of USN&WR's report on college rankings. In order to determine the validity of this measure, a multiple correspondence analysis was conducted to determine the social spatial proximity of prestige scores from USN&WR (a contemporary metric) and the institution's Carnegie Classification (a marker of university type, but also of prestige with more historical validity). It was found that the USN&WR rankings align closely with the Carnegie Classifications, leading the researcher to determine that USN&WR rankings are accurately applicable in this study. Figure 1.1 represents this MCA.



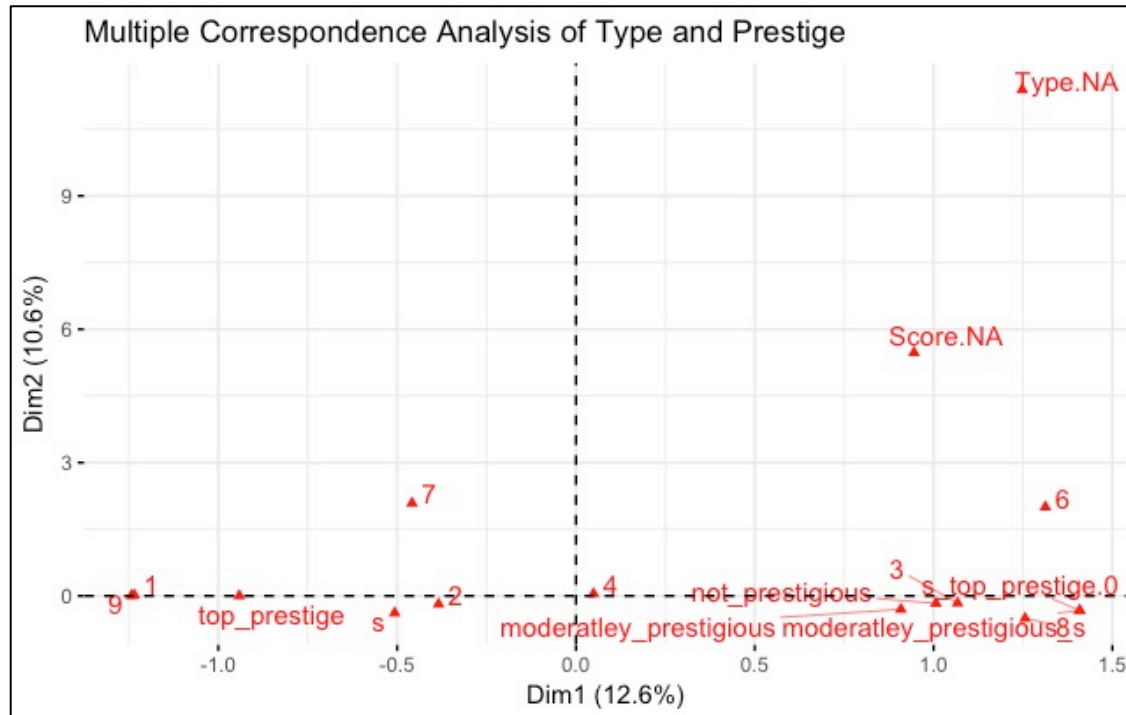


Figure 1.1: MCA visualization of Carnegie Classification (TYPE) and USN&WR ranking (PRESTIGE). Types are represented by numerical codes (1=Ivy League, 2=Flagship Universities, 3= Public 4-year, 4=Private 4 year, 6=Community Colleges, 7=Outside US, 8= Theological/Religious School, 9=School Dedicated to the Arts)

Figure 1.1 allows us to see that the USN&WR ranks correspond closely to similar Carnegie Classifications. Ivy league institutions correspond closely to top prestige scores as do art colleges, and international schools (Such as McGill University in Canada). Flagship Universities (code 2) exist between moderate and top prestige scores, closely resting near the top prestige scores. Private universities (code 4) rest in the middle of top and moderate prestige. Public 4 year universities are corresponded with all three prestige score categories (top, moderate, none), highlighting the real diversity of public four-year institutions in terms of academic prestige. Community colleges correspond in their own space (given they do not have USN&WR scores) religious or theological schools rank in a similar place to public four-years, with top prestige corresponding closely. This analysis lends validity to the decision to implement

USN&WR scores as a measure of prestige, highlighting their close similarities with Carnegie Classifications of institutions covered in the study.

### Gender of Presenter

In addition to the above-mentioned measures, the gender of presenter was recorded for each section. This was done for the historical purpose of tracking the emergence of female scholars in sociology, as the selected time period represents a time where the field was heavily dominated by patriarchal norms. While gender differences in sociology are not the focus of this work, it is important to include this measure in understand the domain of knowledge production in the discipline in a historical context. Additionally, gender is measured against the other variables through multiple correspondence analysis to determine the extent to which factors such as university type, topical area, and prestige may interact with gender in the field. It also serves as a means of beginning a conversation on accessibility and patriarchal domination in the field and how this dynamic also heavily contributed to the diversification of sociology as a discipline as we see the emergence of gendered sub topics. Gender represents a potentially crucial means of stratification in the discipline and may belie monumental implications in terms of how socially defined gender norms (and patriarchal misogyny) permeate all levels of society (from the micro to the institutional) and how these may have potentially profoundly impacted the means of knowledge production in the discipline. Future research into the subjugated knowledge of female voices in our conversation would be advisable and this research exists as a foundational base of sociohistorical data that may lead to discussions in that realm of study.

### Data Analysis

Following coding, data was collated in an excel master datasheet that listed every entry for each session from each coded year. In addition, a separate sheet was created for each year so

that individual years could be analyzed independently from the master dataset. This was done to analyze the years in individual comparison to each other, to track longitudinal changes across each year. This data analysis represents one of the three fields of results from the study. The second field of results is derived from a large-scale multiple correspondence analysis of the entire dataset, to determine, overall correspondence between variables from the total dataset. This second field represents the ‘big picture’ and allows for theoretical inferences to be made about the nature of social interactions on an institutional scale, whereas the first field lends justification and explanation to the claim that sociology has indeed undergone an over-diversification. The third field of results are descriptive and comparative statistics made across the entire dataset. This reports basic information such as the mode average topical area presented, the university with the highest amounts of presentations, and the average amount of presentations in topical areas per year. In addition to this, comparative statistical analyses are reported to examine the interactions between individual variables (independent of the multivariate analysis of MCA) to determine the degree to which variables influence each other on a single dimension. Such as the degree to which region influences prestige, or that topical area compares to the gender of presenter. These statistical analyses are reported in a limited fashion as they do not represent the overall goal of this study which is examining the multivariate correspondence across all six variables.

Multiple correspondence analysis (MCA) was selected as the primary measure of this study due to the fact that social interactions on an institutional scale (like those being studied in this project) are comprised of a host of variables that actively and simultaneously interact with one another. Traditional single-variate analyses do not adequately capture the complex and nuanced nature of a multitude of social factors and the influences they have upon subjects (Khangar and Kamalja 2017; Lana et al. 2017; Massari et al. 2016; Rodrigues et al. 2016). MCA

analyses were completed in the statistical program R, using the package *FactomineR* developed by Francois Husson, Julie Josse, Sebastien Le, and Jeremy Mazet. Analyses were completed in RStudio, a software suite aimed at making R more accessible to users. A key resource in performing these analyses was Husson Et. Al.'s book: *Exploratory Multivariate Analysis in R by Example* (2017). MCA is an underused statistical tool in American qualitative sociology for reasons that are not abundantly clear in the literature. As such, this study presents a venture into MCA in contemporary American sociology and argues that it is that methodological approach that is best suited for understanding the complex intersections of multiple factors in social phenomena.

#### Chapter 4: Results

Following coding of the source documents, three layers of statistical analyses were performed. First, preliminary descriptive measures were taken (Frequency, Mode). Second, comparative statistics were completed upon the data set to determine interactions among variables. Third, exploratory multivariate analyses (multiple correspondence analysis) were performed to add nuance and meaning to the comparative measures.

##### Frequency/Mode:

Of the total population (N=2375), frequency charts were constructed to assess variance in topic over decades in the sample period. Methodology was the most presented on topic over the span of the sample documents, with 181 presentations total, amounting to 7.6% of the total presentations given, following methodology, Social Psychology was second with 151 total presentations, accounting for 6.3% of the total sample. For the variable *Region*, the American Midwest was the most prominent region contributing to sociological knowledge, with 927 total presentations coming from Midwestern universities. This accounted for 38.8% of the total presentations for the sampling period. However, for the variable *State*, New York was the most

featured state at conferences, providing 344 presentations for the sampling period, amounting to 14.4% of the total presentations. For the variable *Type of University*, public four-year universities were represented the most in conferences with 835 presentations accounting for 35% of the total sample. For the variable *Gender*, Men vastly outnumbered women at the conference, with 2274 men presenting over the sampling period, making up 95.3% of the population, compared to 99 women making up 4.1%. Of all institutions that presented, the University of Chicago was most prominently represented with 135 presentations, accounting for 5.7% of the total sample. Each decade will have its own subsection and in these following sections, frequency charts detail the topical focus of presentations over the course of the sample period. It is important to note that these charts *actively* plot and map the “aesthetic dissociation” of sociology, representing the over diversification of the discipline in terms of topics presented on at ASA. While this may not be wholly representative of the entire body of sociological knowledge, ASA existed in the historical sense, as the authoritative voice on sociological knowledge production. In effect, the voices presenting the following topics, were defining and social constructing the knowledge-production reality of sociology in each of the listed decades.

### Comparative Statistics

A Pearson Product Moment Correlation test was conducted across all variables to determine the existence (if any) of strong relational ties between the variables. Table 4.1 reports the results of this test, with significant results highlighted in green. Results marked with an asterisk (\*) were significant at  $P < .05$ . Results marked with a double asterisk (\*\*) were significant at  $P < .01$ .

Table 4.1 Pearson Product Results Table

		<b>Correlations</b>					
		Topic	Region	State	Type	Prestige	Gender
Topic	Pearson Correlation	1	.037	.006	.025	.023	.032
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.074	.784	.220	.265	.116
	N		2374	2374	2374	2325	2372
Region	Pearson Correlation		1	.339**	.273**	-.103**	-.077**
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.000	.000	.000	.000
	N			2375	2375	2326	2373
State	Pearson Correlation			1	.181**	-.302**	-.084**
	Sig. (2-tailed)				.000	.000	.000
	N				2375	2326	2373
Type (Carnegie Class.)	Pearson Correlation				1	-.574**	-.014
	Sig. (2-tailed)					.000	.492
	N					2326	2373
Prestige (USNWR)	Pearson Correlation					1	.042*
	Sig. (2-tailed)						.041
	N						2324
Gender	Pearson Correlation						1
	Sig. (2-tailed)						
	N						

From the correlation test, it is clear that several statistically strong relationships exist in the data. For the variable “region,” a statistically significant ( $P < .01$ ) relationship exists across all other variables. Meaning that in each case the geographic region of the home university seems to have had significant interactions with scores pertaining to prestige (type and prestige) and gender. Given that region and state are inexorably tied, it would be majorly problematic if a significant result did *not* exist between them. As such, that result must be disregarded. As far as type is concerned, the strong correlation reflects social reality in that we see certain types of universities being strongly clustered in different geographic regions. For instance, Ivy League institutions

(excluding University of Chicago and Stanford) are exclusively located on the Eastern Seaboard in The North. This correlation is expected and both the correlations between region and state and type are indicative of the validity of the coding process (it ensures the coding metrics were accurate). The correlation between region and prestige are of particular note. Given the above result reported in Chart 2.1, USN&WR Prestige scores correspond closely to Carnegie Classification types, making it an accurate, historically situated measure of prestige, the correlation between region and prestige shows that institutional prestige is influenced to a significant degree by variance in geographic region. Meaning that, an institution's social context with regards to where it produces knowledge impacts the amount of academic prestige associated with that knowledge. Hypothetically, knowledge that is more frequently produced by universities occupying a specific region will hold more academic prestige over knowledge produced elsewhere. In the social construction of knowledge, this speaks to a contextual social element of knowledge production, a factor that is geographically bound that has a bearing on the amount of value and credibility given to an institution's produced knowledge. Finally, the interaction between region and gender reflects a historical contextual element in ASA knowledge production, in that it is implying that some geographic regions were much less prone to maintaining patriarchal norms than other areas. This allows us to conceptualize the power that social values may have on knowledge production, and the influence that region may have on that knowledge production. For instance, does being a female scholar in New York grant someone more academic prestige due to being allowed to participate in "the conversation" I would argue that this is indicative of that social reality. The interpretations of the correlation of state and the other factors is the same argument as for region, while providing potential future research a chance to make more micro inferences across individually represented states (this was not relevant in this thesis).

Type was found to have a strongly significant relationship with prestige, which lends strong validity to the claims made above in Chart 2.1, that the USN&WR prestige scores, although historically static, are potentially robust representations of prestige in this case. It is potentially arguable then that institutional prestige in this case, is a relatively strong social marker that is resistance to potential social change. In a practical aspect we can see that the power of these institutions to survive negative prestige events is quite strong. It is hard to close an entire university-an entire institution over the actions of one individual, or an isolated series of events. These institutions are strongly equipped to process potential embarrassments and do so through a variety of behavioral actions. The interesting reality of this data in the obverse, is also noteworthy. That there seems to be little chance for upward prestige mobility. It seems there is a (potential) historical precedent to the claim that the institutional structures of academic prestige are somewhat fixed in the context of American higher education. The argument then may rise that this may be reflective of ASA being a potentially elitist organization that only choose to replicate knowledge it deems worthy, and that this elitism guarantees a high degree of prestige in the program and therefore a relative small sample size. In future research that examines the other half of available ASA proceedings (1961-2017/18), it may emerge through the diversification of this conference, more or less validity is added to the USN&WR rankings as a means of historically accurate measures of prestige.

Finally, prestige was closely associated with Gender. Over the entire sample period (which was prior to the feminist revolution) only 99 out of the over 2000 participants were female. Typically, these female presenters were introduced as “Mrs. Professor’s Full Name” for Example: Mrs. Dr. Gordon Allport. Women were also much more likely to present on more “domestic” topics such as sociology of the family, sociology of marriage, or sociology of child-rearing. This is indicative of a potential body of research all its own, the history of sexual



oppression in the *science of morality* and the implications the social fact of sexism had on shaping the social construction of knowledge in sociology.

### Results in Socio-Historical Contexts

What will now be presented is a specialized and targeted reporting of results that is spread across four historical contexts from the sample population. Topical area Frequencies and Multiple Correspondence Analyses will be presented and interpreted for the following historical periods: The Roaring 20's, The Great Depression, Wartime (WWII), and Post War (1950s-1960). Frequencies are reported to map the flow of topical areas over time, and to *actively* map the aesthetic dissociation of sociology across the entire sample period by decade. MCA will be introduced in two phases to lend interpretation and move towards the proposal of a conceptual framework to explain the social factors influencing knowledge production and the prestige associated with that knowledge prestige for each historical period. Phase one will highlight the entire historical period, to display the entire decadal dataset in social space to allow for interpretation as to what causes the distribution of prestige across topic in each historical setting. Phase two highlights a specific sample year from the decade to lend discussion to the social knowledge production, by highlight specific social influences that create anomalous MCA Visualizations. These highlighted MCA visualizations move towards developing a conceptual framework of institutional interaction by showing how institutions (in this case, universities) react to powerful social stimuli to alter their operation (and knowledge production) to suit accordingly. Highlighted years are: 1935 (Height of the Depression/Discussions of The New Deal), 1943 (Height of WWII, Planning of D-Day), and 1955 (The most diverse topical year and the 50<sup>th</sup> ASA meeting).

### The Roaring 20's

The year 1920 is the earliest archived ASA conference proceeding currently available (the first meeting was in 1905). The 1920s saw sociology beginning to fully establish its American roots (Bulmer, 1984) through the Chicago School of Sociology. It can be described as ‘traditional’ in that the discipline focused on rural sociology, methodology, urban sociology and social psychology. These are the more well-established and traditional sub-disciplines that emerged from the data. Each of them (with the later addition of theory) have held relatively stable positions in the sociological discipline since this time period. The social context of the 1920s was particularly conducive to classical sociology in that income inequality was high and elite universities and elites representing these universities were flush with enough disposable income to attend and host such conferences. As such, a conference was held each year throughout the 1920s. Chart 4.1 on the following page depicts the spread of topical discussions for the entire decade. It can be observed that there was a relatively small amount of total topical areas, and that the rectangles representing the amount of presentations given in each topical area enjoy a wide degree of similarities. On the left-hand side of the chart, those topics that are most represented appear, from there as the chart moves right, the boxes get smaller with less representation in conference proceedings. The bottom right corner represents the *least* discussed topics for the decade.

The 1920’s chart shows the top three major topics are: rural, urban, and social psych. which correspond with the work done by the Chicago School at the time in the “urban laboratory” of Chicago (Bulmer, 1984). From there the majority of other topics enjoy a fair amount of representation. Given that this time period was socially conducive to studying urban and rural social life, these topics were “in vogue” and were therefore the most prestigious as well. This time period was a capturing of what “pure sociology” effectively looks like. Examining the different spheres of society (urban and rural) and the individual processes of actors within (social

psych). This represents the 'baseline' of this study, the roots of sociology in terms of topics, and serves as the starting point for the aesthetic dissociation and ultimate identity crisis of sociology. From this baseline, the explosion of subfields will begin.

Chart 4.1 Illustrates the frequency distributions of topical areas presented on during the Roaring 20s. This is the baseline of traditional sociology, by which the aesthetic dissociation will be measured.

## Multiple Correspondence Analysis of The Roaring 20s

An MCA visualization of the entire socio-historical period of the Roaring 20s represents another baseline result for observing the impacts of social and contextual factors on knowledge production and allocation of prestige. The following visualization (Chart 4.2) represents the correspondence between university type and topical areas of presentation for the entire decade.

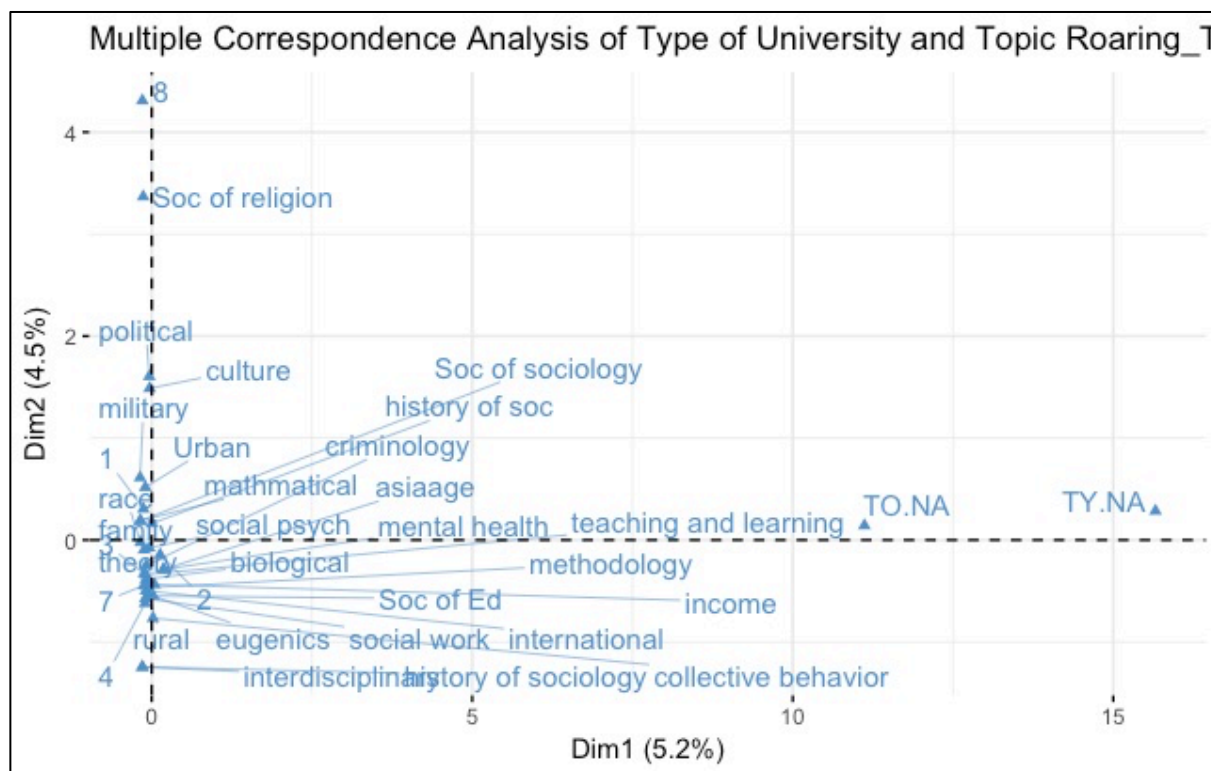


Chart 4.2: MCA Visualization of Topic and Type for the years 1920-1929. Types are represented by numerical codes (1=Ivy League, 2=Flagship Universities, 3= Public 4-year, 4=Private 4 year, 6=Community Colleges, 7=Outside US, 8= Theological/Religious School, 9=School Dedicated to the Arts).

This MCA represents the baseline of traditional sociology. Where all types of universities (except Code 8, religious institutions such as the Chicago Theological Seminary) are producing sociological knowledge in close social proximity. A close clustering of all university types around Ivy Leagues, and Flagship universities, in this time period illustrates that sociology was more unified in its knowledge production, aligning its efforts more or less equally, with some types taking more topics over others. In essence, this is a snapshot of “the conversation” being unified in its direction. It is what a scientific discourse *should* look like. Theoretically, the institutions in this MCA that are less than or moderately prestigious (represented by codes 3, 6, 7, 8, and 9) were aligning themselves closely to the work being produced by top prestige schools (code 1 and 2). This can be conceptualized with Bourdieu’s acquisition of culture capital, which holds that social being strive for the accumulation of social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 2000). What is shown in the above MCA is public four-year institutions aligning themselves closely with ivy leagues and flagships in order to accumulate surplus cultural capital in the form of academic prestige by aligning their knowledge production with that of the prestigious schools.

This begins a discussion on the implications of the social construction of sociological knowledge being influenced and shaped by the pursuit of capital to ascribe status to individual institutions through academic prestige. It hints at the phenomena of institutions, through the types of knowledge they produce through scholarship both shaping and being shaped by the academic prestige landscape. This appears very similar to a situation where individual actors align themselves with ideas that are socially considered to be ‘correct’ so that they may internalize some of the capital from being in a correct in-group. What is seen in the MCA is institutions beginning the century doing similar things in order to accrue status through capital accumulation. Over the decades, this behavior shifts, from conformity being the norm, to novelty being the norm, and again returning to conformity. This lends evidence to two important

assertions of this thesis and the conceptual framework developed from the data. (1.) That an aesthetic dissociation did indeed occur in the history of sociology, immediately forcing prestigious schools and less than prestigious schools to seek prestige through new specializations, and (2.) that institutions change and modify their behaviors (in the example of universities, their knowledge production) to accrue social and cultural capital to advance status (institutional academic prestige in this study).

#### The Great Depression: 1935-1939

The great depression is a socio-historical context wherein the salient social realities surrounding institutional interaction and knowledge production is highly visible. The crushing reality of the great depression forced sociology to *react to a social situation*. It forced the discipline to define the situation, establish a response strategy, and perform that behavior (as Goffman, 1956 would describe as part of his dramaturgical perspective). This is the year socio-historical context that gives rise to the conceptual framework proposed in Chapter 5, which holds that these institutions employ a complex combination of symbolic interactionist strategies, in a social realm as described by C. Wright Mills, with the overall intention of pursuit and accumulation of capital as described by Pierre Bourdieu. This period reflects a social interaction, but on an institutional level, where sociology as an institution responded actively and reflexively to social contexts to produce knowledge that would be *most* desirable given that socio-historical context. It exists as the first practical example of social realities and factors *directly* impacting knowledge production on an institutional scale. Within the context of sociology, this is a first time in the history of the discipline (based on available data) that it *collectively* responded to social stimuli. In essence, what we see is a discipline acting in unison, to focus its knowledge production on an emergent social context (the financial crisis.)

Additionally, the 1930s sees what can be interpreted as the beginning of the aesthetic dissociation of the discipline. It can be seen that in the transition from the roaring 20's to the great depression that new directions of sociological knowledge production emerged. It is important to note that these topics emerged drastically *after* 1935, where the primary focus of the ASA conference will be discussed below as a highlight year of the great depression.



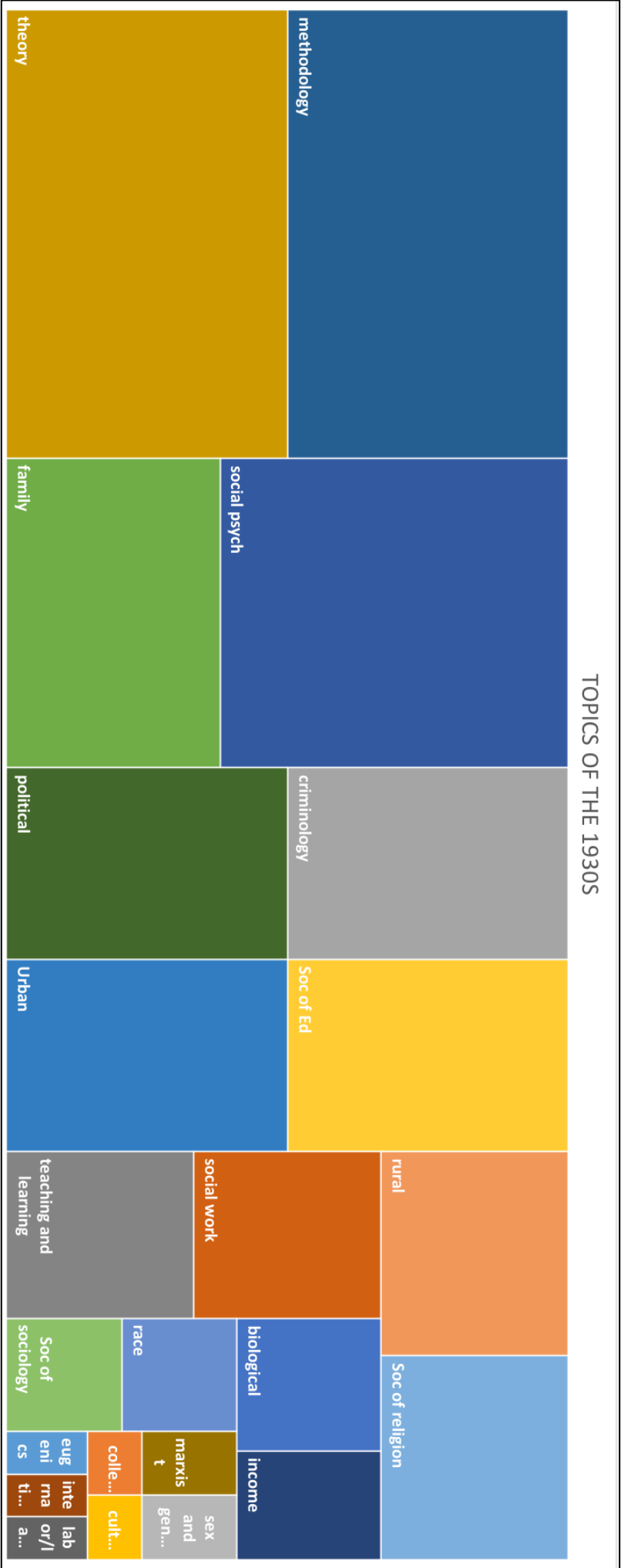


Chart 4.3 Illustrates the frequency distributions of topical areas presented on during the Great Depression Era. This is the insipient stage of the Aesthetic Dissociation of sociology which has ultimately led to its contemporary identity crisis. In the later years of the decade, an explosion of topics emerged although small in frequency, these represent roots of many current fields and subfields in sociology.

## Multiple Correspondence Analyses from the Great Depression Socio-Historical Context

Two MCA visualizations were created to better understand the role of prestige in shaping knowledge production in the discipline of sociology in the 1930s. The first (Chart 4.4) illustrates

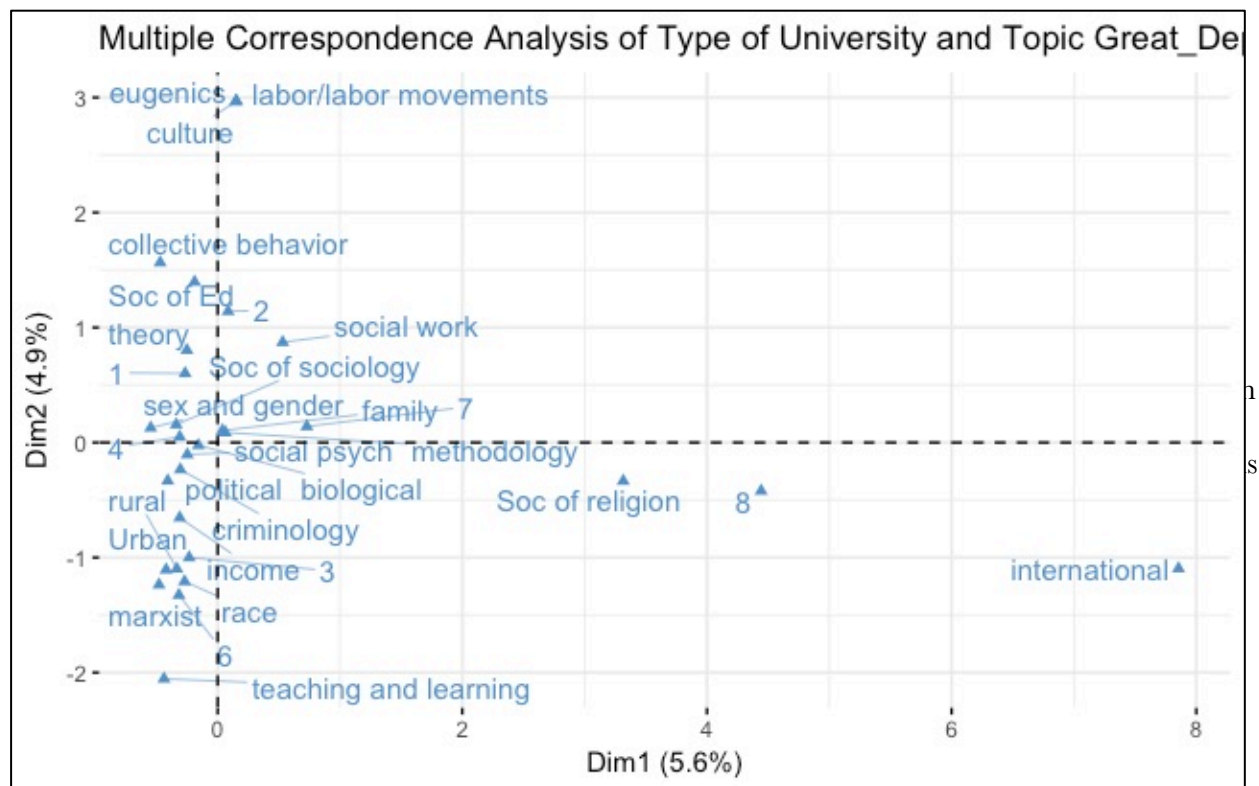


Chart 4.4: MCA Visualization of Topic and Type for the years 1935-1939. Types are represented by numerical codes (1=Ivy League, 2=Flagship Universities, 3= Public 4-year, 4=Private 4 year, 6=Community Colleges, 7=Outside US, 8= Theological/Religious School, 9=School Dedicated to the Arts).

What caused this weakening may be other streams of social influence on knowledge production outweighing the accumulation of prestige. It is entirely possible that the great social need for a diverse sociological response to the Great Depression muffled the academic hunt for prestige.

This leads us to the conclusion that there are at least two social factors influencing the knowledge production of these institutions: *the pursuit of prestige* (as seen in the 1920s) and *response to social contexts* (as displayed in the 1930's).

### Highlight Year of the Great Depression: 1935

The year 1935 was selected for closer examination via MCA to further explore the topic of social context influencing the topical areas of knowledge production. At the height of the great depression, the social context was such that research focusing on the social causes and potential solutions to the financial crisis gripping the nation was highlighted in that year's ASA Annual Meeting. The MCA visualization for 1935 (Chart 4.5) illustrates a striking contrast to previous MCA visualizations in that the diversity of topical range and presenting university types is drastically smaller. The 1935 meeting focused on three sociological topics: Sociology of Income, Sociological Methods, and Social Theory. The subjects of the papers presented at this meeting had almost all to do (with the expectation of the relatively rare theory sessions) with analyzing aspects of the causes of the great depression with particular focus on either developing methodological tools to study it, or the sociological study of income inequality in the financial crisis. Additionally, strong emphasis was placed on developing metrics and methodologies to both pre and posttest President Roosevelt's New Deal policies. In essence, the meeting was predominantly focused on finding causes and testing potential solutions for the financial crisis. Where this year is of interest to this thesis is that it clear highlights the contrast to previously observed MCA phenomena. Meaning that, this year shows institutions *not* pursuing prestige by association at all. They are separated by much greater distances in this year, compared to the decade overall or the 1920's baseline.

It is possible that institutions in Chart 4.5 were acting *solely* on the basis of the social contexts dictating what knowledge needed to be produced. Meaning that the drive to create and explore certain areas of study (I.E. income inequality) was not based on the standards set by institutions of high prestige, by the response of other types of universities to the social need for knowledge production in that field.

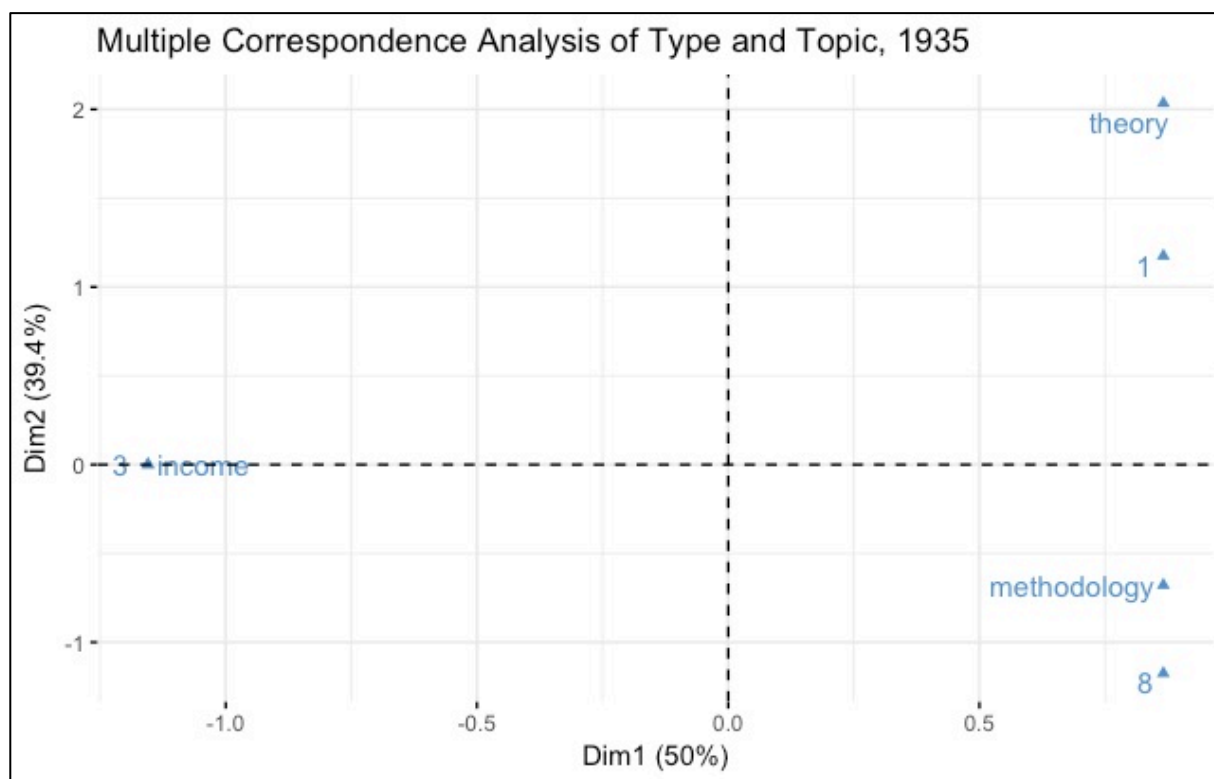


Chart 4.5: MCA Visualization of Topic and Type for the year 1935. Types are represented by numerical codes (1=Ivy League, 2=Flagship Universities, 3= Public 4-year, 4=Private 4 year, 6=Community Colleges, 7=Outside US, 8= Theological/Religious School, 9=School Dedicated to the Arts).

In this year it is clearly visible based on the vast stratification between topic and type that these universities are not being driven to simply conform to what those prestige schools were studying at the time, but we see both public four-year universities and religious institutions taking new steps into the directions that were socially critical at the time, based on the social contexts of the era. In this analysis, Dimension 1 contributed 50% to the separation of prestige and knowledge produced, which is notably strong. It implies that the social factor that separated public four-years from both religious and ivy league schools (by pushing it into the far-left quadrant) was predominant in this particular year. It suggests a very strong social force acted to draw these schools to be pursuing such different topics, and thus allocating different prestige accumulations to each idea. It is theorized that this dimension represents the social factor of necessity for the knowledge being produced. Meaning that, within this visualization, the social context of the era

may have had very strong impacts on the directions that sociological thought went, based on necessity, not prestige. The rationale for prestige *not* being that dividing factor is that the second dimension in Chart 4.5 separates the types of schools with a hierarchal structure. Ivy leagues exist at the top, public four-year schools in the middle, and religious schools (typically) at the bottom, or near bottom. This closely represents reality and strengthens the notion that social need, not prestige caused the stratification of knowledge here. It also provides strength to the theory that the clustering seen in the MCA visualizations of the 1920's and 1930's that shows all topics and schools clustered in a hierarchal line, but with most schools attempting to be as close in proximity (by presenting similar topics) to those universities with the most inherent prestige. It is also important to note that the social influence of need on knowledge production seems to be a targeted and *flashpoint* like phenomenon, occurring in specific times and places, and it seems they do not have as much impact on the field of knowledge production as the pursuit of prestige as the 1930's were not fully stratified by need, but were slightly less clustered around prestige. It is possible that the insipient cause of the aesthetic dissociation was a combination of need vs. prestige. Perhaps, subfields explode during a flashpoint of social need, and then gain footing and diversify as they struggle to acquire prestige. This process hints at what may have caused the identity crisis of sociology being that sub fields arise in the moment where they are needed, and then must float to the top or fade away. The pursuit of and acquisition of prestige appears to be what keeps a topical area of knowledge production talked about in the conversation of academic knowledge production. Therefore, understanding prestige as the factor that most strongly controls the layout of knowledge production in social reality (as shown in the above MCA visualizations) lends us to the claim expanded upon in the conceptual framework proposed by this thesis that the pursuit of markers of status (cultural, social and symbolic capital) may be one

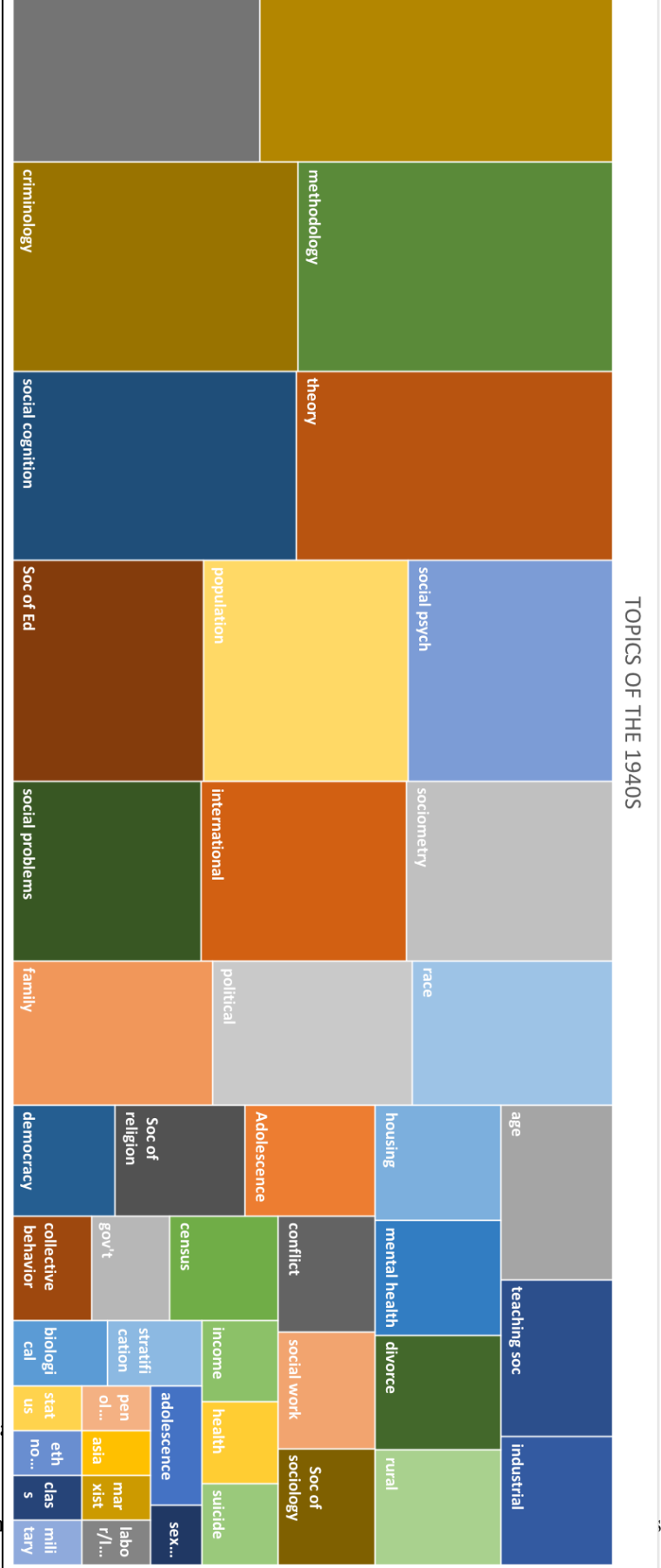
of the driving forces behind institutional interaction, with academic prestige existing as an example of a cultural capital that institutions of higher education actively pursue.

### Wartime: ASA Conferences During World War II

The end of the Great Depression saw the United States stepping out of its financial crisis into what seemed to be a decade of reconstruction, when in 1941, the nation declared war on the Empire of Japan, and on the Third Reich of Nazi Germany in 1944. The wartime period of American sociology saw interesting developments in the field. It is seen through this thesis as a transitional period between the analysis and deep focus on social issues relating to the great depression, to the outright aesthetic dissociation of the 1950s. Sociology experienced a strong diversification of topical areas in this period. Again, it seemed to be reacting to the social need, now instead of income and social programs, the focus was on the war. There were no meetings of the ASA during several years of the wartime period due to the war effort. 1942 was planned for instance, but not held. The meeting in 1944 was cancelled as the United States rallied behind its armed forces as the campaigns in Europe began. The meeting in 1945 was cancelled as well. Sociology of war emerged as a brand new topical area in 1943. It was different than military sociology in that it specifically studied direct impacts and implications of the Second World War on contemporary American society. It is again reflective of major social events directly influencing knowledge production in sociology. In viewing the topical frequency distribution of the Wartime Socio-Historical Context (Chart 4.6), it can be seen that sociology of the war (the war being WWII) was prominently featured in sociology during the 1940s, but also that the seeds of the aesthetic dissociation that were sown in the 1930s have begun to blossom, further-diversifying the discipline. It is important to note that this diversification began in 1946, following the end of the war and continued on into the 1950's. the decade of the 1940s represents one

shaped by social contextual factors and prestige pursuit for academic prestige via an aesthetic dissociation (in the latter half-decade).

Chart 4.6 Represents the frequency distributions of topics that were most notable in comparison to the previous decade that center stage, being the most presented on topic for of the war from its effects on returning G.I.s to post-war important to note the continual diversification of topics



Multiple Correspondence Analysis

Chart 4.7 illustrates the historical clustering of institutions closely together. This again confirms the overall drive of sociology being



the pursuit of proximal academic prestige by way of universities of lesser prestige presenting alongside universities of higher prestige in hopes of attaining similar academic capital. The anomalous finding here shows a melding of the previously discussed realities of social factors influencing knowledge production. This decade sees the social reality of World War II being *both* newly emergent based on social need, but also being the center of the accumulation of academic prestige being that it is strongly corresponded with ivy league schools, international schools, private colleges and universities and flagship universities (indicated in Chart 4.7)



*Chart 4.7: MCA Visualization of Topic and Type for the Wartime Decade (1940-1949). Types are represented by numerical codes (1=Ivy League, 2=Flagship Universities, 3= Public 4-year, 4=Private 4 year, 6=Community Colleges, 7=Outside US, 8= Theological/Religious School, 9=School Dedicated to the Arts). Sociology of War indicated with red circle.*

the nature of the institution. For instance, it is apparent that sociology of war outshone many other topics as that of prime importance to the top prestige level universities. It is possible this occurred in this case rather than in the great depression because the second world war was an

event of such social significance that it impacts the affluent and elite universities more than the financial crisis of the decade prior. Perhaps these top universities did not actively pursue studying the depression to the degree they did the war based on interest convergence in their own spheres of operation. It is entirely possible that these institutions saw the war as a *larger* impact on American society than the depression. It is also possible that this finding illustrates and is reflective of the American psyche at the time, being that the war was the singular most important topic to discuss and understand at home and abroad.

Wartime Highlight Year: 1943, the Emergence of Sociology of War

The following is an in-depth MCA visualization of the year 1943, examining the first ASA meeting where sessions and sections were first officially dedicated to the study of the impacts of World War II on American society. This year displays the phenomenon described above of a new sub field emerging as a product of need, with prestige that is less than top-tier, and then when compared to the decade MCA, it can be seen how institutions sought prestige following the

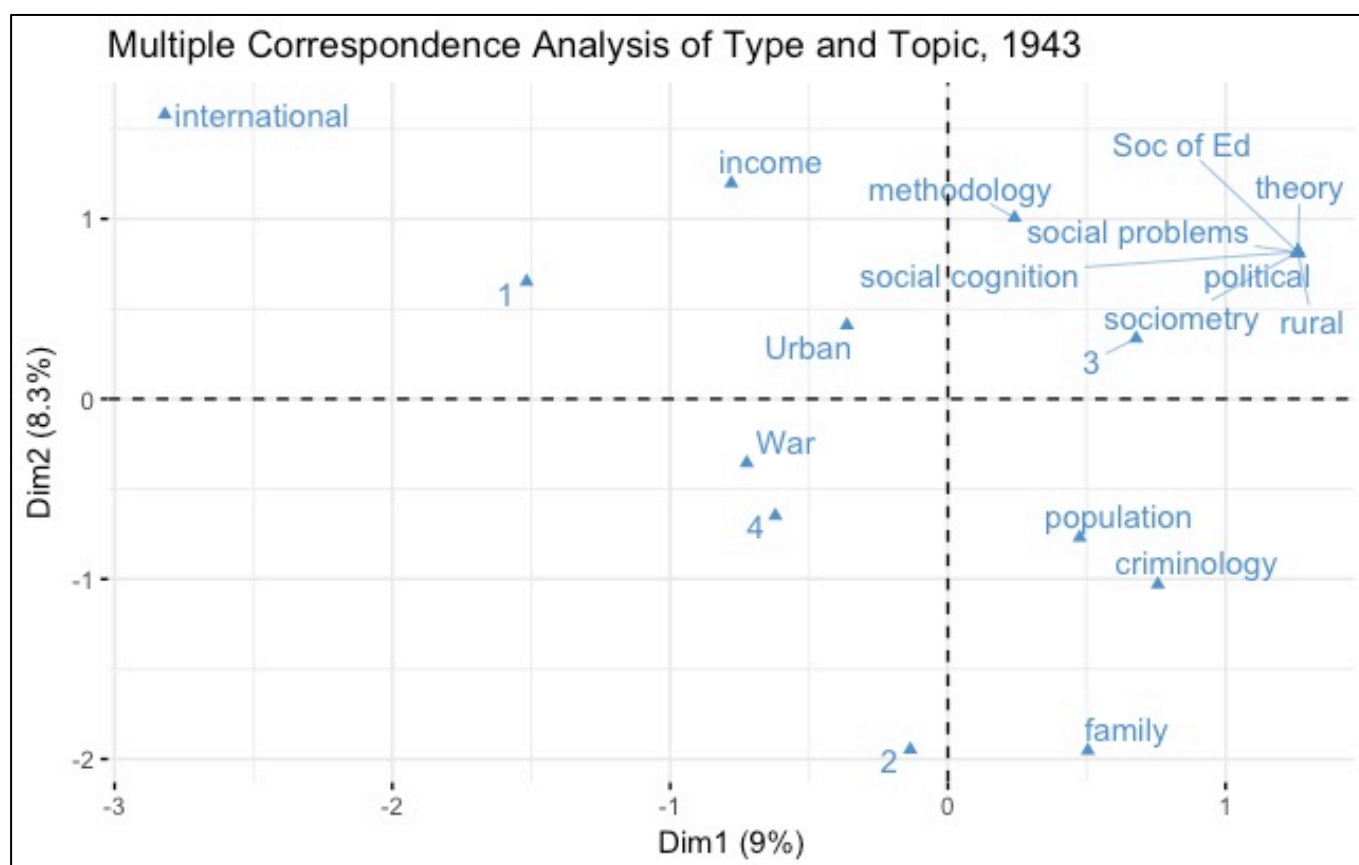
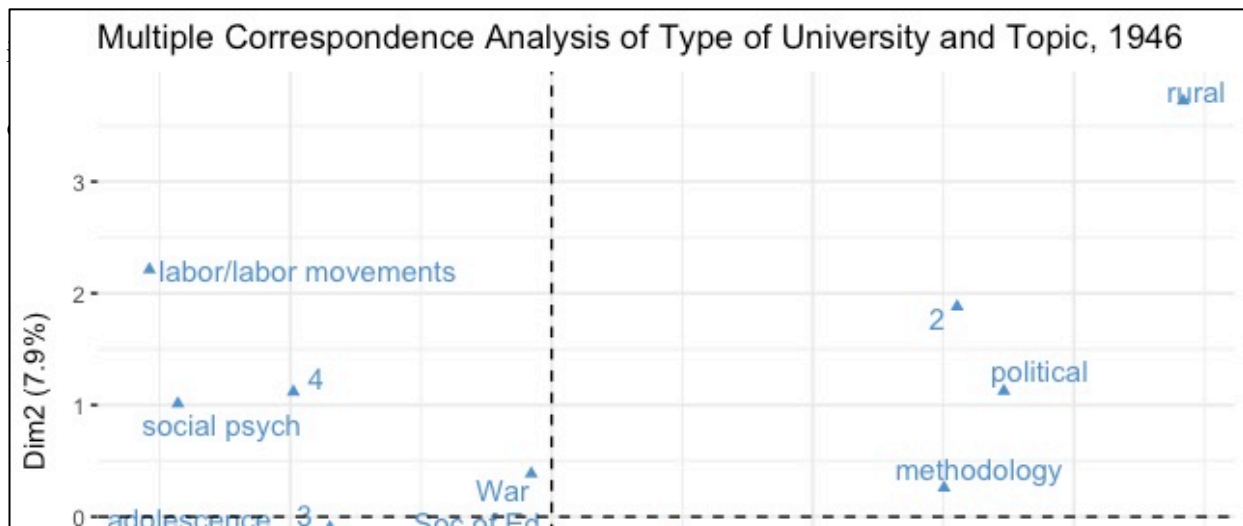


Chart 4.8: MCA Visualization of Topic and Type for the year 1943 Types are represented by numerical codes (1=Ivy League, 2=Flagship Universities, 3= Public 4-year, 4=Private 4 year, 6=Community Colleges, 7=Outside US, 8= Theological/Religious School, 9=School Dedicated to the Arts).

In the subsequent MCA visualization, Chart 4.7, it can be seen that after only three years (with 1944 and 1945 excluded) the social factors have shifted the knowledge production environment



*Chart 4.9: MCA Visualization of Topic and Type for the year 1946 Types are represented by numerical codes (1=Ivy League, 2=Flagship Universities, 3= Public 4-year, 4=Private 4 year, 6=Community Colleges, 7=Outside US, 8= Theological/Religious School, 9=School Dedicated to the Arts).*

In this MCA visualization, the topics are returning to the hierarchical organizational structure observed across the decade MCA visualizations, and based upon the interpretation of those, it can be assumed here that the institutional goal in presentation of topics is slowly returning to the pursuit of accumulated academic prestige through presenting on similar topics to those universities that are the most prestigious. War sociology begins to take a central role, being studied by a broader range of universities, and will, in subsequent years become much more centrally located as the discipline unifies again through the seeking of more prestige by less than prestigious institutions.

#### The Postwar Socio-Historical Context: 1950-1960

The 1950s saw the greatest diversification of the discipline as the United States entered into its postwar period of industrial prosperity. With the change in social focus from a unified concern (The Great Depression or The Second World War) shifted to society being more individually minded, with the vast majority of the population returning to work to build up their individual lives. Without a clearly defined sociological need, the discipline fully fell into the

aesthetic dissociation as the topics became more diversified than ever before. New topics are thought to have begun to emerge based on the search for novelty and prestige from novelty, rather than based on a salient social need. What emerged was the fragmented and disjointed discipline that is contemporary sociology. Chart 4.8 depicts the frequency trends for the postwar period. It is clear from this chart that the diversification of the discipline seems to have undergone a runaway process wherein many new fields emerged in relatively low amounts of presentations. What this means is that the meetings beginning at the end of the Wartime period became less structured, where themes were loose if at all present, and therefore the floor opened up to sociologists presenting on what they were interested in and what would ultimately be novel enough to be considered in the conference.

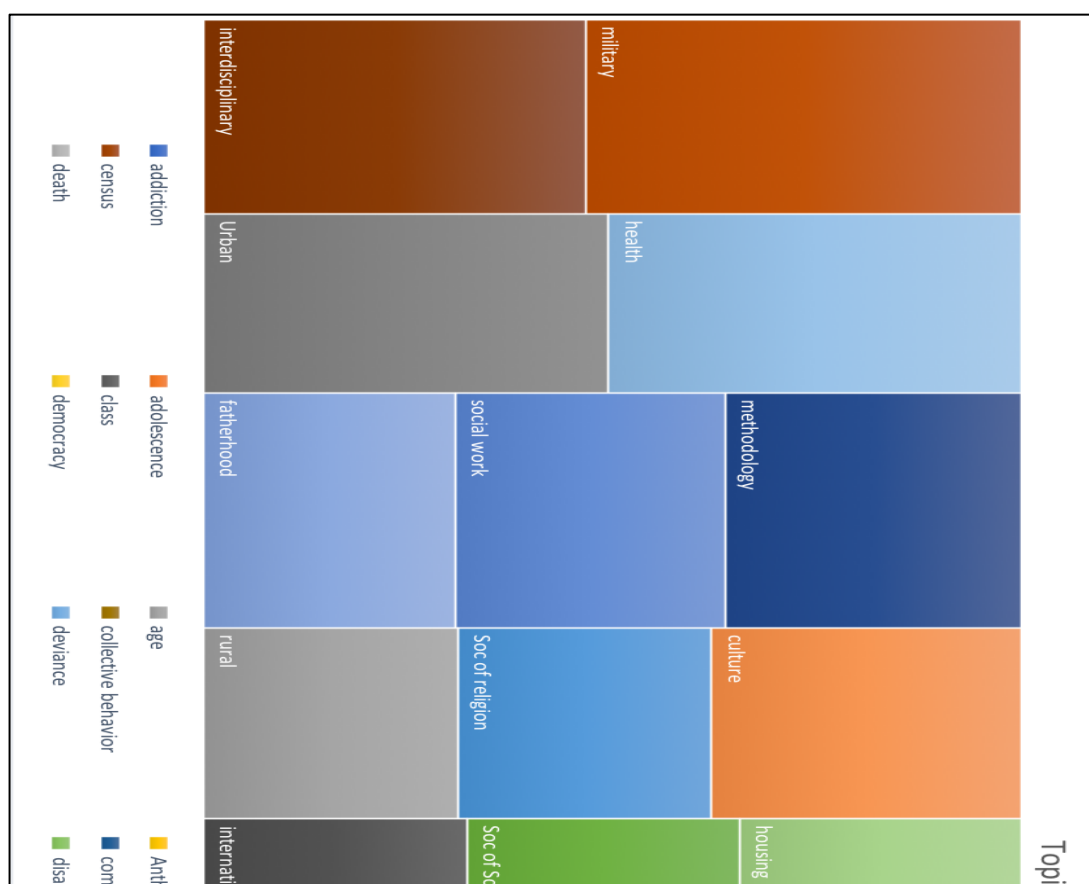


Chart 4.10 Represents the frequency distributions of topics in sociology during the postwar period. Notable that this decade represents the most diverse of frequently discussed topics more diverse (4 as opposed to 3) than the previous decade. This decade also saw the emergence of several sub-disciplines solely for criminology.

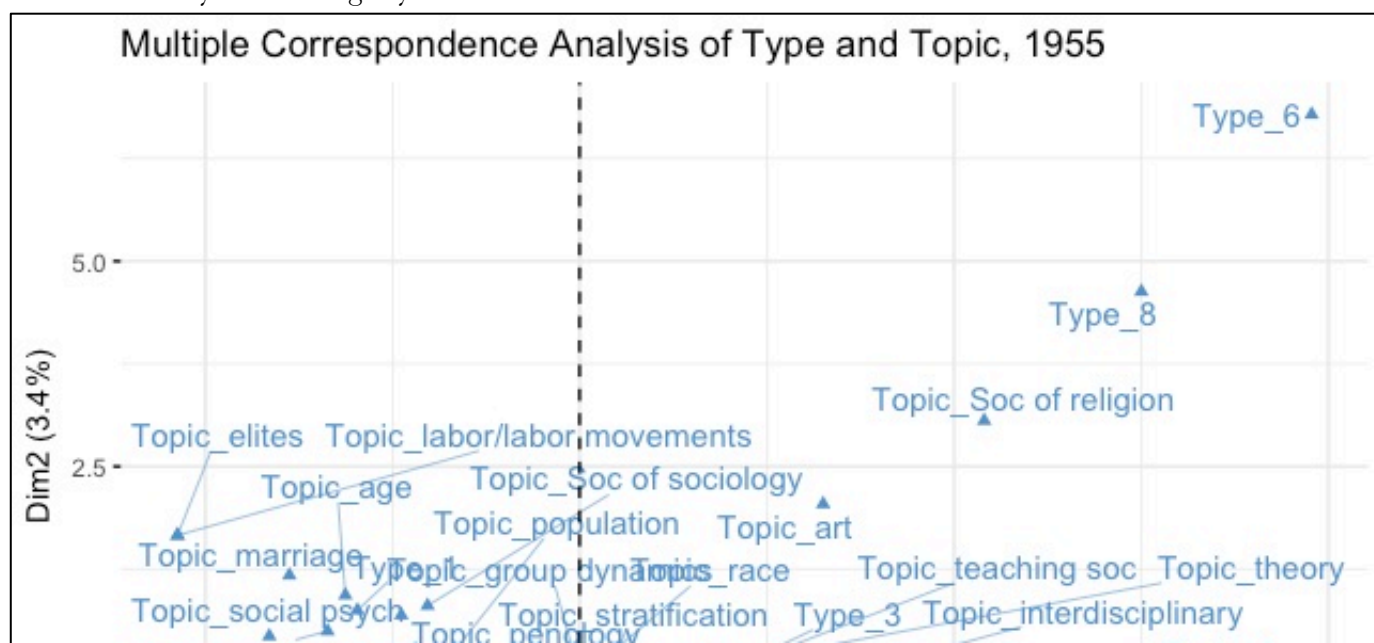
It is important to note that in the case of the Postwar socio-historical context, new topics were not always randomly introduced. Disciplinary topical areas began to fragment and divide into new subfields that were suddenly separate and independent on the original field.

Criminology is an excellent case study in this process as it is shown through the decades to split into the sub-fields of penology, juvenile delinquency, policing, etc. The question to be raised is

that does this occur out of necessity, meaning does this split represent a logical distinction in the overall knowledge production? Does policing differ from criminology? This is the aesthetic dissociation actively occurring in the data, new fields/specializations being created as the discipline flourishes following the Wartime period based solely on the fact that they *can* be created.

### Multiple Correspondence Analysis Visualization of Highlight Year 1955

1955 was selected as the highlight year for this socio-historical context for two reasons. First, it represents a healthy mid-point where diversity of topics was at a peak with several new fields emerging. Second, it represents the fiftieth anniversary of the ASA (more of an arbitrary reason, but still of historical interest. It should be noted that as sample sizes become larger, MCA becomes hard to easily read as the data labels tend to overlap and may cause issues affecting the overall readability. This is a limitation of the software that, at the time of writing is unsolved (as a result the entire decade's MCA is unreadable). The year 1955 also shows an interesting growth in the highlight years in that it more closely resembles the MCA visualizations presented above of entire decades, with a large amount of topics closely clustered together. This follows the hypothesized idea that as the fifties progressed, a scramble to associate again with prestige (based on little to no social necessity for knowledge production) would ultimately draw individual years into tightly clustered visualizations.



*Chart 4.11: MCA Visualization of Topic and Type for the year 1955 Types are represented by numerical codes (1=Ivy League, 2=Flagship Universities, 3= Public 4-year, 4=Private 4 year, 6=Community Colleges, 7=Outside US, 8= Theological/Religious School, 9=School Dedicated to the Arts).*

In this highlight year, almost all topics and types are intertwined with each other with ivy league schools being centrally located (the most prestigious schools located at the center of the pursuit of prestige). The proposed reason for a more horizontal, rather than vertical distribution is that it does not take into account how prestige ebbed and flowed over time as the decade MCA visualizations do. Meaning that as prestige changed over the decades, we see it emerging as a strongly impactful social factor of knowledge production, creating strict hierarchical structures when looked at on the whole. It is entirely possible that as the decades progress beyond the scope of this study, highlight years may begin to more closely reflect the decade in general, which would mean that ultimately, prestige was the primary driving factor of sociological knowledge production on a year-by-year basis. That question is up for interpretation pending future research.

## Chapter 5: Discussion & Conceptualizing Institutional Dramaturgy

### *Discussion of Results*

This sociohistorical analysis provides deep and rich insights into a case study of institutional dramaturgy. Much as a psychiatric student may study the case of an individual with



a particularly rare condition, this work, and the historical knowledge provided by it, represent that case study of the schizophrenic institution, the case study into the inner psychosocial workings of an entire knowledge producing institution in the context of the first half of the American century. These results, while more nuanced than the above presented results in terms of historical significance, represent a detailed, methodical, diagnostic thought-history of the discipline and institution of academic, American sociology. By virtue of its connection to the institution of higher education, and its perfectly situated position as a *social* discipline, sociology represents the prime case study for providing historical evidence for the voracity of institutional dramaturgy as a fledgling theory in sociology. Through examining the sociological voices of institutions of higher education over 40 years, I am now poised to present my framework of institutional dramaturgy, predictive comments and discussion of implications of these historical realities in the context of the institution of higher education later in this document.

The above-mentioned results from the Pearson correlations represent highly significant results in terms of the discussion of institutional dramaturgy. In terms of discussing the correlated relationship between geographic region, the type of university, and academic prestige, we may see that there appears to be a strong influence of the social context a knowledge producing institution occupies, and the value of knowledge they produce. Meaning that, understanding region, and the results from this empirical understanding of region, lend to the assertion of the second pillar of institutional dramaturgy, that historical, and social contexts figure into the institutional performance strongly. It speaks to how one institution's regional location and regional context shapes its image in the performative world in that, it appears to have some kind of influence on *why* these institutions may be more or less prestigious. Given this is simply a correlation, causation is not implied, nor is it intended to be, but rather, these results provide some degree of practicality to the claims of institutional dramaturgy in that they provide an

opening in the understanding of institutional interaction that I would argue strongly is easily filled in the understanding of institutions as individual, autonomous and social actors. The results of the impact of state of origin go hand in hand with this analysis and reflect the reality of human actors in that the sociocultural social environment of one's upbringing play major roles in the formation, presentation, preservation and conception of self (Boulton 2001; Colomy and Brown 1996; Goffman 1956). Focusing slightly in on the biography aspect of the pillar of the interaction, as Mills wrote of the need for both historical context and personal context, the results of the correlations examining the impacts of type of university represent this process in action. In terms of institutional dramaturgy, the type of a university, be that an ivy league, or a community college represents, in essence the personality, the identity of that individual university. It is that collection of values, history, experiences and interactions that form a permeant and salient collection of personal ideals that make up an identity. Harvard, for instance enjoys its position as a storied and prestigious university in the united states and that in the context of Harvard's dramaturgical self, represents its identity. The same way that a small community college's collection of the same factors shapes their identity. The biography of an institution (in the case of universities) is this typology, which, when we consider that it also strongly impacts prestige, we arrive at the conclusion that a strong body of evidence exists to support the notion that this represents their identity. If this typology, this biography is present, and it is indeed a marker of identity, then it would arguably influence the degree to which the holder of that identity functions in social interactions, and the amounts of capital (social, cultural, symbolic and economic) that they hold. The result indicating that academic prestige (the measure of Bourdieu's capital within the institutional context of academia), is strongly influenced via a relationship with typology lends further evidential support to the claim of institutional dramaturgy that history,

biography and Bourdieu's habitus, field and capital influence the institutional dramaturgical performance along the guiding premise of Goffman's original theory.

Nuance is added to these assertions when the MCA results are taken into consideration. They show categorically the strength that prestige has in the realm of academic sociology, acting as a divining rod so to speak among the types of knowledge produced in the field. The active clustering of subfields around certain markers of prestige represents the intentionality, the drive-in institutions to gain prestige. They visually describe how the prestige garnered by one university in presenting on a topic gravitates almost all others to present. It highlights the notion that this presentation of sociological thought is not in fact scientific, but rather that it is human, that it follows strict social rules, and as a result the assumption can be made that institutions, particularly those academic institutions outlined in the MCA behave *humanly*.

## Part 2:

### *Discussion of the Historical Aspects of The Study*

While the numerical data from this study is intriguing, the historical implications are far more sociologically valuable in terms of further constructing the theory of institutional dramaturgy. Not only did the study show evidence for the aesthetic dissociation of sociology (the over specialization, and explosion of new sociological topics), but it showed too, ardent contextual support in the context of a case study for each of the three pillars of institutional dramaturgy. In terms of the aesthetic dissociation, the study began with a relatively few amounts of classifying codes for the topical areas presented on in sociology. For two decades (1920-1940), this trend held. Sociologists studied a very limited number of social concepts. The discipline met annually to discuss advances in understanding in the methodology of their discipline, the application of their discipline to rural and urban areas, the micro-social discussion of human attitudes and behaviors, and other pertinent issues like income. By the 1940's this aesthetic

dissociation was in full swing. Brand new committees were springing up left and right, in 1940 alone three new sociological branches were born (social causation, social ecology, and complex organization), as the united states plunged into the second world war, there too was an appropriation and dissociation of sociology's voice to serve those means as well. Sociologists began working for defense agencies, employing sociological methodologies to perform studies on behalf of agencies of the us government to aid in the war effort. During this time, sociology lost its scientific voice. In reference to the work of Carroll earlier in this work, this is when the identity crisis began. When suddenly a sociologist from the university of Chicago could no longer present on methodology, without being lost in the sea of Office of Strategic Services sponsored sociological studies (often co-presented by the academics and government or private officials). The 1930's saw sociology fulfilling its duty as Durkheim's science of morality, providing tireless work into the understanding of the great depression, attempting to gauge the efficacy of new deal policies and trying above all to propose solutions across the discipline for the plight of the nation itself. That level of social solidarity among social sciences, and that level of unity across the discipline of sociology has not existed since Pearl Harbor. Following the 1940's when sociologists were nearly contractually obligated (it would seem) to study the war, and all aspects of it, we move into the time when the aesthetic dissociation explodes into an uncontrollable wildfire that has effectively diluted the voice of sociology into its current identity crises. By 1948, the study in this text was operating with approximately 25-30 working codes on the types of sociological study being undertaken. The 40's saw the emergence of the studies of war, international relations, and a renewed interest in rural sociology (through the OSS, which presented on its efforts in manipulating rural sociology for wartime intelligence efforts at the 1947 conference), disaster sociology, and social disorganization.

By 1950 however, the game of sociology had changed drastically. In reflecting contemporary American culture during the post war period, sociology flourished out into new “suburbs” it did away with the old and started to examine new horizons. Between 1950 and 1960, the study jumped from 25 codes to 96 working codes. Stereotypical 1950’s values exploded as new and prominent means of discussion in sociology, with marriage, divorce and parenting become hot topics for all types of universities. Particularly, the concept of marital success from a heteronormative patriarchal perspective. In addition to the nuclear family, sociology focused study on crime for the first major time in history. Criminology emerged as less of a footnote and more of a stratified and specialized new field all its own. It grew into studies on homicide, policing, penology, collective behavior and white-collar crime.

In the 50’s the capitalistic mentality of the united states also flourished, inspiring the fields of occupational, industrial and organizational sociology. Incidentally, studies into labor, labor movements, labor leaders, unions, and worker’s rights emerged during this time, with (seemingly) nefarious purposes as seen in such titles as: “*The Social Personality of the Problem Union Organizer (1955 Presentation)*.” In addition to problematic labor unions, 1950’s sociologists examined issues pertaining to the cold war and took an equally reflective lens towards the second world war at the same time. It was during this decade that, with the leisure of the 1950’s, came the aesthetic dissociation of the discipline. It reflected social life at the time, carefree, but with the ever-present fear of the atomic age, with soviet society hotly debated as well.

By the late 50’s, the precursor to the conflict theory resurgence of the 1960s was on the horizon, with sub fields such as a social conflict, class inequality, social problems, symbolic interactionism, feminist sociology (yes, even in the 1950’s), as well as studies on elitism and bureaucracy. This seems to foreshadow the demise of Merton’s structural functionalism, and the rise of the left from the works C. Wright Mills (who gave his first ever ASA presentation in 1946,

the year he was hired at Columbia)<sup>4</sup>. In addition, the 1950's also saw the growth of the sociology of art and the aesthetic, as well as the expansion of sociology of education, of knowledge, of small groups, of complex groups, of bigotry, and of personality. Interestingly there was only one instance of LGBT studies in the sample, and it was a presentation on parenting strategies of "boys of the homosexual persuasion."

Overall, the historical presentation of the nature of sociology was one that definitely supports the claim made by Carroll and others that sociology is indeed in the throes of an identity crises (and that we have been since the late 1940s at least). Critics to this may argue that it simply represents the emergence of new ideas in the discipline and the diversification of its overall directions. To that point I will argue that sociology as it was in the 1950s was not a certifiable science, but rather a loose collection of vaguely related discussions happening across several rented rooms in a hotel. By 1939 the ASA all but abandoned conference wide themes (a trend that is reemerging and did so in the 1980's), effectively treating the ASA meetings as free-for all discussion vacations. They were organized into sections, but the degree to which the individual presentations pertained at all to that theme was laughable at best. A social cognition presentation jumps out of my mind as a perfect reflection of the slow decline of sociological unity: *"Towards a definition of definition, followed by an agreement on the best definition of definition, with later special discussion on the application of that definition."*

#### *Conceptualizing Institutional Dramaturgy From a Grounded Theory Approach*

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<sup>4</sup> As a historical aside, Merton and Mills were both professors at Columbia during the time that Mills' work emerged as the direct counter to Merton's. They presented at the same ASA conferences together, and it is an interesting snapshot of history to think that these two giants that have shaped contemporary social and political thought probably debated them across the halls at Columbia, or during 'informal smokers' at an ASA conference.

Following the collection of data, trends and patterns were discovered and interpreted and ultimately, a new conceptual framework was developed through combining classical and contemporary sociological theory from three streams of theoretical works (Symbolic Interactionism, Mills' Grand Theory, and Bourdieu's Field Theory) in order to conceptualize the process by which institutions interact within society in general both with individual human actors, and with other institutions. In the following chapter, a conceptual framework will be laid out that was born from the data in accordance with the core teachings of grounded theory based upon works by (Charmaz 2006; Glaser and Strauss 1967). The core teachings of which dictate the research, upon performing an exploratory study may construct a theory to explain the data, which inexorably ties the data to the theory and vice versa. The proposed theory is titled "Institutional Dramaturgy" and its core tenets, as well as its theoretical roots are presented below.

The framework is presented in three pillars. Pillar one corresponds to symbolic interactionist theories of human behavior. This pillar was constructed through the observation of the reactionary reality of sociological knowledge production outline above. In the Great Depression, for example, the discipline reacting to the *need* for social science to focus on issues pertaining to that situation very closely mirror how individuals construct behaviors and present themselves for social desirability. The second pillar relates to the context of the institutional interaction, examining how the environment wherein the interaction occurs may influence its overall outcome and performance. The socio-historical contextual data lends validity to this claim in that it clearly shows that as social attitudes and beliefs and values changed, so too did the discipline of sociology (from a top down prestige level, typically). The final pillar examines the intentionality behind institutional interaction, asking and answering the question "why do institutions behave this way?" The constant and active pursuit of markers of status (capital) is the

primary finding from the study that lends to this discussion. It is shown that prestige (a form of capital) is a strong motivator in the influencing of the institutional interactions observed in the study, and therefore the argument is made that prestige acts as a case study example of one type of capital an institution may seek for status attainment.

This theory was born out of the deficit in the literature (described in chapter 2) of a theoretical explanation for the actions of institutions as a whole within society. Much has been written on the functions and actions of institutions in society, without a clear understanding of *why* this occurs in terms of the processes an institution goes through in the performance of these actions. Macro theory provides us a glimpse into what institutions do in society, while symbolic interaction provides a theoretical understanding of individual actions themselves. This new theoretical direction melds macro theories of social interactions on an institutional scale with symbolic interaction to produce a novel ‘map’ of social interactions on an institutional scale within society. At its core, it argues that institutions behave in society exactly as individual actors do, but on a larger scale. It provides its practitioner a framework with which to conceptualize social interactions on an institutional scale within society in such a way that *all* components of the nature of these interactions can be observed and eventually studied.

In order for the theory to be fully expository, it must also speak to the intentionality of institutions, and the means by which the social situation within which they interact is constructed. Additionally, as with the study of individual actors, a picture of the institutional actor must be constructed in as complete terms as possible. This represents a direct result of the barrier between micro and macro sociology in that they represent two distinctive epistemological lenses that are seemingly incompatible. However, the key for bridging this gap in fully mapping symbolic interaction to institutions lies in synthesizing the theories of Pierre Bourdieu and C. Wright Mills.



The question institutional dramaturgy serves to answer is: “what if institutions behaved like individual actors do in society?” Its purpose is to illustrate how institutions’ social interactions mirror those of individual actors on micro levels of social contact, while also answering the question of why institutions behave this way. It provides a theoretical understanding of the interactions institutions have within society, and the *intentions* behind these interactions. It is comprised of three theoretical pillars: The Performance, “the interaction”, and “intention”. Each of the three pillars is informed by a different theoretical approach to the understanding of society. It combines Goffman’s dramaturgical perspective (Goffman, 1959). The symbolic interactionist theory that individuals put on performances within the context of social interactions. This metaphorical representation speaks to the ways actors construct and present the self in everyday interactions. Institutional dramaturgy applies this concept to institutions, but provides further understanding in the applications of the works of C. Wright Mills and Pierre Bourdieu. As, simply saying that institutions act in a theatre when they interact with society, does not offer any meaningful insight into *why* this occurs. Goffman and the symbolic interaction perspective provides the theoretical understanding of “the performance”, Mills’ *The Sociological Imagination* provides a framework to explore “the interaction”, while Bourdieu’s work on habitus and field lends to understanding of “the intention.” These three components of understanding, when used in conjunction provide a new framework for examining how institutions function within society, and the effects they have on each other, on other components of society, and on the individual actors that make up society as a whole.

### *The First Pillar: The Performance*

Institutional dramaturgy holds that a cornerstone of understanding the micro/macro interactional loop between actors and institutions is to first understand institutional policies that influence the institution. It is not simply an analysis of what an institution does, but rather a deep look into the construction of that behavior as an intricately structured performance. Goffman (1959) uses the metaphor of the stage to describe the process by which social interaction is constructed within the mind of the individual actor. institutional dramaturgy accepts these processes as accurate, and applies them to the processes institutions engage in. To understand the analysis of these processes, a cursory overview of the dramaturgical perspective is needed.

### Dramaturgical Perspective

Erving Goffman, the originator of dramaturgical theory proposed that human beings interact with one another through a complicated process of performance of roles and scripts as dictated by the situation (1959). He described the classic metaphor of the theatre, with a situation as a stage, with props aiding in performance, of actors, scripts existing to dictate direction and an audience watching to judge the performance. This process has largely been applied to individual social interaction between individual actors. The theory of institutional dramaturgy strives to ultimately apply this perspective to the institution, with the overall goal of supporting the claim that institutions function in the same way as human beings do, in terms of their impression management, performance and interactions. It is argued that, like human beings, institutions have a self<sup>5</sup>, goals, and intentions, which they pursue, employing the same strategies as human actors, due to them being constructed *of* individuals. It is a tenet of symbolic interaction that this

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<sup>5</sup> The sociological definition of “self” is given by Hughes & Kroehler (2013) as: “The set of concepts we use in defining who we are... It is not a biological given, but emerges in the course of interaction with other people and is affected by the social structures in which these interactions occur... The self represents the ideas we have regarding our attributes, capacities and behavior.” (79).

performance of actions is a result both of the presentation of self, and a means by which the self is constructed (Goffman, 1959).

To understand the construction of self and image of the institution, one must first understand that process within the individual. Though they are distinctive processes, they share much of the same practical steps in their implementation. Erving Goffman (1959) wrote that the social construction and presentation of self in everyday life is achieved through a process that closely mirrors the production of a stage performance. Each individual person acts as the star of their own performance. They act on a stage in front of an audience, they are veiled in costume depending on the role they are playing and they use various props around them to move their scenes forward (Goffman, 1959). In the case of the individual actor, Goffman's micro perspective of dramaturgy is applicable with ease in that, we are able to understand the allegorical narrative he paints as we apply it to our own interactions both self and social.

#### The Theatre, The Audience and the Definition of the Situation

When Goffman (1959) discusses backstage or backstage work he describes the internal processes that are integral to the construction and presentation of self in everyday life. In the back stage, human beings prepare and rehearse their performances, and they create their costumes and their props in anticipation of their audience. The audience is one of the more fundamental aspects of dramaturgy as the audience (the social situation one finds themselves in) dictates the nature of the required performance. It is the individual's initial definition of this situation that leads him or her to begin the back-stage process. They may go through their script (rehearsing what they will say or do), or construct new scripts or scenes depending on their situation. In this performance, there exists a certain degree of improvisational performance in that, there are situations and audiences that may arise in a moment's notice (Goffman, 1959).

During such cases, the actor relies heavily on the past experiences with similar yet distinct audiences. This past experience shapes performances such that actors are able to adapt to new situations via reliance on past experience (Goffman, 1959). The challenge of describing the institutional process of the construction of image is more abstract in that institutions by their very nature are collective groups of people working independently of each other to further the overall goals and demands of the institution.

## Image

Why do institutions construct images? Why do they invest inordinate sums of money on ad campaigns, or PR departments? The key to understanding this reasoning lies in the examination of the “audience”, or in other terms, those experiencing the social interaction. Before such analysis can begin it is worth noting that for the duration of this work, institutions will henceforth be recognized as “operating with traits, behaviors, intentions, and motives that are identical to (or closely similar to) those found in an individual actor.” The institution (as a concept) will be treated as if it were a functioning individual human being, in terms of its approach to self and social interaction.

The image construction takes place primarily in the backstage of the institution, with care being taken to construct the “right image” through massive PR campaigns. However, it is important to note that this process of construction in both individuals and institutions is a *constantly active* process (Goffman, 1959). Brand image construction (and presentation of self) are continuously ongoing, a performance is constantly being constructed (Blumer 1969). Each institution has its own brand. Universities are the institutions being focused on in this thesis and within their context, certain factors (such as academic prestige) affect the desirability of this brand image to a profound degree. In some instances, when the prestige of a university is high and it enjoys an image that is nearly entirely constructed through that prestige. Harvard for instance,

does not need to create expensive marketing ploys to draw students as its reputation is sufficient in this case. A state university may need to construct a more intricate performance in order to draw in students. One such avenue for this acquisition of prestige and of students is in collegiate athletics. Sports teams are often relied upon for increasing an institutions' prestige and drawing more students (both athletes and non-athletes) through the prestige coming from a well-performing sports team. (Hutchinson & Bouchet 2014). However, the university has a vast arsenal of image creation strategies they may implement in the overall pursuit of drawing students. In addition to sports, universities may offer specific programs to students in order to draw them to one institution over another.

#### Example of *The Performance* Process in Higher Education Institutions

A contemporary example of programs used in the manufacture of institutional identity are online education programs. These programs represent an intriguing subset of university prestige in their own rite. They may either be looked upon with the same degree of prestige as a 'traditional' university class, or they may be perceived as drastically less prestigious. Online degrees may hold equal or far lesser value than their 'on campus' counterparts. However, despite this disparity in levels of prestige, online courses are still a major selling point for universities in their marketing towards students that may not be entirely able to spend all of their time on campus. For less selective, less prestigious schools, this serves as a major selling point for the populations they serve that cannot commit to university life full-time, which generally includes nontraditional students, students with families and working-class students needing to work to pay for university. These online courses also contribute to the university image in that they project a more open, inviting and flexible image to entice members of the aforementioned populations that may have been otherwise deterred from attending university on account of their inability to

commit full time (Manhas 2012). The creation of online classes represents a top down example of the means by which image is constructed from the backstage to the front stage.

*What does the process of image construction look like?* Blumer (1969) described this process as both defining and reacting to other's actions in the construction of our own. The issue of low enrollment from under-represented populations serves as a good example of the process in practice. First, the issue of low enrollment from certain populations is discussed at the top of the university on an administrative level. The decision is made that online courses will provide a partial solution to this issue. Following that, the university begins two backstage processes. The office of public relations begins constructing new advertisements, memos, posters and other media to disseminate the new online courses to the public and current students. At the same time, the administration instructs the different colleges that make up the university to begin to create and implement online curricula. After a year or two of course creation and PR research and development, the university is ready to put its new brand image into performance. Students are encouraged to take online classes as they begin to register, university representatives are instructed to inform prospective students at college fairs or high school visits of the new options for taking courses. Professors are now required by their departments to facilitate at least one online course per term. The book store has adapted to be able to ship books to remote students wherever they may be. There may even be television ads or mailers that go out from the university to nearby areas (or nationally) to advertise their new programs. This constitutes the front stage performance in the institutional sense. The important note is that the administration of the institution acts as a part of the brain of the actor, defining the situation it is currently in, the PR department represents the portion of the actor's brain that begins to rehearse their performance. They may be writing new lines or drawing off of their past experiences. The colleges of the university make up the nervous system, carrying the decisions made regarding the

nature of the performance to the rest of the body, while the departments then begin to move to carry out these wishes as muscles do. Finally, the prospective and current students as well as the general public represent the audience watching this institutional performance. The success of the brand image is dependent on their reactions. A collective, macro version of the looking-glass self<sup>(6)</sup> is the means by which the university gauges its performance (Cooley, 1902). This is done through examination of the audience's reaction to their performance via the analysis of data collected from the audience's interactions with the institution. It is important to note that this anatomical analogy is vastly different to similar analogies made in the theoretical realm of structural functionalism in that what is being argued here is that institutions mirror human beings in their presentation of self in everyday life, *not* in that they function as organelles in a cellular society.

Given that traditional dramaturgy can outline the process of “the performance,” it provides a conceptual framework to understand the individual processes institutions employ in approaching social interaction. However, where it leaves conceptual gaps is in the process of “intentionality”, in asking and understanding *why* institutions behave this way, and it says little about the nature of what these interactions actually look like on a macro scale. In terms of bridging the micro/macro gap in the discourse of sociology, traditional dramaturgy provides the micro component of analysis. At this point in the thesis, the connections to the macro are cursory at best, and one may question the assertion that institutions act as individual actors, as it seems to be an arbitrary assumption without direct evidence at this point. To that effect, the study

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<sup>6</sup> Charles Horton Cooley (1902) Describes the concept of the “looking-glass self” as the interactive process by which we gauge the social acceptability of our performances. In essence, it is the process by which we construct the self through observing the social ramifications of our individual performances. In the instance of the institution, the looking-glass process takes the shape of market research, among other behaviors that serve to supplement the institutions understanding of how well-fitted to the social situation its performance was. (136-179).

described in chapters 2-4 operates as a practical example for these points, the findings acting as evidence that the human strategies of impression management, image construction and “the performance” are in fact, quite evident in social interactions on an institutional scale within society.

*Pillar 2: “the interaction”*

C. Wright Mills and *The Sociological Imagination*

In order to attach any semblance of meaning to “the performance” aspect of institutional dramaturgy, it is crucial to construct an understanding of the process of social interaction as a whole, and then to map this understanding to the institution. In his work *The Sociological Imagination* (1959), C. Wright Mills argues that social interaction is best understood by looking at history, biography, and the point at which they intersect as, he argues, this is society (Mills, 1959 p. 6). As such, society is composed of the social context (history) as it was created up until the point of interaction, the identity of the actor experiencing society (biography) in the moment of interaction, and their point of convergence (social interaction). This point of convergence is the moment within an interaction that the actor begins its performance (in institutional dramaturgy). In the context of social interactions on an institutional scale, these three components are vastly important in constructing an overall means of understanding the second pillar of institutional dramaturgy in that they provide the groundwork of the components needed to facilitate an interaction at all.

History

Mills describes history as the “shank of social study” (148), he goes on to write that without a clear understanding of the historical context within which the social scientist is



operating, they may not hope to gain a clear understanding of that society which they are studying. The same sentiment is in the second pillar of institutional dramaturgy in that, without understanding the history of the context of the interaction being observed, an informed analysis of the institution cannot be performed. In this, it is meant that when examining how institutions behave within society (with respects to their interactions with other institutions and with individuals), the context of their interactions must be observed. History in this sense is not operating in the classical understanding of history as a collection of events and facts, but rather a coalescence of experiences that have shaped “the interaction” before, during and after The Performance (Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*, 1959). In the previous part, the process of Performance was outlined, illustrating how an actor is met with a situation and defines it, constructs a response to it, performs that response and gauges its audience’s reaction to determine the appropriateness of that response. History in the Mills sense fits into this process in that it provides the reason for the interaction taking place. In the previous part’s example of universities marketing online courses to working class or other underrepresented populations, the historical component is the fact that these populations are underrepresented, and that the university wants to incorporate them. This contextual understanding begins to lead us to gain the ability to map the behavior itself in terms of the reason (or perceived reason) of its existence. It begins to allow us to dissect the factors that have placed the institutional actor at the position it is in, at the moment of The Performance.

### Biography

Biography as Mills writes is the subjective, egocentric experience within in society (Mills 1959). While Mills’ *Sociological Imagination* is geared towards educating the social scientist, biography can be further extrapolated to include the individual subjective identity of the actor in a social interaction. It is also a similar theme to Bourdieu’s *habitus* (discussed below) in that both

deal with what institutional actors bring with them to the table in terms of their interactions. For Bourdieu *habitus* is more a reflection of the amounts of capital an actor has acquired and the cultural and symbolic attachments that capital has afforded them (Bourdieu, Pascalian Meditations, 1997). Biography is more aligned with the interpretation of past experiences, interactions, and identity within “the interaction” (Mills 1959). Biography provides the strategies for the actor to respond to and within history and it is what makes “the interaction” unique to that actor. One university’s past experiences may differently influence its behavior in the situation it finds itself in.

### The Point of Convergence

The Performance is a culmination of those points discussed in Part 3, and the intersection between the history and biography that makes up “the interaction”. The actor, upon arriving at a situation of social interaction is confronted by this convergence of the history of the interaction, and the biography they hold to themselves. The pillar of “the interaction” represents the first instance within the overall social interaction of the institution where the actor is able to meet the need for a performance by comparing and contrasting both its personal identity and the socio-historical context of the interaction it finds itself in *in that very moment*. It is the process by which the situation is defined, the process by which symbolic interaction becomes possible at the institutional level. Before considering either history and biography, all that existed was a metaphor on the performative nature of the presentation of self in everyday life. By employing Mills, actual substance can be applied to this assertion. The biggest gap in understanding traditional dramaturgy when applied to the institution is attaching the *how* to the process. It is easy to assert that institutions behave as actors, but when they are thought of as arriving at a social interaction at a point of correspondence between their individual identity, and the nature and history of the situation, suddenly the process of institutional dramaturgy becomes plausible.

Take for instance, the same university that has been discussed previously. “the interaction”, the intersect of history and biography occurs at the moment the institution decides that it must reach out to underrepresented students. As we have discussed, The Performance exists as the *actions* the institution takes, and the processes it employs in performing those actions. While “the interaction” itself, is a process by which the institution *defines* a problem (low representation of a particular subset of students) its identity weighs into its thinking about this problem (Does it want to serve this population? Does serving this population help the university accomplish any overall goals? What benefit will come in investing in an interaction to solve the problem?) While also paying attention to the history of the situation (has it historically served this population? Has this population been historically underrepresented? What has worked previously to draw in underrepresented populations? What is the best way to reach them?). Upon concatenating the answers to these questions and possibly forming more, the actor decides upon a strategy of interaction. This represents the synthesis of these two modes of analysis. The history of the situation informs strategy, it provides the scripts described by Goffman. The biography of the institution provides the direction of the interaction, the stage, the costumes, and the props by which the institutional actor will embark upon The Performance of “the interaction”.

### *Pillar 3: “intention”*

If Goffman’s work provides the theoretical *what* of institutional dramaturgy, and Mills’ provides the concept of *how*, Pierre Bourdieu’s work provides the answer to the question of *why*. Habitus and field From Bourdieu (Bourdieu, Pascalian Meditations, 1997) allow a deeper look into the identity of the actor, beyond the surface level analysis that is applied in the study of “the interaction”. These concepts allow a framework to be developed that explains *why* an institutional actor is performing their interaction. Prior to the discussion of Bourdieu, we have established that (1). institutions act as individual actors in society by employing symbolic interactionist strategies

for the presentation and performance of self, and (2). That in order for this performance to be facilitated, the actor must have an understanding of both the history of the situation and of their own egocentric identity within the context of that situation, and at the moment of the start of the performance, these concepts collide and form the baseline for the performance to be completed. At this point though, there is still the question of “intention” within the performance and the interaction. How do institutions perceive the need for interactions at all? What drives these interactions to be perceived in the first place? And what influences institutions to behave in the manner so closely mirroring human interaction?

Bourdieu’s habitus and field represent the proverbial ‘missing link’ in terms of connecting these points, with habitus providing a historical and egocentric understanding of who the actor “is” with field representing where it is currently operating. Bourdieu in this sense provides the theoretical understanding of who the actor is, when they engage in “the interaction”. Habitus is a coalescence and physical embodiment of cultural capital by the individual (Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, 1984). It is also described as “a system of shared social dispositions and cognitive structures which generates perceptions, appreciations and actions” (Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 1977). By itself it cannot be applied to the institution as it can be traditionally argued that such things do not have shared social dispositions or cognitive structures. But, by combining the notion of Habitus with Mills’ biography and history, and the dramaturgical perspective, it can begin to become evident that yes, in fact, institutions *do* have these qualities and can therefore pursue cultural capital. The caveat is that cognition in the institutional respect is not the same as cognition is in the individual respect. An institution is not capable of independent thought as a human is. However, the structures of their governance, those sharply bureaucratic administrative wings form what is, in essence, a human

brain. Cognition itself is not an individualized process at this level, but rather a specialized one held in oligarch-esque fashion by those occupying the top tier of the institution.

In previous pages, the institution of the university is discussed, but, the reality is that a large portion of society itself is an institution. That is to say, that institutions make up a large part of society. They not only exist at small local levels, but transcend the national stage and there are various tiers of institutions in society. In effect, they can be seen as equally stratified across society as individuals are, with this stratification adding the *field* that facilitates an institution's search for cultural capital. Mills argued that there were at least three institutions that occupied this top tier. The military elite, the corporate elite, and the political elite (Mills, *The Power Elite*, 1956). Mills examines how these elite institutions influence and steer society while focusing solely on their macro identities. When applying the theory of institutional dramaturgy, a new line of inquiry opens in that we may begin to examine these institutions within a new class system that can lend further credibility to their pursuit of cultural, social, and economic capital.

Within the context of institutional dramaturgy, it is assumed that institutions collect, cultivate and covet cultural capital. Thus, this is the root of the intentionality of any and all social interaction that institutions perform. Habitus provides the internal subjective drive that leads the actor to arrive at the interaction with a predetermined motive. In the hopes of boosting their status within their class, institutions now have a clearly defined means of experiencing and expressing "intention" to behave as human beings. In the running example of this chapter, the university seeking underrepresented students, with the application of the former two pillars of institutional dramaturgy, we began to understand the processes by which that university defined the social situation it found itself (via collating history and biography), and the process by which it constructed its performance in response to that situation through internal processes and the looking-glass self (dramaturgy and symbolic interactionism). Now, by applying the concept of

habitus, the first half of the third pillar, we may finally begin to understand why the university reacted to that situation as they did (by employing online courses as a strategy to attract new students).

The reason for this behavior lies in understanding that the university wanted to create new streams of inflowing cultural capital (and to some lesser degree, profits). The university recognized that within the elite structure of higher education institutions, that it may garner enough capital to enhance its *status* within the hierarchy of institutions. If we hold Mills' three elite institutions to be the top tier, it is fair then to assume that higher education assumes a role near these elite classes of institutions. Given Bourdieu's analysis of higher education as one of the most central institutions in the regulation of entrance to the elite classes for individuals (Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus*, 1984), this importance is highlighted. However, that is not to say that all higher education institutions function within the institution of higher education equally. As previously stated, there is a stratification within classes at the institutional actor level. With this in mind, institutional dramaturgy holds that there is conflict among these classes, with lesser institutions striving for upward mobility in the pursuit of capital. This institution that tried to gain new students through online courses did so to advance its position within the complex society of institutions (within general society). The degree to which this is successful for that institution is difficult to determine based within the hypothetical realm. However, when applied practically, the theory of institutional dramaturgy may provide a framing lens through which to determine this efficacy along with the structural components of institutional behavior.

While Bourdieu's *habitus* is the key to understanding "intention" within institutional dramaturgy, *Field* as defined by Bourdieu is also a foundational component of this pillar of the theory. *Field* is similar to the point of convergence discussed in Mills' work, in that it is a coalescence of an actor's *habitus* and different capital. However, the difference is that *field*

represents the position in society an actor occupies based on its *habitus* (embodied capital) and its accumulated capital. In essence, it is Bourdieu's definition of status (Bourdieu, Pascalian Meditations, 1997). The *field* of an institutional actor is its positioning within the social order of institutional society. (i.e. where it ranks in the hierarchy of institutions). It is the variable (or set of variables) that distinguishes and divides different institutions. It is what separates local entities such as social clubs from Mills' power elite groups. *Field* plays into "intention" in that it sets the parameters for both The Performance and "the interaction". By this, it is meant that *field* is the factor that emphasizes "intention" for the institution to actively engage in inter-societal institutional conflict in the hope of acquiring more cultural, social, or other forms of capital. An institutional actor is reflexively and constantly aware of its field and as soon as dissonance within that field is 'felt' by the institution, it feels a drive to act. This sets it upon the path to The Performance, which facilitates its production of image (with the goal of increasing capital) its face work (Goffman 2005)(to preserve that capital) its employment of the looking-glass self (in order to gauge its efficacy), following its employment of history and biography to define the situation. Both *habitus* & *field* provide the "intention" for these behaviors having taken place, and therefore represent the key theoretical concepts that allow for a humanization of the institution, and for the previously mentioned anatomical analogy to be applied. They provide the human component of intention to the process of intuitional performance, where, without them, the institutions behavior could be seen only in terms of 'normalcy' of institution's place within society. When Bourdieu is incorporated with Mills and Goffman, the theory of institutional dramaturgy begins to take on a corporeal form.

### *Towards Unifying the Conversation*

Institutional dramaturgy, as it operates in its three pillars exists as an effective and practical framework for understanding the processes by which institutions interact with each

other, with individual actors, and how individual actors may interact upon institutions. It can stipulate a means of analysis that can inform a wide variety of research design in order to explore the complex interplay and feedback of institutions and individuals. Effectively bridging the gap between micro interactional analysis and macro study. In applying its assumptions in a research design process, any sociological study (hypothetically) could benefit from this multi-level approach. Given that the ‘conversation’ of sociological discourse is a broad and disjointed collection of voices, a wide implementation of this theoretical perspective could serve to maintain the broad discourse, while narrowing the conventions of the approach to producing the content of the conversation. In the following chapters I will demonstrate this research design process with regards to implementing institutional dramaturgy *in practice*, to illustrate how it centralizes and unifies the approach to answering sociological questions.

It is important to note that this theory does not replace, nor attempt to replace the existing theories. It exists in a unique position within the discipline as a theory of analysis, rather than an expository theory. It is a set of tools for the researcher to employ to better understand the humanistic nature of interaction within and between actors and institutions. As such, it can operate comfortably within other theoretical frameworks that inform the rationale for the research conducted. For instance, if a functionalist approach was employed to study an institution, although institutional dramaturgy accepts the conflict theory canon, it may still be employed as a set of strategies for the researcher to conceptualize the institution they are attempting to understand. As such, the onus on the practitioner of institutional dramaturgy is to *humanize* the institution and study it in those terms, to hold that it is something that is in a sense, alive, conscious and that it possesses what in symbolic interactionism constitutes the idea of the self. In order to facilitate this principle of humanity in the study of institutions, the research must develop an understanding of the institutional actor’s habitus and field in order to understand why



it exists in the interactional nature that it is being studied. It requires the researcher to understand the identity of institution such that it provides a context for its entrance into the interactions it is participating in.

It is the hope behind this thesis that this initial proposal of the theory of institutional dramaturgy starts sociology down the path of finding common ground within the discipline in order to solidify and unify our collective voice within the overall community of knowledge production. As the discipline is not as young as it was 61 years ago when Mills began to be critical of it, it becomes imperative for the current and future generations of practitioners in the field to move towards amalgamating our discipline to bring it more in line with telling a coherent story in the conversation. That is not to negate diversity of study. This theory has the potential to begin to deconstruct the self-imposed barriers between micro and macro sociology which may lead to this unifying effect in the general presentation of the discipline. It goes beyond simply creating a lexicon of universal terms or approaches, but it strives to a degree of homogeneity in the presentation of knowledge, and the pursuit of it, by freeing the social researcher of the binding shackles of micro vs. macro. By facilitating this deeper and novel approach to knowing the nature of the institution in society, it can be hypothesized that such insights gained from research within this contextual framework will provide new insights that transcend sub-field boundaries within sociology. While providing new and meaningful findings, that may have otherwise been hidden to a purely macro or micro approach. It is the goal of the following pages to do so.

## Chapter 6:

### *Final Meditations*

#### *Predictive Implications for the field of higher education, including directions for future research*

While this study does indeed present a wealth of knowledge into the field of sociology in a retrospective sense, it so too does provide predictive insights into the world of higher education, and how that world is built upon, maintained through, and ultimately dictated by the academic conference, the publication, and the ‘credentials’ of the author in question. What this exploration into the history of sociology, the history of the ASA and the nature and evolution of the academic conference has taught me is that we as scholars rely far too heavily upon this method of knowledge production, and that this reliance is arbitrary in its existence due to one resounding point: conferences are *not* knowledge production social contexts. They are not a place where knowledge is created and shared among peers, but rather it is a place where prestige is traded, sought after, gained and lost in appeasing the social context you currently occupy. It is a sink or swim gauntlet that determines one’s ultimate success in their chosen field. It is an evil, but an evil that is integral to one’s own upward mobility in the process of professional knowledge production.

In terms of the classroom and the educator, this is potentially negative when we think about the environments that a capitalization of knowledge production may create when it comes to teaching and producing new knowledge. Outside the discipline of sociology, for instance, we can see this reality of prestige, publication, image cultivation and capital acquisition emerging as rampant social norms in academia. We may contrast the romanticized, antiquated perception of higher education as a place where men in bespoke suits recline to discuss Kierkegaard over brandy in a firelit study, and replace it with the contemporary academic world, that sees research

faculty bent over computer screens in their labs, frantically publishing papers to get tenure, and constantly under pressure to write grants, to secure governmental or other external partnerships, and to always present a novel paper.

When we discuss the workload of the contemporary academic as a result of the shift away from the original purpose of higher education to this more capitalized version, we may hypothesize that the students in the classrooms of these overworked faculty members may not be receiving their best education either. In another world (the world of the presentations analyzed in this study), professors had time to teach, to foster intrinsic motivation to learn in their students, and to engage in thoughtful discourse with them. The contemporary engineering professor does not have that luxury in the ‘substantiate or suffocate’ world of publication driven grant research. As discussed elsewhere in this text, the pragmatic reality of American higher education has deeply reaching effects on how we teach, produce knowledge, and ultimately on why we produce the knowledge that we do. For instance, it is far more desirable for a contemporary sociologist to do research in novel and socially favorable topics (as we saw begin in the 1950s), and it is arguable that this extends out to other disciplines as well.

In the teaching of sociology, it is a lost opportunity if one misses the chance to engage with a class on a real level due to being burdened with academic work. As sociology is a deeply personal science, it benefits from the deeply personal exploration of ideas with peers, and undergraduates that have not been steeped in the field for decades are the prime sources of *real* novel ideas. They will not be proposing such ideas as an entire course on the sociology of guns (a real course offered by Oregon State University) but may offer a nuanced comment in a discussion of Durkheim’s collective effervescence that sparks an entirely new line of thinking.

With that, this study represents only a very small glimpse into how higher education “works” as an institution by examining one of the very numerous realms in which it interacts. In

terms of future directions of research, I have several proposed directions to examine this institution in depth in different social situations. First, as a sister-study to that of conferences, the nature of academic publications must be examined, as they represent the other primary means of communication, production and replication of ideas, as well as the threshold for acceptability of a new idea. I do fundamentally believe that to understand the nature of this institution that the realm of publications must be thoroughly mapped. It could potentially be so mapped through a careful application of social network analysis to track and follow citations and ideas as they travel through the ether. Second, the public sphere is another social context this institution exists in on a daily basis. How do universities exist in this world? What do they do as a means of interacting healthily with the public in order to perpetuate, present, and construct their ideal selves? I would propose a study examining the publicly released messages of absolute authority from a university to accomplish such a task (preferably someone like the president) to then be coded and analyzed qualitatively to examine how the institution saves public face in times of scrutiny. In addition, further studies are in development to understand this nature of the institution and will be appear in the print version of this text, upon its completion and expansion as a publishable book manuscript in August or September of 2018.

#### Part 4:

##### *Parting Meditations*

In this text, the bold assertion has been made that institutions behave, interact, think and perceive themselves as human beings do in social contexts. It has been argued that they exist on an equal social plane in society, one that transcends an arbitrary micro/macro distinction that has become the sociological norm. It (perhaps ambitiously) presents a new way of thinking to the practicing sociologist. To go beyond looking at higher education for instance as macro idea and look at it as you would a human being. Look at its performances, its intentions, and the

interactions you have with it as a basis for your understanding of the social world. The central thesis of this theoretical framework is that the ultimate construction of social reality is fundamentally constructed via that interaction between institutional actors and individual actors *on the same social level*. Meaning that levels of social interaction begin to open up for further analysis when the shackles of our previous dichotomy are released.

Goffman's dramaturgy and the first pillar of the theory of institutional dramaturgy teaches us that institutions *perform* just as we do. They have their costumes, their stage, their scripts, and they play their parts based on the front and back stage work they do to cultivate their costumery. When we imagine an institutional actor, we now imagine a creature constructing its face to belie, to protect, to charm, to inspire other institutions and individuals based on its internal drives for the presentation, preservation and ultimate creation of self in its life. We remember that institutions do indeed have a self, a central personal identity that drives their interactions and performances, while also being shaped by these interactions, and the social contexts they inhabit.

The work of C. Wright Mills reminds us of the importance of place, of history, and of biography in the construction of the institutional performance. He reminds us to look into *why* the institution is who it is based on its own personal contexts and the social and historical contexts of the stage it is performing on. And finally, that work of the great Pierre Bourdieu provides us as sociologists the connective tissue between the performance and the environment that it happens in with the care and knowledge to understand *the intention* of the actor. To be able to place a *why* to the *what* through the understanding of habitus, field and capital acquisition.

In closing it is the hope of this author that this work inspires sociologists to through off the shackles that bind us to the micro/macro world, to embrace that homogeneity between humans and human institutions. To see that reality, social reality as we currently exist in is reflective on

both our lives and the lives of institutions, and that the intersectionality and interactions of these two separate yet symbiotic lives gives rise to modern society as a whole. It may be used as a framework to understand inequality, conflict, war, crime and deviance, and any other aspect of society. Ultimately, it has the potential to unite a dissociated discipline so that it may hope to present further and more nuanced scientific understandings of the social world in the future. It serves as a potential therapy to the aesthetic dissociation of sociology and should therefore be on the minds and in the hearts of sociologists as they blaze out into the world of research design, so that the social world may be more fully understood, and the discipline itself may be far more articulate in that understanding.

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