The Intellectual and Social Organization of ASA 1990-1997: Exploring the Interface between the Discipline of Sociology and Its Practitioners

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This article examines patterns of joint membership in ASA sections and analyzes the resulting section clusters in order to ultimately assess the present state of the discipline and unearth the organizational structure underlying intellectual and professional currents. Previous empirical findings regarding the structure of sociology in the 1980s are largely confirmed for sociology in the 1990s. Despite a 41 percent increase in the number of ASA sections between 1990 and 1997, I find remarkable stability in the interpretation of clusters of sections, a fact that provides an updated empirical basis for the assessment of internal debates within the discipline and suggests future structural trends.

Introduction

This study seeks to explore the forces structuring contemporary American sociology. By dissecting its peak association, the American Sociological Association (ASA), it aims to disentangle the dynamics of the production of sociological knowledge so that one might gain a clearer picture of localized action without losing sight of the broader structure. Placing the discussion at the level of a discipline's peak professional association affords a unique vantage point on both the micro- and the macro-processes structuring knowledge production. By definition peak professional associations embody the institutionalized image of a discipline. However, they are also sensitive to the idiosyncrasies of the various scientific subfields and research areas as well as to the individual expectations of their members. That is why they can serve as an excellent analytical springboard whence to theorize about the intellectual and social organization of science production as this emerges out of the dynamic interplay of structural and agentic forces.

But apart from its theoretical potential, this article offers new empirical insights and an updated report on the organizational structure of the discipline. Building on similar research on the structure of American sociology in the eighties (Cappell and Guterbock 1992; Ennis 1992), it discusses the complex character of the field and speculates about future structural trends.

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Previous Empirical Studies of the ASA

Since this article can be seen as an extension of and a commentary on similar empirical work by Ennis (1992) and, especially, Cappell and Guterbock (1992) on the structure of ASA in the eighties,[1] I will very briefly discuss these two studies before presenting my own research.

James G. Ennis considers the clique and fissure formations of sociological specialties as these emerge out of the areas of interest[2] of ASA members. According to Ennis, "[m]aking explicit the intellectual and social web of a discipline may shed light on the relative size, prestige, and power of particular specialties, the rise and decline of topical areas, and the diffusion of theories and methods among them" (1992: 260). Using cluster and multidimensional scaling techniques, Ennis identifies seven distinct clusters of specialty areas (Deviance and Control, Setting and Context, Political and Macrosociology, Theory and Culture, Numbers, Social Psychology/Gender/Medical, Stratification and Work) and discusses their relative position within the discipline. Notably, no single cluster occupies the center of the field. Rather, the center is shared by both substantive and applied orientations, with theoretical and quantitative clusters pulling towards opposite ends of the spectrum (Ennis 1992: 264).

Instead of using areas of interest as their unit of analysis, Charles L. Cappell and Thomas M. Guterbock (1992) look at joint membership in ASA sections. They argue that sections represent institutionalized areas of sociology and attract members active in research and publication. In this respect, in contrast to "invisible colleges" (Crane 1972), sections can be considered the "visible" part of professional specialist networks (Cappell and Guterbock 1992: 268). Assuming "that the greater the overlap in membership between two sections, the more proximate the sections are in the discipline's structure," Cappell and Guterbock employ cluster and multidimensional scaling analysis to capture the structure of sociology[3] (1992: 267). Their modeling is meant to test four distinct hypotheses as to the structure of the discipline: (a) it is cognitively based (ideational theory); (b) it hinges on the dynamics between the interests of the welfare state and a critically opposed academia (political-economic theory); (c) it rises out of market and status concerns (professional power theory); (d) it is defined by collaboration ties (intellectual circle/network theory). After plotting the specialties in three-dimensional space, they identify three parameters that best describe the structure of American sociology in the eighties: (1) a "Critical/Applied" axis that distinguishes between the discipline's critical block and "Standard American Sociology,"[4] (2) a "Professional Power" axis predominantly populated by prestigious subfields and white, non-Hispanic males at one end of its spectrum and female and minority sociologists on the other, and (3) a "Microsociology/Macrosociology" axis differentiating between specialties primarily working at the micro- vs. the macro-level of analysis. According to the authors, these parameters lend partial support to the first three hypotheses. Although their report does not yield the same specialty clusters, it does point to similar conclusions to those drawn by Ennis. Furthermore, the latter's contention that the center of the field is defined by more than one specialty is categorically confirmed by Cappell and Guterbock (1992: 271): "there was no central cluster of specialties—the scattered specialties resembled a *systase* rather than a sys-

tem. [...] The structure of sociology may be moving toward a postmodern cultural anomie."

Despite differences in units of analysis and theoretical scope then, both reports essentially arrive at quite comparable results, thus mutually reinforcing each other's observations about the intellectual and organizational structure of ASA in the eighties.

Data

My data is derived from ASA membership directories. Every year, ASA sends a renewal form to its members where, among other requests for dues and contributions, they are asked to indicate whether, for a specified fee, they would like to be considered a member of one or more of its sections. Sections must be distinguished from what ASA calls "areas of sociological interest." In the initial membership application form, prospective members are asked to provide some general demographic information (age, gender, race/ethnic background, citizenship, education level, employment status), their section selections, as well as four areas of sociological interest in order of priority. All of this information is included in the *Biographical Directory of Members* published biannually by ASA. My analysis is based on information provided in the 1990 and 1997-98 directories. By collecting section selections for each ASA member and creating a binary database of the relevant information, I was able to quantify joint section preferences (the number of members shared by two sections) into a distance measure (the degree of proximity between the two sections). Thus, I was ultimately able to construct a square, symmetrical, joint-frequency similarity matrix with cells translating the number of persons holding simultaneous membership in each pair of sections into distances[5] between sections at that particular time point.

There are various reasons that I chose to focus on section memberships (see Cappell and Guterbock 1992) rather than areas of interest (see Ennis 1992). From a practical point of view, information on areas of interest is limited to four choices, collected at the initial entry stage and never updated. Section membership, on the other hand, is limitless and reviewed annually. Furthermore, the fact that section members are required to pay annual dues in order to preserve their membership privileges attests to the commitment of those who choose to get involved. On a more substantive level, sections, with their elected officials, administrative personnel, newsletters, and sessions during ASA annual meetings, reflect a more or less formalized and rigorous structure and, in this sense, seem better positioned to allow one a view into the intellectual and organizational configuration of the discipline. In this respect, while it can be argued that a mapping out of areas of sociological interest might provide valuable insights into processes of growth and decline of research areas because of the scope of their substantive spectrum, the examination of clustering patterns among sections is a far more reliable measure of the dynamic interface between the cognitive and organizational structure of sociology. After all, conceiving of a scientific discipline as a reputational work organization necessarily places special emphasis on the formalized patterns of knowledge production that, in their turn, give specialties their unique form. It is within the framework of the

discussion of section membership that one can most appropriately address sociology as a discipline proper, as a scientific network at its stage of maturity. To paraphrase Cappell and Guterbock (1992), sections make the structure of sociological knowledge production visible.

For both time points, 1990 and 1997, the ASA joint section membership frequencies used represent a full census of section memberships. There were 27 sections in 1990 and 38 sections in 1997. While ASA membership held steady at around 13,500 members, members belonging to at least one section increased from 50 percent in 1990 to 60 percent in 1998. Members belonging to two or more sections increased from 28 percent (3,815 joint section members) in 1990 to 38 percent (5,060 joint section members) in 1997.

Analysis

If membership in two sections is an indicator of co-specialization, one can legitimately argue that the greater the degree of co-specialization between two sections, the more proximate sections are expected to be within the overall structure of sociology (Cappell and Guterbock 1992). Based on that assumption, I conducted a cluster analysis in SPSS, using Jaccard distances and between-groups average linkage, for each joint section membership data matrix. The dendrograms in Figures 1 and 2 display the resulting structures for years 1990 and 1997 respectively, with newly introduced sections and their introduction year in bold script. Following Figure 1, ASA can be described in terms of six clusters that clearly exhibit a distinct conceptual theme. This picture is essentially repeated in Figure 2. This time, however, we encounter ten clusters instead of six, primarily the result of the institutionalization of 11 new specialties within a seven-year period. In effect, the introduction of the "Sociology of Mental Health" and "Alcohol and Drugs" has produced a thematically distinct cluster comprising five sections. The same outcome has had the addition of the sections of "Rational Choice" and "Mathematical Sociology" or that of "Race, Gender and Class," the "Section on Sexualities," and the "Sociology of Children." An idiosyncrasy of the 1997 configuration is the outlier status of the section of "Peace and War" at the bottom of the cluster hierarchy.

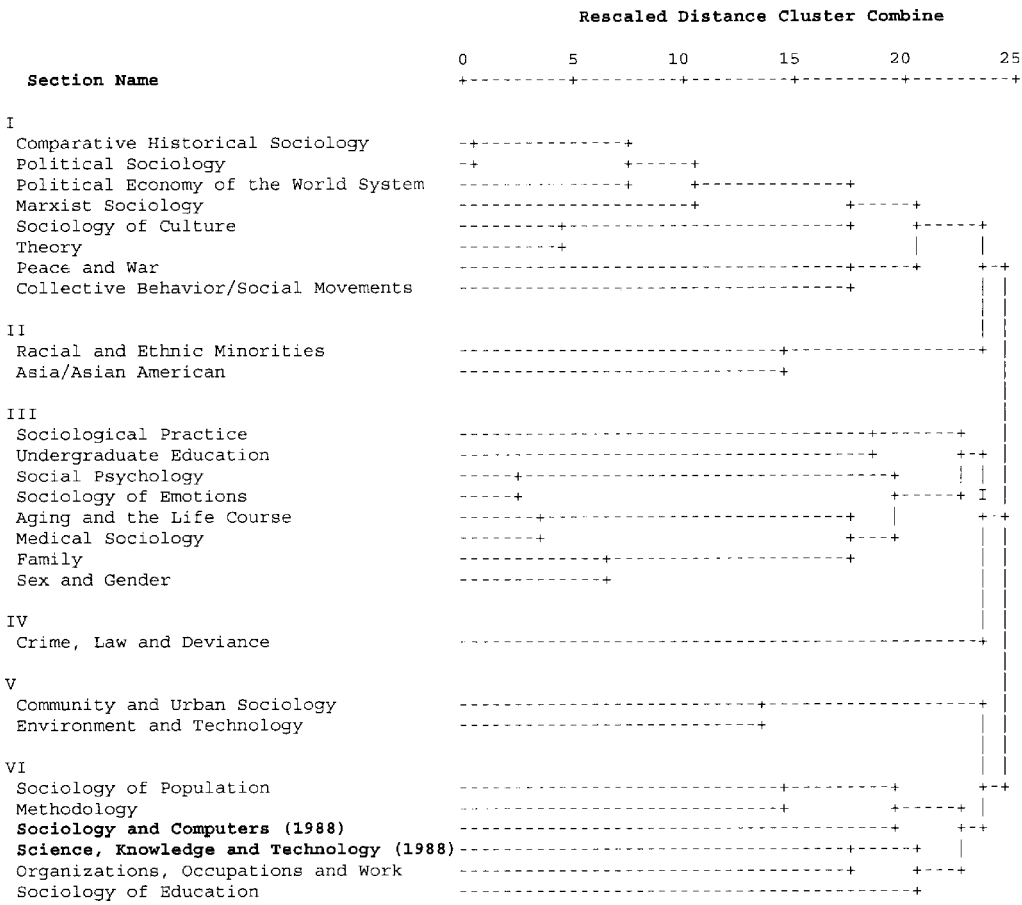
Looking at the boundaries between and within the clusters, one notes that the 1990 initial division of the discipline into critical, micro- and macro-sociology (clusters I and II, III and IV, V and VI respectively) becomes more complex in 1997. Now, the discipline is first fractured into five, much more specialized and thematically coherent categories (clusters I, II, III through V, VI and VII, VIII and IX). Furthermore, in 1997, proximity distances between clusters are generally less prominent while those within clusters are markedly more pronounced, indicating the conceptual and social affinity of the sections within them.[6]

Finally, it should be noted that the hierarchy among clusters has been modified considerably between the two time points with no clusters occupying the same position relative to the whole cluster or to their former structural neighbors.

In order to get a more detailed and systematic representation of the distances between ASA sections, I turned to multidimensional scaling (MDS) techniques and analyzed each of the two proximity matrices using ALSCAL (SPSS 1993: 155

Figure 1

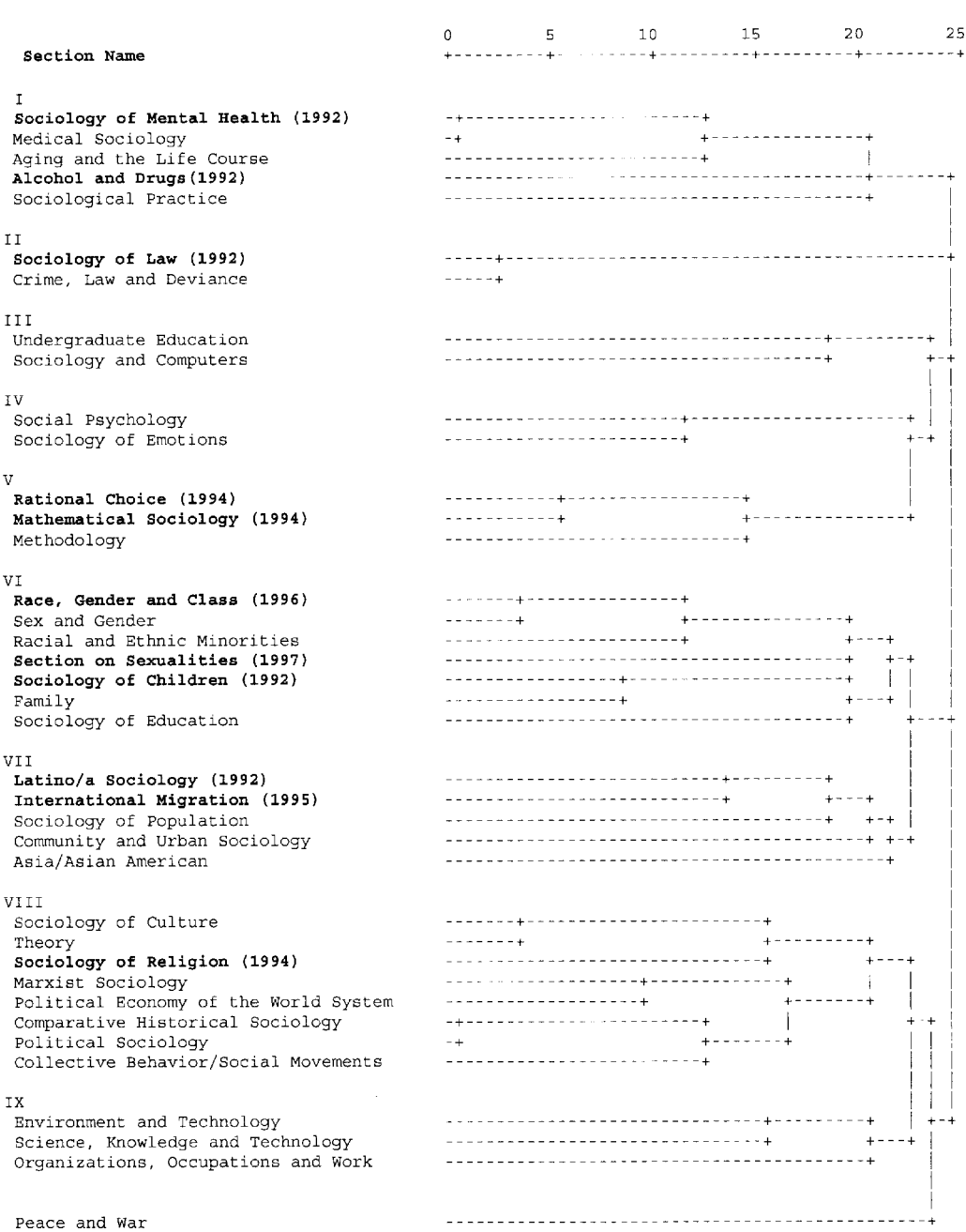
Hierarchical Clustering of Joint Specialties in Sociology: ASA, 1990



ff.). ALSCAL employs an alternating least-squares algorithm to analyze the matrices in a way that displays the structure of the distance-like data as a geometrical picture. Each section is represented by a point in multidimensional space and arranged so that the distances between pairs of points have the strongest possible relation to the similarities among pairs of sections. Various measures of fit (e.g., Kruskal's stress measure or R^2) indicate the number of dimensions that best describes the data.[7] Since the fundamental merit of employing a multidimensional scaling model rests in its representational power, my primary concern was with the "appropriate" dimensionality (that which proves most conducive in interpreting the data) rather than with the "correct" dimensionality (the hypothetical true dimensionality underlying the data) of the structure. Aside from goodness-of-fit issues, there were other, equally important considerations that needed to be taken into account such as interpretability, ease of use, and stability (Kruskal and Wish 1978: 56 ff.). I shall therefore discuss both the two-dimensional and three-dimensional solution, since no single model is prefer-

Figure 2

Hierarchical Clustering of Joint Specialties in Sociology: ASA, 1997



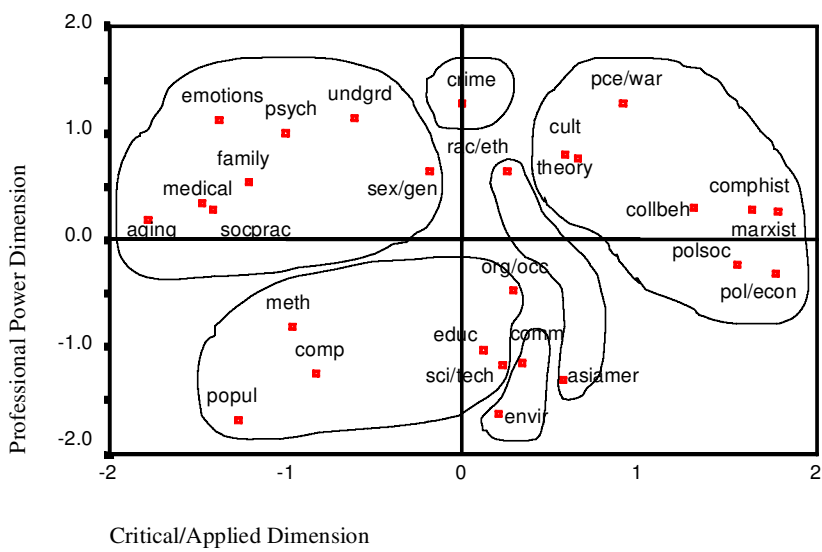
able on both statistical and substantive grounds.[8] While the two-dimensional configuration is easier to follow and provides a clearer picture of the structural changes between the two time points, the three-dimensional configuration is statistically more compelling and, as will be seen in a moment, it allows for a more fruitful comparative analysis of the state of ASA between the 1980s and the 1990s.

A quick overview of the resulting configurations will suffice to show that no single cluster dominates the structure of ASA sections at either time point (see especially Figs. 3 and 5, where circles represent clusters). Rather, it seems that several clusters are involved in the struggle for centrality. On the level of sections, "Organizations, Occupations and Work" consistently appears closest to the center of the structure at both time points.

An initial assessment of the established two dimensions proves that the configuration for year 1990 closely resembles Cappell and Guterbock's (1992) results for 1980-86 ASA specialties. Just as in the latter case, "Medical Sociology" and "Sociological Practice" are placed on the far left pole of the horizontal axis with "Political Sociology," "Marxist Sociology," and "Political Economy of the World System" facing them on the far right. On the vertical axis, "Sex and Gender" and "Racial and Ethnic Minorities" are grouped at the top, while "Environment and Technology," "Sociology and Computers," and "Methods" define the lower part of the plane.

Figure 3

Two-Dimensional Configuration of Joint Overlapping memeberships in ASA Sections: 1990

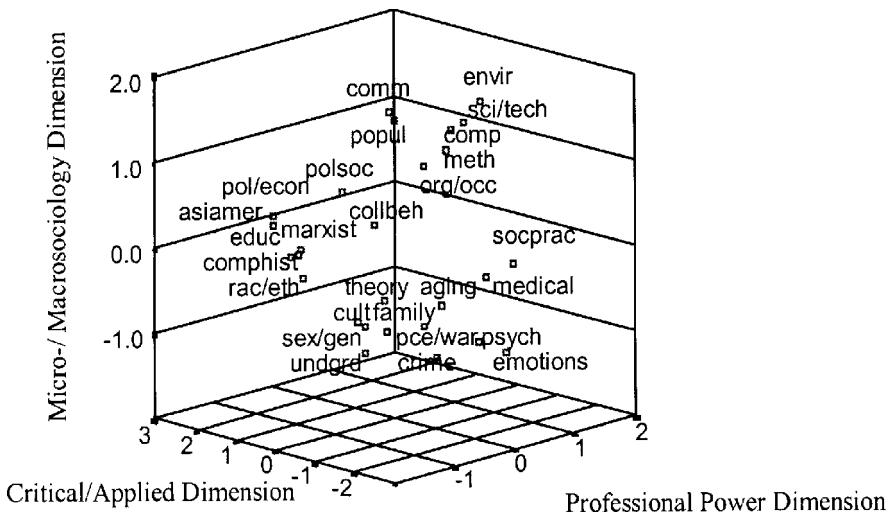


Since the two dimensions of 1990 ASA specialties so faithfully correspond to Cappell and Guterbock's (1992) results for ASA during the 1980s, I decided to also consider the three-dimensional configuration of the data in search of a validation of their third dimension. Indeed, my 1990 results also support Cappell

and Guterbock's (1992) three-dimensional solution: "Social Psychology" and "Emotions" appear in the lower part of the plane while "Sociology of Population," "Environment and Technology," and "Community and Urban Sociology" mark the upper limits of the third dimension (Fig. 4).

Figure 4

Three-Dimensional Configuration of Joint Memberships in ASA Sections: 1990



In 1997, ASA specialties are broadly structured along the same three criteria of critical vs. applied sociology, professional power and micro- vs. macrosociology.[9] At the same time, however, one notes important deviations from the 1990 configuration. The most striking effect of the addition of eleven new specialties within the seven-year period seems to be the splintering of already existing clusters into new, more thematically coherent formations. Furthermore, the upper boundary of the vertical axis in Fig. 5 is almost exclusively monopolized by the Minorities cluster, while all other clusters have clearly shifted towards the middle-lower part of the spectrum. Finally, a closer comparison of Figs. 4 and 6 suggests that, although the outlying sections of the 1997 configuration essentially reinforce the dichotomy established in the 1990 structure, the central specialties now settle into a much looser pattern, possibly indicating a gradual degeneration of the microsociology/macrosociology divide.

The Intellectual Organization of ASA

Each ASA section can be seen as representing an intellectual field. In this sense, ASA is cognitively structured via the various sections that comprise its body. Moreover, the clusters identified in the analysis allow one a glimpse at the intellectual organization of ASA on a more aggregated level. As previously mentioned, it is apparent that the six or ten clusters—depending on the time point under discussion—display a clear conceptual theme. It seems then that

Figure 5

Two-Dimensional Configuration of Joint Overlapping Memberships in ASA Sections: 1997

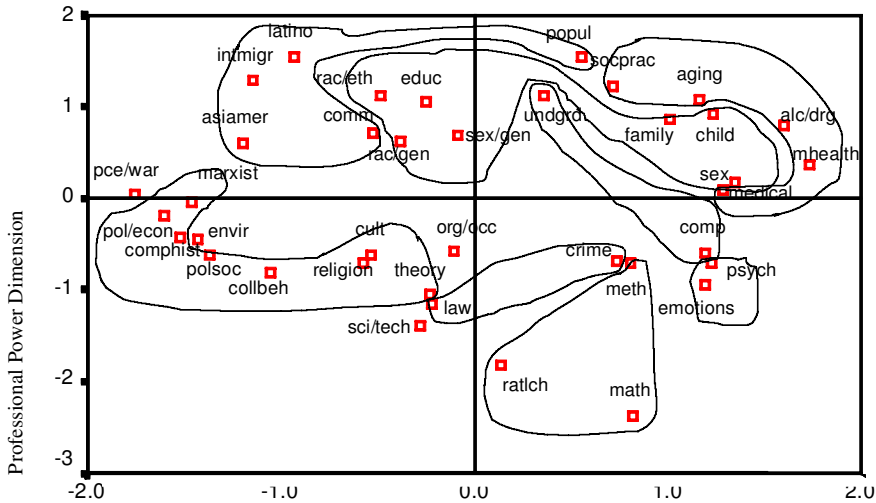
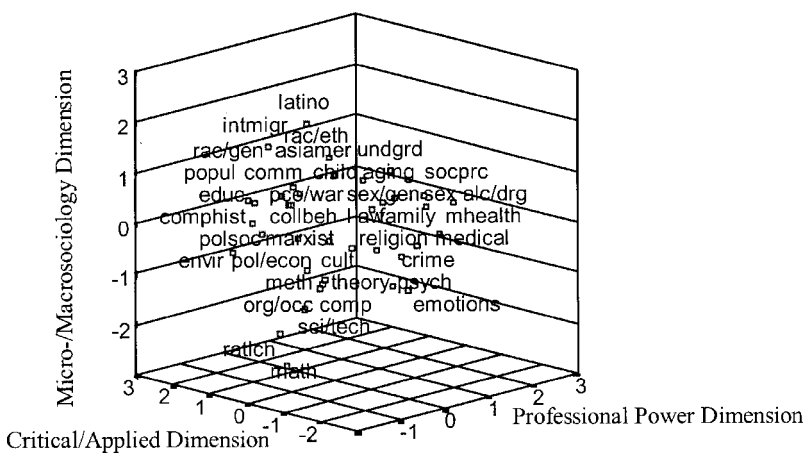


Figure 6

Three-Dimensional Configuration of Joint Overlapping Memberships in ASA Sections: 1997



ASA members tend to primarily specialize in intellectually related sections. The research clusters emerging once sections have been grouped together are essentially the same throughout the whole 1980-97 period—if anything, they get progressively clarified into more thematically distinct groups in the 1990s: Medical Sociology, Sociology of Deviance and Control, Education and Computers, Social Psychology, Mathematical Sociology, Family, Gender and Race Studies, Minorities, Critical Sociology, Organizations and Technology.

Not surprisingly, therefore, seven out of the eleven new sections institutionalized between 1992 and 1997, and consequently just recently having achieved the required critical mass of 200 members, are to be found in newly formed clusters (Fig. 5). Following this line of reasoning, the "Medical Sociology" section had the highest joint membership number (677) in 1990[10] but it was not until the introduction of the "Sociology of Mental Health" section in 1992 that an impressive 189 shared members clustered the two sections together pulling other, thematically similar specialties into the newly formed scientific area. Similarly, it was not until the introduction of the section of "International Migration" in 1995 that a cluster around the field of Minorities was formed. The reason that the section of "Racial and Ethnic Minorities" is not included in that cluster should be attributed to the fact that, despite its obvious strong ties to minority issues, its link to the "Sex and Gender" section (136 shared members) and, after 1996, to the "Race, Gender, and Class" section (205 shared members) is much more powerful, pulling it towards their cluster.

One could think of various causes triggering the institutionalization of specialties into ASA sections. Some of the more obvious ones are (a) that they serve as intellectual bridges to cover a research area that has so far been left unattended, or (b) that they reflect intellectual, methodological, or ideological schisms within an existing section as a new generation of sociologists finds itself at odds with the prevailing paradigm, or (c) that they emerge as the core group of an already established section that promotes a new one in order to garner more sessions during ASA's Annual Meeting. The factors influencing the introduction of a new section can thus be intellectual as well as professional. Nevertheless, I would maintain that the reasons new sections get to form a cluster of their own (i.e., get to promote a distinct sociological approach) are primarily intellectual.

This discussion is especially illuminating regarding the unusually similar section pairs observed in the cluster analysis of the 1990 and 1997 formations (see note 6). Although the only such pairs containing a new section belong to the 1997 structure, an examination of the 1990 pairs will help uncover otherwise hidden parallels. For example, the pair of "Comparative Historical Sociology" and "Political Sociology" corresponds very closely to the newer pair of "Rational Choice" and "Mathematical Sociology." Sections in each pair were introduced within two years from each other and have at least one-third of their membership in common. It makes sense that the introduction of these sections served to institutionalize research areas that were gaining in popularity by a new generation of sociologists. The remaining section pairs did not appear at about the same time. As a matter of fact, one section in each pair has for a long time served as the sole representative of a research topic. Consider the pair of "Crime, Law and Deviance" and the "Sociology of Law." The latter section was introduced in 1992, more than twenty years after its "generic" counterpart. Similarly, the section on "Aging and the Life Course" appeared more than 10 years after "Medical Sociology," the "Sociology of Emotions" appeared more than fifteen years after "Social Psychology," the "Sociology of Mental Health" appeared more than twenty years after "Medical Sociology," the section on "Race, Gender and Class" appeared fourteen years after "Sex and Gender," and the "Sociology of Culture" appeared more than fifteen years after the "Theory"

section. The causes behind the formation of this type of section pairs are more complex. On the one hand, the fact that the section on the "Sociology of Emotions," the "Sociology of Mental Health," and the "Sociology of Law" share more than half of their members with "Social Psychology," "Medical Sociology," and "Crime, Law and Deviance" respectively could suggest either that the newer sections were created so as to procure more sessions for the already existing specialties or that they are an indication of an intellectual/ideological schism from the already established paradigm. On the other hand, the section pairs of "Sociology of Culture" and "Theory," "Aging and the Life Course" and "Medical Sociology," and "Race, Gender and Class" and "Sex and Gender," though quite similar, share at most one-third of their membership and, consequently, suggest a different interpretation. I would argue that the institutionalization of these newer sections essentially points to the institutionalization of new research areas within the discipline. Of particular interest in this respect is the section on "Race, Class, and Gender": it shares about a fourth of its members with the "Racial and Ethnic Minorities" section as well as a third of its members with the "Race and Gender" section. The appearance of the newer section can be viewed then as the outcome of an increasing scientific interest in the complexities of race and gender, an interest that could not or would not be satisfied within the framework of either of the relevant older sections. "Race, Class, and Gender" effectively acts as an intellectual bridge, linking two as yet remote specialties into a thematically coherent research area.[11]

As already noted, the 1997 configuration provides the most complex yet most paradigmatically pure depiction of the cognitive structure of ASA. Following the Critical/Applied dimension in Fig. 5, one finds the Critical Sociology and Minorities clusters positioned on the left, the Medical Sociology, Social Psychology, Sociology of Deviance and Control and Mathematical Sociology clusters clearly plotted on the right, while the Organizations and Technology and the Family, Gender and Race Studies clusters occupy the middle of the plane (Fig. 5). Furthermore, sections on either pole of the spectrum appear highly interconnected: any two sections on the right hand side of the plane average 80 shared members while this number reaches 105 members for the sections on the opposite side of the plane. The ensuing dichotomy does not point towards commonly held explanations that distinguish between mainstream/positivist vs. interpretivist sociology (Fuchs 1992) or between quantitative vs. theoretical sociology (Ennis 1992). Rather, the intellectual structure of ASA seems to be influenced by a critical perspective with a tendency towards historical research and by what Alvin Gouldner (1970) calls an "administrative sociology,"[12] a middle-range theory/social problems oriented approach arising out of the demands of the welfare state.

True to its name, the Microsociology/Macrosociology Dimension reveals a second intellectual parameter structuring the discipline: the vertical pole differentiates between specialties primarily focusing on large-scale applied research and those interested in micro-level processes (Figs. 4 and 6). Predictably, for both time points, the sections of "Social Psychology" and "Sociology of Emotions" appear on the lower part of the plane, with "Rational Choice" and "Mathematical Sociology" acting as additional markers of the lower end in 1997. Regarding the upper boundaries of the configuration, one notes some inconsis-

tency. Whereas the sections defining the upper end in 1990 were, echoing Cappell and Guterbock's results, "Environment and Technology," "Community and Urban Sociology," and the "Sociology of Population," the sections appearing at the upper end in 1997 are "Latino/a Sociology," "International Migration," and "Racial and Ethnic Minorities," while the former sections have perceptibly moved towards the middle range of the spectrum. In sum, while the institutionalization of the newer specialties has redefined and broadened[13] the fissure between micro- and macro-analysis, it would seem that, on the whole, the Microsociology/Macrosociology Dimension as an intellectual parameter structuring the discipline is on the decline as evidenced by the erratic arrangement of most sections.

The Social Organization of ASA

According to the report of the Ad Hoc Committee on ASA Future Organizational Trends (1989: 1), "ASA membership that belongs to multiple sections is apparently the most organizationally mobilized and influential segment of the ASA." Furthermore, Cappell and Guterbock (1992: 268) argue that "ASA sections seem to attract members active in research and publication." It is not hard to see that sociologists occupying a more central position in the scientific and social network of their discipline will be more heavily committed to control their environment and thus more interested in securing their existing position by becoming members of their national peer scholarly society and, within it, strive to promote the specific interests of their subfields. Along the same lines, the more network-conscious a member, the more sections she will join in an attempt to keep abreast of developments and resource opportunities in that particular field.

It would seem then that, given the overall stability in the absolute number of ASA members, both the increase in joint section memberships and the increase in sections[14] should be attributed to a heightened sense of professionalization within the association that reflects the gradual tightening of the academic job market since the late 1970s. The success of the first sections that took advantage of the organizational density and opportunities offered by ASA has triggered a competition between sections to procure more members,[15] more sessions, more awards, more funding, and more events for themselves. According to John McCarthy, "professions have many of the characteristics of social movements, which organize to create and control markets for their services, as well as engaging in educational and political lobbying and legitimation efforts" (Ad Hoc Committee 1989: 2). In this respect, the social organization of sections should be seen as a more accurate measure of the status of the profession than that of ASA proper. Proceedings in and around sections better reflect the organizational dynamics of American sociology that is ultimately the interpretational target of this article.

As the Critical/Applied and Micro-/Macro-sociology dimensions of the MDS analysis have already helped assess the intellectual structure of ASA, so will the Professional Power dimension serve as an indicator of its social organization. Undoubtedly, professional status is not easily measurable. There simply are too many factors that need to be taken into consideration in order to achieve a truly

cogent model. To further complicate matters, I was not able to gain access to raw data on such obvious variables as gender, race, age, education level, employment (sector and type), membership status, selected journals, and gross annual income of ASA members (i.e., information disclosed in the membership application form but confidential for obvious reasons). Instead, I had to infer gender from the forenames of members and make intuitive sense of information on the distribution of ASA minority members across sections available through Cappell and Guterbock's report (1992), who did have direct access to electronic files on ASA section membership and found a heavy representation of minorities in the "Racial and Ethnic Minorities" section.

Given these caveats, my results appear surprisingly consistent with their proposed professional status interpretation. Starting with common elements for both time points, family, minorities, and gender issues seem to be asymmetrically represented at one pole of the axis: following Figs. 3 and 5, the "Racial and Ethnic Minorities," "Family," "Sex and Gender," and "Undergraduate Education" sections are plotted at the upper half of the plane[16] while, in 1997, the structural positioning of the newly introduced "Latino/a Sociology," "Sociology of Children" sections, and the "Section on Sexualities" only reinforces this pattern. On the other side of the spectrum, the prestigious clusters of "Deviance and Control" and "Mathematical Sociology" partly define the field that is characteristically occupied by sections whose male/female ratio[17] is disproportionately high.[18] However, it should be noted that, unlike the 1980-86 ASA experience, where, on average, women comprise less than one-third of section members (Cappell and Guterbock 1992: 271), in 1997 the overall male/female ratio is 57:43. Moreover, this ratio varies only slightly between the sections that set the pace for the two opposite sides of the Professional Power dimension. In other words, the outlying cases of either especially high or especially low male/female ratios are the exception rather than the rule for both poles of the axis, indicating a gradual softening of the effect of gender on professional status hierarchies, at least as far as the discipline of sociology is concerned.

The opposite ends of the 1997 Professional Power spectrum are occupied by four of the newly introduced sections when most sections have clearly shifted towards the middle portion of the plane (Fig. 5). Interestingly, these sections happen to be "International Migration" and "Latino/a Sociology" at one pole and "Rational Choice" and "Mathematical Sociology" at the other. Once again, it is the presence of newly formed sections that broadens the existing gap between sociological subfields.[19]

It seems then that it is not one single criterion, whether it be gender or ethnic background, that structures sections along the Professional Power dimension. Rather, it is the combined effect of all of the above that produces the resulting configuration. Hence the attractiveness of the professional status interpretation, which does not favor one explanatory factor in abstracto but, instead, looks at the logic of the situation that every time redefines the notion and dynamics of power.

Discussion

Up until now, the discussion has revolved exclusively around the intellectual and social organization of ASA. The ultimate objective of this study, however,

has been to gain a glimpse at the structure of American sociology per se. In the manner of the previous studies by Cappell and Guterbock (1992) and Ennis (1992), it was assumed that, through the identification of patterns of alignment within the parameters of its peak association, related structures could possibly be traced within the discipline itself. Based on this assumption, I concentrated on sections as my unit of analysis. Indeed, sections proved to be a rigorously defined segment of ASA both in cognitive and organizational terms: each section represents a distinct intellectual field or research area and each has its own administrative forces committed to the coordination and promotion of its respective subfield within the larger association of sociology. Springing out of a plethora of specialties and crystallized into a legitimized intellectual field through the concentrated efforts of a critical mass of members, sections are the visible (Cappell and Guterbock 1992) structural parallel to the dynamics involved in the cognitive and organizational arrangement of their discipline.

Briefly, the pattern suggested by my previous analysis is that of an environment of relatively stable coexistence of several research clusters. This apparent atmosphere of pluralism is punctured by an ongoing debate over metatheoretical issues as is indicated by the fissures between critical vs. applied and micro- vs. macro-approaches. In this respect, as centers of skill production, certification and recruitment continue to be identified with the university environment while the administrative apparatus of the welfare state retains control over a substantial chunk of research funding, the discipline is bound to be loosely divided into, on the one hand, a sociology that is more theoretically nuanced, preoccupied with a dynamic image of society, and, on the other, a sociology that is primarily geared into an instrumental or pragmatic mode of conceptualizing social reality, addressing commonsensically defined social problems in need of policy "solutions." A methodological/ideological preference for engaging society at the micro- vs. the macro-level of analysis further complicates this tension.

This problematic state of affairs is reinforced by the fact that scientific fields, exactly because they lack intellectual and organizational direction from the discipline as a whole, tightly cluster into thematically distinct subdisciplines whence they draw resources and reputational legitimation. In this sense, sociology can be conceptualized as an "umbrella scientific discipline" (Whitley 1976). Its lack of a coherent, well-developed theoretical framework and its reliance on an eclectic array of methodological principles renders it vulnerable to metaphysical debates and identity crises and unusually dependent on exogenous sources such as the state and the other sciences for justification and support. At the same time, reflecting a generalized tendency for greater professionalization, subfields increasingly rely on specialty associations, journals, and research networks as a means of coordinating collective activities. It would seem then that ASA, the peak association, is still viewed as the most legitimate forum for communication and funding opportunities, and subfields make sure that they are sufficiently represented in its ranks by forming their own section; it is specialty associations, however, that are seen as the most efficient venue for the exchange of ideas, networking, and market assessment.

The picture that emerges for the discipline of sociology is that of a considerably diffuse scientific community with research networks radiating around conceptually relevant intellectual and organizational centers. Although the commu-

nication infrastructure within these research clusters is expected to be quite elaborate, brokerage ties between them will not prove quite as significant, with interspecialty competition primarily acting as a negative identification marker that keeps research areas intellectually and socially segregated from each other. Furthermore, the absence of a centralizing or ordering principle structuring the discipline is bound to produce highly unstable or contested hierarchizations among the specialties. Consequently, scientific developments, training, and employment opportunities will tend to be concentrated across the various focal points and barely aggregate at the level of American sociology proper (cf. Turner and Turner 1990).

Exactly how sociology will ultimately survive this state of affairs remains to be seen. Still, this study has been able to provide important insights on the dynamics currently structuring the discipline. It is along the dimensions of critical/applied sociology, professional power, and micro-/macro-sociology that the boundaries within the discipline are shifting and expected to continue to shift during the next few decades. In this respect, for example, although the influx of women into sociology is bound to trigger a domino effect all across the field as it creates novel selective affinities and status hierarchies between sociologists and specialties, the rebalancing of the situation will most probably occur according to the guidelines set by the aforementioned three criteria. In light of my results for ASA, I would maintain, however, that the microsociology/macrosociology parameter is bound to have an increasingly weaker effect on the structuring of the discipline.

My findings on the structure of ASA and, in extension, the discipline of sociology during the 1990s echo the findings of similar empirical studies on ASA and sociology during the 1980s. Based on this evidence, it would seem that the identity of both sociology and its practitioners is being debated and formed around certain enduring critical parameters. Thus, while the critical/applied sociology, the microsociology/macrosociology, and the professional power dimensions serve as fissures that drive specialties apart, they similarly serve as guidelines around which specialties can be coherently arranged into a holistic picture. In effect, the persistence of the three-dimensional interpretative framework suggests that the discipline is solid enough to be conceptualized within a few parameters. Consequently, the resilience of the aforementioned factors in the face of the proliferation of subspecialties can be seen as a basis for some optimism.

In this article, I do not claim to have predicted where sociology is going. I do hope, however, to have provided an empirical analysis that will help make better sense of the present intellectual and professional structure of the discipline and will expose current debates about the direction of the field to real trends and realistic expectations.

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Notes

1. Although Ennis's data comes from the 1990 ASA membership directory, it actually reflects information gathered in 1989.
2. As will become clearer in the following section, areas of members' interests are based on an "Index of Areas of Sociological Interest" compiled by ASA and included in the ASA membership form. From this index, prospective members are asked to indicate in order of priority four research areas they are interested in.
3. Note that Ennis as well as Cappell and Guterbock essentially equate ASA with American sociology. Although I do believe that this bridge is theoretically and methodologically justifiable to some extent, I am not prepared to make such a strong claim here. In the absence of other corroborative data, my analysis can only be about ASA. It is only in the discussion section that I explore the structural parallels with American sociology suggested by my results.
4. According to the authors, this dimension also establishes to a certain extent a split between theoretical and applied sociology, a finding that confirms Ennis' results.
5. In order to control for absolute section size which would otherwise influence the spatial proximity of sections, I used Jaccard's similarity measure, a matching coefficients measure in which joint absences are excluded and equal weight is given to matches and non matches: a/a+b+c (SPSS 1993: 127-42). For a pair of sections, a is the number of persons naming both specialties, b is the number naming the first section but not the second, and c is the number naming the second section but not the first. In the resulting similarity matrix, cell values represent the similarity measure between sections and the value on the main diagonal equals 1. The higher the value between sections, the more proximate the two sections.
6. As a matter of fact, the high proximity factor shared by certain pairs of sections points to a quite significant intellectual and social correspondence between them. In the 1990 cluster, there are four such pairs: "Comparative Historical Sociology" and "Political Sociology" (raw proximity distance: .198), "Sociology of Culture" and "Theory" (.167), "Social Psychology" and "Sociology of Emotions" (.185), and "Aging and the Life Course" and "Medical Sociology" (.177). In the 1997 cluster, the pairs rise to six: "Sociology of Mental Health" and "Medical Sociology" (.233), "Sociology of Law" and "Crime, Law and Deviance" (.210), "Rational Choice" and "Mathematical Sociology" (.191), "Race, Gender and Class" and "Sex and Gender" (.208), "Sociology of Culture" and "Theory" (.201), and "Comparative Historical Sociology" and "Political Sociology" (.229).
7. The stress values (Kruskal formula 1) for the solutions from one dimension to six dimensions for year 1990 are .45, .28, .18, .13, .10, and .08. The corresponding R^2 values are .39, .54, .69, .78, .83, and .87. Similarly, the stress values for the solutions from one dimension to six dimensions for year 1997 are .50, .28, .19, .15, .11, and .09. The corresponding R^2 values are .29, .54, .68, .75, .82, and .86.
8. On the one hand, the slightly circular pattern of both time points of the two-dimensional configuration might possibly indicate a degenerate structure. On the other, the third dimension is getting progressively more loosely defined between Cappell and Guterbock's 1980-86 ASA configuration, my 1990 results and then my 1997 results, again indicating a degenerate structure.
9. These three criteria correspond to the labels of the three dimensions. I will expand on them in the following pages. For the purposes of simplicity and continuity, I have kept Cappell and Guterbock's (1992) chosen nomenclature. Incidentally, one should note in comparing the 1990 and 1997 arrangements that the Critical/Applied Dimension appears reversed in the latter configuration. Orientation is arbitrarily determined by the SPSS MDS procedure and has no effect on the actual structural positioning of sections.
10. In 1990, the sections with the highest joint section membership were: "Medical Sociology" (677 joint members), "Organizations, Occupations and Work" (633), "Theory" (493), "Sociology of Culture" (470), "Social Psychology" (466), and "Racial and Ethnic Minorities" (454). In 1997, the sections with the highest joint section membership were: "Sex and Gender" (1001), "Organizations, Occupations and Work" (798), "Sociology of Culture" (731), "Race, Gender and Class" (675), "Medical Sociology" (674), and "Family" (640). These numbers are as much indicators of a section's relative popularity as they are indicators of the zeal of its recruiting officers and the various benefits associated with joining.

11. Thus, while the sections on "Race and Gender" and "Racial and Ethnic Minorities" belong in two separate clusters in 1990, in 1997 they form part of a new research cluster around the area of Race and Gender Studies (cf. Figs. 1 and 2).
12. In this respect, the "applied" side of the Critical/Applied axis does not exclusively refer to Standard American Sociology as Cappell and Guterbock (1992) would have it. It encompasses, rather, a somewhat different spectrum of American sociology than the kind of structural-functionalist work pursued in the fifties and sixties that also had a quite salient theoretical component. According to Gouldner (1970: 475), "An administrative sociology views the world from the standpoint of the values and needs of the administrative elites in the society and is shaped by the initiatives, perspectives, and limits of such elites. [...] The central social function of an administrative sociology is to find less costly and more effective ways of satisfying the distinctive requirements of the institutional status quo."
13. Compare the range of the Microsociology/Macrosociology Dimension in 1997 vs. that in 1990 (Figs. 4 and 6).
14. The introduction of new sections and the increase in joint section memberships are not necessarily related. For example, out of the total 5,060 joint section members in 1997, only 2,357 are members of at least one of the 1990 sections and one of the 11 new sections introduced since then; 2,631 are still only members of at least two of the 1990 sections while 72 are only members of at least two of the 11 new sections. More information is required to fully explore the significance of the interaction effect between the two phenomena.
15. It can be legitimately argued that intersection competition might possibly have led to an inflation of section memberships, which would partially explain the dramatic increase of joint section memberships in the face of the constancy of the number of ASA members. This inflation could also have a potentially important effect on the structure of the discipline. In an attempt to determine the extent of such noise, I experimented with dividing a member's contribution to a section by the total number of his/her section memberships and redid the analysis. A person who was a member in two sections was credited .5 per section, a person who was a member in three sections was credited .33 per section etc. In effect, the resulting cluster and MDS configuration of year 1990 are indicative of some data inflation since they better anticipate the structure of the discipline in 1997 (Figs. 5 and 6). In the new 1990 clustering, for example, the Education and Computers cluster is already in existence and all clusters are more neatly grouped together in the MDS analysis. On the other hand, discrepancies between the two analyses are not significant enough to suggest a serious flaw with the chosen methodology. Either way, further research is needed in order to develop more accurate weights to control for the possibility of section membership inflation.
16. It must be noted, however, that the section on "Asia/Asian American", expected to be grouped near the top of the Professional Power axis in accordance to Cappell and Guterbock's 1980-86 analysis, appears, quite on the contrary, in the far low side of the plane. This deviation is remedied in the 1997 configuration where the "Asia/Asian American" section dutifully appears at the far upper pole of the Professional Power axis (Fig. 5). But more generally, this second dimension is far less clear-cut than the Critical/Applied one and interpretation of the resulting configurations is of necessity somewhat tentative if not impressionistic. It is worth mentioning that in a previous report, Cappell and Guterbock (1986: 31), noting the haziness of the second dimension, translated the ensuing structure as conforming to "a contrast between more quantitative and more qualitative methods of analysis"—an interpretation that they outrightly rejected in their later report (Cappell and Guterbock 1992: 271).
17. In accordance with the professional status hypothesis and in order not to unduly bias the results with the dramatic inflow of female students in sociology departments since the end of the last decade (on average, the ratio of male vs. female joint student members is 4:6 for both 1990 and 1997), I computed the proportion of males vs. females per section from the pool of members with regular member status.
18. For year 1990, the exceptionally high male/female ratios are 74:26 for "Methodology," 74:26 for "Peace and War," 72:28 for "Sociology and Computers," and 68:32 for "Environment and Technology." On the other hand, the sections of "Aging and the Life Course" and "Sex and Gender" have a low ratio of 49:51 and 21:79 respectively. For year 1997, the high male/female ratios reach 71:29 for "Political Economy of the World System," 70:30 for "Marxist Sociology," 67:33 for "Crime, Law and Deviance," 66:34 for "Peace and War," and 71:29 for "Sociology and Computers."

19. Compare the range of the Professional Power Dimension in 1997 vs. that in 1990 (Figs. 3 and 5).

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