A Forgotten Figure: Hans L. Zetterberg at Columbia and the Transfer of Knowledge Between the United States and Sweden

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Accepted: 3 March 2022 / Published online: 29 March 2022 © The Author(s) 2022

Abstract
The main purpose of this paper is to provide a biographical sketch of the late Hans L. Zetterberg and a historical background to a translation of an essay based on a lecture given by Zetterberg in Stockholm in 1995. In it, he recounts his time at the Department of Sociology at Columbia University in the years 1953–1964. This essay is full of insights into an inspiring and formative period for Zetterberg in the United States, particularly in the stimulating milieu that was Columbia, at this time the center of American sociology led by Robert K. Merton and Paul Lazarsfeld. In the introduction to this translated essay, I give a brief overview of the establishment of sociology as a discipline in Sweden, and the transfer of knowledge between the United States and Sweden (and Europe, more broadly), embodied in Hans Zetterberg. In the post-WWII years, American sociology, which had a strong positivistic imprint, played an important role in shaping the beginnings of Swedish sociology. However, the transfer of knowledge went both ways, with Zetterberg, a semi-central and often neglected figure, being both a significant contributor to sociology at Columbia in its period of greatest prominence, and in his native Sweden.

Keywords Columbia · Zetterberg · History · Sociology · Sweden

Introduction

Hans Lennart Zetterberg (1927–2014) was born into a middle-class family and grew up in the outskirts of Stockholm. In 1947, he finished high school (Bromma läroverk), and began studying sociology at the then newly established department at Uppsala

1 I would like to acknowledge and thank Karin Busch Zetterberg for meeting with me and providing me with insight into Hans’ life. I met with her in June, 2021, in a café in Stockholm, where we had an informal interview. I would also like to thank Richard Swedberg for allowing me to use his personal correspondence in this paper. All sources in this introduction are documented under the references list. For more information on Hans’ life: www.zetterberg.org
University in 1948, under the tutelage of Torgny T. Segerstedt – Sweden’s first sociology professor. A year later he would travel to Minnesota and study under F. Stuart Chapin, thanks to a fellowship by the Sweden-America Foundation. In 1950, he also became acquainted with large-scale survey research, something non-existing in Europe at the time, which would become an important formative experience for Zetterberg. He spent time at the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago, and at Princeton, where he met George Gallup, among other several polling organizations (Busch Zetterberg, 2021). Zetterberg received his master’s degree in 1951 and in (1952) his licentiate degree from Uppsala University. According to his own statement, he chose not to defend his dissertation in Sweden after seeing how hard the psychologist Rudolf Anderberg assailed fellow doctoral student Georg Karlsson during his dissertation defense, most likely due to psychologists’ realization of the new competitive science at that time, namely sociology (Aspers, 2015: 85).

While Zetterberg was a graduate student at the University of Minnesota, Professor Chapin introduced him to a rigid methodology based on logical empiricism, and it was here where he met the strict methodological ideas of George Andrew Lundberg, which would have a major influence on Swedish sociology in the years after World War II. Lundberg earned his PhD in 1925 at the University of Minnesota and then

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2 The origins of the establishment of sociology as a discipline in Sweden can be traced back to the early 1900’s, where in 1903 Gustaf Steffen (1864–1929) became Sweden’s first sociology professor in Economics and Sociology at the Gothenburg University College, currently the University of Gothenburg. Despite this, Steffen is often not considered the first sociology professor in Sweden, mainly for two reasons: the first being that the professorship was split between two subjects, sociology and economics, and the second reason being that he did not have any lasting influence in future Swedish sociology, at least when considering a more international perspective (Wisselgren, 1997: 75–76). It is not until the post-war years in 1947, that sociology in Sweden is considered to have its start at Uppsala University under Torgny Segerstedt. At this time, the Swedish state played a significant role in establishing the discipline. For instance, in 1943 a proposal was submitted by representative political parties calling for an improvement of academic research and education in social conditions, since developments in Swedish society were not being studied or taught at the country’s universities and colleges. This resulted in the offering to those who held Chair in Practical Philosophy at different universities the chance to switch to sociology (Larsson & Magdalenić, 2015), making Segerstedt the first sociology professor in Sweden. According to Segerstedt himself, “the background to the decision to establish special sociology professorships in 1947 was as follows: during the war, the idea emerged that it was the scientific potential that would determine the outcome of the war. That view was internationally embraced and, in this country, it was represented above all by Tage Erlander (Prime Minister) and his advisers. The main focus was on science and technology, but Erlander was convinced that society would change rapidly and that a deeper understanding of that process required social science knowledge, based on basic research. For that reason, they wanted to strengthen the conditions of research” (Segerstedt, 1987: 13).

3 F. Stuart Chapin was an important figure in the creation of a quantitative/statistical sociology in the United States. He received his PhD in Sociology from Columbia University and was head of the Minnesota Department of Sociology from 1922 to 1951. He also served as the 25th President of the American Sociological Society (renamed Association) in 1935.

4 A licentiate is a degree that is half-way to a doctoral degree. Zetterberg received an honorary doctorate degree from Umeå University in 1977. According to his widow, Karin Busch Zetterberg, “you did not need to have a doctoral degree then.” (Busch Zetterberg, 2021).

5 Rudolf Anderberg became the first professor of psychology in Sweden, at Uppsala University in 1948.

6 Georg Karlsson was one of the first sociology students in Sweden. He went on to become the head of the then newly established Sociology department at Umeå University in 1966.
went on to teach at Columbia University until 1927. Thereafter, he spent most of his time at the University of Washington, where he served as department chair from 1945 until his retirement in 1963. He also served as the 33rd president of the American Sociological Association two years prior in 1943.

In Sweden, Lundberg’s books were mandatory readings in Sociology courses in Uppsala, Lund and Stockholm (Larsson & Magdalenić, 2015: 27). Lundberg advocated a strictly positivistic sociology and under his influence, the Department of Sociology at the University of Washington became one of the first American sociology departments to develop a vision of sociology as a scientific discipline (About the Department, 2022). In 1949, Lundberg spent two months in Stockholm where he was “greeted as a master” (Larsson & Magdalenić, 2015: 29), and his type of sociology, simply called “American Sociology” at that time, symbolized a broader empirical-positivistic sociology, which left a lasting influence in Sweden.

The transfer of knowledge between the two countries was evident in the post-war years. Not only did American scholars visit Sweden and other Scandinavian nations but many Swedes travelled to the United States since “Sweden lacked advanced education in the subject and the likelihood of rapid career advancement at home was greatly increased after spending time abroad… Sociology and the social sciences in general flourished in interwar America…[and] the dynamic, creative environment had benefited from the increasing stream of intellectuals fleeing fascist Europe” (Larsson & Magdalenić, 2015: 26). Moreover, not only did Americans have a vision of rebuilding Europe economically, in the form of the Marshall Plan, but also intellectually. Shortly after the end of World War II, three Harvard students had the vision to rebuild Europe by pursuing a “Marshall Plan for the Mind,” thus creating the Salzburg Global Seminar in Austria. Whereas the Marshall Plan saw economic aid as the vital force for rebuilding war-torn Europe, the founders of the Salzburg Global Seminar knew the importance of strengthening and supporting intellectual and cultural ties between Europe and the United States. They believed that former enemies could talk and learn from each other, even as countries recovered from the catastrophes of war (Hunt, 2019).

According to Bo Andersson, his first direct contact with American sociology (apart from visiting lecturers in Uppsala) was Talcott Parsons teaching at the Salzburg Global Seminar or as it was called then, the “American Summer Institute in Salzburg.” Among the students in this summer course were some who became famous sociological researchers, such as Johan Galtung who founded the Peace Research Institute Oslo, Norway (PRIO), and Rainer Lepsius from

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7 These students were Scott Elledge, Richard “Dick” Campbell, Jr., and Clemens Heller, born in Vienna and whose father was Sigmund Freud’s publisher. Eventually, he would later establish an institution fostering international research in the social sciences, “Maison des Sciences de l’Homme,” together with the French historian Fernand Braudel.

8 Bo Andersson was one of the first sociology students in Sweden, at Uppsala University, and also a student of Hans Zetterberg. He would eventually move to Stanford where he worked with Joseph Berger et al. (1972).
West Germany, a scholar of Max Weber. Perhaps not surprisingly, all three ultimately travelled to the United States, specifically to Columbia University. For Andersson and Galtung, the invitation came from Zetterberg himself: “the reason Bo Andersson came to Columbia was because I had the chance to nominate two people from Scandinavia on the condition that one would be a mathematical sociologist (it was Paul Lazarsfeld\(^9\) who was interested of mathematical sociology). It was then Johan Galtung and Bo Andersson, who was a lecturer at Uppsala University” (Zetterberg, 2019: 490).

Thus, when Zetterberg arrived at Columbia, he came “partly with intellectual baggage from the Midwest and partly from Sweden” (Zetterberg, 2019: 499). The baggage from Sweden was logical positivism. By then, he had written *Theory and Verification in Sociology* (Zetterberg, 1954), just before arriving at Columbia, which was very well received there. This book came out in three different editions in (1st ed in 1954 by Almqvist & Wiksell, Stockholm; 2nd ed: 1963 and 3rd ed: 1965, both on Zetterberg’s own press, Bedminster Press, NJ). In it, he tried to put all of sociology under a smaller number of common theoretical principles, from which one could derive hypotheses, and test them, leading to an axiomatic theory in sociology. This book became an important part of Columbia Sociology, in which Zetterberg argued for verification; in that all theories must be verified through empirical research, not just contain unsupported statements. As a testament of how important this book was for sociology at Columbia, I refer to Robert K. Merton’s view on the matter: “Perhaps the most thoroughgoing and detailed analyses of the logical structure of middle-range theory have been developed by Hans L. Zetterberg in his monograph *Theory and Verification in Sociology*” (Merton, 1968: 60). An excerpt of Zetterberg’s book “On Axiomatic Theories in Sociology,” was also featured in *The Language of Social Research* (Lazarsfeld & Rosenberg, 1955), what was generally considered the most important book in methodology in American sociology. According to Zetterberg, however, verification proved to be a difficult task and he instead focused on teaching the classical works in sociology. This was not necessarily a choice he had made, but it was something expected of him: “…when I arrived in Columbia, they said something like this to me: ‘you, who come from Europe and know many languages, you have to teach the classics’” (Zetterberg, 2019: 499). He had to quickly become an expert on the classics, and it was a rather “difficult and challenging time for Hans” (Busch Zetterberg, 2021).

The early 1940’s to the mid-1950’s was a period in which modern sociology was undergoing a revolution at Columbia University through the introduction of several

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\(^9\) Paul Lazarsfeld was an Austrian-born sociologist, educated at the University of Vienna where he received his doctoral degree in applied mathematics in 1925. Shortly after, he became interested in applied psychology, and became assistant to Viennese psychologist Charlotte Bühler. In 1933, thanks to a Rockefeller Foundation grant Lazarsfeld arrived in the United States. He served as director of the Office of Radio Research at Princeton University (1937–40), and studied the effects of mass media on American society. It was also here where Theodor W. Adorno had his first job in the U.S. in 1938 as a researcher. The project was eventually transferred to Columbia University in 1940 and later renamed the Bureau of Applied Social Research (BASR). The bureau would become a very well-known laboratory for empirical social research.
new quantitative methods. Seymour M. Lipset\textsuperscript{10} expressed this “revolution” as being identified with Talcott Parsons and Robert K. Merton in theory and with Paul Lazarsfeld and Samuel Stouffer\textsuperscript{11} in methodology. According to Lipset, “the theory, variants of structure functionalism, subsumed all that had gone before. The methodology, largely innovations in quantitative analysis and formal logic, involved great advances over the seemingly simplistic, more qualitative work done earlier” (Lipset in Zetterberg, 1997: 9). In 1941, Robert Merton and Paul Lazarsfeld were hired at Columbia, and they found common ground in research inspired by "middle-range theory"\textsuperscript{12} – testable propositions, derived from theory, addressing observable phenomena. Their collaboration modernized Franklin Giddings’\textsuperscript{13} founding vision of the usage of quantitative methods and ultimately influenced the discipline all over the world (Western, 2022). Merton and Lazarsfeld would collaborate very closely for the next few decades and spend something like 3 hours every day to discuss research projects (Merton, 1998: 309).

A completely different type of sociology had been developed at Columbia – “middle-range sociology” – which set itself against the sociology from the Midwest (Zetterberg, 2019: 491), but also sociology conducted at Harvard University, where Pitirim Sorokin,\textsuperscript{14} Talcott Parsons, George C. Homans,\textsuperscript{15} and Samuel Stouffer were the most important figures. In an email conversation with sociologist Richard

\textsuperscript{10} Lipset received his bachelor’s degree from The City College of New York and his doctoral degree in Sociology from Columbia University. He was a major figure in political sociology and is known, among other things, for his “cleavage theory” together with Norwegian sociologist and political scientist Stein Rokkan. Lipset had also planned to collaborate and wrote a proposal on a comparative study of social mobility together with Zetterberg (Lipset in Zetterberg, 1997), but did not receive the funding (even bright minds do not get funding sometimes). What came out of this collaboration, however, was the Lipset-Zetterberg thesis which can be stated as “the overall pattern of social mobility is the same in Western industrial countries” (Jones, 1969). This proposal was later revised and included as a chapter in Social mobility in industrial society (Lipset & Bendix, 1959). See also Korom (2019) for more information on Lipset.

\textsuperscript{11} Stouffer was one of the leading statisticians in sociology and was the Director of the Laboratory of Social Relations at Harvard University. One of his most important works was Communism, Conformity & Civil Liberties (1955), where he found how levels of tolerance differed among people based on socioeconomic factors.

\textsuperscript{12} According to Zetterberg (2008), these theories are middle in several ways:

1. the range of phenomena to explain, i.e. the informative scope, degree of abstraction and comprehension of the definition of the phenomena, is deliberately limited.
2. the number of factors used in the explanation is deliberately limited.
3. the use of references to presumed general laws of sociology should be none or extremely limited.
4. the reliance on logical deductions in lieu of empirical evidence from general laws (or even confirmed general propositions) should be avoided or made with great reservations.

\textsuperscript{13} Franklin Giddings was the first full professor of Sociology in the United States and one of the “founding fathers” of American Sociology.

\textsuperscript{14} Sorokin was a Russian-American sociologist who founded the first sociology department in Russia in Saint Petersburg. He also worked at the University of Minnesota in the late 1920’s and in 1931 at Harvard University’s invitation, he set up the department of Sociology and was chairman for the next 13 years. Sorokin was also Robert K. Merton’s dissertation supervisor.

\textsuperscript{15} Homans served as the 54th of the American Sociological Association. Although Homans had no degrees in Sociology, he was an important figure in social exchange theory and behavioral sociology.
Swedberg, Zetterberg (2008) gives us his understanding on the relationship between the sociology at Columbia and at Harvard:

In a forthcoming book on middle range theory by Peter Hedström and Peter Bearman we are reminded that “Merton used the notion of middle-range theory mainly in a negative way, to distance himself from grand theory, on the one hand, and raw empiricism on the other.” The grand theorists were Sorokin and Parsons. And involved in this was also a post-war competition between Columbia and Harvard sociology. When I came to the Columbia department in 1954, *The Social System* (1951) by Talcott Parsons had just arrived. There was much talk about how we should position us to this book. Lazarsfeld argued that the author did not think of action as sophisticatedly as had his teachers, the Bühlers in Vienna (he asked Tony Oberschall to write a thesis to investigate the difference) … Merton gave a couple of lectures on Parsons’ book to which we in the junior faculty were welcome, very pedagogical, and helpful for the readers of the book. Eventually a consensus emerged in the whole junior faculty and among the theory interested researchers in The Bureau of Applied Social Research: The Parsonsian AGIL was a “premature closure,” to use Bo Andersson’s words. Merton and Lazarsfeld were happy with this conclusion; and perhaps unknowingly, so were the Columbia doctoral students who could stay away from Parsonian theory in framing their thesis projects; middle range was enough.

I had set my sights for social theory higher than middle range. The first edition of my *On Theory and Verification in Sociology* was out before I started at Columbia (and might have been one reason why I was appointed.) This book explicitly favored going all the way rather than middle range on items 3 and 4 in the list (see footnote 12). So did George C. Homans at Harvard.

During my time at Columbia, Homans was generally treated in the junior faculty with respect as someone “everybody” had to read. Among doctoral students, Terrence Hopkins and Charles Kadushin were clearly influenced by Homans’ way of presenting theory. I never heard Merton on doctoral committees debase any references to Homans. The threat to Columbia from Harvard for hegemony in American sociology in his view came from Parsons, not Homans. Merton and Homans were, however, competitors in the New York world of letters as being the rare sociologists who could write good, enjoyable English. The two were also practicing lifestyles in speech habits and

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16 Zetterberg here refers to the book by Hedström and Bearman (2009). *The Oxford handbook of analytical sociology*. Oxford University Press.

17 Vienna psychologists Charlotte Bühler and Karl Bühler (dissertation advisor of Karl Popper). Lazarsfeld was Charlotte Bühler’s assistant at the University of Vienna.

18 Parsons’ sociological scheme representing four basic functions (Adaptation, Goal Attainment, Integration, Latency) that all social systems must perform if they are to persist.
pronunciations, dress, and residential styles of New England gentlemen. Here, of course, the Boston Brahmin\footnote{George C. Homans was a descendent of Abigail Adams and John Quincy Adams, the sixth president of the United States, and therefore a quintessential Boston Brahmin. Merton, on the other hand, had changed his name from Meyer Robert Schkolnick to a more Anglo-sounding name. He was the son of an impoverished Jewish immigrant tailor from Philadelphia, Aaron Schkolnickoff and Ida Rasovskaya, an “avid reader who held anarchist political views…both were Yiddish-speaking…but spoke in English with their son.” (Crothers, 2020: 12).} was unbeatable.

Zetterberg was situated in the “mecca,” of sociology during its most pivotal years. During his stay at Columbia in the years 1953–1964, he worked alongside Merton, Lazarsfeld, Seymour Lipset, C. Wright Mills, Robert S. Lynd, and at that time doctoral students: Immanuel Wallerstein, James Coleman and Barney Glaser. Zetterberg supervised a few doctoral students, with Barney Glaser perhaps being the most known today. In personal correspondence with Richard Swedberg, Zetterberg (2010) provided insight into his role as a supervisor:

You have to ask Barney why I and not Merton became the main advisor on his dissertation. The advisor could also have been Hyman,\footnote{Herbert Hyman received his doctoral degree in Social Psychology in 1942. He joined the sociology department at Columbia as an Associate Professor in 1951 and was chair of the department 1965–1969. He also served as the Associate Director for the Bureau of Applied Social Research (1957–1969).} since the thesis was a secondary analysis of data collected for another purpose. It could also have been Lazarsfeld, since it concerned interview analysis. My simple ambition as Barney’s advisor was that thesis should be as good as the sum total of what Merton, Hyman, and Lazarsfeld could have expected from their doctoral students…Barney worked independently, ambitiously, carefully, and without delays and excuses. I do not remember any conflicts between us, but Barney may remember better. Best of all, his thesis met the cumulative criteria of Merton, Hyman, and Lazarsfeld, in other words, it was very very good… You ask if I saw any grounded theory in Barney’s thesis. We did not have in the Columbia Department any serious instruction in symbolic interactionism, the Chicago School of Sociology. At Barney’s time there, Natalie Rogoff was our only PhD from Chicago, and she was a researcher in BASR,\footnote{The Bureau of Applied Social Research.} not a teacher in the Department. I believe that not until symbolic interactionism was added to Barney’s repertoire through his collaboration with Anslem Strauss that a visible grounded theorist emerged.

Zetterberg’s work at Columbia, and then Ohio State University,\footnote{Zetterberg was Professor of Sociology at Ohio State in the years 1967–70.} in the 50’s and 60’s was mainly to teach the classics, especially European, to doctoral students. Together with his students, he had seminars where they were required to read one book a week and then meet to discuss it. Some important titles recurred every academic year while some were new. According to Zetterberg “even when a new group
read the same book, I did not find it tedious and usually reread the book myself. One of the best definitions of a classic is that it provides new insights every time it is reread” (Zetterberg, 1997: 369). Zetterberg would also visit Uppsala often around this time, together with one of his previous students, Bo Andersson. According to the late Johan Asplund, a former student of Zetterberg and former chair of sociology at Lund University:

Two of Segerstedt’s most talented students, Hans L. Zetterberg and Bo Andersson, had both moved to the United States. They returned quite often to Uppsala - Andersson on longer, Zetterberg on shorter visits. Those who remained in Uppsala admitted without much fuss, the brilliance the institution had produced which was now found in exile.

Andersson and Zetterberg’s performances were particularly stimulating. The former taught in the form of long improvised monologues and radiated a kind of controlled aggression. He was very short-sighted and used to stand close to the board, which he soon scribbled full of key words and formulas. Zetterberg lectured elegantly. He never lectured without manuscripts and had a slight American accent. One was intense, the other elegant. Had they not visited from time to time, I might have abandoned sociology (Asplund, 1987: 131).

Zetterberg would eventually become the chairman of the Department of Sociology at The Ohio State University between 1967–1969 (The only Swede to ever hold such a position in the United States) and return to Sweden shortly after for good, where he worked and built up Sifo (Swedish Institute for Opinion Surveys) together with his wife, Karin Busch Zetterberg. Zetterberg was also head of publishing at Bedminster Press, which in 1968, published both Pareto’s *Rise and...*
Fall of the Elites (Pareto, 1968), to which he wrote an introduction, and a full translation of Max Weber’s, Economy and Society (Weber, 1968), which was “something Hans was extremely proud of, it was very big and a fantastic success” (Busch Zetterberg, 2021), and was voted in 1997 by the American Sociological Association as the twentieth century’s most influential book in sociology. Moreover, Zetterberg was an Adjunct Professor of Sociology at Umeå University (1976–82), where he had several doctoral students (Busch Zetterberg, 2021) and received an honorary doctorate from the same university in 1977. He also acted as President of the World Association for Public Opinion Research (WAPOR) in 1986–88 and was the editor-in-chief of the conservative newspaper Svenska Dagbladet in 1987–1988, where he often took part in the public political debate. He was the last editor-in-chief for the entire newspaper, after it was split into different sections with different editors e.g., Culture, Business, Opinion (Busch Zetterberg, 2021).

His latest work consisted of The Many-Splendored Society (2009). 25 In 2017 the Hans L. Zetterberg Prize in Sociology was established at Uppsala University, given to a young researcher who through the combination of theory and practice in their work, has made important contributions to the field. The award was made possible through a donation from Hans L. Zetterberg’s family: his wife Karin Busch Zetterberg; son Martin C. Zetterberg and daughter Anne D. Zetterberg.

The essay that follows is based on a lecture given by Hans Zetterberg on April 10, 1995, at the Department of Sociology at Stockholm University. He “was a great speaker, and he could really stimulate a large crowd” (Busch Zetterberg, 2021). The original text was edited for publication in the Swedish sociology journal Sociologisk Forskning 26 and provided with a reference list by Anne-Sofia Ojala and Richard Swedberg and reviewed by Hans Zetterberg and Karin Busch Zetterberg. Before the death of Hans Zetterberg in 2014, he created a website about his own work with much valuable information, which the reader can find on the following web address: www.zetterberg.org.

Hans L. Zetterberg

Sociology at Columbia University 27

I studied Sociology during the 1940’s and was perhaps most active during the 50’s. It was during this time when I was at Columbia University. It wasn’t my first job in
America, since I had studied in the Midwest, at the University of Minnesota at the end of the 40’s and in the early 50’s. Already then, I had a pretty good idea about what constituted traditional American sociology: the one from Chicago, founded by Albion Small,28 and above all the one found in Michigan, which had its beginnings with Charles H. Cooley.29 A lot was new to me when I came to Columbia in 1953. I had a Swedish education from Uppsala University and an American education from the Midwest. The stars at Columbia were Robert S. Lynd, Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert K. Merton. Some of their best-known students were Philip Selznick and Seymour Martin Lipset, who in turn had a student named Immanuel Wallerstein. Lazarsfeld had a long line of students like Charles Y. Glock, Allan Barton and Hanan Selvin. Together with Merton, he trained several sociologists of which the top ones were on par with James Coleman, who died of cancer before he could receive a Nobel Prize. Juan Linz was also there and graduated. Merton’s students included David Sills, Ralph Ginsburg, Gillian Lindt and Harriet Zuckerman (who became his second wife). There were also Kingsley Davis and Herbert Hyman, the latter being a major researcher at the Bureau of Applied Social Research. Hyman also had a good student30 called C. Wright Mills. And then there was Bernard Barber at Barnard College.

Columbia University was 200 years old and had the usual American structure with two colleges – one for boys and one for girls. The one for boys was called Columbia College and the one for girls Barnard College. They are both co-educational nowadays, but at that time they were separate. They were 4-year colleges, where one felt a bit like a stepfather to the students. They lived there and they were taken care of. The students were only 16–17 years old when they arrived, and 21 when they graduated.

Columbia was also a research university. In fact, it was a very big school in terms of higher education; doctoral and master’s programs were much larger than undergraduate education. In a sense, it was like a reverse pyramid. It worked only to some extent, and just when I arrived, they had reformed undergraduate education. They had moved a large part of undergraduate studies to a newly opened school of “General Studies”; a school where students were of different ages, with slightly different ambitions or came from a European university.

The most prestigious part of Columbia was clearly the “Graduate School.” Herbert Hyman was at the Graduate School while Bernard Barber was at Barnard College of General Studies. C. Wright Mills was at Columbia College. He was interesting in the

28 Small founded the Department of Sociology at the University of Chicago in 1892, and was chair for over 30 years. In 1894 together with George E. Vincent (Small & Vincent, 1894), he published the first textbook in sociology: An introduction to the study of society.

29 Cooley taught the first sociology course at Michigan in 1899. He coined the concept of the “looking-glass self” and had a big influence on George Herbert Mead’s theory of self and symbolic interactionism.

30 “Eleve” in Swedish. Other translations may include “pupil” or even “apprentice.” This statement is somewhat unclear. One interpretation is the following: While both received their doctoral degrees in the same year (1942) Hyman was at the more prestigious Graduate School while Mills was at Columbia College. Hyman was also a Senior Project Director at the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) in Chicago. It is therefore likely that Hyman played a significant role during Mill’s early years at Columbia.
sense that he did not want so much to do with the Graduate School. He did not want any doctoral students. He reasoned something like this: “I have very essential knowledge of society and I want to share it with those who are going to play an important role in society – and you bet it’s not those who will become doctoral students in sociology! What is most important to new sociologists is in which university they will begin working at, and that is not interesting. Here at Columbia, however, the future American elite is also being educated: lawyers, businessmen, politicians, doctors, etc. I want to spend my time with the latter and not on the sociologists who attend the Graduate School.”

Although this was a respectable opinion, C. Wright Mills was a stunning individualist. He came to the university on a motorcycle – a German BMW, which was very unusual at that time in New York. In his home, he would write books on a big desk in the attic, which was divided into different parts. If the book had nine chapters, he would have nine different sections on his desk. In the middle of the table, he placed a board, where he had on the other side the books he was going to cite in the chapter he was working on (even if he was writing different chapters simultaneously). The books on the table were rarely whole books; he had torn out the pages that were interesting and thrown away the rest.

Another person at Columbia was Fritz Stern, editor of Science & Society, which during the 1930’s and 1940’s was the leading Marxist journal in America. And then there was Mirra Komarovsky at Barnard College who stood for feminism. In fact, we had quite a lot of Marxism and feminism even at that time. So, it doesn’t feel very unusual to me to attend a sociological conference nowadays and see post-Marxism and feminism – that is how it already was in our environment in the 1950’s.

Many at Columbia worked part-time and especially at the School of General Studies, which was open to all New York intellectuals. Many were recruited to teach part-time, and it became a very exciting group. There was Bell,31 for example, who was labor editor for Fortune Magazine, and covered the trade union movement. He wrote a book called The End of Ideology (1960), a title that since then has been like a millstone around his neck. There was also Herbert Marcuse, best known from the student movement in the 60’s. He lectured on the "one-dimensional man" (Marcuse, 1964). He lectured mostly late in the evenings for students who attended the School of General Studies. Another professor was Siegfried Kracauer, the first great film theorist (film sociologist).

There were also other interesting people from Europe like Amitai Etzioni and Guenther Roth,32 who came from Germany; Johan Galtung from Norway, and Bo Andersson from Uppsala (Sweden). The reason Bo Andersson came to Columbia was because I had the chance to nominate two people from Scandinavia on the condition that one would be a mathematical sociologist (it was Lazarsfeld who

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31 Born Daniel Bolotsky, Bell was a sociologist educated at The City College of New York and at Columbia University. The translator believes the information regarding Bell’s teaching at the School of General Studies may not be accurate. Daniel Bell became a professor of Sociology at Columbia in 1959 and served as chair of the Sociology Department (General Studies was an adult education program).

32 Roth studied under Theodor W. Adorno in Frankfurt. He received his doctoral degree from Berkeley under Reinhard Bendix and came to Columbia later in his career.
was interested in mathematical sociology). Bo stayed in America and is currently at Michigan State University. Johan Galtung, on the other hand, has a business card that would make you believe he is a professor at four different universities in different parts of the world. He did not want to be stuck just in one place.

We also had visiting professors from France who were doing work on the Renault factories, which was interesting. Ralf Dahrendorf, who was a professor in Konstanz (Germany), also came to Columbia – and later became Commissioner in the European Commission and Director of the London School of Economics. Dahrendorf was eventually made a knight. We also had a few other fellows, including Renate Mayntz a German sociologist, and Erik Allardt, who would become a kind of expert in Scandinavian sociology. In short: Columbia was an interesting and exciting environment with all these people, who were at different stages in their careers, which now converged.

In order to understand the uniqueness of Columbia, one has to define the sociology at Columbia vis-à-vis other schools in American sociology. First, in relation to the one in the Midwest, which constituted the original sociology of the United States (Small, Cooley and Ross). These early sociologists were authentically American. Admittedly, they had good contact with Europe, but they still constituted a genuine American tradition. On the contrary, some of their contemporary American colleagues, such as Sumner at Yale and Giddings at Columbia, were rather echoes of various European intellectual movements and not at all that interesting.

Of the early American sociologists, Cooley at Michigan was the most original. Shortly after the turn of the century, he coined terms such as "primary group," and "the looking-glass self." The first denotes such groups that are there to take care of us since the day we are born, who teach us languages, who teach us how deal with our aggressions, and who teach us how we shall see reality. Through these groups, we become that which we were not when we were born, namely humans. Note that such a task can only be performed by these groups. It cannot be taken over by bureaucratic institutions or by the market. In Cooley’s books *Social Organization* (1909) and *Human Nature and the Social Order* (1902), we find the image of man dependent on shared values - of norms from childhood and the immediate environment (the so-called small world, *lilla världen*). This conception is in fact, much more sophisticated than the individualism of the Enlightenment era and of the French and American Revolution. In the latter tradition, man is viewed as a being with a natural ability to reason, and it is this tradition that has become an ideology. The second conception has existed long before Columbia. The theory behind this came from George Herbert Mead in Chicago, a social philosopher who was active in the 1920’s and 1930’s and was a unique and early American contribution to sociology. There is nothing in the European tradition that correspond to these types of ideas.

The Chicago school of Sociology also included others than Mead, who was actually a philosopher. Here originated the typical American sociology, with books such as *The Ghetto* by Louis Wirth (1928), and *The Gang* by Frederic Thrasher (1927), among others. It was especially the social problems of Urban America to which the famous Chicago School devoted itself to. Against this background, however, a completely different type of sociology developed at Columbia, and the same was true at
Harvard University. Eventually, Chicago lost its central position in American sociology and was replaced by Columbia and Harvard.

The oldest of the three stars at Columbia had also been looking at local communities and their problems. It was Bob Lynd, who in the 1930’s used to be referred to as “Mr. Sociology.” He was well known through newspaper articles and on radio, as well as inside and outside Academia. He had studied "Middletown" – the new lifestyle in small town America. He wrote two books on Middletown, the first was written in the 1920’s and gave a rather idyllic picture of America – even if there were many disturbing novelties, such as cars (Lynd & Lynd, 1929). The second book was written during the Great Depression and was titled *Middletown in Transition* (1937). This book contained a more critical analysis and it’s evident that Lynd was inspired by a larger, and broader social knowledge with Marxist overtones, enabling him to do a class analysis of American society. He also wrote an influential book that came out in 1939, titled *Knowledge for What?* in which he talked about the role of social science in politics. He wrote, for instance, that “Nazi power-politics has stripped the social sciences in Germany of their intellectual freedom, while professors-in-uniform in Italy have been forced to betray their heritage by solemnly declaring the Italian population to be of Aryan origin. This is a critical time for social science” (Lynd [1939] 1964: 1). These Italian academics had thus saved their intellectual honor by saying that Italians were Aryans. There are many such examples from this time.

At about the same time [as Lynd’s book came out], a very thick volume was published by Parsons called *The Structure of Social Action* (1937) with the same point of departure. The message was that there is something wrong with the system that we have. Both books – written by two quite different people – contain, in fact, a similar critique of what we would today call neoliberalism.

It is obvious that Lynd’s book was written during the Great Depression. During this time in the United States, there was no shortage of nutrients in the fields, no shortage of machinery in the factories, and no shortage of agricultural workers, factory workers and engineers. But still starvation, poverty and general misfortune were widespread. Important parts of the social system had completely broken down. Lynd wrote, “[f]or it is the intractability of the human factor, and not our technologies, which have spoiled the American dream; and the social sciences deal with that human factor” (Lynd [1939] 1964: 4). Social scientists had not done their job but rather accepted American capitalism’s assumptions about society. “This over-ready acceptance of the main assumptions of the going system has been a source of confusion and embarrassment of the social sciences as that system has become highly unmanageable since the World War, and particularly since 1929” (Lynd [1939] 1964: 4). Lynd’s recipe against this was that one must get away from the theory of the Invisible Hand and develop instead a theory of social planning. He goes as far as to say that what is needed is “extensive planning and control of the individual.”

Many people agreed with Lynd on this side of the Atlantic (in Europe) and if you read Talcott Parsons’ book, you find a similar reasoning, though his analyses are more sophisticated from an history of ideas point of view. The conclusion, however, is the same: one cannot let a simple theory of supply and demand govern society. Social processes are governed by significantly more complicated things. Parsons did not seek support for his views in the reality of American society, but instead opted
for classic sociologists like Durkheim and Weber and demonstrated that they also had this critique.

Back to Columbia, though. There you had a more practical point of view on things. Lynd wanted a sociology that was about Great Social Engineering. There were few dissertations in this tradition. One was about the Tennessee Valley Authority and was written by Selznick (1949). Another one, analyzed the socialist experiment in Canada – this was Seymour Martin Lipset’s dissertation from 1949, published in 1950 as *Agrarian Socialism* (Lipset, 1950).

Lynd was a connoisseur of American society and at the same time a prophet of social engineering; he was a magnet that attracted many students with similar interests who wanted to follow his footsteps. As a Lynd enthusiastic, I had to take over one of his dissertations. A topic I would have never given to anyone – it was about the Coal and Steel Union. The study was conducted by Louis Lister. The work was greatly appreciated; it was high-quality sociology (Lister, 1960). It was quite clear that in the 1950’s, research of such large-scale planning constituted one of the major subjects of the social sciences. One easily forgets Lynd when talking about Columbia, since prominence is given to Lazarsfeld and Merton. But for us who were there, Lynd was a great man and a prophet.

Lynd was also eager to recruit faculty members who had some understanding of his ideas; and became very excited when he heard of a socialist man from Vienna who could possibly be hired: Paul Lazarsfeld. Lazarsfeld was eventually hired with the expectation that he would continue Lynd’s type of work, but instead he devoted himself to completely different things. And then there was Robert Merton who had written his first essay in the Marxist journal *Science & Society* – so Lynd had high hopes when he hired him. It was thought that Merton would continue in the Marxist tradition. Lynd, however, was not successful this time either. And then, when I came from Sweden, he became very interested, even if he had nothing to do with my nomination. We talked, and he thought it was interesting in Sweden with its social planning. He thought that I had all the right opinions. But he could not understand when I said that I was a bourgeois, and not a social democrat. “You are far to the left of the Democrats,” he said. "Yes, of course," I said – and so it was; the whole left–right dimension was so displaced in the U.S. that coming with bourgeois values from Sweden, you ended up far to the left of the established Left party in the United States, and so I was accepted by Lynd.

Merton had studied at Harvard where he encountered a very European sociological tradition. In the preface to his book *Social Theory and Social Structure* (1968) he writes about his mentor at Harvard. Merton had a mentor and a friend at Harvard. His mentor was Pitirim Sorokin and his friend Talcott Parsons. Both were actually his teachers, but he did not see it that way. This is how he wrote about Sorokin: “Before he became absorbed in the study of historical movements on the grand scale as represented in his *Social and Cultural Dynamics*, Pitirim A. Sorokin helped me to escape from the provincialism of thinking that effective studies of society where confined within American borders and from the slum-encouraged provincialism of

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33 *borgerlig*, usually used to denote someone with socially conservative and economically liberal views.
thinking that the primary subject-matter of sociology was centered in such peripheral problems of social life as divorce and social delinquency. I gladly acknowledge this honest debt, still not discharged” (Merton, 1968: xiii). This is just one sentence in the foreword – a single long sentence – where one can see how Merton, at the same time, distanced himself from the Chicago school, which devoted itself to studying social problems, and partly from Sorokin’s so-called “Grand Theory.” Grand Theory was not a concept that existed at that time, but it was introduced by Mills (1959). We called it macro-theory.

What was it about Grand Theory that Merton distanced himself from, while thanking Sorokin for introducing him to classical European sociology? It was Sorokin’s history of ideas – his great theory of how it fluctuates within societies from sensate culture to ideational culture. In sensate culture, symbols and culture have a clear and close connection to the senses; it is concerned with the material and emotions. In ideational culture, however, most symbols are distant from emotions; they contain the symbolic world of the spiritual world. In sensate culture, activities are outwardly facing – in ideational culture, they are introspective.

Sorokin’s work Social and Cultural Dynamics (Sorokin, 1937) came out in four volumes between 1937 and 1941. He tried to show how the different parts of Western culture fluctuated between sensate culture and ideational culture, and he tabulated these fluctuations. For example, he had a long chapter on how philosophy and knowledge have fluctuated since ancient Greece. Sorokin’s assistant was Robert K. Merton. Merton disliked to hastily categorize various philosophical works and then place them on a curve that showed how much was ideational culture and sensate culture. However, Merton became so interested in his task that the Sociology of Science would remain one of his specialties.

Sorokin became somewhat of a prophet whom one believed to be able to predict the future. Some believed that he predicted the rise of Hitler through his theory that great frictions can occur in society when it goes from sensate culture to ideational culture. In the final phase, when sensate culture is abandoned, there is a lot of violence and blood; and that’s exactly what Sorokin emphasized in the 1930’s. There were plenty who thought this was a correct diagnosis. As the great prophet that he was, he also predicted the new ideational culture that would come after Nazism.

You get easily nostalgic when you are in America, and I used to think of an old song that I heard when I was a student in Sweden that fit in very well with Sorokin’s theory. “One day it will be summer, so the ballads claim, one day space will loom over the land. Much shall be shattered that has shone far and wide, but mankind shall be lifted in spirit.” That suited Sorokin very well, I thought.

Merton did not want to know any more of this nonsense (Sorokin’s type of ideas). He instead developed a much more close and manageable type of sociology, which he called middle-range sociology (see Merton, 1968). There are many examples of middle-range theories, including some that Merton developed together with Lazarsfeld. Lazarsfeld, for example, was interested in researching newspaper reading, but it was mostly boring tables: this person and that person read this type.

34 När skönheten kom till byn – “When Beauty came to the village.”.
and that type of newspapers, etc. There was nothing captivating. However, Merton managed artfully to fit this into a middle-range theory; there are two types of newspaper readers: *cosmopolitans* and *locals* (Merton, 1968: 441–74). The former see more exhaustive news in their news feed, and want to know how things are going for the government, their nation and the world; while the latter just want to know how things are going for their small local community. It was only this and nothing else that Merton added to the newspaper analysis. So, he used a great European theory to invigorate rather dull tabulations about who read which newspapers on Long Island. Merton’s analysis turned the report into a wonderful reading – and it all provided evidence of what you could accomplish with middle-range sociology. There are many other theories that one could bring up. The best known is Merton’s analysis of anomie (see Merton, 1968: 185–248). Here Merton uses Parson’s early work, but mostly Durkheim’s.

The most useful part of middle-range sociology to students at Columbia was certain terminologies and theories, which were incredibly simple. Take for example the sociological question, what is human, who are you? The answer is not that you are aggressive or submissive, because then it would be psychology. Instead, the answer is that you are a professor, and also a man, a husband, etc. This is called a *status set*. If you have not become a professor but have gone through another type of education and various positions, then we have a *status sequence* – another example of simple terminology. The professor, spouse or man play different roles – a collegial role among all other professors, another for students and a third vis-a-vis the university administration. Not only do you have a status set but also a *role set*.

Another example is Herbert Hyman’s interview surveys, which Merton made theoretically interesting by connecting them to social anthropology. In this way, the background factors in interview surveys were emphasized theoretically and merged into Merton’s structuralism. Since I am a functionalist, this suited me well. Simple commercial research on demographic background factors could suddenly be elevated to a more theoretical and interesting level.

Another very simple approach that Merton used was SED; abbreviation for *Socially Expected Duration* (Merton, 1984). The formal definition of this term has to do with the mutually prescribed, or commonly defined expectations about the evolution of time that is built into different social structures. Much of Merton’s work was about trying to incorporate time into the social structure. Some social phenomena are long, others are short. Marriage is expected to be long, tenure rather long, and employment in a project fairly short. All of this regarding long- and short-time spans has theoretical properties that are very important. One can, for example, build

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35 Merton’s interest in the social organization of time is likely to have originated during his years at Harvard (1931–1939), during which he coauthored the article *Social Time: A Methodological and Functional Analysis*, together with Sorokin. In it, they argue that social time is different from astronomical time or “clock-time.” According to the authors “social time expresses the change or movement of social phenomena in terms of other social phenomena taken as points of reference...social time, in contrast to the time of astronomy, is qualitative and not purely quantitative; [and] these qualities derive from the beliefs and customs common to the group and that they serve further to reveal the rhythms, pulsations, and beats of the societies in which they are found (Sorokin & Merton, 1937: 618–623).
the social structure of political phenomena around the term of office. The market can integrate the future in the present. Here we have yet another very simple concept, which is also useful in purely empirical research.

We were all aware of how simple it all was, but Merton still managed to elevate it to a very elegant level. His lectures were about simple topics and they were well attended. When Bob Lynd might have had 8–10 students toward the end of his life, Merton had around 60 to 80 students in his lectures. He would walk in with his tweed jacket and with a pipe in his mouth, and then begin a brilliant lecture without interruptions. He was absolutely fascinating. Some of us – it was not only students but also teachers – sometimes left thinking and wondering what exactly it was that we had just heard. They were incredibly simple things. Let me also mention that Merton was very keen having his presentations being aesthetically pleasing. He wrote and re-wrote; everything had to be easy to read and elegant, and of course rooted in the European sociological tradition.

Lazarsfeld was completely different. He was not an elegant person, but a rather jovial Jewish man from Vienna. Merton was also Jewish (from Philadelphia), but he did not talk about it. He had changed his name to an Anglo-Saxon sounding name, and he never made any reference to his background. But the two found each other in a very unusual kind of intellectual partnership and friendship. Lazarsfeld had been a social psychologist in Vienna, and co-authored a well-known study that is very relevant even today: *Die Arbeitslosen von Marienthal* (1933). Together with Marie Jahoda and Hans Zeisel, Lazarsfeld studied unemployed people in the small town of Marienthal, and studied what people did when they are unemployed.

Lazarsfeld researched the new media world – radio, newspapers, advertisements – which was big at that time in the American consumer society. He became particularly fascinated by radio and founded the “Office of Radio Research,” to help both radio companies and radio advertisers target the right demographics. Then came the Bureau of Applied Social Research (BASR), located in Columbia University’s backyard. It was never really integrated into the university – one was not really sure if this was one of Lazarsfeld’s famous jokes or if it had something to do with this type of work.

Lazarsfeld received money to do his research on consumer goods, on choice of clothing, soap, etc. However, what he really wanted to do was research on political elections. He eventually took the same methods and in due course got going a series of election surveys. The idea was to systematically create his own source material of relatively hard data. Lazarsfeld was aware of the humanist tradition in the social sciences and knew that historians had their own source texts. He reasoned something like this: “I also have a source material; but the difference between mine and yours is that I have systematically created my own source material, while you, you poor thing, you have to plow through archives to find something that may be relevant. All material in my archive is relevant.” Much of this kind of research made it easier for Lazarsfeld to hang out with Merton. He was the one who got organized research into the university, meaning bureaucratic organized research, through his Bureau of Applied of Social Research. He lived on research contracts -commissioned research – rather than on research that came through faculty grants and foundation grants. The BASR was bureaucratically organized, and located in a rather nice little
house, where little geniuses met in the afternoon and sat well into the night and wrote about their data. They also had coded cards from which one could make tables. It was tedious to make tables, but they did it of course, and once the table was done, oh how they interpreted and interpreted. When you look at those publications afterwards, it is clear that they were extremely over-interpreted. But they were interpreted in the right direction and in a sense, it became a bridge between theory and social research.

Something that Lazarsfeld did not want was a large number of people doing interviews. He thought this meant one would risk losing creativity. There was a lot of discussion about whether one should do as they had done at Michigan and Chicago, that is, to set up a nationwide interview team. Lazarsfeld was very strongly against this and for good reasons, I think. I know how it is when you have an interview team you have to provide for all the time; you take in whatever project just to keep the team operative. It ends up becoming more administration than research. However, BASR retained its creativity in many ways, by over-interpreting the few data they had and not acquiring these large data sets. Over the years, there was less market research and more social research done by the BASR. Election surveys were also conducted.

Lazarsfeld had a fairly independent attitude to his sponsors and those whom he signed contracts with. He said, "Give me the money; I know better than you how to spend it!" He used the money especially for what he thought was interesting – even if contract might be approaching its end, a good idea had to be pursued. The goal was then getting a new contract, which could pay for this interesting thing. Ultimately, he fell behind on the finances and on his worst days the university had to step in and save the institute financially. This was done with some joy, because over the years that passed, I realized that this was a fine and true research tradition that one should have in universities.

James Coleman worked at the BASR and wrote his doctoral dissertation on Union democracy together with Lipset (Lipset et al., 1956). Juan Linz also worked there, but not on American data. For his dissertation, he had gained access to a large West German interview survey conducted in Cologne, but sadly in a fairly commercial way, it only tabulated age, gender and place of residence. There was no feeling for political dynamics, political theory or theory-building which then existed within political sociology. Juan Linz therefore did a so-called secondary analysis of the German material, which then became his dissertation. He did this under the leadership of Lipset. Like Kingsley Davis did earlier, Lipset soon discovered that there was another coast in America – the west coast. Berkeley and Stanford were attractive destinations with their lifestyles, their big money, and they started buying up the good sociologists from the universities on the east coast. Other sociologists also ended up out there, including Juan Linz.36

Anyway, I had to take over the supervision of Linz’s dissertation. This in effect meant that Linz supervised me and that I handled the administrative part.37 I have

36 Linz worked briefly as a research assistant on German elites, particularly business elites and social change with Professor Reinhard Bendix.
37 According to Karin Busch Zetterberg, whenever Hans and Juan met, they would always joke about who was supervising whom.
never read such a good dissertation as Linz’s; it was a pity that it was not given the publicity it would have received had it been published as a book. Instead, it is only available as a print from University Microfilms (Linz, 1959). In their own way, James Coleman and Juan Linz became the ones who best represented the tradition that Merton and Lazarsfeld had developed through their friendship and partnership: namely, to link living theory, often of a European kind, to hard data. In this manner, theory became anchored in a source material, which consisted either of hard data from interviews or of softer types such as archival data. But the data were never missing and the theory was never completely far-fetched either.

As mentioned, it was important at Columbia to emphasize the aesthetic element in the reports. They collaborated with a book publisher named Jeremy Kaplan who was good at this. He had started a book publishing company in Glencoe, Illinois, which he called The Free Press. It was then bought up by the giant McMillan and he came to New York, where he became friends with Merton and Lazarsfeld and many other sociologists. Kaplan developed an elegant way of adding tables into a text; everything flowed; they would not prevent one from reading the text. So, I got to work a bit with the aesthetic.

There were many doctoral students for whom I was a supervisor during my years at Columbia University – over thirty. We had our own way of handling supervision, and in the general instructions (which I at least signed) it said: "When you think your dissertation is complete, then you have two months left – to elevate the writing style and make everything elegant and readable for people other than your professors." So, the aesthetic was a very important part of this; we wanted worldly people that one could send out into the world who could write elegantly. There were also references to classics in all texts. My best doctoral students were Terrence C. Hopkins, Charles Kadushin and Imogen Seger. Two doctoral students wrote dissertations on Sweden using Sifo\textsuperscript{38}-data: Nechama Tec and Murray Gendell.

Last year, I had lunch with Irving Louis Horowitz from Rutgers University, also a student of C. Wright Mills, and we talked a little about the old Columbia and what has happened to sociology since then. Horowitz (1994) has written a book on this, and his argument was that sociology had been fragmentized and lost its common core. He edits a journal called \textit{Society}, which is a kind of general social science journal; and he said he can no longer make an issue that is only filled with articles written by sociologists. The wholeness of sociology had been lost, he said, and I believe he is right.

I thought sociology was a wonderful science in the 1940’s when I began my studies, and I was an extremely enthusiastic sociologist in the 50’s. When \textit{American Sociological Review} came in the mailbox, I threw everything else aside and started reading it. Today, it also comes with the mail, but I have to admit that it can take weeks, sometimes months, before I sit down and read any article. What has happened? It may not be something that happened to me, but rather something that has happened to our science. We have somehow lost that common core, which makes you want to read all kinds of articles. The common core meant, among other things,

\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Svenska institutet för opinionsundersökningar} – "The Swedish Institute for Opinion Surveys".
that one could tie one’s work to the tradition of Weber and Durkheim and find a kind of common thread in all these wonderful subjects, which are to be found in the great field of sociology. But this is not the case today.

Something else that was characteristic of sociology at that time was the mix of hard and soft data. It wasn’t just hard data in the Columbia reports. Today, data are analyzed in such a way that one can see if a thesis is written at Michigan or Wisconsin. One notices they come from a particular university; but it wasn’t like this during my time.

In my opinion, the over-interpretation of data is a charming feature if it is in the right theoretical direction. At Columbia, such interpretations were made, but there was also a connection to the dynamic society of the United States – especially to problems related to the market and the media. Thus, it was not the problems of civil society that were of concern, which had been the case in Chicago, or the state’s problems, which is the case today at Stockholm University. It is precisely this, that one had a connection to the most fluid and dynamic parts of American society – to the media and the market – that gave sociology a proper presence in the present.

As I mentioned before, I came to Columbia partly with intellectual baggage from the Midwest from Sweden. The baggage from Sweden was logical positivism. I was very impressed by Anders Wedberg\textsuperscript{39}; for him it was about hypotheses and hypothesis testing, reliability and variability. I had also written a short book before I got there called \textit{Theory and Verification in Sociology} (1st ed. 1954, 2nd ed. 1963), which was well received at Columbia. It contained a research program that was based on taking this wonderful subject-matter that sociology is and try to put it under a smaller number of common theoretical principles, from which one can then derive a number of hypotheses, and some of which can then be tested. This would give you an axiomatic theory in sociology. However, this proved to be difficult to develop. Besides, I also had the good fortune that when I arrived at Columbia, they said something like this to me: “You, who come from Europe and know many languages, you have to teach the classics.”

Needless to say, I was aware of the classics; I had read some of them at Uppsala, where Torgny Segerstedt, who was my professor, had forced us to read Sorokin’s textbook in sociological theory (Sorokin, 1928), among others. I was in no way an expert on the classics. Of course, I protested, saying that I did not know all the languages and that I had insufficient knowledge on the classics – but they did not believe me, and instead regarded it as a manifestation of European modesty. I was therefore forced to put a lot of my own work aside and instead devote myself to the classics. It actually made my own research program even more burdensome, since it became much clearer to me the richness that existed in our field. It also became difficult for me to find where to fit in my own thoughts – which revolved around a number of law-like propositions- in all this richness.

\textsuperscript{39} Anders Wedberg became the first professor of theoretical philosophy in Sweden at Stockholm University in 1949. He had a big impact in the development of philosophy in Sweden toward the analytical tradition; a tradition that still dominates at Swedish universities until this day.
Jeffrey Alexander has written a series of books in sociological theory, and in one of these he uses the first fifty pages to just beat the idea of neo-positivistic sociology to death, which I had believed in during 1950’s (see especially Alexander, 1982, I: 3, 6–8). I think he has valid points, but even in the old days I had already begun to wonder if it would be possible to work out some variant of logical empiricism – a kind of modified positivism – to get some control over sociology. It’s possible that I will try to get back to this before my time is up.

Acknowledgements The author would like to express gratitude to Karin Busch Zetterberg for all the wonderful insights into Hans’ life and comments to the manuscript, and to Richard Swedberg for all the encouragement and advice. I would also like to thank Per Wisselgren, Rickard Danell and all participants in the course “Social Science in Context” at Umeå University for all the helpful comments. I also owe gratitude to Michael Hechter for valuable comments to the manuscript. Finally, I would like to thank Julia Syrén for all the help concerning questions about translation and Swedish society.

Funding Open access funding provided by Umeå University.

Declarations

Conflict of interest No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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