PROBLEMS REAL AND IMPOSED IN THE DISCIPLINE OF SOCIOLOGY

Earl Smith, Wake Forest University,
and Bonnie Berry, Pacific Lutheran University

ABSTRACT

According to some, sociology is in deep trouble (Cole 1994; Coughlin 1992; Horowitz 1993; Kantrowitz 1992; Marsland 1988). While the discipline has undergone metamorphoses of form and substance in the past decade, many sociologists and nonsociologists are concerned that sociology is endangered as an academic discipline, or, at the very least, is declining in quality of scholarship, graduate recruitment and training, and impact on policy. At first glance, the current state of sociology seems a rather confusing mixture of good and bad news. Some measures indicate that the discipline is thriving while other accounts suggest that sociology has serious problems. The mixture of messages can be understood in light of sociologists' having been convinced by anti-sociologists that we are doing a poor job. Moreover, a false negative imagery comes from a comparison of sociology to other academic disciplines in which sociology is described as coming up short and in which sociologists are described as nonscientists. The authors contend that many of the criticisms of sociology are not valid and are not different from those that could be levied against any scientific discipline. Recommendations to abrogate criticisms of sociology are offered.

"Once again the season of the anti-sociologists is upon us."
Robert K. Merton (1961)

"Both the character and survival of sociology are dependent upon those recruited to carry out its charges."
Willie Pearson, Jr. (1987)

INTRODUCTION

Much of what has been written about the faults of sociology, dating from 1939 to the present, is emotional and impressionistic. For example, Horowitz's (1993) book, *The Decomposition of Sociology*, provides a long list of horrors about the present state of sociology but is underwhelming in its absence of evidence showing that the discipline is truly in poor condition or decomposing. To prove his point, Horowitz (1993) writes that harsh criticisms leveled at the discipline by sociologists and by nonsociologists result in "little effort at factual refutation." There may be little effort at refutation because there is evidence to the contrary and because, as scientists, we understand the futility of arguing about subjectivity.

Less impressionistic, more empirical descriptions of the state of sociology offer optimistic and positive views (D'Antonio 1992). While there may be problems in sociology, as there are in all scientific disciplines, there is also evidence that the discipline is strong, growing in size and diversity of tasks, cumulative in scientific effort and accomplishments, and contributing to society through education and policy development.

The difference of opinion about the state of sociology might be a difference between perception and reality. Sociologists and nonsociologists alike are inundated with true and false messages about the positive and negative qualities of our science, its impact upon social problems, and its progress in understanding social phenomena. To untangle this confusing picture of the state of sociology, we begin with the history of criticisms against sociology, followed by a discussion of good news and bad news about sociology, fallacies about sociology as a nonscience, and recommendations for turning away invalid criticisms.

HISTORY OF CRITICISMS AGAINST SOCIOLOGY: CRITICIZING SOCIOLOGY IS NOT A NEW THING

The perceptions of sociologists and nonsociologists about sociology have changed over time.[1] One of the earliest and most scathing portrayals of sociology was written by Crane Brinton, a history professor, in 1939. He writes at length, with no substantiation and seemingly little knowledge of sociology, about how sociology is "the pariah subject" in the university "to which even the most uninspired student in the humanities ... could feel comfortably superior." Brinton (1939) refers to sociology as an impractical "would-be science," and calls sociologists "liberal intellectuals" (a criticism) and hypocrites.

Sociology's involvement in social change may provide the backdrop for poor opinions about sociology. The substance of sociology is social phenomena and, not unexpectedly, sociologists are often involved in social movements. As shown below, sociology has been affected by broad social changes, such as changes in the political and economic climate; and we have participated in collective movements, such as protests against war and social

inequality.

Sociology's involvement in political and social movements has influenced its more strictly scientific pursuits (Lipset 1994). In the 1940s until the mid-1960s, sociologists were politically active and radical while maintaining their emphasis on scientific objectivity. Conflicts within sociology in these times were not over ideology but emphasized theoretical and methodological issues. Then, in the 1960s and 1970s, politicization within the discipline undermined the field. After the Vietnam War, the severe political conflicts dissipated but, Lipset says, sociology never regained scientific consensus and intellectual unity. Halliday (1992) agrees that political factors affect the discipline but finds that the 1990s climate in sociology "allows issues to be debated in a less ideologically charged atmosphere" than, say, a decade ago. One might conclude, if Lipset and Halliday are correct, that the confusion and conflict experienced internally by sociology in decades past have given way to a greater focus on the subject matter of sociology.

Sociology's historical involvement in social policy has wavered. Horowitz (1993) states that once upon a time there was more openness, more permeability between the discipline and society, more of a chance for sociology to be policy-relevant. Currently, this openness is a bad sign, Horowitz believes, pointing out that issues of power, policy, and political agendas negatively influence the discipline and our positions in it. Moreover, he states that the promise of a merger between sociology and social policy has not come about. Indeed, he writes that presently "... the informal alliance between sociology and policy has turned sour." Halliday (1992) would seem to agree. At the same time that he describes sociology as having an attentive public, our public voice has grown dimmer.

Funding and scarcity of resources have played no small part in opinions about sociology. The last quarter of the nineteenth century up to the beginning of World War Two is considered the "seedtime of the modern academic landscape" although, during this time and coinciding with the expansion of higher education in the United States, there developed "fierce interdisciplinary struggles for the academy's finite ... rewards" (Camic 1989). This competition over resources has negatively affected sociology and all academic disciplines to some degree.

Finally, Cole (1994) offers a more general statement on a change in perception. After World War Two to the late 1960s, sociology was one of the most prestigious social sciences in the United States. The situation has reverted today, to the point that members of the profession, the public at large, and academic administrators, have a "generally low regard for sociology departments."

ANY TRUTH TO THE RUMORS? GOOD NEWS AND BAD NEWS

Bad News

Under the heading of bad news, Horowitz (1993) offers at least 16 indicators of problems in the discipline. Among them are: departments shutting down, departmental attrition, declining numbers of students earning bachelors degrees, declining numbers of students earning graduate degrees, and few jobs in sociology. He opines that gaps between pure and applied research are bad for sociology as are the formation of special agendas (such as gay and lesbian caucuses), the conversion to practical work (criminology, social planning, and other applied areas), the "radical chic" perspective in sociology, and nonseparation from political concerns. Cited in Horowitz are others' views on decomposition, such as an absence of sociological work that "offers insight into the behavior of people in groups" (Kantrowitz 1992), a "sense of vulnerability" (Coughlin 1992; Marsland 1988), and incoherence in the discipline due to specialization (Collins 1990).

Gans (1989) points to other bad signs: Lay rejection of sociology, long-standing inequalities within the discipline (our mistreatment and exploitation of graduate students and of part-time instructors), and an overemphasis on publication causing overspecialization and a piecework mentality. Sociology is also said to be plagued with conflicts within sociology and across disciplines over scarce resources (Komarovsky 1987), a disconnection of our work from the real world, absence of cognitive consensus within the discipline (Cole 1994), and an overwhelming magnetism toward cutting edge novelty without an equal interest in ideas (Lipset 1994).

To expand on sociology's internal battle over methods and substance, several sociologists assume that we overemphasize methods and techniques at the expense of theory. "Our passion for methodology" has led to substantive validity taking a backseat to the favored

analytical technique of the moment (Gans 1989). Theory development seems to follow fads in methodology as opposed to a meaningful consideration of the findings (Berry 1991; Cole 1994;) and we have been "hiding out in techniques and methodologies" rather than examining ideology (Horowitz 1993). However, Faia (1993) states that the rift in sociology between theory and statistics, of great concern to some sociologists, has become smaller in recent decades.

There are also concerns about sociology's presumed lax gatekeeping. In the area of publication, we find censorship of debate and wrongful acceptance-rejection decisions by journal editors (Berry 1994a; Faia 1993; Hargens 1988). To make matters worse, sociology has many different and incompatible standards for what constitutes good scholarship and good work (Stinchcombe 1994).

Of the more empirical identifiers of sociology's declining status, we find reduced membership in the American Sociological Association and poor GRE scores. As to the former, the ASA has experienced a decreasing membership, from a high of more than 14,000 members in the mid-1970s to less than 12,000 in the early 1980s (D'Antonio 1992; Horowitz 1993).

Regarding the latter, GRE scores of sociology students are low and declining (Lipset 1994), and retention standards are lax (Berry 1994b). Overall, according to some sociologists, "the quality of sociology's graduate student recruits has dropped radically since the late 1960s" (Halliday 1992). A comparison of GRE scores among sociology, psychology, natural science, and physical science students does suggest a relatively poor showing among sociology students (Berry 1994a). This trend may not, however, be a sign that sociology as a discipline has gone downhill. Such a trend might indicate that students in recent times (since the 1970s) are less skilled, less prepared in examination procedures, or less well-educated prior to graduate training. The interpretation that there is nothing wrong with sociology (it's the students, not the discipline) begs the question of why sociology students would be over represented among students with fewer skills, etc. The answer might lie in the discipline's relatively less rigorous admissions standards compared to other (but not all other) disciplines. Even if it is true that sociology has lower admissions standards for graduate school, it does not necessarily follow that sociology is on an intellectual downhill slide. Low admissions standards may speak to a need for tuition funds and it is not out of the question that, once accepted to the university, the students undergo a good educational program.

In short, bad news is not necessarily a criticism of sociology. Bad news may describe a bad trend, such as a loss of resources, which, even so, may not affect sociology's ability to do the best job possible. Sometimes the bad news, leveled as criticisms against sociology, is just plain false. For example, to say that departments are shutting down could be more accurately phrased: Two departments, those at Rochester University and Washington University in St. Louis, have shut down.[2]

The perception that something is wrong with sociology is not always born out by available indices. Equally disconcerting, the perception that something is wrong may be the reality but along different dimensions from traditional ones, and ones that may be very troubling for us to accept, such as infringements upon research. These same problems occur in varying degrees across disciplines (Smelser 1992).

Good News

The alarms ringing in the above discussion can be countered by some indicators of positive developments and positive constancy's in the discipline of sociology. For example, Gans (1989) writes that sociology has established a strong presence in practice and policy analysis, which has not escaped the attention of the news media. Barber (1987) cites the effectiveness of sociology in social science research. Sociology "produces a prodigious amount of scientifically respectable research," published work in sociology is of basic intellectual quality, and sociology journals do serve as quality controllers over our academic work (Davis 1994). Sociology is less discriminatory of women and minorities than other disciplines in hiring and retention of faculty and in graduate admissions policies (Davis 1994). D'Antonio (1992) cites increased undergraduate and graduate enrollments in sociology, including minority enrollments, as signs of revitalization.[3]

D'Antonio (1992) views the formation of academic subunits as a positive direction for sociology. Unlike Horowitz (1993), he believes that the additions of ASA sections on aging, gender, Marxist sociology, environmental

sociology, the study of populations, world systems, collective behavior and social movements, and racial and ethnic minorities represent growth and stimulation.

Simpson and Simpson (1994) find that membership in the American Sociological Association has experienced a slight upturn, albeit a soft one with the increase in student memberships. Moreover, all of our professional associations, including regional and specialized sociological organizations, can be described as "robust" (Halliday 1992). Although sociology has experienced problems with underemployment and unemployment, there is a trend toward more tenure track jobs opening and being filled in the early 1990s. Specifically, from 1978 to 1984 there was a 12 percent decline in full-time faculty positions but the number of tenure track positions have doubled between 1982 and 1991 (D'Antonio 1992).

Sociology, even in the lean and mean times, has experienced an increase in external funding as well as increases in development of sponsored research, growth of research labs and research centers. Throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, funding from the federal government and private foundations grew. Funding has not always kept a steady pace but the economic situation is not bad on all counts; for instance, funding for basic research more than doubled between 1975 and 1989 (D'Antonio 1992).

Sociology is very much involved in all levels of government (*ASA Footnotes* 1994-95), and sociology continues to make substantial and meaningful contributions to social policy (D'Antonio 1992).[4] Specifically, sociological studies in demography, AIDS, medicine, poverty, race, homelessness, single mothers, teen pregnancy, population growth, the elderly, and third world countries has made significant contributions by pointing out the sources of social trends and offering constructive, unbiased solutions to social problems. Judging from the works of Jencks (1994), Wilson (1987), Piven and Cloward (1971), and countless others, sociologists continue to be involved in disseminating an accurate understanding of social structure, organizations, and problems.

In sum, sociology appears to be vital on many dimensions. Sociology seems to be living up to Parsons' (1959) image of sociology as a profession with distinct societal obligations to clarify society's "definition of the situation."

ARE WE A SCIENCE? FALLACIES AND FALSE COMPARISONS

We are not a science because we are not objective, or so the criticism goes. One of the gravest concerns is that bias is inherent to our work, that our theories are distorted by our own values and therefore meaningless, that we see what we expect to see, and that we study that which is personally relevant (Faia 1993). Faia moreover describes an anti-science movement currently present in the United States which "wrongly asserts an ineluctable tension between science and interpretationism."

The antipositivist argument suggests that the study of humans is fraught with subtleties and subjectivity which are not concerns for "harder" sciences (Alexander 1988). The fact is, as Becker (1987) points out: Neither natural nor social scientists "work with total impersonality and objectivity." Faia (1993) concurs and writes that "the truism about large and inescapable biases" has been repeated so many times that even sociologists believe that our work is negatively affected by it. This acceptance of presumed bias has resulted in what Faia calls a "failure of nerve."

Scientific prostitution is a question considered more pertinent to social and behavioral sciences than to the life and physical sciences. However, the history of science has established that no scientific line of inquiry escapes co-optation. Physics, chemistry, and mathematics are pressured to ask "acceptable" research questions, apply innovative though inappropriate methodologies, and reach palatable conclusions in exchange for funding, publications, and other rewards (Smelser 1992).

Comparing sociology to biology and physics, sociology allegedly is lousy at hypothesis-building, can not agree on sociological matters whereas physicists agree on physical matters, and sociology, unlike all "true sciences," is not cumulative (Brinton 1939).

A superior attitude on the part of some scientists leads them to believe that they can do sociology's work. Due to interdisciplinary struggles within the university, biology has attempted to override sociology by claiming that biology unlocks the secrets of the social as well as the biological world. Biology can explain the individual and collective foundations of life; hence, there is no need for a social science separate from biology (Camic 1989).

Not all members of disciplines take

criticisms to heart. Economists, for example, are very unconcerned with their own failings and have been unruffled by challenges from other sciences. Anthropologists have responded to challenges to their scientific integrity by carving out a distinctive disciplinary niche (Camic 1989).

Discussions which rank sciences are probably pointless. Gans has suggested that one of the causes of supposed imperfection in sociology is

> *scientism*, the modeling of sociological ... research methods on a highly idealized version of the methods of the [unspecified] natural sciences. (1989)

The key word here might be "idealized" because, as Glazer (1994) points out, the natural and physical sciences have some of the same methodological and interpretive difficulties as social and behavioral sciences. Interestingly, while no discipline is above reproach, there is much less debate about the faults of economics, political science, and other social sciences than there is about sociology (Meiksins 1995).

CRITICISMS OF SOCIOLOGY: OVERVIEW OF THE DEBATE

As has already been discussed, at least some of the bad news and some of the good news is impressionistic. We find little or no documentation for the rather strong statements used to describe decomposition. Horowitz (1993) admits to a reliance on "preconceptions and prejudices" and uses highly charged phraseology such as "tragic condition" to describe a "once-great" discipline that "has turned sour if not rancid." Cole also applies "senses" and "beliefs" in describing the state of sociology:

> Today there is a sense among many American sociologists that all is not well with their discipline. Many of us believe that ... sociology is not making the kind of progress we would like. (1994)

Many positive statements are also without foundation; for example, to say that sociology is "fascinating subject matter" (Davis 1994) is a matter of opinion.

Thus far, we have seen that there are a number of indicators, supportable or not, of vitality and decomposition. To better understand the status of sociology, let us consider three issues relevant to the state of sociology's health: academic, economic, and socio-political issues.

Academic Issues

We have the least to say about academic concerns because we have concluded, based on recent literature, that sociology is as academically healthy as any science. Sociology, like all scientific disciplines, has internal disagreements over appropriate and worthwhile content (research questions, topics), methodology, theoretical applications, and other scholarly matters. It should not be otherwise that sciences carry on disagreements within and without their ranks. What makes us different from the other disciplines with respect to our disagreements is that our disagreements seem to provide ammunition to anti-sociologists (including scientists from other disciplines, students, and university administrators) who discredit us and our work.

Economic Issues

While we may have experienced some highly profession-relevant divisions, these divisions seem to be growing closer to resolution. Then why are some sociologists so worried about sociology's state of health? Because the criticisms, valid or not, persist.

Take the question of pay, for instance. Sociological work may be interpreted as worth less than the work of engineers, economists, and other scientists who are paid more. Poor salaries and poor working conditions (pressure to simultaneously publish, get outside funding, teach heavy loads and achieve high teaching evaluations, and engage in community service) may represent an anti-sociological opinion of our work as valueless.

Previously, in the good-news section, we mentioned that external funds are available for sociology. This is all very well, but it can be argued that it is unreasonable to expect university faculty who are teaching seven or eight classes a year to write grant proposals and to conduct an active research program. Nonetheless, when sociology or any discipline falls from grace, internal funding from universities may dry up. When internal funding dries up, academics are faced with the need to get outside funding. Indeed, it is an increasingly applied contingency of university employment that faculty must draw in external funds.

Outside funding sources may have their own agendas to "prove" something (for

example, that welfare does not work, that incarceration does work, etc.) and funding may be based on the willingness of academics, not just sociologists, to reach the desired though invalid conclusions (Halliday 1992; Smelser 1992). Sociologists who have observed lean and mean economic actions in their own universities' funding, hiring, and retention practices may become anxious to the point that they place their own professional integrity at stake by engaging in non-controversial teaching and research, in the hope that they might survive in academics.

Socio-Political Issues

The history of sociology is not obviously different from that of other disciplines, except that we are more involved in social movements than many other sciences, at times championing an unpopular cause or a disadvantaged segment of the population. This involvement in social causes has labeled us as do-gooders and liberals, a criticism in some circles.

Strong public reactions to sociological topics may influence or be influenced by political leaders. At the same time that the political arena would seem to be concerned about social problems (crime, unemployment, homelessness, poverty, etc.) and could be informed by sociology, there are "pockets of hostility" mostly located in the right wing of the government, that attack sociology's function (Smelser 1992). Research in behavioral and social sciences has been criticized from this quarter as "trivial, obvious, and unimportant," "wasteful of public funds," "basically unscientific," and yet "dangerous." As for being dangerous, Meiksins (1995) says that sociology has been, of all scientific disciplines, routinely singled out for the pillory "because sociology is just a bit more dangerous than people like to admit" (personal communication). Glazer (1994), more specifically, suggests that sociology poses a threat to the conservative side of the government which hopes to coerce sociologists into being defenders of the status quo.

Sociologists are also criticized for our ineffectiveness at solving intractable social problems, as though solving intractable social problems is within our power. In fact, we know how social problems come about and we are able to offer ideas on how to minimize problems that may never be solved. Unfortunately, even though Auguste Comte thought it appropriate for us to be in charge of social engineering, we are not in positions of power that allow us to manipulate society on a grand scale. Sociologists are more adept at social engineering than those who are positioned to do so (Dye 1990; Lundberg 1947), but we are not permitted the access necessary to alleviate social problems.

At the same time that anti-sociologists may put us on the spot for our inability to solve problems, they do not give us the benefit of the doubt that they give other, harder scientists relative to esoteric expertise. Anti-sociologists tell us that sociology is common sense, implying that anti-sociologists know as much as sociologists do about sociological matters. Often, people without training in sociology tell us that they know how to fix crime, teenage pregnancy, and other social problems as though these very complex problems are "simple" to understand and control. Some nonsociologists and, more obviously, anti-sociologists do not want to be bothered with social science facts. Theories and research findings from sociology are dismissed, sometimes vociferously. See, for example, Kaminer (1994) on the public's and politicians' refusal to hear social facts about crime.

Sociology has a tradition of studying and, particularly in earlier days, attempting to remedy poverty, crime, and other problems associated with the disenfranchised.[5] Sociologists have had scientific and humanist interest in those who are disadvantaged, and as such, we are guilty by association with the socially disadvantaged people that we study.

It is not difficult to imagine that external forces have taken their toll on the discipline of sociology to the point that sociology may have internalized these negative perceptions. The impact of these negative evaluations should not be dismissed as having a minimal effect on sociology. Subjugation to criticisms from the anti-scientific community may lead to a feeling "give-it-up-itis" (Faia 1993).

RECOMMENDATIONS

We should fix the problems that we can fix, such as retention of inappropriate students and the pressure to publish outweighing the quality of research. This would be more likely if we, as sociologists, were more cohesive in our resistance to outside pressures. Beyond a self-recognition of the problems we do have, we need to make clear to those who evaluate us (university administrators, funding

Becker HS 1987 The writing of science *Contemporary Sociol* 16 25-27
Berry B 1991 An account of a professional ethics violation in sociology *Amer Sociologist* 22 261-266
_____1994a Artificiality in the construction of crime, criminal justice, and criminology *Free Inq Creat Sociol* 22 33-43
_____1994b The relationship between infringements on the freedom to research and teach and poor sociological practice *Amer Sociologist* 25 53-65
_____1994c The isolation of crime, law, and deviance from the core of sociology *Amer Sociologist* 25 5-20
Brinton C 1939 What's the matter with sociology? *Saturday Rev Literature* 20 3-4, 14
Camic C 1989 Structure after 50 years: the anatomy of a charter *Amer J Sociol* 95 38-107
Cole S 1994 Introduction: what's wrong with sociology? *Sociological Forum* 9 129-131
Collins R 1990 The organizational politics of the ASA *Amer Sociologist* 21 311
Coughlin EK 1992 Sociologists confront questions about field's vitality and direction *Chronicle Higher Education* August, Section A 5-7
D'Antonio W 1992 Recruiting sociologists in a time of changing opportunities. in TC Halliday, M Janowitz eds *Sociology and Its Publics: The Forms and Fates of Disciplinary Organization* Chicago: U Chicago Press
Davis JA 1994 What's wrong with sociology? *Sociological Forum* 9 179-197
Dye TR 1990 *Who's Running America?* Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall
Faia MA 1993 *What's Wrong with the Social Sciences? The Perils of the Postmodern* Lanham, MD: U Press of America
Gans HJ 1989 Sociology in America: the discipline and the public *Amer Sociol Rev* 54 1-16
Glazer N 1994 A troubled social science: book review of Irving Horowitz's (1993) *The Decomposition of Sociology* in *Atlantic Monthly* 273 127-131
Halliday TC 1992 Sociology's fragile professionalism. in TC Halliday, M Janowitz eds *Sociology and Its Publics: The Forms and Fates of Disciplinary Organization* Chicago: U Chicago Press
Hargens LL 1988 Scholarly consensus and journal rejection rates *Amer Sociol Rev* 53 139-151
Horowitz IL 1993 *The Decomposition of Sociology* NY: Oxford U Press
Jencks C 1994 *The Homeless* Cambridge: Harvard U Press
Kaminer W 1994 Federal offense *Atlantic Monthly* 273 102-114
Kantrowitz B 1992 Sociology's lonely crowd *Newsweek* 119 55-56
Komarovsky M 1987 Some persistent issues of sociological polemics *Sociological Forum* 2 556-564
Lipset SM 1994 The state of American sociology *Sociological Forum* 9 199-220
Lundberg GA 1947 *Can Science Save Us?* NY: Longmans, Green
Marsland D 1988 *Seeds of Bankruptcy: Sociological Bias Against Business and Freedom* London: Claridge Press
Meiksins P 1995 Internet communication via Progressive Sociologists Network, May 12
Merton RK 1961 The canons of the anti-sociologist *New York Times* July 16
Parsons T 1959 Some problems confronting sociology as a profession *Amer Sociol Rev* 24 547-559
Pearson W Jr 1987 The crisis in sociology and higher education. from Presidential address, delivered at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Sociological Association, Memphis: October
Piven FF, RA Cloward 1971 *Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare* NY: Vintage Books
Simpson IH, RL Simpson 1994 The transformation of the American Sociological Association *Sociological Forum* 9 259-278
Smelser NJ 1992 External influences on sociology. in TC Halliday, M Janowitz eds *Sociology and Its Publics: The Forms and Fates of Disciplinary Organization* Chicago: U Chicago Press
Stinchcombe AL 1994 Disintegrated disciplines and the future of sociology *Sociological Forum* 9 279-291
Wilson WJ 1987 *The Truly Disadvantaged* Chicago: U Chicago Press

agencies, and so on) that our teaching and research practices are greatly affected by pressures to do the impossible and the undesirable.

As to denunciations of sociology as nonscientific, those who criticize sociology should be put to the task of supporting their criticisms with fact. We could force the recognition that the problems with sociology are not unique to sociology, notably the concerns with subjectivity and the emphasis on methodology overshadowing substance.

Relatedly, we can describe the weaknesses and strengths of *all* sciences. If confronted, for example, we can compare sociology to math, economics, biology, law, physics, or any academic discipline on the dimensions of theory, methodology, interpretation, and the formulation of research questions. Falsely criticizing any science can be alleviated with a recognition of mutual faults. It would also be helpful to garner mutual support across sciences and among scientists for intellectual pursuits.

We may not be able to convince our critics of the value of our work. Skeptics probably can not be convinced. We can, however, instruct our critics as to the importance of standards and to the worth of sociological work. We can do this by offering examples of how we have made and do make a difference in societal attitudes and social policies. If necessary, we can cite studies and research findings evidencing our worth.

On the other hand, there is also something to be said for not providing such evidence but rather forcing the anti-sociologists to defend their position on the valuelessness of our work. Let those who criticize sociology define and substantiate their criticisms. We should not be defensive for we have nothing to be defensive about.

Recruitment of high quality students is an important initial stage to improving the future products and image of the discipline. In addition to halting sociology's image as the "cake" program in the university, the program that students who fail in other programs fall back on as an alternative, we need to instill in our students a sense of optimism about sociology's ability to impact social problems. We need to not restrict our students' fantasies but to encourage them to think in ways that go beyond what we have been able to do. We can impart the knowledge to our students that will enable them to make a real difference in society, much in the tradition of sociologists historically.

In conclusion, we recommend that sociologists discontinue accepting the blame for ineffectual social policy, research, and education. With greater solidarity and an activist stance, it would be within our capacity to deflect invalid, anti-sociological criticisms.

END NOTES

1. Nonsociologists are people who are not sociologists. They have no particular opinion about sociology or sociologists. Anti-sociologists are people who attribute negative qualities to sociology as a discipline and to sociologists as members of the discipline. Anti-sociologists' criticisms usually are about the presumed commonsensical nature of sociology, the triviality of what we study, the unscientific nature of our methodology, and the "bleeding-heart" liberal qualities that sociologists presumably possess.
2. Horowitz (1993) wrongly anticipated the closing of the Sociology Department at San Diego State University. The Department fought to stay open and succeeded.
3. For instance, undergraduate enrollments have increased 20 percent from 1985 to 1990 and M.A. graduates have increased 10 percent from 1988 to 1989, and at least half of the new Ph.D.s in the early 1990s are women.
4. See the *ASA Footnotes* 1994-95 on the greater involvement during President Clinton's administration. Scanning the headlines of the *ASA Footnotes*, we see that there is reason for optimism particularly in saying that sociology as a scientific discipline is very much involved in social and political agendas. The following are among the recent topics discussed in the *Footnotes*: "Social and Behavioral Sciences Gain New Presence at NIH" (Vol. 23, No. 5), "Sociologists Attend White House Affirmative Action Meeting," "[Presidential] Administration Appoints Sociologists," "ASA Sponsors Congressional Briefing on Social Security," "Sociologists Join White House Salute to Women Scientists" (Vol. 23, No. 4), "Sociologists Meet with Clinton, Gore" (Vol. 23, No. 2), "Clinton Names William J. Wilson to Committee on National Medal," "NIMH Renews MFP with Subtantial Growth" (Vol. 22, No. 8), "Clinton Appoints Social Scientists to Science Board," and "ASA Meets with HHS Secretary Shalala" (Vol. 22, No. 9).
5. Within sociology, there is greater and lesser guilt by association. Criminologists, sociologists who study crime and criminal behavior, are wrongly perceived as not contributing to the core of sociology as much as sociologists who study other social phenomena (Berry 1994c).

REFERENCES

Alexander JC 1988 The new theoretical movement. in NJ Smelser ed *Handbook of Sociology* Newbury Park: Sage

American Sociological Association Footnotes 1994-1995 Washington DC: American Sociological Association

Barber B 1987 *Effective Social Science: Eight Cases in Economics, Political Science, and Sociology* NY: Russell Sage