Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences, Vol. 42(2), 159–176 Spring 2006
Published online in Wiley Interscience (www.interscience.wiley.com). DOI 10.1002 /jhbs.20166
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THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF SWEDISH SOCIOLOGY AND THE BOUNDING OF DISCIPLINARY IDENTITY

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Bounding a scientific discipline is a way of regulating its cognitive direction as well as its relations to neighboring disciplines and extra-academic authorities. In this process of identity making, disciplinary history often is a crucial element. In this article, focusing on the historiography of Swedish sociology and the reception of Gustaf Steffen, Sweden's first professional sociologist, it is argued that Steffen's marginalized role in the traditional accounts should be understood not only with reference to his supposed theoretical shortcomings, but also in the historical context of the early postwar reestablishment of sociology as an academic discipline and its prevalent need for a new disciplinary identity, strategically adjusted to the contemporary institutional and political settings. © 2006 Wiley Periodicals, Inc.

In 1997, the Swedish Sociological Association celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of sociology as an academic discipline. According to the disciplinary foundation story sanctioned by that ceremony, the "birth" of Swedish sociology is dated to the moment in 1947 when Torgny Segerstedt took up the new chair in sociology at Uppsala University. During the years that followed, sociology expanded as an academic discipline and was established at all other existing Swedish universities with a rapidness and successfulness that have been remarked upon even by international observers.[1] Segerstedt was well aware of his own pioneering role in that process. In an influential book on the disciplinary history of Swedish sociology, published in 1987, Segerstedt introduced his own article by commemorating: "It was in 1947 that the first original chair in sociology was established in this country. I became its first holder" (Segerstedt, 1987, p. 11).[2]

The importance of Segerstedt's achievements in the history of Swedish sociology is probably hard to overrate. Nevertheless, there is a crucial historiographical problem with this foundation story: Segerstedt was not the first professional sociologist in Sweden. Almost half

1. Sociological departments were established at Uppsala University in 1947, at Lund University in 1948, at Stockholm University College in 1949, at Gothenburg University in 1959, and at Umeå University in 1965. In Stockholm and Lund, however, the chairs in sociology were not installed until in 1954 (Gunnar Boalt) and 1956 (Gösta Carlsson), respectively. The first holders of the chairs in Gothenburg and Umeå were Edmund Dahlström (1959) and Georg Karlsson (1965). The private university colleges in Stockholm and Gothenburg were transformed into state universities in 1960 and 1954. The private university colleges in Gothenburg and Stockholm were transformed into state universities in 1954 and 1960, respectively. For international comments on the institutionalization process, see Reiss Jr. (1968, p. 16): "Despite their small size, the Scandinavian countries have witnessed probably the most rapid growth of sociology in the period since World War II."

2. Translations of the original Swedish quotations throughout the article are made by the authors.

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a century earlier, in 1903, Gustaf Steffen attained a chair in economics and sociology at what was then Gothenburg University College, a post that he held until his death in 1929. As a sociologist, Steffen was contemporary with the so-called "classical founding fathers" of modern sociology. But Steffen is obviously not regarded as the founder of Swedish sociology. On the contrary, he has often been presented as a marginal and rather odd figure in the disciplinary history. Why is that so? That is the basic historiographical question of this article. Why is Segerstedt and not Steffen regarded as the founder of Swedish academic sociology?

By focusing on the varying images and receptions of Steffen in the written history of Swedish sociology, an additional and more general aim of this article is to discuss the relationship between historiography and the bounding of disciplinary identity. In the first part of the article, we scrutinize some arguments for placing Gustaf Steffen in the margins of the discipline's history. As a hypothetical counterargument, we hint at the possibility of regarding Steffen's sociological project as a potential Swedish counterpart to the projects developed by the contemporary classical founding fathers on the Continent—although it is not our purpose to argue that he ought to be regarded as such. But we also, from an institutionally contextualized perspective, emphasize the serious practical problems that Steffen faced in his strivings to promote the new discipline. To answer the historiographical question posed, it is, however, insufficient to pay attention only to the contemporary institutional setting.

Instead, by drawing on two usually separated strands of current science studies literature—on the one hand, on the uses and functions of disciplinary history (Abir-Am & Elliot, 1999; Connell, 1997; Graham, Lepenies, & Weingart, 1983; Platt, 1996; Schaffer, 1996) and on the other, on the bounding and construction of disciplinary identity (Barnes, Bloor, & Henry, 1996; Galison & Stump, 1996; Gieryn, 1999; Shapin, 1992)—our main argument is that crucial parts of the answer to the question are to be found in the contextual setting of the first generation of the postwar sociologists and their strategically motivated strivings to reestablish sociology as an academic discipline. The argument is empirically substantiated in the second half of the article. There, it is shown that the historiographical marginalization of Steffen can be understood as a significant consequence of the boundary work performed by Segerstedt and his disciples. Their primary task was to find a new disciplinary identity that legitimated the scientific credibility of the subject and at the same time regulated the relationship to other neighboring disciplines as well as to extra-academic authorities in the wider environment of sociological knowledge production.

Steffen and the "Nonclassical" Foundation of Swedish Sociology

In justifying the marginalized role of Gustaf Steffen in the traditional historical accounts on Swedish sociology, two main arguments have been commonly heard. First, the professorship of Steffen was shared between sociology and economics. He was not only—and, as it is sometimes supposed, not even primarily—concerned with sociology. Second, he did not have much influence on later sociology, or as it has been claimed: "Gustaf Steffen never got any epigones, he failed in building up a sociological 'school' and his influence on the later development of sociology in Sweden is not investigated but probably marginal" (Fridjónsdóttir, 1987, p. 254; cf. Fridjónsdóttir, 1991, p. 249; Hansen, 1999, p. 10).

In the collected works on the disciplinary history of Swedish sociology, the dominating narrative emphasizes the discontinuity and the basic differences between the sociological project developed by Steffen and the sociology developed by Segerstedt and his disciples. The latter is usually characterized as empirical, quantitative, and influenced by American sociology, while the sociology of Steffen by contrast—if mentioned at all—is characterized as the-

oretical, qualitative, historically oriented, Continentally influenced, and sometimes even "speculative" (cf. Allardt, 1993, p. 125; Allardt, Lysgaard, & Sørensen, 1988, pp. 35–40; Bengtsson & Molander, 1998, p. 9; Boalt & Abrahamsson, 1977, pp. 102–106; Eyerman & Jamison, 1994, pp. 37; Hansen, 1997, p. 10; Reiss Jr., 1968, p. 16; Segerstedt, 1955, p. 85; Segerstedt, 1987, p. 12; Sohlberg, 2000, p. 353; SOU, 1946, p. 81). The historiographical result of this meta-narrative is two sociologies clearly separated from each other—theoretically and historically—where the early one indirectly is said to be a disciplinary failure, while the later one is given the character of a success story.

Our counterarguments summarized are that the first referred argument—about the shared professorship—is both implausible and partly wrong, and that the second one—about the discontinuity—is inadequate because it is based upon an oversimplified and internalistic narrow version of the complex and multilayered history of sociology in Sweden.

The historical fact, though, is that Gustaf Steffen (1864–1929) was the first professional sociologist in Sweden. As such, he was a contemporary of and maintained direct contact with the so-called "classical founding fathers" of modern sociology. He was born the same year as Max Weber and corresponded with the six-years-older Georg Simmel, who was born the same year as Émile Durkheim. In that sense, Steffen belonged to the generation of social theorists who entered the intellectual scene during the 1890s and, following Henry Stuart Hughes (1958, pp. 33ff), came to revolutionize our understanding of modern society. Like the international social theorists of his time, Steffen became deeply concerned with the widely discussed social questions of the new industrial society. He struggled with the same fundamental social and epistemological issues and was directly involved in the formation and institutionalization of modern social science (Wisselgren, 2000, pp. 211–213).

The argument sometimes heard that Steffen was not a "pure" sociologist because of his shared title is, from an international perspective, apparently implausible, since that consequently should disqualify even the classical sociologists as "real" sociologists. Durkheim's chair at Sorbonne was also shared—between science of education and sociology (Lukes, 1992, pp. 365–366). Weber was a professor of law, of political science, and of economics, but never of sociology (Turner, 2000, pp. xvi–xviii; Weber, 1975, pp. 703–708). Simmel's chair, when he finally got one, was in philosophy (Frisby, 1984, p. 22). And Marx, as is well known, never had any professorial title at all. Instead, it is more adequate to regard Steffen's shared title as typical for the time and for the low grade of specialization characterizing the newly academized social sciences all over Europe.

Then what about the sociology developed by Steffen? Was it due to the intellectual shortcomings of Steffen's project that he failed in establishing the discipline on a long-term basis? As earlier studies on the topic have shown, it is far from easy to describe the sociology of Steffen in a short and comprehensive way. Instead, what has been repeatedly emphasized is the receptive and dynamic character of his social thought (I. Eriksson, 1994; Klackenberg, 1931; Lilliestam, 1960; Wisselgren, 1997). Generally, though, Steffen was thoroughly conversant with the contemporary intellectual, political, and philosophical debates going on abroad. In Germany, England, and Italy, where he lived for more than a decade before entering his chair, he was inspired, during different phases of his life, by thinkers as disparate as Marx, Krapotkin, Spencer, Nietzsche, Simmel, and Bergson, and by different movements of thought such as *Kathedersozialismus*, economic marginalism, and Fabianism.

Easier to conclude is that Steffen was far from one-sidedly influenced by Continental thinking. On the contrary, it is well documented that it was after he had left Germany and moved to England, in 1887, where he came in contact with and was inspired by Morris, Wicksteed, and the Fabians, that his interests in sociological issues began to germinate. That

way, the relationship between the individual and the social was fundamentally problematized. And to explore this crucial issue, Steffen wrote in his diary in 1893, it was necessary to become a sociologist (Lilliestam, 1960, p. 52; Wisselgren, 1997, p. 89). He was also not solely devoted to deduction and philosophical reasoning. For example, in Steffen's extensive and empirically and statistically oriented research project on the historical development of the wage system in England, resulting in three separate books, the explicit aim was to bring about "a synthesis of the theoretical and the historical or 'deductive' and 'inductive' research methods" (1899, pp. v–vi). And it was with a summarized version of the two first books that Steffen in 1902 qualified for his PhD, which made him formally eligible for an academic post (Lilliestam, 1960, pp. 85–89).

When Steffen attained the position as the holder of the new chair in economics and sociology in the following year, one of his first professional tasks was to clarify the role of the new academic subject in relation to the already existing neighboring disciplines, but also to argue for the public need for and the societal benefits of the sociology propagated. Hence, in a widespread series of popular booklets, titled *Sociala studier: Försök till belysning af nutidens samhällsutveckling* (*Social Studies: An Attempt at Delineating Modern Society*, 1905–1912), the ambition was to characterize modern society, its institutions, current tendencies, and social policy issues. The vision was a synthetic sociology, which, compared to the other social sciences, was both more fundamental and more general. By synthesizing the specialized knowledge offered by disparate disciplines such as ethnography, political science, economics, geography, and psychology, Steffen proclaimed, the aim of sociology as the only truly general social science should be to help modern man to reach an overview of the complex society rapidly arising around him (Steffen, 1905, pp. 13–18). Theoretically, this sociological program rested on two pillars, which were most extensively elaborated in Steffen's magnum opus *Sociologi: En allmän samhällslära* (*Sociology: A General Theory of Society*), published in four volumes, together amounting to 800 pages: on the one hand, a theory of social interaction, inspired by Simmel and Tarde, and on the other, a strong commitment to evolutionary thinking, where he was influenced by Spencer and Bergson (Steffen, 1910–1911).[3]

To turn this program into practical research appeared, however, to be easier said than done. In spite of Steffen's thoroughly prepared theoretical foundation, his rich production of books, booklets, and articles; his policy-related research on the publicly debated social questions on housing, emigration, and socialization, where he repeatedly underlined the need for induction, facts, and details (Steffen, 1909, 1910, 1918, 1921); and—most important—although Steffen primarily was recruited to Gothenburg University College as a sociologist, and also identified himself as such, he encountered great problems in realizing his sociological vision. Instead, the professional duties obliged Steffen to concentrate on his educational tasks in economics. This obligation was mainly institutionally caused. Economics was at that time an already well-established subject in the prevalent higher education system. And, since

3. Although Steffen's social thought changed a lot during these formative years, his focus on the interaction between the individual and the social remained relatively constant. Inspired by Simmel and Tarde, Steffen regarded "society" as a mental entity, based on the social interaction between two or more individuals, where the task of the sociologist was to study the different forms of social life, including, for example, "social copying" or imitation, a fundamental mechanism in all forms of socialization processes (Steffen, 1910–1911, pp. 83–114; cf. Steffen, 1907, p. 47). Another constant in Steffen's social thought was his commitment to evolutionary thinking. Unlike Spencer, however, Steffen made a fundamental distinction between the living world and the material or "dead" world. The study of nature, Steffen argued, inspired by Bergson, could never be anything else than knowledge from the "outside," whereas the sociologist could study human society from the outside as well as from the "inside," by using his or her intuition—a faculty situated between the instinct and the intellect—and hence reflect upon the deeper meaning of being a social being and intellectually systematize these insights into "sociological laws" (Steffen, 1910–1911, pp. 627–649).

Gothenburg University College (founded in 1891) was an institutional newcomer, striving for a firmer and more secure position in the Swedish academic landscape, it had to bring its examination requirements into line with the traditional universities of Uppsala and Lund. Economics was for that reason designed as a major subject, while sociology appeared first at the third semester of study (Lindberg & Nilsson, 1996, pp. 179–182). Hence, it is true that Steffen in his professional duties and activities was primarily concerned with economics—though involuntarily.

This incongruity between intended sociological research and the actual education situation caused large problems for Steffen. Since sociology did not have any real institutional function in the educational practice, the reproduction of Steffen's sociological enterprise was made more or less impossible. As Peter Wagner and Björn Wittrock (1991, pp. 332–341) have argued, the educational and professional practices are usually intimately connected with the cognitive development of the social sciences; where the professional tasks of sociology and its public role were diffuse, the discipline regularly met the largest institutional problems. And so, we have to state, was the case with Gustaf Steffen's sociology at Gothenburg University College.

This institutional problem was also observed by one of Steffen's contemporaries, the amateur sociologist E. H. Thörnberg, when he commented upon the current state of the discipline in 1925:

> It is a regrettable fact that Professor Steffen, who possesses such a versatile knowledge, scientific passion, research power and enthusiasm for this subject, has not during the last fifteen years had a specialized chair in sociology. In that case, he would in a quite different way have had the opportunity to engage himself in this discipline, in which he, in spite of his many duties, has produced results of lasting value. (Thörnberg, 1925, p. 194)

The quotation, written when Steffen still was alive and active as a sociologist, also hints at another fact of interest in this context, namely that Steffen was held in respect as a social scientist in his own time. Highly esteemed as one of the leading experts in that area and as the pioneer of Swedish sociology, Steffen was entrusted with the task of writing several articles on related topics for the major Swedish encyclopedia *Nordisk Familjebok* (Steffen, 1916a, 1916b, 1917). Several of his books were translated, which lay a foundation for a strong international reputation.[4] And as a teacher, he was commonly appreciated by his students, which some of the more outstanding ones later have expressed (Hessler, 1982, p. 149; Wigforss, 1950, p. 355).

When Gustaf Steffen passed away in 1929, the odd construction of the chair made it even harder to carry on his sociological project. The chair had, when installed at the turn of the century, been individually designed for Steffen. Thirty years later, it was more or less impossible to find a person merited for a double professorship in sociology and economics. Instead, due to the referred university system, it was Gustaf Åkerman, a well-established

4. Cf. Becker and Barnes (1961, pp. 947–948), where Steffen is treated most extensively of the 30 different Swedes mentioned. A selection of his translated books includes: *England als Weltmacht und Kulturstaat* (1899); *Studien zur Geschichte der Englischen Lohnarbeiter mot besonderer Berücksichtigung der Veränderungen ihrer Lebenshaltungen. 1-3* (1901–1905); *Ueber die Kaufkraft der Löhne erwachsener männlicher Arbeiter in England während des Durchbruches des Fabrikssystemes* (1760–1830), *Diss. Rostock 1902* (1901); *Lebensbedingungen moderner Kultur* (1909); *Die Grundlage der Soziologie. Ein Programm zu der Methode der Gesellschaftswissenschaft. 1. Auflage* (1911); *Die Demokratie in England* (1911); *Der Weg zu socialer Erkenntnis* (1911); *Die Irrwege sozialer Erkenntnis* (1913); *Krieg und Kultur* (1915); *Weltkrieg und Imperialismus* (1915); *Demokratie und Weltkrieg* (1916); *Der Weltfriede und seine Hindernisse* (1918); and *Die Grundlage der Soziologie. Ein Programm zu der Methode der Gesellschaftswissenschaft, Umgearb. Aufl.* (1928).

economist lacking both the competence and the research interest to prolong the sociological enterprise, who finally got the professorship. This turned out to be devastating for the future of the sociology propagated by Steffen. Åkerman gave no lectures at all in sociology. When later, in 1953, the "sociological addition" of the chair finally was erased, that only meant that the formal description was adjusted to a local practical situation that had been prevailing for more than two decades.

After Steffen's death, the domestic image of him underwent a significant change. This was reflected upon by Carl-Gustaf Thomasson in an article dealing with the heritage—or rather nonheritage—after Steffen:

> In his own time highly respected and honored, and even regarded as a pioneer in his own field, the sociological, it is nowadays only in foreign works of reference that you can find reflections of the high reputation prevalent during his own time. (Thomasson, 1962, p. 279)

Thomasson indicates a significant decline in the reception and valuation of Steffen's achievements. Apparently, something had happened along the way.

Representing the Past and Policing the Present

In order to explain the changing reception of Steffen as a sociologist, it is important though nonetheless insufficient to pay attention to the contemporary institutional problems in establishing sociology on a long-term basis. Steffen was not unique in that sense. On the contrary, it is more plausible to argue that the institutional problems were typical for the time. As Peter Wagner noted, it is even possible to suggest that "classical sociology" in general can be regarded as a failed project, in the sense that classical sociology managed neither to establish sociology as an academic discipline nor to reach any consensus about the cognitive direction of the subject. "'Modern,' post Second World War sociology," Wagner (2001, p. 8) thus states, "is an intellectual enterprise essentially different from 'classical' sociology." One interesting, and, in this article, highly relevant, implication of Wagner's way of reasoning is that continuity in itself should not be regarded as a criterion for classical status, which consequently means that another important part of the second argument—about the discontinuity—fails.

It is possible, though, to problematize the traditional role played by the classical sociologists in the history of the discipline one step further. As Jennifer Platt and R. W. Connell have recognized in different reception studies, it is well worth observing how the selection and invocation of theoretical "founding fathers" of modern sociology have changed over time. Durkheim, for example, was well known but by no means regarded as an outstanding sociologist in his own time. After his death, Durkheim's recognition fell to a low point in the 1930s. The reversal of his reputation began in the late 1930s, consolidated in the 1950s, and rose spectacularly in the 1960s (Platt, 1995). In the cases of Weber and Marx, there were similar canon-making processes going on—Weber being established as a sociological key figure, especially by Parsons, from the 1930s onward, while Marx became a full-fledged member of the sociological canon as late as the 1960s with the dramatic expansion of sociology and the radicalization of university students (Connell, 1997, pp. 1538–1542). The central point here is that the so-called "classics" of modern sociology have not always been classical. Instead, the choice and invocation of classics should be understood not primarily as the result of the superiority of those theorists but rather as an expression of the needs and uses of the modern collective of sociologists and what they regard as important and relevant contributions and perspectives (cf. Platt, 1996, pp. 240–247).

In a similar way, our main argument in this article is that the crucial part of the answer to the basic historiographical question posed is to be found "downstream" —i.e., in the context of the sociologists who translated and represented the image of Steffen and his negligible role in the history of the discipline. Two relevant perspectives at this point of the argument are the ones offered by studies of the functions and uses of disciplinary histories and by recent research on the bounding of disciplinary identities.

As Lepenies and Weingart (1983, pp. ix–xx) point out, disciplinary history often plays a crucial role in authorizing a certain cognitive direction, usually by constructing a linear chronology of dogmas and theories with focus on the "great men," where the present discipline takes a share of the prestige by appealing to its accumulated positive heritage. These kinds of founding myths tend—as do "invented traditions" more generally—to appear especially during periods of uncertainty and reorientation, when there is a need for legitimating the practitioner's own role. Hence, whenever a new discipline arises or a present one changes its cognitive content, the disciplinary past is usually rewritten in an almost automatic way (cf. Abir-Am & Elliot, 1999; Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983; Schaffer, 1996).

Another observation is that whenever a new scientific discipline becomes institutionalized, great attention is often paid to the policing of its conceptual and methodological boundaries (Shapin, 1992, p. 335). At the same time, the formation of a particular disciplinary identity is instructive for structuring the disciplinary practitioner's relationship to the already existing neighboring disciplines in the academic community, as well as to other extra-academic authorities in the wider institutional context, including funding agencies, politicians, the media, and the public in general (Cooter & Pumfrey, 1994, p. 251; Gieryn, 1999; Rosenberg, 1979, p. 444; Shapin, 1990, p. 1003; Shapin & Schaffer, 1985, p. 342).

In that sense, following Schaffer (1996, p. 219), disciplinary history should be understood not as epiphenomenal, but fundamental for the internal and external self-presentation of a discipline. Hence, boundary speech in general and disciplinary history in particular can be analyzed not simply as indications of how things are, but also as rhetorical instrumentalities actively used in the construction of a disciplinary identity (i.e., for carving up a specific niche in the intellectual ecosystem), while at the same time defending or advancing the professional interests of the disciplinary practitioners (Gieryn, 1983, p. 783).

Applying these perspectives to our case, consequently, makes it possible to displace the chronological focus forward in time and reformulate the basic question in a more exact way: Why was Steffen not ascribed classical status by posterity?

The "Unsociological" Interwar Period

When Steffen died, academic sociology lost what had been its single most important institutional stronghold in the Swedish higher education system. But this does not mean that sociology once and for all disappeared from the academic scene. Instead, and paradoxically as it may seem, the absence of an institutionalized sociology opened up for and encouraged sociological activities within other departmental settings, although these activities often to a large degree were based on individual initiatives and temporary groupings. Particularly in the departments of moral or "practical" philosophy, sociological lectures and courses were initiated and carried out throughout the 1930s and 1940s. In Lund and Gothenburg, sociological seminars and sociological societies were set up, whereas in Stockholm the so-called "philosophy and social science seminar" gathered philosophers as well as economists, political scientists, and psychologists (Hansen, 1999, pp. 11–17; Larsson, 2001, pp. 32–63; Nilsén, 1997, pp. 179–201; Nilsson, 1989, pp. 62–67).

Meanwhile, outside the academic walls, a general interest in sociological issues was steadily growing and repeatedly expressed in the media and the political sphere, often articulated in terms of a need for a systematic knowledge production about contemporary society and more specifically for an academic sociology.[5] At that time, however, several political measures had already been initiated, aimed at coordinating, reforming, and fundamentally strengthening the entire Swedish research organization, exemplified by a long sequence of Royal Commissions and a new state-governed financing system with area-specific research councils. To a large degree, these initiatives were based on a consensual spirit of belief and confidence in the role of science for building the society of the future. Primarily, these efforts were focused on the natural and technical sciences, but an increasing attention was also paid to the social sciences (Edqvist, 2003, p. 212; Nybom, 1997, pp. 38, 42, 63; Svensson, 1980, pp. 25–28). Hence, in the late 1930s and early 1940s, the recognition of the social sciences was officially marked in several ways: a new social science degree in political science was created; a number of new chairs in the social sciences were established at Stockholm University College; and special commissions were initiated to investigate the need for a social science research council, as well as the situation involving the social science disciplines at the universities, where once again the need for chairs in sociology was especially emphasized (Larsson, 2001, pp. 55–62, 73–82; SOU, 1935, 1937, 1944, 1946).

The state of the art of Swedish sociology during the interwar period may in that sense give an ambiguous impression, characterized by, on the one hand, a strong and growing external demand for academic sociology and, on the other, an institutionally vague internal supply. In this asymmetrical situation, the propagators of academic sociology inside as well as outside the academic walls could sail before the political wind. At this moment, it was, however, far from predestined which kind of sociology was to be established. Instead, there were several heterogeneous sociological seeds sown in the different local settings.

In particular, the Department of Practical Philosophy in Lund is worth bringing to the forefront in this context, since it gathered and fostered a number of individuals who actively contributed to the intensified sociological discussions. Among the most prominent local actors were Gunnar Aspelin, acting professor 1930–1931; Einar Tegen, professor, 1931–1937; Fritz Croner, a German émigré who joined the department in 1935; and Bertil Pfannenstill, who later became the head of the new sociological department in Lund in 1948. Of these actors, several showed an intimate knowledge of Continental sociology and social thought from early on. But this was in no way the single source of inspiration. Instead, all of them were to similar extents influenced by recent trends within American social science.[6] The most important trait of the dynamic sociological activities going on in Lund in the 1930s seems instead to be the open-minded attitude characterizing the intellectual discussions. "Sociology" was in that sense broadly conceived, recognizing the contemporary international development as

5. In the new public service radio, for example, several popular series of programs focusing on different "sociological" issues were produced and broadcasted (Nordberg, 1998, pp. 307ff.). Popular "amateur sociologists" such as E. H. Thörnberg attracted large audiences (Forstorp, 1997). For different articles in the daily newspaper arguing for the need for an academic sociology, see Nyström (1939) and Ahlberg (1938). For similar arguments in the parliamentary debate and in scientific journals, see Ohlin and Myrdal (1938, p. 7) and Myrdal (1944, p. 256).

6. Aspelin lectured on Durkheim, Weber, and, later, Marx, but also wrote an introductory essay on "American social science" in 1934; Tegen was originally a specialist in Kant and a strong adherent of Husserl's phenomenology, but also gave courses on, for example, G. H. Mead; Croner had been associate professor (*Dozent*) in Berlin, but his empirical studies were explicitly designed in accordance to its American counterparts; Pfannenstill was considerably inspired by Max Weber's discussion on ideal types but was also heavily influenced by Myrdal's *An American Dilemma* (Hansen, 1997, p. 10; Larsson, 2001, pp. 33–40; Nilsén, 1997, pp. 182–186; Nilsson, 1989, pp. 60–61; Pfannenstill, 1987, p. 24).

well as earlier achievements, where the latter included—not least significant in this context—Aspelin's former teacher Gustaf Steffen, whose major work *Sociologi* was included in the list of textbooks when Pfannenstill took his bachelor degree (Pfannenstill, 1987, p. 24).

When, within a few years' time in the late 1930s, Aspelin, Tegen, and Croner left Lund for other positions, the sociological branch of the department was partly brain-drained. All of them did, however, continue to develop their sociological interests in their new settings. Aspelin became responsible for the teaching of sociology in Gothenburg (Hansen, 1999, p. 11). Meanwhile, in Stockholm, Tegen and Croner joined the economist Gunnar Myrdal, who from the early 1930s had acted as one of the most ardent—and successful—advocates of the sociological perspective (Larsson, 2001, pp. 40–53; Nilsson, 1989, pp. 62, 66–67).

Hence, even though there was a vague and insecure institutional anchoring of Swedish sociology in the interwar period, it is worth emphasizing the fact that a lot of sociological activities actually were taking place, in several different localities, especially in Lund and Stockholm, and to a certain degree in Gothenburg, but not so much in Uppsala. Or to put it another way, when taking a closer look at the "unsociological" interwar period, it is quite obvious that the history of Swedish sociology is not as discontinuous and Uppsala-centered as the traditional accounts tend to assert (cf. Nilsson, 1989, p. 70).

Segerstedt Performing Frontstage and Networking Backstage

But after the war it was indubitably the sociology in Uppsala that turned out to be the most successful one. How was that possible? In the decisive situation characterizing Swedish sociology in that period, Torgny Segerstedt (1908–1999), who was the head of the Uppsala department, gained an exceptionally influential position. Like the aforementioned sociologists, Segerstedt had been trained in the Department of Practical Philosophy in Lund, where he had been actively involved in the manifold local sociological activities in the 1930s (Nilsén, 1997, pp. 182–187). After completing his doctoral thesis on value and reality in Bradley's philosophy in 1934 and having written a couple of philosophical follow-up treatises (Segerstedt, 1935, 1937), he successively developed a more explicit social psychological interest centered on epistemological issues concerning the social role of value, norms, and language (Segerstedt, 1938a, 1939, 1944; cf. Ralph, 2002, pp. 789–790).

A crucial step in Segerstedt's career was taken when he moved to Uppsala University in 1939 to take up the chair in practical philosophy, which from that very year—in accordance with a parliamentary resolution in the previous year—was attributed "an explicit sociological leaning" (*Riksdagens skrivelse*, 1938, p. 417). Even more important in this context, however, is that Segerstedt was chosen as the official representative of sociology in 1945 when the government set up the so-called Social Science Research Committee in order to investigate the state of Swedish social science. From this hybrid position—as the research leader of the Uppsala department and as someone heavily involved in the investigation—Segerstedt was offered an extraordinary opportunity to navigate his department with insider information about the ongoing political considerations and discussions, as well as a chance to affect the very direction of the research policy for the social sciences (Larsson, 2001, pp. 96–100; cf. Nybom, 1997, pp. 93–98).

The Social Science Research Committee presented its official report the following year, including the proposal to reestablish sociology as a discipline at the state universities. What is remarkable in this context is not so much the widely expected suggestion to set up chairs in sociology, but the controversial fact that it was underlined—in the very parts written by

Segerstedt—that it should all be about a specific type of sociology. As I. Eriksson (1994, p. 47) has noted, the rhetorical maneuver was to distinguish between two fundamentally different kinds of sociological research: on the one hand, "the speculative form of sociology," represented by "a number of well-known French and German scholars," and on the other, "a markedly empirical one," which, according to Segerstedt, had "become most developed in the United States." Added to the characterization of the so-called American empirical sociology was its specific methodology: "In carrying out such a survey and description it is above all quantitative methods that are used" (SOU, 1946, p. 80). The underlying normative direction implicated in this seemingly harmless dichotomized description was then explicitly spelled out and underlined:

> It has to be strongly emphasized, what Swedish social scientific research needs is an empirical sociology, aimed at field surveys of modern society [...]. What it is all about is to avoid a speculative sociology, which on the basis of scarcely examined facts constructs far-reaching and fragile theses. (SOU, 1946, p. 81)

Also striking in the official commission text is the fact that neither Steffen's earlier achievements nor his name were mentioned. Nevertheless, it is possible to strongly feel his invisible presence, or demarcated absence. Only a few sentences later, the chair at Gothenburg was brought up, but without naming its first holder—although Gustaf Åkerman, Steffen's successor, was another member of the Committee. Instead, the chair was categorized as a professorship in economics (Ibid., p. 81, cf. p. 15). Furthermore, it was stated that Swedish sociology "until now primarily has been developed within practical philosophy" (p. 14), and in that context, Segerstedt's predecessor in his own chair, Axel Hägerström, was named and brought out, despite the fact that the "sociological leaning" of that chair had been added after Hägerström had left it.

In that sense, it is possible to interpret the Committee report in terms of an unusually clear example of boundary work, where the scientific American sociology was separated from the speculative Continental sociology, and where Segerstedt inscribed himself into a key position in the nexus between the main line of ancestry (practical philosophy in general and the analytical one fostered by Hägerström in Uppsala in particular) and the future (as the holder of the only chair in practical philosophy with a sociological leaning and with a personal preference for American quantitative empirical sociology).

That this pedagogically simplified but rhetorically strong figure—with two different and opposed sociologies—was not perceived as innocent or uncontroversial by Segerstedt's contemporaries is evident from the reactions provoked by the proposal. The Philosophical Faculty in Lund raised strong objections, especially toward the very distinction made between the so-called empirical and speculative sociologies. Instead, they argued, it is necessary that both directions—if they at all should be rhetorically kept apart—ought to be regarded as mutually important and that the subject must not be tied down to one restricted methodological ideal (Proposition, 1947, pp. 219–220).

In practice, however, these objections had little effect. The political decision made was that the two incumbents of the chairs in practical philosophy at the state universities in Uppsala and Lund (but not at the two private university colleges in Stockholm and Gothenburg) were personally offered to switch subjects from practical philosophy to sociology. Segerstedt chose to do so, while his colleague in Lund, Åke Petzäll, preferred to remain a practical philosopher. Instead, a readership (*biträdande lärarbefattning*) was created in Lund to lead its new sociological department, a post the associate professor of practical philosophy, Bertil Pfannenstill, took up in 1948.

This meant that Segerstedt considerably strengthened his position by becoming the only professor of sociology in Sweden as well as the research leader of the new Uppsala department. On top of that, Segerstedt was both elected dean of the Philosophical Faculty in Uppsala and appointed a member (and later the chairman) of the board of the new Social Science Research Council, the first state-governed funding body in the area of the social sciences, established in 1947. From that moment on, Segerstedt's exceptional career as an academic leader accelerated with a number of prestigious commissions, and was later crowned by an extraordinary two-decades-long period as rector magnificus of Uppsala University from 1955 to 1978 and a lifelong membership in the Swedish Academy, awarded in 1975.

Inside and Outside the Boundary

In accordance with the guidelines outlined by the Social Science Research Committee, Swedish sociology after 1947 was given a clear and programmatic direction. This helped to create an image of sociology as a progressive and policy-relevant social science, which corresponded harmoniously with the political postwar optimism and the social democratic welfare state project (Fridjónsdóttir, 1991, p. 254). The new sociology was centered on a number of positive keywords. It should be of the "American" kind and pursue "empirical," "quantitative" "field surveys" of modern contemporary society. In that spirit, Segerstedt initiated and, together with one of his students, Agne Lundquist, coordinated an extensive and path-breaking attitudinal survey of people in the industrialized community (Segerstedt & Lundquist, 1952–1955). The impression of cognitive unity was strengthened by the speech about a pronounced "Uppsala School of Sociology," a concept introduced by Segerstedt and his colleagues in the very first volume of the Scandinavian journal *Acta Sociologica* in 1955. Outlined in the article were the contours of a locally distinct sociological program based on Segerstedt's theory of norms and groups. But, as Fridjónsdóttir (1991, p. 253) and Sohlberg (2000, p. 354) have pointed out, it is difficult to speak about a theoretically consolidated school. More important to recognize in this context is instead the fact that it was Segerstedt and his disciples who actively communicated this image of a sociological "school." In that sense, the rhetorical speech primarily filled a socializing and legitimating function, aimed at promoting certain directions within the wider domain of sociological research.

In this bounding process, the potential heritage of Steffen lost any positive function. It was instead most important for the postwar sociologists to identify their subject as a historically new scientific discipline, indispensable in explaining contemporary society. Or, to quote Georg Karlsson, one of Segerstedt's first disciples and later the first professor of sociology in Umeå, "to show that sociology was something new and different" (Karlsson, 1983, p. 1). That sociology had an earlier history in the Swedish context was, in this respect, troublesome.

In one sense, it is reasonable to argue that Steffen's synthetic sociological vision was strategically unfit to defend in the more densely populated postwar social science landscape. According to Segerstedt's conception, sociology was not a general but a specialized discipline, working alongside the other social science disciplines. When Bengt Rundblad, another of Segerstedt's early disciples, emphasized that sociology "is a completely empirical science with the task to investigate the social conditions in modern society" (1946, pp. 25–26), the disciplinary territory was limited to the Western world of present times, thus demarcating it from ethnography and history as well as from ethnology. These boundaries were, however, like scientific boundaries more generally tend to be—ambiguous, internally inconsistent, and contextually variable—making it possible for the postwar sociologists to move flexibly among its repertoire of different self-descriptions (Gieryn, 1983, p. 792). Hence, sometimes the dis-

tance to philosophy was marked (Segerstedt, 1938b, p. 104); at other times, its closeness was noted (Segerstedt, 1955, p. 85). On certain occasions, the connections to subjects like economics and statistics were brought up (Segerstedt, 1938b, p. 104), while at other times, sociology could be described—in a way more reminiscent of Steffen's conceptualization—as "a general science that could be applied to any kind of society at any time in history or of any particular culture" (Karlsson, 1983, p. 1).

Occasionally, Segerstedt mentioned Steffen as one out of many historical forerunners (e.g., Segerstedt, 1949, p. 113). But in these cases, Steffen usually was categorized as an outdated and speculative thinker, "influenced by the intuition philosophy of the French philosopher Henri Bergson and probably for that reason not disposed to heavy data gathering" (Segerstedt, 1987, p. 12). More often, however, Steffen was not mentioned at all (e.g., Karlsson, 1951; Pfannenstill, 1945, 1953). One reason for this was probably that Steffen had spoken on behalf of Germany during World War I, in opposition to the official neutral foreign policy. This politically controversial extra-scientific aspect also stamped the image of him as a one-sidedly, Continentally influenced theorist (Lilliestam, 1960, pp. 232–261). Nevertheless, it is reasonable to state that Steffen did play a role in Swedish postwar sociology, not a positive but a negative one, as symbolizing an anticanon, an estranged tradition of social thought that had been superseded.

On the other side of the symbolic coin was the so-called "American" sociology. Repeatedly from the Social Science Research Committee Report and onward, it was emphasized that sociology should be of the "American" kind rather than the "German" or "French." This orientation is partly to be understood as an aspect of the more generally changing patterns of scientific communication that were taking place at that time, where American social science had gained a dominating position on the international scene (Platt, 1996, pp. 2–3). In the Swedish case, the increasing transatlantic exchange of ideas was infrastructurally supported in several ways: through research funding from American private foundations, through Swedish students and researchers going to the United States, and through American sociologists coming to Sweden (Allardt, 1993, pp. 119–124; Eyerman & Jamison, 1992, pp. 11–22; Fridjónsdóttir, 1991, pp. 252–253; Sörlin, 1994, pp. 203–207). Besides this actual influence, however, the American label also signified a positive symbolic meaning adjusted to and strengthened by the specific international political situation characterizing the postwar period. Needless to say, it was not American sociology in its entirety that was seen as an ideal. The Swedes instead were focused on those elements within the multifarious American social science research that fit their own disciplinary agenda.

The single individual who more than anyone else came to symbolize this constructed image of American sociology was George A. Lundberg, whose far-reaching scientistic positivism has been described as an offshoot of an empiricist tradition that saw early sociological theory as a bad dream from which the discipline had been awakened by the kiss of science (Connell, 1997, p. 1539; cf. Platt, 1996, pp. 212–223). Lundberg visited Sweden a couple of times, and his influence on Swedish postwar sociology has accordingly been confirmed by several of the contemporary sociologists in their own memoirs (e.g., Karlsson, 1987, pp. 48–49; Pfannenstill, 1987, pp. 48–49; Segerstedt, 1987, p. 14; cf. Fridjónsdóttir, 1991, pp. 252–253). Still though, it is reasonable to argue that Lundberg's most important role in the history of Swedish sociology probably was the symbolic one he came to play. As a representative of American sociology, Lundberg, the son of a Swedish immigrant, was ascribed an almost mythical status by the Swedish sociologists, who regarded his Foundations of Sociology "almost like a Bible" (Boalt, 1995, p. 44; Pfannenstill, 1987, p. 28). Although Lundberg had quite a central position in the American sociological community—among other things, as the

president of the American Sociological Association—his domestic position was hardly as dominant as many Swedish sociologists assumed. For example, Bo Andersson, one of the Uppsala sociologists who visited the United States, commented in retrospect, "[W]e thought that American sociology was a homogeneous phenomenon" (Andersson, 1987, p. 58).[7]

Hand in hand with the embrace of American social science, symbolically personified by Lundberg, went the estrangement of Steffen. By describing, defining, and legitimating sociology in terms of opposites—empirical rather than speculative, American rather than Continental, quantitative rather than qualitative—it was emphasized that the new sociology was a truly scientific enterprise, indispensable for a modern and progressive nation like Sweden, but also that the alternatives that did not fit into the predominant research agenda were neglected or associated with backwardness and nonscientific speculation (Larsson, 2001, p. 200).

Turned into practical action, this dichotomizing rhetoric became an effective instrumentality in the "closure" or "black-boxing" of the disciplinary disunities. One of those individuals most heavily hit by the power of this boundary work was Bertil Pfannenstill. A part of the background is that Pfannenstill had appeared from early on as one of the strongest critics of Segerstedt's sociological approach, which, according to Pfannenstill (1945, pp. 448–449), appeared far too narrow and programmatic in its positivistic and quantitative orientation. And it was for similar reasons that Pfannenstill and his colleagues in Lund had raised strong objections against the Social Science Research Committee Report (Proposition, 1947, pp. 219–220; cf. Pfannenstill, 1987, p. 22). As the holder of the readership at the new sociology department at Lund University in 1948, it was, however, generally expected that Pfannenstill should be designated the first professor of sociology in Lund once the chair was established. In similar ways, Gunnar Boalt was appointed the readership in Stockholm when its new sociology department was established in 1949. But while Boalt fulfilled the expectations and became the first professor in Stockholm in 1954, Pfannenstill never achieved any professorial status. Instead, when the chair finally was established in 1956, Pfannenstill had to stand back in favor of Gösta Carlsson. Two of the experts judging the competence among the applicants were Segerstedt and Boalt, both of whom not only ranked Carlsson first, but also explicitly declared Pfannenstill as incompetent (Bengtsson & Molander, 1998, pp. 77–81; Larsson, 2001, p. 134). As a consequence, Pfannenstill had to leave not only his readership, which was withdrawn, but also (for several years) the department and the university. At the same time, this meant that one of the strongest critics of Segerstedt's program from within the sociological field was set aside.

The general tendency in the apparently successful institutionalization and expansion of Swedish postwar sociology was an increasing homogenization. While the interwar generation of practical philosophers interested in sociology, like Aspelin and Tegen, had had a broader and more open-minded definition of sociology, the early postwar generation primarily identified themselves as sociologists and, as such, developed a more fixed but also narrower understanding of their professional tasks, centered on field surveys and quantitative social psychological attitude research. This pattern of cognitive consolidation was also mirrored in the syllabi. In the course literature for the first and second semester of sociology study in

7. In similar ways, there is a myth to support the tie between Norwegian and American sociology, where according to the legend, American sociology was brought to Norway during the Second World War by a parachutist from the Allied Forces. He died because his parachute never expanded, but his body was found and George A. Lundberg's book *Social Research* in his knapsack was received by the Norwegian resistance movement (Allardt, 1993, p. 125; cf. Thue, 1997, p. 121).

Uppsala, for example, 18 out of 21 books were in English. Of these, all but three were published in the United States, and only one author was represented by more than one book—George A. Lundberg (*Filosofiska fakultetens studiehandbok II*, 1948).

But this process of streamlining was not without its critics. When the American sociologist Arnold Rose, who had been Gunnar Myrdal's collaborator in the work with *An American Dilemma*, visited Swedish sociological departments in the late 1950s, he criticized what he perceived as its methodological narrowness, which ironically had been tailored upon "American" raw models (Hammarström, 1997, pp. 11–12). In a similar but more neutral spirit, Albert Reiss Jr., as late as in 1968 (p. 16), commented that Scandinavian sociology "tends to favor a positivistic, quantitative approach to social phenomena, often linked with a deep interest in social policy and legislation." Another critical international observer was the Finnish professor of sociology K. Rob. V. Wikman, who already in 1947 drew attention especially to the role of historiography in this bounding process and strongly questioned the often-heard claim that Swedish sociology should be understood as a historically new phenomenon. Instead, Wikman argued, it is more plausible to regard the Swedish postwar sociology project as an offshoot of a long tradition of domestic sociological research, including, for example, the extensive state-governed social investigations and, not least of all, Gustaf Steffen's pioneering enterprise (Wikman, 1947). It is symptomatic that these critical voices and the acknowledgment of Steffen's historical efforts came from outside the disciplinary interests of the Swedish postwar sociologists.

A necessary qualification to be made, however, is that the historical image of Swedish sociology, of course, has changed a lot in the aftermath of Segerstedt and his disciples. In Sweden, like elsewhere, especially the general expansion of higher education in the 1970s brought new social groups and a range of new issues, interests, and perspectives into the strongly expanding discipline, which since then have considerably opened up for a more pluralistic understanding of the discipline's past (e.g., Beronius, 1994; B. E. Eriksson & Qvarsell, 2000; Gullberg, 1972; Therborn, 1973). These changes have, to some extent, also included a reevaluation of Steffen's role (I. Eriksson, 1994; Wisselgren, 1997). Hence, in one of the more recent historical accounts of Swedish sociology, it is stated that "today it is fairly well-known among Swedish sociologists that Gustaf Fredrik Steffen was the first one in Sweden to hold a professorship in sociology" (Hansen, 1999, p. 19). But still, it is worth recalling the fact brought up in the introduction that it was the fiftieth anniversary of Segerstedt's installment that was officially celebrated, while the more recent centennial anniversary of Steffen (in 2003) was passed over in silence.

Historiography and Disciplinary Interests

The relationship between disciplinary history and disciplinary identity is a complex one. It is a well-known fact among sociologists that the classics fill an important socializing function by offering a common disciplinary frame of reference, as has been expressed from the insider's perspective by, for example, Arthur Stinchcombe (1982, p. 3): "We define what holds us together as sociologists in part by having a common history." To this, historians and sociologists of science have added that disciplinary history also serves as a rhetorical vehicle in the bounding of collective identities. Usually, this normative function is staged by extracting historical lines of ancestry where the present discipline takes a share of the accumulated prestigious heritage.

What is remarkable in the case of the reestablished Swedish postwar sociology is, however, the rather one-sidedly negative use of history. In their strategic bounding of a discipli-

nary identity, the first generation of postwar sociologists heavily emphasized that the sociology propagated was an entirely new academic endeavor. In that context, the preexistence of the sociological track beaten by Steffen was conceived as a historical encumbrance rather than a resource, something that, if necessary to mention at all, was important to be distanced from. Instead, the dominant postwar sociologists repeatedly stressed the positive heritage from American sociology. In that sense, the origin of Swedish sociology was rhetorically placed not in a historical past but abroad. That way, the embrace of "American sociology," symbolically personified by the Swedish-American George A. Lundberg, went hand in hand with the depreciation of Steffen. And in both cases—the negative image of Steffen and the positive one of Lundberg—the historical narrative was, as has been shown, oversimplified and, in certain respects, even mythical.

The result was an effective, rhetorically dichotomized foundation story, which underlined the moment of historical discontinuity and at the same time accentuated both the societal relevance and the scientific credibility of the new American-oriented, empirical, quantitative, and scientistic sociology—in contrast to the old-fashioned, Continental, speculative, and counterproductive alternatives. This narrative fit the cultural, political, and scientific settings in the years after World War II and was rhetorically addressed to the lay public, political authorities, sponsors, and not least of all to the practicing sociologists. In the last sense, the foundation story at the same time backed up Segerstedt's program in the internal sociological debate on theory and method, while also depreciating Pfannenstill's and others' alternative standpoints as less scientifically credible. This way, the disciplinary history not only defined the collective memory of the past, but also glorified Segerstedt's own pioneering role and, by way of socialization and exclusion, structured the future.

Having summed up the main argument of our critical analysis of the postwar sociologists' presentist account of their origin, it is important from a historiographical meta-perspective to clarify that disciplinary history should not be regarded as an exception from history in general. All history is purification and simplification. As a historian, you always have to select, exclude, translate, and interpret. And in that sense all historical accounts are cultural products of their own time, of what the authors tend to find important and relevant, given their situated interests. But this does not mean that all disciplinary history is deliberately biased. Nor does it imply that historicist accounts per se are more detached and objective than presentist ones. Historicism has its interests, too. Opened up here is a window toward the long-debated and perplexing philosophical issues on presentism versus historicism, internalism versus externalism, relativism, and objectivity (see, e.g., Biagioli, 1996; Collins, 1997; Connell, 1997; Graham, 1983; Jones, 1985; Lepenies & Weingart, 1983; Schaffer, 1996; Seidman, 1985; Stinchcombe, 1982). What we are asking for, without taking a simplistic stance in these elusive discussions, is not a less but a more sociologically reflexive understanding of the intriguing and multifaceted relationship between disciplinary history and the bounding of disciplinary identity.

Acknowledgments

Earlier versions of this article have been presented to the ISA Research Committee on the History of Sociology in Montreal and to the History of Science and Ideas Seminar, Umeå University. We are grateful for the substantial feedback offered at these two occasions, as well as for valuable comments at different stages from Ian Jarvie, Anders Ekström, Sven Widmalm, two anonymous reviewers, and the editor of this journal. Wisselgren's work on this article has been sponsored by The Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation.

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