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Teaching of Clinical Sociology

Sociologists Teaching in Business Schools: Prospects and Opportunities

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the issues and experiences facing sociologists who take jobs in business schools, including the differences in political environment, the interaction and differences between sociologists and psychologists and sociologists and economists, teaching style and technique, and consulting opportunities. It also discusses the intellectual opportunities which come from exposure to research literature on a broad range of social phenomena at different levels of analysis and the access to research within and on corporations. Throughout the article the emphasis is on translating from sociology to management language, assumptions, and conventions of behavior.

Since the end of the extended economic expansion of the 1960s and the beginning of the economic woes of the 1970s and 80s, US students—and the populace at large—have showed an increasing interest in business, both as a career and as a field of study (National Center for Education Statistics, 1983–84:118–19). The result has been a tremendous expansion of business schools in the US and the enamoring of the MBA as an academic ticket to success. Simultaneous with the growth of the numbers and sizes of business schools has come a movement toward their accreditation, with increasingly stringent standards. Whereas business schools were for years professional schools dominated by practitioners with “business experience,” they have increasingly moved toward concern with developing a research faculty, most of whom have

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not worked in business careers. There has not been, however, a sufficient number of research oriented Ph.D.s trained in business schools to fill the demand for new assistant professors. As such, business schools have in the last few years, as never before, opened their doors to graduates of a variety of disciplines. Of interest to this paper is the movement of sociologists into business school positions and careers. Based primarily on my experiences and discussions with others who taught in sociology departments and then transferred to business school jobs, this paper describes the major issues and likely experiences sociologists who take jobs in business schools will face. It also discusses the differences in political climate, interactions with colleagues with training in psychology or economics, teaching and consulting.

Academic Politics and Business Schools

During the 1960s, with social unrest rampant and social change underway in every corner, universities tended to favor their social science departments. The departments grew as students flowed to graduate study in sociology, political science, and psychology. Especially in sociology departments, which see their province as the study of "social problems," an anticorporate and antiestablishment orientation developed among many faculty and even more students. Radical sociologies in a variety of subfields flourished, and indeed, some of the best work by sociologists in the 1970s was done by sociologists who identified themselves as radical, often explicitly as Marxist, sociologists. Yet some of these same sociologists, whose fields of interest often included the study of organizations and the labor market, found themselves on the wrong side of the tenure crunch and subsequently sought positions in the growth sector of the business school.

For many radical sociologists, business represents all that is wrong with the country, if not the world. The business world is seen as one of power and resources to effect self-interested outcomes in all of society. The hype surrounding the growth of the MBA degree has not moderated that image. In fact, it has reinforced it. The talk of fast-trackers up the corporate ladder who, through perseverance, hard work, and unmitigated self-interest, strategically "streamline" corporations to their own benefit but at the expense of millions of workers has been a frequent subject of the press. The image many sociologists have of the MBA way of running corporations is further embellished by talk of power eating, power dressing, and power negotiating.

Not all MBA students are as aggressive or as narcissistic as we in the social sciences often assume. This should be obvious when we consider that as many as 40% of current undergraduates are majoring in job-related fields, including business and management, the health professions, computer and information sciences, public affairs and service, and engineering (National Center for Edu-

cation Statistics, 1983–84:118–19). Of these fields, the largest increase by far has been in business and management; it has far outstripped even the other job-related fields in the increase in the number of majors. This means that many who would have been sociology majors or majors in the other social sciences or humanities have now chosen to major in business, but they may not be any different in their political or social orientations than if they had not pursued a business career. This depends, of course, on how much socialization takes place through the courses one takes, and clearly the intent is that it is substantial, but other social influences still play a significant role in the lives of all undergraduate and graduate students, including those students now working toward an MBA.

Getting a Job in a Business School

Because the recent demand for people to teach in business schools has exceeded the available supply of Ph.D.s in management, it has been possible for sociologists (and those from other disciplinary departments) to get jobs in business schools without specific business training. Although I have not attempted to count the number of sociologists now employed in business school positions, I would guess that there are 50 to 100 with Ph.D.s in sociology now teaching in business schools. Those sociologists most likely to be hired are those with specialties in complex organizations or studies of the labor force. These sub-disciplines translate into what management people call “organizational behavior” and “human resources.” Sociologists with backgrounds in social psychology might be asked to teach group dynamics, if hired in a business school, but they would also be expected to teach organizational behavior.

In most management departments in business schools, where sociologists are most likely to be hired, a course in organizational behavior (sometimes called organizational management) is usually part of the required curriculum. The requirement is sometimes divided into a micro course with an emphasis on personality, motivation, and leadership and a macro course with an emphasis on organizational design and structure. Otherwise, both micro and macro issues are combined into the same core course.

Those who get a Ph.D. in management typically will get an MBA degree along the way or at least will take the equivalent of introductory MBA courses. This is not usually the case for sociologists or those from other social science disciplines, and it would not automatically be expected for one to be hired in a business school. What would be expected, though, is familiarity with the types of courses taught in business schools and an understanding of the accepted method of teaching, as well as willingness to adapt one’s teaching to the more applied orientation of MBA students. It would also be expected that one would orient one’s research to topics more directly related to management issues than is typical of what one does within a sociology department. Of course, any

preparation specifically in business or management would be looked upon favorably.

Sociologists and Psychologists

Sociologists, with or without a radical orientation, have often been skeptical of business schools because psychologists tend to dominate in the business school departments where sociologists are typically hired. The macro orientation taught to sociologists as a professional bias has often manifested itself in a cynical orientation toward problems defined in micro terms. This is perhaps less true for those sociologists trained in social psychology, but they are not typically the ones, in my experience, hired from sociology. The sociologists who are generally hired, namely, those who specialize in organizational sociology, learn of business school studies only the critiques of the human relations school (e.g., Perrow, 1979). As a consequence, they view the management style derived from human relations theory as a disingenuous and manipulative practice in corporations. When such sociologists are hired in departments of organizational behavior or management, they find themselves having to teach about the very subjects that in their lives as sociologists, they considered suspect: motivation, leadership, and the importance of communication.

The gap between sociologists and psychologists is wider than one might expect on a number of dimensions. Sociologists define themselves as "social" scientists; psychologists as "behavioral" scientists. Although this may appear to be only a semantic difference, it implies a difference in concept and method.

The methodologies typically employed by sociologists and psychologists are quite distinct in practice. In recent years most quantitative studies in sociology have used regression analysis; psychologists more frequently use analysis of variance. Although the two methods are related, there are very different assumptions between sociologists and psychologists about how one proceeds in data analysis. A sociologist would typically use regression analysis with dummy variables to compare differences among groups. A psychologist would do the same analysis with an analysis of variance procedure and may be very suspicious of drawing conclusions from the use of dummy variables. This is, in part, because of some other differences. Sociologists tend to be more concerned with the size and generality of samples; psychologists are far more concerned with research design and the validation of measures.

There are also differences between sociologists and psychologists on the conventions of publishing. Sociologists on large projects do group work and publish with multiple authors occasionally, but there are rarely more than three names on a single article. Psychologists frequently work on group projects, usually publish with multiple authors, and it is not unusual to have three, four, or more authors on a single article. As such, the standards about how much is

Table 1

Distribution of Number of Authors on Articles in *American Sociological Review* (ASR), *Academy of Management Journal* (AMJ) (for Spring, 1983 to Spring, 1985), and *Journal of Applied Psychology* (JAP) (for 1983-1984).
Number of articles (percent of total).

	ASR	AMJ	JAP
1 author	61 (53.5%)	30 (25.0%)	34 (21.1%)
2 authors	41 (36.0%)	69 (57.5%)	74 (46.0%)
3 authors	11 (9.6%)	16 (13.3%)	31 (19.3%)
4 authors	1 (.9%)	5 (4.2%)	19 (11.8%)
5 authors	0	0	1 (.6%)
6 authors	0	0	2 (1.2%)
Total Articles	114	120	161
Average # Authors	1.55	1.84	2.29

enough productivity is often distinct for the two groups. Most psychologists from good schools come out of graduate school with several published articles done in conjunction with research projects organized by their major professors. Sociologists are more likely these days to have publications by the time they graduate than was true a decade ago, but more typically, whatever they have published will be from a masters thesis or dissertation, not from a project designed and organized entirely by their major professors.

Table 1 provides data on the distribution of the number of authors on articles published in three journals over a comparable two-year period: *American Sociological Review* (ASR), *Academy of Management Journal* (AMJ), and the *Journal of Applied Psychology* (JAP). This is a conservative test, because among sociological journals, ASR is more likely than others to have joint- or multiple-authored articles. AMJ, which is the major journal in organizational management, is more likely than a psychology journal to have single-authored articles, even though it is dominated on its editorial board and among its authors by those with training that is more psychologically than sociologically oriented. JAP is one of the major research journals for organizational psychologists.

The table shows that the average number of authors on articles published during this period was 1.55 in ASR, 1.84 in AMR, and 2.29 in JAP. If these differences are typical, and I believe they are, any given psychologist compared with any given sociologist is likely to have more articles published, for example, at the time of a tenure review. The scholarly productivity of sociologists, therefore, will appear to be less than for those from psychology backgrounds, and one may wonder if this disciplinary difference in publishing conventions is taken into account when candidates are evaluated. And, if this is a conservative test, as I claim, the differences would be even greater than is suggested here because much sociological research is completed and published by individual researchers, and many sociological journals would have even fewer multiple-authored articles than ASR.

Sociologists and Economists

In addition to being hired into departments usually dominated by those trained in psychology, sociologists also find themselves in schools otherwise dominated by economists or specialists in finance. (The distinction between the two within business schools is very clear, but their training is sufficiently similar to consider them together here.) Economics, of course, is the other field toward which sociologists hold a fascination, but a critical one. Those trained in quantitative methods are intrigued by the methodological precision required in econometrics, but at the same time, they feel that the very things which make economic models precise is what divorces them from the realities of social life.

The differences between the disciplines of sociology and economics, like those between sociology and psychology, are also more than might meet the eye. The language, as we all know, is different, and it often seems strange to hear someone trained in another discipline describe phenomena with which you may have thought you were familiar. For example, sociologists, with their frequent orientation toward social problem analyses, often balk when economists talk, for example, of “preferences” for substandard housing or for leisure over employment. Sociologists are also often surprised to learn that many economists do not use data in their academic work, but rather concentrate their efforts on model-building. In contrast, sociologists are very data oriented and almost always try to find ways to test their models on the “real world.”

Even with these differences, though, the accommodation of sociologists to economists is perhaps less difficult for sociologists to make than to psychologists. The more macro orientation of economists, compared to psychologists, is more consistent with sociological perspectives. Even micro-economics, which is, of course, the foundation of current economic thought, is macro compared to psychology in that the outcomes with which micro-economists are concerned are behaviors in the economy as a whole. In that sense it is analogous to the use of

survey analysis of individuals by sociologists. In contrast, psychologists are often concerned with the behavior of an individual person or a small group, but they rarely discuss general psychological trends in the country. For sociologists teaching in business schools, though, the similarities between sociology and economics may seem few, when sociologists realize that in the tenure review process, their work will most likely be reviewed by economists, as well as by psychologists.

Teaching Style

In part because the faculties of management departments are likely to be trained in psychology, the style of teaching typically done in a business school—at least in management departments—is quite different from that most often used in sociology departments. In a word, teaching in a management school is “experiential,” whereas in sociology departments, it most typically is not. According to Hall et al. (1982:3), experiential learning is based on five assumptions drawn from learning theory (or the psychology of learning): 1) Learning is more effective when it is an active rather than a passive process. 2) Problem-centered learning is more enduring than theory-based learning. 3) Two-way communication produces better learning than one-way communication. 4) Participants will learn more when they share control over and responsibility for the learning process than when this responsibility lies solely with the group leader. 5) Learning is most effective when thought and action are integrated.

In business schools, experiential learning includes the use of experiences and cases. Experiences are ways to practice a concept or relationship or ways to make it appear relevant to the individual learner. In practice, it may involve a large class breaking down into small groups for discussion with provision for reporting back to the larger class, a role-play (or an open-ended way of acting out a given situation or interaction), a game (usually with competing teams), or other means to effect the same end of actively involving the class in the learning process. In business schools, cases are stories of real-life organizations facing a crisis, an important decision-making situation, or even an example of success. Most good cases are also open-ended in that they do not present a specific and defined question or problem to resolve, but rather it is left to the students to determine through discussion how the case applies to the concept or issue at hand and what action might be recommended. The most famous example of the use of cases is at the Harvard Business School (HBS). Much of the teaching at HBS is done through cases, and they make cases widely available for sale for use in business schools throughout the country.

Sociologists attempt to effect the same results as occur in experiential learning by using examples in lectures. But despite good intent, examples are often an afterthought and far fewer than students want. Also, examples are still theoretical in that they present additional material to students to assimilate, without

involving them actively in the process of their own learning. In contrast, experiences and cases force students to be engaged with the material, and learning theory indicates that they are thereby more likely to learn it. What I am claiming here about sociologists, of course, is probably generalizable to much of the teaching done in the arts and sciences.

Students—and faculty—who have been exposed primarily to a lecture format in teaching are often puzzled by experiential learning techniques when first confronted with them. In some cases, they may be actively hostile and feel that teaching has turned into game-playing. I have found, however, when I compare the classes I taught in organizational sociology in sociology departments with comparable classes in organizational behavior in management, that students in the latter are far more satisfied with the course. Whether they also learn more I cannot say, but they think they do.

Teaching by way of the experiential method has another dimension, namely, it is also consistent with the way managers in corporations think about learning. Of course, many managers were trained in business schools and are exposed to experiential learning through their own training departments. They are often quite puzzled by the academic penchant for theoretical discussion, compared to practical application. Even if the goal of interaction with corporate managers is to get them to change an attitude or to make a specific kind of decision, the chances of success are far more likely with easily understood applications than with theoretically based logic. For both consulting and research, knowing this difference in orientation may be important for sociologists who want to gain access and resources.

In addition to style, the technique of teaching is different in business schools, and hence, in corporations. Faculties from business schools frequently (if not always) use overhead projectors in all presentations, especially those in the classroom. Classrooms are frequently equipped with projectors and screens. The same is true for managers in corporations. They take for granted the use of “overheads” or other visuals in presentations. Even when the visuals are not really visual, but verbal, every major point is presented on an overhead, so that it can be read at the same time it is being discussed. Learning theory again applies: a picture is worth a thousand words. Those who can see what it means (or even see it, period) are much more likely to learn than those who only hear it. This distinction would be readily apparent to anyone who attended both the American Sociological Association meetings (ASA) and the Academy of Management (Academy). One will find at ASA few, if any, presenters who use an overhead projector. That would not be the case at Academy meetings, where many, if not most, will do so.

Classroom techniques carry over into other interactions as well. In my experience in business schools, almost every meeting, no matter how informal, will have a written agenda provided by the person running the meeting. This is

true for faculty meetings, for working lunches, and for more formally identified task forces or committees. It is assumed that putting the agenda in writing will save participants from having to spend time discovering what the session is about. And it does.

Teaching materials, in my experience, also differ between business schools and sociology departments. In the years I taught in sociology departments, I never assigned text books for classroom reading, and I knew few others who did. Instead, I typically assigned a series of "issue" books. That is, class time was used for presenting the basic material, while assigned reading was for illustrations, examples, and applications. This style is the exact opposite of what I now do in business school teaching, where class time is for illustration and outside reading is for learning the literature and research.

In addition, among the many textbooks sent to me for use in sociology classes, I remember only a few which included a teacher's manual of any substance. This is quite different in business schools. In management classes for the MBA, textbooks are frequently used, and they are accompanied by a mountain of supplementary materials for the assistance of the instructor: a teacher's manual with prepared lectures and suggested formats, discussion questions and answers, test questions, experiences, cases and case analyses, and "overheads." Some currently available textbooks also provide computer exercises—with answers, of course. Although, as is typical for textbooks, these materials may be quite variable in quality, they are exceedingly useful for the instructor and provide a means to incorporate structure in the unstructured experiential learning format.

Consulting

Being in a business school provides sociologists with opportunities for consulting, which are also available, but on a much less extensive scale for those within sociology departments. That difference need not be true, but it seems to me that sociologists have not been used by corporations as consultants as much as they might be because they have not been sufficiently attuned to the differences in the use of language and conventions and have not had a clear sense of their markets. To be successful as a consultant requires that you know what it is you have to sell. Sociologists who want to do consulting with corporations sometimes make the mistake of trying to sell skills for which psychologists or economists are better trained and better known, instead of selling those skills which are unique to sociology (or at least more familiar) and which are more easily credible with the business community.

Organizational sociologists are, perhaps, most vulnerable to this temptation, because sociological theories of organizations often seem far removed from prescriptive action. For example, one may know that the relationship between measures of centralization and stratification in organizations is positive and

between .2 and .3, but this does not easily suggest action to be taken. Furthermore, sociologists have not typically stressed outcome measures, such as efficiency and effectiveness, although there has been substantial work on innovation. In fact, some have criticized organizational sociologists for orienting their work even to an implicit image of efficiency (e.g., Mouzelis, 1968).

If sociologists want to use such theories for consulting with organizations about how to improve their functioning, they should know the conventions of how this might be done. Changing organizational structure is done, for obvious reasons, at a very high level. In management, it is linked to what is called "strategy" or "policy." Strategy involves both internal and external analyses of where the organization fits and how it might best shape itself for profitable endeavors over a given period of time. Internally, strategy involves helping the organization understand what its business is really about. Externally, it involves helping the organization understand what forces impinge upon it that may affect its ability to reach its goals, who its competitors are and their likely actions, and niches of opportunity, given the characteristics of the organization.

This sort of work is clearly the province of MBAs, usually working with major consulting firms, in conjunction with the highest levels of corporate management. It is unlikely that sociologists would be hired by major corporations for such work, in competition with the myriad of management consulting firms filled with MBAs trained in strategy and policy. There may, however, be a large market for such work with medium and small businesses, but even they are likely to want strategy as defined by major business schools. Organizational theory in sociology, then, has more to do with what management people call "organizational design"—i.e., how to structure the organization—than it does with strategy or policy. Even so, management consultants usually recommend changes in organizational design only after a careful analysis of strategy from a business perspective. For sociologists to use their knowledge and skills successfully to help design or redesign corporations, they need to learn the language and orientation of business, including most likely, some accounting.

Another area where sociologists might want to use their skills in consulting is in the area of organizational development and change. I recently talked with a young woman who saw this as an area where she could develop a business career from a sociological background. However, by development and change, she meant the same kinds of theories about centralization, formalization, and innovation that I just discussed. In the business world, however, organizational development and change has more to do with creating an atmosphere within the organization to facilitate organizational members working well together. It involves such things as team building and sensitivity training. Again, sociologists can easily learn how to do it and how to adapt what they know to problems of interaction, but they must know that that is what is involved when businesspeople talk about organizational development and change.

Another area where sociological training would seem to be a natural extension is training, and businesses do a lot of it. The primary skills needed are good communication and presentation skills. Even here, however, sociologists should know that some adjustments must be made, for training departments in corporations will assume the same teaching techniques, based on the psychology of learning, that were discussed earlier. They will assume the use and familiarity with flipcharts, overhead projectors, and slide projectors, and presentations with a lot of visual material.

The kind of topics which are most often covered in corporate training programs are things which may appear mundane, like written and oral communication, how to run a meeting, or time management. Again, these are topics which have their own conventions within the management literature. Sociologists can easily learn them, but they need to be aware of the wealth of material already written on such topics. Even so, this need not be a major barrier to doing consulting in training departments because many large corporations use already prepared materials and simply need people skilled in presenting it.

If you are asked to write a new course or presentation for a corporate audience, you should be aware of the conventions of instructional design, a subfield within education. One of the major guidelines in instructional design is the writing of objectives. All material to be learned is to be organized with clearly laid out objectives which are presented upfront in any course and reinforced throughout. Instructional design also presumes knowledge of learning theories, including the need for constant reinforcement and the involvement of the learners in their own learning.

These are just examples of areas where sociologists could be involved in corporate consulting, but where they also may make many mistakes if they approach it without doing some preliminary preparation as to the language, assumptions, and conventions of the business world. There are many other areas as well where sociologists could consult with business and where they have a great deal to offer. But, they will not be utilized if it is not packaged correctly and presented in a way that corporate managers will understand what is being sold. Examples include: the whole range of topics dealing with small group interaction, including conflict resolution, understanding power and influence techniques, communication skills, and negotiation tactics; analysis of communication flows and information processing needs; industrial relations; leadership; employee attitudes; and compensation studies.

To some extent, what sociologists can most offer in building a consulting record are the methodological and general social science skills they have. Many businesses need or want surveys done. Typically, they hire nonacademic consulting firms, but could just as well hire academics. Reasons they go to non-academic firms are: they want quick turn-around, and they want sophisticated, but clear and to the point reports (again, with many visuals, not just tables).

Because of the decline in social science jobs in universities, many Ph.D.s have ended up in corporate careers, so it is not unlikely that the person who will hire you to do a survey in a corporation will be a fellow Ph.D., with some background in statistics and methods, but with very precise business needs.

In addition to surveys, sociologists also have skills to run what in the corporate world are called “focus groups.” These are typically groups of consumers, for example, in advertising, who are asked to talk about their responses to a product or service. The person running the meeting must know how to get the group to reveal their thoughts, without intimidating them, guiding them, or permitting group dynamics to get out of hand which will undermine the goal of getting good information. Sociologists learn these skills in a variety of ways, not only in running classrooms, but also through the use of unstructured interviewing techniques. Businesses of late have also been very interested in qualitative studies, as they have become more and more intrigued with the notion of corporate culture and want to know what the underlying values are within their firms.

Opportunities for consulting are available in business schools, but are not necessarily automatically provided. Many of the largest and most prestigious business schools are regularly called by potential clients who are then referred to members of the faculty, either individually or through a school-organized consulting program. In most cases, though, I think that people develop consulting practices through their own efforts, by making contacts and letting people know what it is that they can provide for them. The easiest way to develop contacts is to write or publish something or to give a presentation of which businesspeople become aware and see as of value to their business. Consulting opportunities can also grow out of research. One may gain access to a corporation for research purposes, then after the research is completed be asked to do other work for the corporation on a consulting basis. Such an outcome is more likely if one provided the corporation with a useful report on the research results, as a tradeoff for the opportunity to gain access.

Advantages of Teaching in a Business School

For business schools, the interest in hiring sociologists is their research training. And, because the business school position is often a second job rather than a first, sociologists who are hired in business schools usually have a record of publication by the time they are hired. For sociologists, the interest in business school jobs is not only because the prospects for obtaining a position are often greater than in sociology departments, but also because they have been caught by the same cultural wave that has led students to major in business in ever increasing numbers; to put it bluntly, it is where the action is. Business schools pay higher salaries, provide more resources for research, access to consulting, and importantly, access for research.

The greater access to data on the corporate world can provide a tremendous source of enlightenment for sociologists on many of the problems they have wanted to study. A good illustration of this interest is the recent emergence of a new subfield called "economic sociology." It typically involves many issues which have been the province of business schools: capital structures and flows, interlocking directorates on corporate boards, the structure of decision making and internal labor market mobility within corporations, etc.

Because of the social movements of the 1960s, however, the discipline of sociology has negative connotations to many businesspeople. Thus, it is undoubtedly more difficult for sociologists from sociology departments to gain access to study corporations regarding any of these issues than for sociologists from business schools. This is also true because sociologists often do not use the same language as businesspeople. For example, a sociologist who has not been involved in consulting work may refer to "organizational intervention" and mean the actions a corporation takes in the community, whereas a management person will mean by the term the use of a program within the corporation to effect change. Yet, for the same reasons discussed in regard to teaching and learning theory, being on the inside and seeing what is happening enables one to learn so much more than is possible by theorizing about it from the outside.

Another advantage of being in a business school is the exposure which one can gain from the closer contact with psychologists and economists to the study of a wider range of social phenomena than otherwise would be possible. Sociologists in business schools may find their own sociology better informed because in business schools they frequently have to shift levels of analysis and give thought to how different levels might be integrated. (Of course, this is not true for all sociologists in business schools. Some may just as well narrow their focus, but this is much less likely, because unless the business school is very large, the interdisciplinary nature of the school will make it difficult to avoid exposure to this broader perspective.) The failure of most sociologists (and for that matter psychologists as well) to integrate levels of analysis is exemplified in my earlier comments about the cynicism which sociologists of organizations have often expressed about work on motivation, leadership, and communication. Although in the last few years, the subjects of organizational culture, symbolism and myth have received more currency among sociologists than previously (e.g., Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Meyer and Scott, 1983; Pondy et al., 1983), these are still well within the realm of sociological thinking. Motivation, leadership, and communication are still not familiar topics to most sociologists.

An example of how a more integrated perspective can better inform sociological thinking is easily found in the response of sociologists to work on leadership. Those from schools of management often write as if leaders create change in organizations and shape behavior within them at will. Their actions are fundamentally linked to notions of strategy, and it is assumed that strategy determines structure (Chandler, 1962).

Such work is part of the body of literature taken for granted by organizational sociologists, but it is also often used as a foil against which “sociological” or “structural” interpretations of organizational behavior and change are presented. In fact, an active debate about the relative efficacy of leaders versus structures gained substantial attention in the literature. Those arguing for the importance of leadership were typically from management schools, while sociologists took up the banner for structure. The debate ended with a compromise, which within sociology is called “strategic contingencies” theory. It argues that under certain conditions, decisions by leaders make a difference, but otherwise the effects of structure prevail (Child, 1972).

What is still at issue is the breadth of those strategic contingencies. How much latitude does a decisionmaker have, independent of the constraints of organizational structure and the environment? If one reads the currently popular business press, which has apparently also had a major effect on the development of the sociology of organizations, leaders have a great deal of latitude. In fact, selling leadership has become a new growth industry within management (which always provided a ready market). But leadership in this form borrows heavily from sociology: leaders are said to be charismatic, the symbolic embodiment of values in the corporation (Deal and Kennedy, 1982; Pfeffer, 1981; Trice and Beyer, 1984). The need for each discipline to enlighten the other in the meaning and manner of leadership is obvious in this case, but the same could be said for theories of motivation with theories of socialization and theories of communication and of information-processing with theories of social interaction, for example. Without belaboring the point, it seems clear to me that sociology could be informed by exposure to levels of analysis other than the structural (see DiTomaso, 1982)—and vice versa.

Both the intellectual and the occupational advantages of teaching in a business school are many. However, there are also clear disadvantages. Among other things, a business school is a different environment from a sociology department, and as such, taking a job in a business school constitutes changing fields. It requires learning a new language and literatures, meeting new colleagues, developing new networks, writing for new journals, and attending new conventions. It means that some aspects of sociological training can be developed far more extensively than might be possible in a sociology department, e.g., organizational sociology (or organizational theory and behavior) and studies of the labor force (or human resource management). But, the tradeoff is that other topics within sociology are likely to be part of one’s past or indulged only in infrequent engagements with other sociologists.

There need not be isolation, however. In my case, I have an appointment in a sociology department and I attend the sociology conventions. In addition, there are now so many sociologists teaching in business schools across the country that it is easy to maintain a network of like minds within management.

At the same time, the market for sociologists in business schools may be narrowing, because of the leveling off of growth of business schools and the increase in the number of Ph.D.s in management. On balance, though, the advantages, from my view, outweigh the disadvantages, and evidently that is the judgment as well of many other sociologists.

Conclusion

Teaching in a business school is only a step away from teaching in a sociology department, and yet it brings one much closer to the application of theory than is often necessary within sociology departments. In a disciplinary department, like sociology, one can choose to do applied work or not, but most often the focus and rewards are to those who do theory. In a professional school, like business, research is rewarded, but it must be done in the context and with an orientation to the application of conclusions. In addition, teaching in a business school is more consumer oriented than is often true in a sociology department. One often finds in a business school that the best known researchers are also good teachers; that is not necessarily the case within sociology departments. Whether students in your classroom or corporate clients in your consulting activities, both are looking for usable knowledge and may have little tolerance for knowledge for its own sake.

Although such an attitude may appear crass and anti-intellectual to those of us whose lives are spent in universities, the positive challenge is that it forces one to think more seriously about the linkages between theory and action, and in doing so, we often find that our theories are made better for the effort. There may be a temptation to be too opportunistic, in which case we develop theories around limited applications and later find that the theories do not hold when tried in another context. The value of linking theory and practice, however, is that we often learn more about theory when we attempt to use it. That is why those with "experience" seem so much more valuable to a university or a corporation than those fresh out of classroom training.

Teaching in a business school may not be markedly different from teaching in any professional school. Most are more oriented toward application than is true of disciplinary departments, and in most the interdisciplinary composition of the faculty forces one to confront the boundaries of one's assumptions. It has been only recently, however, that sociologists have developed a visible presence in business schools, and this opens the door to new opportunities and challenges for sociological theory and practice.

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