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Bogardus, Emory Stephen

(21 February 1882–21 August 1973)

Robert C. Bannister

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Bogardus, Emory Stephen (21 February 1882–21 August 1973), sociologist and university administrator, was born near Belvidere, Illinois, the son of Henry Brown Bogardus, a farmer of Dutch descent, and Eliza Stevenson. Growing up in a rural household, with no mail delivery or daily paper, Bogardus learned of the outside world through publications such as the *Youth's Companion*, *Farm and Fireside*, and a weekly Sunday-school paper. Although rural isolation fostered intellectual self-reliance, his childhood, he later commented, was also dominated by the “authoritative voices” of adults; his parents were over forty when he was born, and his two brothers sixteen and ten years older (*Much Have I Learned*, p. 4).

After graduating from high school, torn between choosing a career in “money-making” or “human values,” Bogardus sought a compromise as cub reporter for the *Belvidere Standard*. But he soon returned to farming for five years to earn money for college. Entering Northwestern, he received a B.A. in 1908 and an M.A. in 1909, both in philosophy and psychology, before obtaining his doctorate at the University of Chicago (1911) for a thesis on “The Relation of Fatigue to Industrial Accidents.” To finance his first year of graduate study, he obtained a fellowship at the Northwestern University Settlement on Chicago’s North Side, where he developed a lifelong interest in the relations of immigrant groups. At Chicago he was especially influenced by the sociology of Albion Small, Charles Henderson, and William I. Thomas and the social psychology of George H. Mead, James R. Angell, and Harvey W. Carr. Avowedly eclectic, Bogardus sidestepped the methodological debates of his time. “Interview, life history, participant observation, and statistical methods,” he once wrote, “are all needed ... in order that one may understand a human relations problem” (*Much Have I Learned*, p. 63).

Appointed assistant professor of sociology and economics at the University of Southern California in 1911, Bogardus headed the newly created sociology department from 1915 until 1946, gaining for it a reputation as one of the finest on the West Coast. He also served as director of the Division of Social Work from 1920 to 1937 and as acting dean (1926–1927) and later dean of the Graduate School (1945–1949). A prodigious writer, he published more than twenty-four books, including revisions of the textbooks for which he was most widely known. Among them were *Social Psychology* (1918), *A History of Social Thought* (1922), *Sociology* (1922), and *Contemporary Sociology* (1931), each of which appeared in several editions. He also addressed contemporary issues in *Essentials of Americanization* (1919), *The Mexican in the United States* (1934), and *Leaders and*

Leadership (1934). In addition, he wrote some 275 articles, which, with a characteristic enthusiasm for quantification, he later classified as 12 percent each treating social theory, race, and immigration, 10 percent measuring “social distance,” and the remainder dealing with cooperative movements, research methods, world organization, public opinion, and democracy.

In his research and teaching, Bogardus contributed to the interwar drive to make sociology more rigorously “scientific,” though not without regard to social welfare. In the early 1920s he organized at USC a “Social Research Clinic,” where graduate students could bring problems to clinic members serving as “doctors” to diagnose “research impasses” (*Much Have I Learned*, p. 61). In 1924 he formulated the first of the “social distance” scales for which he was best known. Developed initially when he was director of the Pacific Coast Race Relations survey (assisted by Robert E. Park), the “Bogardus scales” charted the psychological-social distance separating individuals in different racial and nationality groups by measuring willingness to accept social intimacy, as expressed in attitudes ranging from exclusion from the country to admission to family membership through marriage. Published in leading sociological journals, his findings were collected in revised form in *Social Distance* (1959) and applied in countries such as South Africa, Ethiopia, and Thailand.

As editor of *Sociology and Social Research* (founded in 1915) from 1916 to 1961 and as editor emeritus until 1967, Bogardus earned the journal national stature. Although less prestigious than the *American Journal of Sociology*, *Social Forces*, or the *American Sociological Review*, it provided a forum for discussion of “applied” sociology and contemporary issues at a time when such interests were increasingly unfashionable within the profession. Commenting, for example, on Benito Mussolini in 1933, when the Italian dictator was still admired in many quarters, Bogardus predicted that fascism contained the “seeds of its own destruction in its autocracy.”

Bogardus was extremely active in the professional and civic organizations that mushroomed in the interwar years. In 1920 he founded Alpha Kappa Delta, the sociological honor society. In 1929 he helped found the Pacific Sociological Society, serving as its first president from 1929 to 1931, and in 1931 was elected president of the American Sociological Society. In Los Angeles, he worked with organizations concerned with race relations and the problems of young people, the latter the subject of *The Boy in Los Angeles* (1925). For his professional contributions and public activities he received honorary degrees from USC and several other universities.

Despite his many professional activities, Bogardus found time for a rich personal life. Married in 1911 to Edith Mildred Pritchard, with whom he had one child, he enjoyed more than thirty-seven years of what he termed “genuine marital happiness” before his wife’s death in 1949. An avid world traveler, he kept double-entry notebooks of his adventures: one page contained pre-trip notes, the second, impressions from his travels, the most memorable of which he published as *The*

Traveler (1956) and *Explorer* (1961). Some impressions took the form of sonnets, which he also regularly composed and published on a variety of subjects. His visits to cooperatives across the world formed the basis of his *Problems of Cooperation* (1960). He probably died in Glendale, California; he is buried there.

Although the “social distance scale” won Bogardus a footnote in the history of American sociology, he never quite enjoyed the reputation of William F. Ogburn, F. Stuart Chapin, and other leaders of sociology’s “second generation,” who dominated the profession in the interwar years. But, in conjunction with other institution builders of this generation, he played an important part in securing for the discipline a permanent place within the nation’s universities.

Bibliography

Bogardus described his early life and career in *Much Have I Learned* (1962) and the development of sociology at his university in *A History of Sociology at the University of Southern California* (1972). An earlier unpublished autobiographical sketch is in the Luther Lee Bernard Papers at Penn State. Additional books by Bogardus include *An Introduction to the Social Sciences* (1913), *Essentials of Social Psychology* (1918), *Methods of Training Social Workers* (1921), *Fundamentals of Social Psychology* (1924), *Making Social Science Studies* (1925), *The New Social Research* (1926), *Immigration and Race Attitudes* (1928), *Introduction to Social Research* (1936), and *The Making of Public Opinion* (1951). Bogardus’s role in the history of American sociology is discussed briefly in Howard Odum, *American Sociology* (1951), and his opposition to fascism is in Robert Bannister, “Principle, Politics, Profession: American Sociology and Fascism, 1930s–1950s” in *Sociology Responds to Fascism*, ed. Stephen Turner and Dirk Käsler (1992). An obituary and tribute appear in *Sociological Inquiry* 44 (1973): 3–5.

See also

Small, Albion Woodbury (1854-1926), sociologist

Henderson, Charles Richmond (1848-1915), sociologist and minister

Thomas, William Isaac (1863-1947), sociologist

Mead, George Herbert (1863-1931), philosopher and social theorist

Angell, James Rowland (1869-1949), academic psychologist and fourteenth president of Yale University

Park, Robert Ezra (1864-1944), sociologist and student of cities and race relations

Ogburn, William Fielding (1886-1959), sociologist

Chapin, Francis Stuart (1888-1974), sociologist

