Sociology as Documenting Dystopia: 
Imagining a Sociology without Borders – a Critical Dialogue

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Abstract
This is a dialogue between a teacher-student and a student-teacher in the discipline of sociology. Critical questions about the state of sociology are pursued in the context of a hegemonic American sociological enterprise. American sociology has become content with continuing to document dystopia, with exploiting those who struggle under societies’ structural weight, leading to a discipline whose work reproduces the very structures of domination we study. Through this Freirean dialogue, we ponder epistemologies and pedagogies of justice, liberation, and humanity. We hope this critical dialogue will help spark more conversation towards imagining a sociology without borders – away from the imperialism of American sociological epistemology, methodology, and practice.

La sociologia que documenta la dystopia: imaginando una sociología sin fronteras – un diálogo crítico
Este es un diálogo entre un profesor-estudiante y un estudiante-profesor de sociología. Se tratan cuestiones críticas sobre la situación de la sociología en un contexto americano. La sociología americana se contenta con continuar su documentación de la dystopia, con la explotación de quienes sufren bajo el peso estructural de la sociedad y conduce a una disciplina cuyo trabajo reproduce las mismas estructuras de dominación que estudia. A través de un diálogo al modo de Freire, nos planteamos las epistemologías y las pedagogías de la justicia, de la liberación y la humanidad. Esperamos que este diálogo crítico pueda fomentar más conversaciones acerca de la posibilidad de imaginar una sociología sin fronteras, alejada del imperialismo de la epistemología, metodología y práctica de la sociología americana.

Sociologie en tant que documentation de dystopia: imaginant une sociologie sans frontières – un dialogue critique
L’article est un dialogue entre un professeur-étudiant et un étudiant-professeur dans la discipline de la sociologie. Des questions critiques au sujet de l’état de sociologie sont poursuivies dans le cadre d’une recherche sociologique américaine hégémonique. La sociologie américaine
est devenue contente de documenter le dystopia, et, en même temps, d'exploiter ceux qui lut-
tent sous le poids structural des sociétés, menant à une discipline dont le travail reproduit les
structures de la domination mêmes qu'on étudie. Par ce freirean dialogue, nous considérons
des épistémologies et des pédagogies de justice, de liberté, et d’humanité. Nous espérons que
ce dialogue critique encouragera plus de conversation vers imaginer une sociologie sans fron-
tières – loin de l’impérialisme de l’epistémologie, de la méthodologie, et de la pratique soci-
ologiques américaines.

Keywords
critical sociology, pedagogy, epistemology, Paulo Freire, utopistics

Introduction

Teacher-student: Yes, sociology is indeed in a state. However, before lament-
ing, I want to start by sending us back a bit. A memory, perhaps fading. Let’s
drift back to an Introduction to Sociology course where you fell in love with
the discipline of sociology – a discipline that offered both explanation and
hope. Think about the professor who led that class through material that,
though it did not have definitive answers, had the most wonderful questions
and thus your sociological imagination was developed. Allow yourself to be
enveloped in the memory of the sociology professor whose passion for what
she did both broke through the cynicism as well as shone light on your shadowed
dreams. Sociology offered us a road map and a set of tools in our early
walks towards social justice – it did for me, yes. It is true, I think, that by and
large we have come and continue to come to sociology with experiences,
notions, something called (by those who take pleasure in turning the pursuit
of justice into ideology) ”idealism,” and, we have come with desires to ”make
the world a better place” for all who inhabit it. Remember?

Student-teacher: Yes, I do remember. It was a time and a place when I came
open hearted, desperately seeking reason, seeking understanding, seeking myself.
I came as a vulnerable and rebellious mind. I was offered a critical look at a
world with which I was so desperately frustrated – a world which seeks so much
domination. I was told sociology was the science of liberation – I came to learn
the operative word: was. Sociology has simply become a science.

Teacher-student: Your observations are timely, important, and I hear
such frustrations articulated more often than I would like to acknowledge.
Let’s think about the classic readings by Peter Berger, C. Wright Mills, Emile
Durkheim, and, yes, W.E.B. DuBois and several critical others who ”invite”
us and our students to sociology, who ask us to question, who ask us to speak
truth to power – perhaps these early introductions give us the master's tools