

How Can The Heritage and Legacy of Durkheimian Sociology Be Revived? : Ana Analysis of Sociological Textbooks1)

journal or publication title	聖学院大学総合研究所Newsletter
volume	Vol.27
number	No.2
page range	40-44
year	2018-03
URL	http://doi.org/10.15052/00003388

How Can the Heritage and Legacy of Durkheimian Sociology Be Revived?:

An Analysis of Sociological Textbooks¹⁾

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Acknowledgment

First of all, I sincerely appreciate that prof. Evert Osburn at Seigakuin university because he edited this paper for a short time before the convention and encouraged a lot of my work.

And, I also appreciate this work was supported by JSPS KAKENHI Grant Number JP15H03409.

1. Purpose of the Study: Sociological Education in Japan

I will report on the results of an analysis of a sociology textbook in order to facilitate research and enhance the development of sociological education in contemporary Japan. I am a member of Group D, which is one of the groups in the JSPS KANKENHI study on “How can the discipline of sociology, namely, Durkheimian sociology, be revived?”

Utilizing the textbook *Sociology, Modernity, Self and Reflexivity* (henceforth, *Sociology*) by

Hasegawa, et al., I intend to demonstrate an effective method for teaching sociology and then to analyze it.

2. How the Heritage and Legacy of Durkheimian Sociology Can Be Revived

This report introduces *Sociology*, a Japanese textbook for beginners, which is the most popular textbook in the field of sociology in Japan. The authors argue that Durkheim’s theory of sociology is more sustainable than Max Weber’s. What follows is my analysis of the book.

It appears that these four Japanese sociologists wrote the sixteen chapters of the book in accordance with their particular fields of expertise. These chapters specifically deal with actual problems in Japan. For example, Professor Hasegawa, the President of the Japanese Association of Environmental Sociology, composed Chap. 3 : “Social Order and Power,” Chap. 4 : “Organizations and Networks,” Chap. 8 :

Hasegawa, K., Hama, H., Fujimura, M., and Machimura, T. *Sociology, Modernity, Self and Reflexivity*, Yuhikaku: Tokyo, 2007, 588p.

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“Environment and Technology,” and Chap. 16: “Social Movements and Concepts.” These chapters were written from his perspective as an environmental sociologist, whose focus is upon environmental sociology, theories of social change, and social movements²⁾.

Another example is Professor Hama’s contribution. As the Director of the Japanese Sociological Association, he is an expert on the history of sociological theory and the sociology of knowledge³⁾, and he wrote Chap. 1: “Intimacy and Publicity,” Chap. 2: “Interaction and Self,” Chap. 5: “Media and Communication,” and Chap. 6: “History and Memory.”

I have researched the entire content of the *Sociology* textbook and will now compare Durkheim’s and Weber’s theories on sociology. The following analysis will confirm the sustainability of Durkheim’s theory into the future.

◇ Case I: Durkheim and Weber in Chaps. 1 and 6, by Hama, Hideo.

Prof. Hama appears to posit that Weber’s viewpoint of “Wertfreiheit” (“value-freedom”) is the same as Durkheim’s viewpoint of “normal/pathological.” Thus, Durkheim’s viewpoint can serve as an alternative to Weber’s.

In addition to this, Prof. Hama proposes that the “public sphere of memory,” which is based on the “collective memory,” as suggested by Halbwachs, a Durkheimian, will further develop Weber’s historical sociology.

● Chap. 1: “Intimacy and Publicity”

In chap.1, Hama demonstrates “the existence of society” proved by Simmel, Weber, Durkheim, Goffman, and Tönnies, whose theories provide an explanation for

the inappropriate actions that give others trouble on Japanese trains, and also introduces these sociologist’s viewpoints.

He picks up Durkheim’s proposition, «nous ne le réprouvons pas parce qu’il est un crime, mais il est un crime parce que nous le réprouvons»⁴⁾ (Durkheim [1893] 1998), and explains, “There is a criterion, a rule which distinguishes an appropriate action with an inappropriate one in a society” (Hama 2007: 20).

He also says, “According to Durkheim, it is the scene in which an inappropriate event is happening on which we should focus if we are trying to observe a given society” (Hama 2007: 21).

● Chap. 6: “History and Memory”

This chapter deals with the sociological manner in which Weber and the second-generation Durkheimian, Halbwachs, may be compared regarding their treatment of history.

○ Prof. Hama says the “collective memory”⁵⁾ constitutes a “public sphere of memory.” While memories of historical facts may differ from community to community, the common memories that people share strengthen their solidarity.

○ The history in “historical sociology” is a chronological chain of past events as the proper relation between cause and effect, for example, in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Hama 2007: 179–181). In this interpretation, it appears that “historical sociology” is only a singular history. I believe it may be arguable as to whether the concept in Weber’s

work is singular or plural history, but *Sociology* makes this claim because Hama needs to distinguish it from the following “sociology of history.”

- The “history” in “sociology of history” is “the image of the past when we reflect upon it from the present” (Hama 2007: 181–182), such as in *Collective Memory*.
- This chapter demonstrates that collective memory is developed among people and “creates a public sphere of memory.” On the other hand, it excludes the people who don’t have a common history, making them “forget what is to them an inconvenient past” (Hama 2007: 198) as demonstrated, for instance, in the 2015 controversy over holding an atomic bomb exhibition in Washington, D.C. or Hiroshima. Consequently, there are apparently concurrent, plural collective memories of but one historical event.
- Prof. Hama maintains the sustainability of collective memory because we belong to plural groups, not only one group, at the same time. The collective memory has not only “the power to collect us into the community of memory,” but also constitutes the “public sphere of memory” made up of “plurally different memories” (Hama 2007: 198).

◇ Case II: Durkheim and Weber in Chaps. 4 and 16, by Hasegawa, Koichi.
These chapters demonstrate Durkheim’s theory

of intermediate groups as becoming a framework with which to explain the problem in which we consider the various public spheres, as opposed to the rationalization and bureaucracy of Weber.

● Chap. 4 : “Organization and Network”

In this chapter, Prof. Hasegawa introduces the concept of “the McDonaldization of Society” (Hasegawa 2007: 107), which is an extension of Weber’s rationalization as applied to some franchised restaurants. He explains the transition of the theory of organization from Weber’s rationalization to an NPO and the socialization of a network.

- “The expansion of an organization generally advances its specialization, standardization and formulation, but has a negative correlational effect regarding centralization. Thus, it simply does not advance the bureaucracy as much as would be expected in Weber’s theory (Hasegawa 2007: 116).
- It is social roles and issues whereby NPOs network with each other to become an “intermediate support organization” and to develop policy, but they do not become subcontractors to the government (Hasegawa 2007: 127) (see following, Chap. 16).
- Though Weber’s bureaucracy of society predicts the collapse of socialism, the history of the sociology of organizations lent criticism to his theory. On the other hand, a capitalistic society succeeds by networking to prevent the negative effects of the bureaucracy (Hasegawa 2007: 133–

134).

● Chap. 16: “Social Movements and Concepts”

Chapter 16 describes the new social movement from the 1960’s to 1980’s, when industry expanded extensively to a high level.

Prof. Hasegawa states that the government, market, family and community do not function well in contemporary society. As an alternative and/or supplement to the function of these societal institutions, a civil society that depends on NPOs/NGOs is being observed with keen interest (e.g., intermediate groups, social capital, and the public sphere) (Hasegawa 2007: 526). He states that there is a “public sphere” which “has strong civil solidarity and presses to actively participate in society [...] in order to conserve and to protect the environment” as common property that will be shared with future generations (Hasegawa 2007: 527–529).

- “We regard the role of various intermediate groups or each group emphasizing its solidarity in accord with Émile Durkheim, whose theory is typical of them, as the essence of sociology as opposed to politics, economics, and jurisprudence, which basically address the relationship between the state and the individual. We realize that the public sphere becoming weaker is an indicator of the frailty of these groups and of privatization” (Hasegawa 2007: 535).
- “Solidarity is the epitome of the sociological viewpoint. Sociology emphasizes the important role of

intermediate groups. An example is Durkheim’s theory of suicide, “suicide égoïste,” which describes the cohesion in a family and a support group that prevents a potential suicide. That role appears to be emphasized again by resource mobilization theory, in which a group emphasizing solidarity could create and utilize resources much more easily than an isolated individual” (Hasegawa 2007: 539–540).

3. Summary

This report reveals that the heritage and legacy of the Durkheimian theory of sociology should be revived and is, indeed, sustainable into the future. Thus, this classical theory of sociology remains applicable to the actual problems of modern society.

Examples:

1. Durkheim’s viewpoint of “normal/pathological” is the same as Weber’s “Wertfreiheit” and is an alternative to it.
2. The Durkheimian “sociology of history” is more advanced than Weber’s “historical sociology”.
3. The Durkheimian theory of intermediate groups and solidarity is more efficacious than that of Weber’s “rationalization” and “bureaucracy.”

The *Sociology* textbook is meant to be a primer for sociology. For that reason, the four Japanese sociologists who authored it cogently explain the sociological essence, with the aim being for the next generation in contemporary Japan to revive the legacy and heritage of Durkheim’s theory of sociology.

- 1) This paper was presented at the international convention “Lire l'actualité à travers les œuvres classiques: quels renouvellements pour la discipline sociologique? ” (“Read the Actuality through the Classical Works: How can the discipline of sociology be revived?”) which was held at Kyoto on September 21, 2017.
- 2) His main works are *Constructing Civil Society in Japan: Voices of Environmental Movements*, Trans Pacific Press: Melbourne, 2004, and *A Choice for a Post-Nuclear Society: The Age of New Energy Revolution*, revised edition, Shinyosha: Tokyo, 2011.
- 3) His main works are Iyasu, T., Iwasaki, N., Soeda, Y. *Georg Simmel and sociology*, Sekaishisoshu: Kyoto, 2001, and Nasu, H., Embree, L., Psathas, G., Srubar, I. (Eds.) *Alfred Schutz and his intellectual partners*, UVK Verlagsgesellschaft MbH: Konstanz, 2009.
- 4) “It’s a crime that we criticize, and we don’t criticize it because it is a crime” (Durkheim, É., *De la division du travail social*, PUF: Paris, [1893] 1998, p.48)
- 5) According to Halbwachs, “collective memory” is reconstituted by remembering a past event with others, who help to fill in the details of forgotten memories (Halbwachs, M., *Mémoire collective*, Albin Michel: Paris, [1950] 1997, p.52).

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