The Palgrave Handbook of Altruism, Morality, and Social Solidarity

Formulating a Field of Study

Edited by
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Preface

This volume presents the first comprehensive proposal of the nature, scope, and potential future directions of altruism, morality, and social solidarity as a field of study. These phenomena are of major importance in forming the personalities of individuals, the content of daily interactions, and macro-level properties such as institutions and the predominant cast of the general culture. For this reason, this subject matter occupied a prominent place in the formative and earlier years of sociology. After a period of decreased attention, there is now a renewal of interest in these phenomena. This interest has culminated in their being placed together into a single field of specialization. This combination of altruism, morality, and social solidarity into an integrated focus of study indicates a recognition of their considerable interdependence in sociocultural reality. This interdependence is a theme of this volume.

In 2012, the American Sociological Association formally granted full section status to the Section on Altruism, Morality, and Social Solidarity. The efforts of many individuals contributed to this recognition of the subject matter as an identified field of study. These collective efforts are continued in this volume. All but a few of the authors of chapters are members of this section. The others have participated in the section’s formal professional activities.

This volume is intended to be foundational in two main senses. Most importantly, it provides a first statement about the field that can serve as a point of departure for criticism, refinement, and further development by sociologists and other social scientists. Second, it provides a basic source for courses and program development pertaining to the field of study.

This foundational analysis is divided into four parts. The first part focuses on the general perspectives and potential directions of the field. In chapter 1, Vincent Jeffries describes six projects directed toward developing the field of study. These projects are derived from factors that have contributed to the growth of philosophical and sociological traditions. In chapter 2, Margarita A. Mooney maintains that an understanding of the human person is foundational to theory and research in the social sciences. She synthesizes insights from virtue ethics, critical realism, and personalism to develop
a conception of the human person that emphasizes moral factors and the interdependence of personal and common good.

The second part identifies the intellectual heritage that provides a basis from past thought for main features of the field of altruism, morality, and social solidarity. Emile Durkheim, Jane Addams, and Pitirim Sorokin provide the foundational intellectual traditions for the development of this field. In chapter 3, Alexander Gofman analyses the basic principles of Emile Durkheim’s approach to moral and legal rules, and their relationship to both solidarity and altruism. Some new interpretations of Durkheim’s thought are offered. In chapter 4, Raquel Weiss and Paulo Peres present a critical reconstruction of Durkheim’s theory of morality. They construct a typological model of individual and social morality that provides a basis for considering how specific variations in morality may lead either to the encouragement or the discouragement of solidarity. Chapter 5, by Patricia Lengermann and Gillian Niebrugge, presents an analysis of Jane Addams’s theory of moral action and social life. The authors focus on Addams’s theory of how ethics functions as a foundational structure of social life, and how ethics is related to the organization of material production. In chapter 6, Pavel Krotov maintains that a unitary theoretical foundation for the field is provided by the ideas of Pitirim Sorokin. He presents Sorokin’s ideas as a formulation that provides both a distinctive approach to the subject matter and the outline of a mission to effect beneficial change. In chapter 7, Lawrence T. Nichols considers the interpersonal encounters and flow of influence between Leo Tolstoy and Jane Addams, Mohandas K. Gandhi and Pitirim A. Sorokin. He also evaluates how these figures have contributed to the development of a new positive sociology that includes the study of love.

In the third part each of the core ideas of altruism, morality, and social solidarity are elaborated, and their implications for future scholarly work are evaluated. In chapter 8, Stephen G. Post considers the nature of altruism and its dimensions. He then presents a typology of six components of the sources of altruism in human experience. In chapter 9, Steven Hitlin offers an overview of concepts and research within sociological social psychology and the study of morality that can contribute to macro understandings of social action and organizations. Work in areas such as justice, ideology, trust, and values are suggested as potential ingredients for enriching the study of altruism, morality, and social solidarity. Chapter 10, by Christian Smith and Katherine Sorrell, explores the place of the concept of solidarity in sociological theory. Viewing solidarity as a basic and essential aspect of human existence, they present a broad research program to further its study.
In chapter 11, Edward A. Tiryakian and Jonathan H. Morgan focus on concepts of solidarity associated with groups committed to peaceful emancipatory change. They conclude the chapter by considering the possible future of the study of solidarity as a scientific project.

The fourth part focuses on the interrelationships of altruism, morality, and social solidarity, and their relevance for understanding phenomena such as organizations, politics, and philanthropy. Chapter 12, by Jonathan H. Turner, focuses on an evolutionary reconstruction of how and why altruism evolved. Developing behaviors indicating reciprocity, empathy, and justice are linked to altruism. With sufficient development of a sense of self and emotions conscience in humans, in terms of a sense of good and bad, and morality became possible. In chapter 13, Jeffrey C. Alexander stresses the importance of studying solidarity and its relation to morality from a sociological perspective. A macro-level theory that distinguishes between different varieties of both morality and solidarity is central to this endeavor.

Chapter 14, by Matthew T. Lee, argues that altruism, morality, and social solidarity are better understood if they are examined together rather than in isolation. Shared and competing moral visions can either facilitate or inhibit specific forms of altruism and solidarity. Chapter 15, by Jan E. Stets and Kevin McCaffree, discusses how one sociological micro-level theory, identity theory, can serve as a framework that links altruism, morality, and social solidarity. The activation and verification of moral identities are basic processes in relating moral standards to altruistic actions and bonds of solidarity.

Chapter 16, Sorcha A. Brophy analyses the nature of moral standard-setting involving ideas about “right” and “wrong” in institutionalized regulatory bodies, such as governmental, religious, educational, and healthcare institutions. She also examines ways that research on moral standards can enrich understandings of variations in altruism and social solidarity.

In chapter 17, Peter L. Callero explores what form of politics and political engagement is most likely to promote an altruistic orientation, resolve moral conflicts, and facilitate social solidarity in modern society. Self and identity are viewed as centrally important in promoting these orientations and results. In chapter 18, Paul G. Schervish addresses four aspects of the practice of philanthropy in biography and in society. What is called the “moral citizenship of care” is considered as a fruitful way to understand civil society and as an alternative to the notion of social solidarity.

The volume demonstrates the centrality and importance of this new field of study for future work in sociology and in the other social sciences. It is intended to serve as a basic source for further growth and development of the
field. There are a number of important areas that call for additional exploration. One is advancing knowledge of the nature of the basic phenomena of altruism, morality, and social solidarity. This focus would include their ranges, forms, and types, as well as their sources and consequences. A second important area is the interdependence of these phenomena. Evidence indicates that they influence, shape, and direct each other to a considerable degree. The necessity of exploring these relationships gives coherence and mutuality to both theoretical development and empirical research in the field. A third focus is developing the practical and policy implications of the knowledge and understanding of altruism, morality, and social solidarity and their interrelations. The positive forms of these phenomena have great potential for bettering the lives of individuals and for the general social welfare. Finally, formulating and presenting ideas and research findings that can be appreciated and applied by the general public is of great importance. This extension to publics outside sociology and related disciplines is essential to maximize contributions of the field to the common good.

VINCENT JEFFRIES
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Part 1

General Perspectives and Future Directions
1

Altruism, Morality, and Social Solidarity as a Field of Study

Vincent Jeffries

The study of altruism, morality, and social solidarity is now in the process of becoming a recognized field of specialization in sociology. These phenomena were of central concern in the earlier years of sociology. However, with the exception of the writings of some individual scholars, they have been given scant attention in the last 50 years. Interest in their study is now reawakening. Recent writings by Alexander (2006; 2014), Efremenko and Evseeva (2012), Hitlin and Vaisey (2010), Oliner (2011), and Smith (2003; 2010) show this trend can be expected to continue.

The nature of a coherent field integrating the study of altruism, morality, and social solidarity has yet to be elaborated. This chapter suggests several projects that will contribute to advancing the study of these phenomena, both separately and with respect to their interrelationships. The identity of these projects derives from previous analysis of the development and maintenance of schools of thought. Two works, Randall Collins’s (1998) comprehensive study of trends in philosophical thought throughout world history and Edward Tiryakian’s (1979) account of the importance of schools in the development of sociology, provide the primary basis for this analysis.

Systems of thought in philosophy and in sociology can be viewed as schools. They usually begin as a small number of individuals organized around a particular set of ideas. If they succeed in attracting others and transcending generations, these schools become established traditions of thought (Alexander and Colomy 1992; Collins 1998; Tiryakian 1979).

There are differences between schools of thought and fields of specialization. A field is defined by its focus on a particular subject matter, such as altruism, morality, and social solidarity, within the much broader scope of a discipline, such as sociology. A field of specialization is much narrower
Vincent Jeffries

in substantive focus than a major school of philosophical or sociological thought. Writings in a special field draw on a variety of theoretical schools and methodologies in their specific focus.

Despite these differences, it is reasonable to assume that factors that contribute to the development and maintenance of schools, whether they are philosophical or sociological, would make similar contributions to a field of specialization. This chapter frames these factors as projects to be accomplished to advance the field of altruism, morality, and social solidarity.

First project: Identifying the founders and intellectual heritage

Theoretical schools in sociology develop around the ideas of a founder/leader. The ideas of this individual provide a different perspective from those current in the discipline. They also provide a basis for unity by formulating both a distinctive approach to the subject matter and a mission to effect beneficial changes in the discipline (Tiryakian 1979). Major intellectual figures whose ideas are parallel and relevant to the focus of a field of specialization can impart the same benefits to work and progress in that field.

The ideas of three individuals—Emile Durkheim, Jane Addams, and Pitirim A. Sorokin—appear particularly important as foundational sources for future developments in the field of altruism, morality, and social solidarity. Their ideas provide a comprehensive and inspirational heritage for theoretical elaboration and research programs. The distinctive nature of their individual thought is complementary. Viewed as one system of thought, their ideas span and integrate the diverse subject matter of the field and the manner of its practice. All three theorists also saw their scholarly work as a basis for improving the lives of individuals and the characteristics of the sociocultural order. Hence their ideas are relevant for developing approaches to both the application of sociological ideas in policy and for dialogue about sociological knowledge and understandings with publics.

The study of social solidarity was a central focus of Durkheim’s writings. His interests included the emergence of solidarity through social interaction and the role of social institutions such as the division of labor, religion, and education in influencing solidarity (Durkheim 1957; 1960; 1961). He also gave attention to sociocultural conditions such as anomie and egoism that are antithetical to solidarity (Durkheim 1951). His delineation of the nature and components of morality, and his emphasis on its theoretical and practical importance, established the foundation for the sociological study of morality (Durkheim 1953; 1961). Durkheim (1951:35) believed that “the
progress of a science is proven by the progress toward solution of the problems it treats.” This conviction that science should benefit society was manifested in his efforts to change and improve the French educational system (Turner, Beeghley, and Powers 2007:255–256). Lukes (1973) has recounted Durkheim’s life and his sociology.

While sociology in the United States was developing into a recognized discipline in the period from 1885 to 1930, a form of sociological practice known as settlement sociology was of major importance. The foremost theorist and leading researcher in this sociology was Jane Addams (Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley 2002:14). The primary motives and the philosophy of the settlement are based on three general suppositions. First, the entire “social organism” needs to be made more democratic, going beyond basic political participation. This includes extending full “fellowship” to all races, ethnic groups, immigrants, classes, and ages (Addams 2002a:45–49). Second, the social energy and the benefits of civilization should be made available to all. Third, basic religious ideas and the philosophy of Leo Tolstoy (Addams 2009:116–123) contribute to the supposition that “love is the creative force of the universe” (Addams 2002a:24). Love unites people and can be embodied in society (Addams 2002a). This philosophy was manifested in sociological practice by systematically gathering empirical data with the intent of identifying and understanding problems. On this basis, informed efforts and legislation could be initiated to provide amelioration. Addams’s research illustrating this combination of description and consideration of policy includes studies of domestic labor (Addams 1896), trade unions (Addams 1899), municipal administration (Addams 1905), recreation in cities (Addams 1912), and sex trafficking (Addams 1914). Because of basic changes in society, a new social ethics is needed in these areas (Addams 2002b). To further this development, Addams advocated a theory and approach that stressed linking the practice of sociology to a moral purpose. This moral focus involves improving the lives of people and uniting communities by instilling the idea of a “neighborly relation” in place of the disconnection of urban life (Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley 2002:15–16). Mary Jo Deegan (2005) has described Addams’s thought and her work in relation to sociology at the University of Chicago.

The writings of Pitirim A. Sorokin include a general theory of solidarity and antagonism (Sorokin 1947), a typology of social relationships that reflects these forms of interaction, and an extensive historical analysis of revolution and war (Sorokin 1947; 1957). Sorokin’s explorations in the study of morality include a historical analysis of the ethical systems of
culture and their effects on solidarity (1947; 1957; 1998b), and a consider-
eration of the relation between power and morality (Sorokin and Lunden 1959). Sorokin’s publications on altruistic love (Sorokin [1954] 2002) and on reconstruction (Sorokin 1948) founded the modern scientific study of altruism during the 1950s. Sorokin believed that knowledge about how to create a “harmonious universe” is limited. Therefore, “the historical moment has struck for building a new applied science or a new art of amitology—the science and art of cultivation of amity, unselfish love, and mutual help in interindividual and intergroup relationships.” The development of the knowledge for this science is “the paramount need of humanity” (Sorokin 1998a:302). Throughout his career Sorokin wrote for both the scholarly community and the general public, combining description and analysis with programs of reconstruction (Jeffries 2005). Johnston (1995) has written a comprehensive account of Sorokin’s life and ideas.

**Second project: Formulating core ideas**

Sociological schools derive their identity from the innovations that are characteristic of their core ideas. These innovations typically include some view of how the school can move sociology to a higher level of excellence. They also provide a sense of purpose to the schools’ followers (Tiryakian 1979).

The most basic innovation of the emergent field of altruism, morality, and social solidarity is the collective effort to reinvigorate and promulgate the study of these phenomena within the discipline of sociology. The foundational concepts of the field—altruism, morality, and social solidarity—each include a variety of somewhat diverse and often interrelated phenomena. Advancing knowledge and understanding regarding the nature, forms, and ranges of these phenomena is a fundamental project in building the field.

Altruism in the most general sense signifies both intent and behavior to benefit another person in some manner (Jeffries 1998). Generosity, benevo-
lence, forgiveness, volunteering, unlimited love, virtue, philanthropy, and altruistic love are terms used to indicate specific manifestations of this generalized orientation. Each can be regarded as ranging on a continuum from low to high.

Morality entails ideas about proper and improper, right and wrong, and good and evil (Hitlin and Vaisey 2010:5–6; Smith 2003). Such ideas are a component of the psyche of every individual, and also part of the culture of groups of different types. Systems of morality can vary in many respects.
Moral principles can be considered obligatory, or simply recommended. They may require or prohibit. The content of ideas considered as moral can differ widely.

Solidarity refers to a form of interaction and of intergroup relations (Alexander 2006; Sorokin 1947:93–118). At either of these levels of analysis, the essential characteristics are the ability to engage in cooperative activity to strive for common goals, and a sense of unity and bonding. A similarity of meaning and value underlie these characteristics. Solidarity can be manifested in a wide variety of interactions and intergroup contacts. Important variances occur in the intensity, extensity, and duration of solidarity.

It is important to recognize that altruism, morality, and social solidarity can all involve actions and consequences that are negative, in the sense that they harm others. Altruistic behavior undertaken with the best of intentions can harm those it is intended to help (Oakley, Knafo, and McGrath 2011). On a sociocultural level, Durkheim (1951) has examined how excessive altruism can be pathological. Morality can mandate suppressing, dominating, enslaving, or exterminating others (Alexander 2014). Likewise, solidarity can produce in-group coordination and out-group antagonism that can lead to conflict that results in harming others, even to the extent of atrocities. Such actions are perceived as, and may actually be, “especially harmful and evil” (Collins 2012:2–3. See also, Sorokin [1954] 2002:461–464). Instances of the negative results of these phenomena are an important focus of future theory and research.

A sense of purpose, based on potential contribution to sociology and the general society, is inherent in the subject matter of this field. There can be no question that altruism, morality, and social solidarity are each sociologically important. Their different forms and ranges of variation are significantly implicated in individual lives and sociocultural structures and processes of various types. Knowledge and understanding of these phenomena are also important in contributing to the general social welfare. Valid scientific information regarding how the positive manifestations of altruism, morality, and social solidarity can be more fully realized could benefit both the lives of individuals and the common good of the general society.

Discerning the nature, ranges, and forms of altruism, morality, and social solidarity is an important innovation for the field. Understanding these core ideas conceptually and empirically also provides a foundation for studying the interrelationships among these phenomena.
Third project: Constructing syntheses of theory and of practice

Sociology is engaged in the search for truth. This requires obtaining accurate knowledge and understanding of what actually exists. An important part of ascertaining and advancing truth is the development of creative systems of thought (Collins 1998:33). The historical study of philosophical thought shows that such creativity involves formulating a synthesis that incorporates existing ideas and renders them compatible. They are selected and molded into a coherent and comprehensive new system of thought. An effective synthesis also correctly anticipates the most important foci for future scientific activity (Collins 1998:33, 131–133).

These characteristics of synthesis can be applied to the study of altruism, morality, and social solidarity. Three areas of synthesis can be considered: synthesis of interrelationships, synthesis of the sociology of the good, and synthesis of sociological practice.

Synthesis of studying interrelationships

The first area of synthesis is to move from the study of altruism, morality, and social solidarity as separate subjects to systematically investigating their interrelationships. There is a very complex and pervasive relationship between morality and solidarity, with great variance in consequences. Alexander (2006; 2014), Fein (1997:203–212; 2007:1–14), and Sorokin (1957:414–429, 436–473; 1998b) have all contributed important insights regarding this relationship. Their work provides a strong and empirically based starting point for further theoretical development and empirical research. Likewise, altruism appears related in different ways to both solidarity and morality, with a varying range of consequences. The distinctions between in-group and out-group, and between inclusion and exclusion, as manifested in moral codes and in patterns of solidarity, are of major importance in these variations in altruism.

Synthesis of studying the good

A second area of synthesis is to develop a perspective that emphasizes the sociology of the good. In the most general sense, good can be defined as the actualization of positive potentials. In this sense good can range from minimal to the highest possible development of these potentials (Aquinas 1981:663; 1993:4, 41). The frame of reference of sociology dictates that the idea of good should be specified in reference to particular components of culture, society, or personality (Jeffries 2012). There are thus various
conceptions of good that can be elaborated into a model of the good that includes aspects of the individual psyche and of the sociocultural universe. Both Alexander (2013:109) and Gorski (2012) have noted the need for such a model. In this vein, Gorski (2012:99–100) describes a model of the good implicitly contained in the sociology of Durkheim.

Development of a generalized sociological perspective focused on the good has been suggested by Bell (1996; 2009:95–96), Gorski (2012), and Smith (2010:384–490). Moral realism provides a philosophical basis for such an endeavor (Gorski 2013). Moral realism is a school of thought that maintains the possibility of ascertaining in varying degrees the truth or falsity of moral statements. From this philosophical basis moral judgments can be empirically studied and conceptions of the good can be evaluated for their validity (Boyd 1988; Platts 1988).

An Aristotelian model in which social and cultural factors are evaluated in terms of their influence on developing and maintaining the good of human nature, viewed in terms of flourishing and virtue, has been suggested as one approach to a model of sociological analysis of this nature (Levine 1995:105–120; Smith 2010:384–490). Another view of the good is provided by Sorokin, who considered greater goodness as movement toward an integral culture. Such a culture is characterized by universal norms on essential matters and predominant orientations toward truth, goodness, beauty, and human beings as “an end value” (Sorokin 1948:107–108; 1998a:285).

Erik Wright’s (2010) three-component model for sociological analysis is important for formulating the empirical study of the good. The model derives from the assumption that sociology has a moral purpose (Wright 2010:10). This purpose is approached through a model that first identifies pathological conditions, viewed as those that harm people, and subjects them to analysis. The second focus is the exploration of preferable and realizable alternatives that promise greater opportunities for the good. The final component of the model involves exploring the means of movement from negative conditions that harm to preferable alternatives.

In Wright’s (2010) model the good is identified as justice, expressed in two forms, social and political. The first form entails human flourishing through the availability of means to develop capacities and talents. The second form deals with opportunities for people to participate in decisions that affect their lives. The opportunity for individuals to experience these goods is determined by social structure.

A fundamental question for the field of altruism, morality, and social solidarity is how these core concepts can be formulated to signify the maximum
good. Applying Wright’s (2010) model, these concepts can then become the objects of theoretical development and research to study how the personal, social, and cultural states they indicate can be realized and then maintained over time.

Sorokin ([1954] 2002:6) maintains that altruistic love, the giving of self for the welfare of the other, epitomizes the idea of goodness with respect to individual personality. This love “is a life-giving force, necessary for physical, mental and moral health” (Sorokin [1954] 2002:xi). In a similar vein Oliner (2011:129–161) defines goodness in general as caring for others. He maintains this basic attitude can be manifested in various forms, such as volunteering, benefiting oppressed groups, gratitude, apology, and forgiveness. In formulating the good at the level of personality, the virtues of temperance, fortitude, justice, charity, and prudence (Aquinas 1981:817–894, 1263–1879) can be regarded as foundational to altruistic love (Jeffries 1998). Sorokin’s ([1954] 2002:15–35) five dimensions of love—intensity, extensity, duration, purity, and adequacy—provide a measure of the degree of altruistic love. The high ranges on these dimensions indicate maximum altruistic love and the low ranges minimal.

The study of morality involves the study of systems of ideas. In terms of the sociology of the good, the focus is upon the meaningful content of moral ideas that appears most likely to produce and maintain maximum altruism and a universalistic solidarity. Sorokin’s (1947:99–102) description of the familistic system of interaction provides a potential enumeration of components. This form of social relationship, presented as an ideal type, has the following characteristics: predominately solidary, generally high intensity, long duration, inclusive in extensity, emphasis on the “sociocultural oneness” of individuals in the system, and mandate of “unlimited ethical motivation” (Sorokin 1947:99–100) of concern for the other. Such norms are defined as obligatory in most instances, rather than simply recommended. This type of familistic interaction and social relationships is by no means restricted to families as a specific group, and moreover is not characteristic of many families.

In conceptualizing the maximum good in social solidarity, a solidarity that unites and does not divide is called for. Alexander’s (2006:43–44) concept of “universalizing social solidarity” meets this criterion. This solidarity transcends particularistic loyalties and interests. Rather, this is a solidarity that entails a feeling of connection to a community that, in principle, includes “as full members every grouping and individual composing it” (Alexander 2006:44). Addams’s description of the neighborly relation also expresses
aspects of this universalizing solidarity. In this solidarity individuals “live side by side with their neighbors until they grow into a sense of relationship and mutual interests” (Addams 2002a:26). This relation is “grounded in a philosophy whose foundation is the solidarity of the human race, a philosophy which will not waver” (Addams 2002a:26). It is a solidarity in which “it is natural to feed the hungry and care for the sick, it is certainly natural to give pleasure to the young and to minister to the deep-seated craving for social intercourse that all men feel” (Addams 2002a:27).

Valid scientific generalizations are based on replication. By focusing attention on the most positive forms of altruism, morality, and social solidarity, here characterized as the study of the good, valid knowledge and understandings can be developed more rapidly and effectively. This will also provide the necessary foundation for valid policy and public sociologies.

**Synthesis of holistic analysis and practice**

The third area of synthesis is developing a comprehensive mode of analysis and practice that maximizes the contributions of the field of specialization. These entail contributions to two interrelated areas: knowledge and understanding and the general social welfare.

The holistic model of sociological practice formulated by Michael Burawoy (2005) provides the most effective means to realize these two goals. In general this model has been overlooked in the focus of attention on public sociology. Yet, it is far more important in terms of its potential to advance sociology (Jeffries 2009:1–2). Basic components of the model are four forms of practice: (1) professional: theoretical schools, models, concepts and research techniques, and programs; (2) critical: the debate about the purposes of sociology and its directions, including formulating a “conscience” that identifies existing evils and a “moral vision” (Burawoy 2005:10, 16) of possible goods; (3) policy: formulating, evaluating, and implementing means to realize specified ends; (4) public: communication and dialogue about sociological knowledge and understandings with different publics.

These different forms of practice are reciprocally interdependent. They can correct and enhance each other, and the optimum productivity and creativity of sociology can be realized from this close interdependence (Burawoy 2005:15). Ideally, the forms of practice interact, disciplining and directing the course of theoretical and research endeavors toward the highest level of performance. The utility and validity of this holistic four sociology model has been demonstrated with respect to ongoing research projects (Cornell

Burawoy’s (2005) holistic model provides a mechanism for the synthesis of the four forms of sociology into a united model of disciplinary practice. This model can maximize both the advance of sociology as a science and its contributions to human welfare.

**Synthesis and success**

Tiryakian (1979:222) defines a successful school of sociology as one that has a sufficient degree of impact that it cannot be overlooked in the history of the discipline. The same criterion can be applied to a field of specialization. A parallel achievement is that the topical focus of the field cannot be overlooked in an account of the discipline. Each of the aforementioned three syntheses make a unique and important contribution to the validity, comprehensive scope, creativity, and public relevance of the study of altruism, morality, and social solidarity. This provides a basis for the field becoming a central influence in the discipline of sociology in future years.

**Project four: Developing scientific research programs**

Theory and research interact in the development of schools of sociology. The approach to studying reality characteristic of a school forms the basis for research programs. Validation of the ideas advanced by the school can be provided by this research (Tiryakian 1979:217). The research program of a school can also serve to demonstrate its greater theoretical and research potential in comparison to that of other perspectives (Alexander and Colomy 1992:40; Tiryakian 1979:217). This same interaction between core ideas and research is important in furthering the development of the field of altruism, morality, and social solidarity.

**Research on core ideas**

The most fundamental theoretical development and research focus is the causes and consequences of altruism, morality, or social solidarity studied as separate phenomenon. Developing understanding of these phenomena provides the foundation for examining their interrelations.

The range and different forms of each of these phenomena need to be carefully studied. For example, Sorokin’s ([1954] 2002:15–35) typology of the dimensions of love is foundational for further explorations of altruism. The study of morality as a cultural phenomenon would be greatly advanced
by an empirically based typology of moralities (Alexander 2014). The major components of moral systems need to be identified, and their variances ascertained. Such a typology should be especially oriented toward the degree of extensity of solidarity mandated in moral codes, and the inclusion/exclusion stipulation associated with moral norms of care and responsibility. Finally the interpersonal and intergroup variances in forms of solidarity need to be categorized and understood.

In the broadest sense, factors influencing altruism, morality, or social solidarity can be identified as cultural, social, or as attributes of personality. Cultural values and norms, institutions, and structural factors, such as stratification, inevitably influence these phenomena. For example, Durkheim (1960) considered how the economic system influences the nature and problematic of maintaining an effective solidarity. Focusing on culture, Durkheim (1951) analyzed how a pronounced egoism involving excessive individualism can weaken family and religious bonds of solidarity. Alexander (2006:44) has noted that culture requires an effective balance between collectivism and individualism to foster a universalizing solidarity. In a complementary cultural analysis, Bellah and associates (1985) maintain that varieties of the cultural value of individualism must emphasize both individual freedom and social responsibility to ultimately contribute to social solidarity.

**Research on interrelationships**

Research programs that examine the relationship between altruism, morality, and social solidarity are particularly significant. These phenomena are clearly interdependent. One approach is to study them as a closed system of three components. Alexander (2006:38) maintains that a universalizing solidarity depends on a continuing discourse on morality. Likewise, Sorokin (1947:119–131, 507–522; 1957:414–434) concludes that a viable solidarity that does not also generate out-group antagonisms is dependent on a significant degree of absolutism in an ethical system that emphasizes altruistic love, helping, and the Golden Rule. Knowledge regarding the influence of the moral code and system of solidarity on levels of altruism, particularly with respect to the dimension of extensity, need to be studied.

How personality, social, and cultural factors influence the three component system is another major area of research. For example, in small groups, such as families, one person can influence the profile of the system through consistent everyday interaction. On the societal level, external factors, such as intergroup conflict, powerholders’ policies and actions, natural disasters,
and economic fluctuations, can initiate changes within the altruism, morality, and social solidarity system.

**Research on the good**

An empirically based sociology of the good would involve research on maximum altruism, familistic morality, and universalizing solidarity. The personality, social, and cultural systems associated with these phenomena need to be elaborated. Examples of this kind of work are case studies such as Oliner’s work on the altruistic personality (Oliner and Oliner 1988) and on moral exemplars (Oliner 2003), and Sorokin’s ([1954] 2002:377–455) studies of the culture and moral system of altruistic communities.

**Research and the holistic model**

A successful research program ideally yields scientifically valid findings that are important both sociologically and to the general social welfare. The previously considered holistic model of practice developed by Burawoy (2005) provides for enhancing both these outcomes. By integrating scholarly excellence, the value and sociological relevance of topics, policy implications, and potential for increasing public understanding, the four-form model maximizes the scope and importance of research projects and programs. Consideration of each of these aspects of practice influences the research endeavor from start to finish, including providing for the communication of results to publics outside of sociology. This holistic model has the potential to greatly enhance the overall contributions of research programs on altruism, morality, and social solidarity.

**Project five: Building and sustaining commitment**

The core ideas of a theoretical school are the foundation for the commitment of its followers (Tiryakian 1979:217). The same should hold for those doing scholarly work within the scope of ideas that give a field its identity. The identification of founders, formulation of core ideas, the three syntheses pertaining to interrelationships, the good, and holistic practice, and research programs combine to give identity and coherence to the field of altruism, morality, and social solidarity. To build this field commitment must be generated and sustained for an extended period of time.

Commitment to core ideas involves the motivation to work long hours in formulating and disseminating these ideas. The concept of emotional energy (Collins 1988; 1998) has clear implications for the practical problem
of developing and maintaining commitment. In the most general sense, emotional energy is “the individuals’ motivating force” (Collins 1988:361). The emotional energy that underlies the productivity and creativity of intellectuals is “the surge of creative impulse that comes upon intellectuals or artists when they are doing their best work. It enables them to achieve intense periods of concentration, and charges them with the physical strength to work long periods of time” (Collins 1998:34). Weber (1946:135–139) presents a somewhat similar account of motivation and scholarly productivity in his analysis of the vocation of science. Science advances through the generation of ideas that are correct. Though inspiration is decisive in this achievement, the scientist can take steps to “entice” the idea. Answers must be searched for with “passionate devotion.” If “very hard work” and enthusiasm are “jointly” practiced, the best chance for a correct idea emerging is created (Weber 1946:135–136).

Generating emotional energy/enthusiasm and commitment to the study of altruism, morality, and social solidarity is enhanced by the focus of the field. The sociological and practical importance of the subject matter is a powerful source of motivation to dedicated and time-consuming work. Valid scientific information on these topics can have a significant impact on individuals’ lives and the common good.

Interaction rituals are another important source of emotional energy (Collins 1998:20–46). In the most general sense, an interaction ritual occurs when individuals are in contact, share a similar mood or emotion, and consciously direct attention to a given action or object. Out of such interactions the core ideas become shared symbols invested with emotion. A sense of unity and of shared moral obligation can emerge from such interactions.

For intellectuals, interaction rituals with these characteristics can generate the emotional energy that sustains the long periods of solitary work necessary for scholarly productivity and creativity (Collins 1998:20–46). Additional benefits of such interaction rituals are the transmission of cultural capital, and new awareness regarding possible sources of additional intellectual development (Collins 1998:71–74).

A recent study by Parker and Hackett (2012) provides further evidence of the importance of emotional energy, interaction rituals centered on scientific work, and social bonding with other researchers. Their study of a group engaged in original research in the environmental sciences found these factors contributed to “sufficient motivation, confidence, and commitment to conceive, pursue, and communicate novel ideas” different from the prevailing scientific traditions (Parker and Hackett 2012:21).
Collins’s (1998) theory and its application in analyzing the development and longevity of schools of philosophy suggests the need for creating interaction rituals that can contribute to the advancement of the study of altruism, morality, and social solidarity. The most readily available settings are the yearly section activities at the American Sociological Association Annual Meeting, regional sociological meetings, and specialized conferences pertaining to the field. Regular participation in these activities can reinforce individual commitment to scholarly work and develop a sense of belonging to an active intellectual community dedicated to studying a shared subject matter.

**Project six: Building and extending the organizational base**

No school of sociological thought can be developed and maintained over time without an organizational base that furnishes the necessary resources (Tiryakian 1979; Turner and Turner 1990). A field of specialization has similar requirements, though they are probably broader in scope and more diffused geographically.

The field needs publications and research programs pertaining to the subject matter. Undergraduate and graduate courses and the offering of altruism, morality, and social solidarity as an area of specialization for graduate students directly establish the organizational base.

**Conclusion**

A sociocultural system must possess three characteristics in order to survive and develop over time into a major ideological system. They are as follows: the system must be important both in a meaningful and a practical sense; it also must address a genuine need of some group or society; and the system should be related to some “perennial reality and value” (Sorokin 1947:584–585). The field of altruism, morality, and social solidarity is a sociocultural system in an early stage of formation.

The field possesses these characteristics. The subject matter is meaningfully important by its very nature. Altruism, morality, and social solidarity are first order sociological phenomena in the sense that they powerfully affect the lives of individuals and the shape and direction of societies. The practical value of increasing the positive forms of these phenomena is evident. With respect to a genuine need, the social world needs greater knowledge
and understanding of the causes and consequences of these phenomena, the means to increase their positive forms, and the resulting potential benefits of this increase for individuals and for society. Finally, by developing a focus on the positive forms of these phenomena, a viable sociology of the good can be developed. This is a sociology that studies the nature, causes, and means of increasing the perennial value of goodness in its individual, social, and cultural forms.

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