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Book Review of Public Sociologies Reader

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Public Sociologies Reader edited by Judith R. Blau and Keri E. Iyall Smith (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006, 355 pp., hard cover, \$80.00; soft cover, \$29.95).¹

Reviewer: Douglas Klayman, American University/Social Dynamics, LLC, USA

Judith Blau and Keri Iyall Smith take the important first step in what may be a revolutionizing movement in sociology. Their *Public Sociologies Reader* offers a compelling collection of sixteen essays that both define and use public sociology to draw attention to human rights violations and the need to empower vulnerable communities.

Michael Burawoy's introduction to the book provides insight into the evolution of the discipline. Part I, The Local and the Global, begins with William Robinson's challenge to academics and intellectuals to critically consider the issues facing humanity, contributing to critical globalization studies (CGS). Gerard Delanty emphasizes that the social, civil, and political rights of individuals must transcend national citizenship to form a globally organized network of international non-governmental organizations. Jackie Smith re-emphasizes the importance of empowering global civil society and educating local communities to engage more effectively in politics at the local, national, and international levels. Smith also urges intellectual workers to contribute to the global civil society through Walda Katz-Fishman and Jerome Scott's (chapter 5) network of grassroots movements for justice, equality, and popular democracy. Katz-Fishman and Scott make the case for the integration of praxis, methods and sociological theory for social transformation.

Part II, The Rights of Human Beings, begins with Robert Pollin's convincing argument that the precipitous decline in agricultural jobs produced surplus labor, contributing to a rise in manufacturing and a spread of sweatshop labor in less-developed countries. Though somewhat out of place in this volume, Deana Rohlinger and Jill Quadagno present an exemplary analysis of the evolution of the social security debate, which demonstrates the importance of policy framing, political ideology, and population targeting. Three chapters by Antonio Ugalde and Núria Homedes (chapter 8), Keri Iyall Smith (chapter 9) and Anthony Orum and Arlette

¹ *Editor's note:* Thank you to Laura Toussaint, associate editor, who commissioned this review.

Grabzynska (chapter 10) call for a more systematic sociological analysis of the civil rights of indigenous people and the empowerment and unification of local forces to fight for their advancement.

In Part III, Sustainability and Peace, three essays analyze the impact of social inequality on disaster preparedness and response, environmental sustainability, and global governance, continuing the internationalist critique of the neoliberal ideology. The final section, Rethinking Liberalism, presents four essays on the uses and meanings of public sociology that I found useful in developing greater depth in my own understanding of what public sociology *can be*. Judith Blau and Alberto Moncada are critical of the unrealized democracy in the United States, as well as its promotion of individualism, which weakens social cohesiveness and endangers the democratic process. Blau and Moncada's use of the *ejido* as an ideal typical self-governed community but they overlook extreme poverty and alienation. Better examples might be the co-housing movement, the Kibbutz, or Native American communities. Barbara Risman (chapter 16) and Charles Gallagher (chapter 17) conclude the volume with statements that reaffirm the need for scientific methods to be integrated into public sociological research and practice and confront the challenge of disseminating findings that are in conflict with conventional attitudes or institutions.

Public Sociologies Reader is an excellent graduate-level text that explains public sociology through the lens of Marxist social theory ranging from the theoretical to the practical, eclectic to the mainstream, and pedagogical to the scholarly. It demonstrates that sociologists can and should play an important role in both furthering the scientific enterprise that is sociology and offering insight to publics. However, because *Public Sociologies Reader* lacks theoretical diversity and debate, it could not be used to compare and contrast contradictory analyses of social issues, approaches to the application of public sociology, or policy recommendations. Nonetheless, it is a valuable contribution to sociology and a must read for social scientists interested in refining the methods they use to communicate sociological information to non-academic audiences.

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