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## **Introduction**

In 1987, JEFFREY ALEXANDER pointed to an important pedagogic aspect of modern sociology that sets this discipline apart from the other social sciences such as economics. In sociology, the history of sociology matters. It gives shape to the field and drives its discourse. When surveying the field of sociology and trying to map the line of demarcation separating economic sociology and economics proper, Neil Smelser and Richard Swedberg (1994: 7, 8) emphasized that a

\*The artist's sketch of Talcott Parsons was drawn during the March 10th seminar. Other photographs of the March 10th seminar were taken by Mr. Steven Dunwell of Providence, Rhode Island, and copies are in the Harvard University Archives in Pusey Library (HUGFP 42.65). The picture of Martel is a family picture. Ms. Michelle Gachette, who serves as a research assistant in the Harvard University Archives, deserves a special thanks for helping us secure copies and permissions for a variety of items that we used in this introduction. Finally, we offer a special word of thanks to Mr. John Kulig for supplying us with a variety of information about Professor Martin U. Martel, who died on December 20, 1995. Mr. Kulig is a relative of the Martels and the executor of Mrs. Martel's estate. Mrs. Martel passed away in 2005 but not before corresponding with the editors about this planned project. During his long tenure at Brown University, Martel was active in the civil rights movement and helped generations of students confront, understand, and contribute to the improvement of race relationships in the United States. He was active at the university with other colleagues in setting up the Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity in America. Martel was the catalyst in the effort to videotape Talcott Parsons and but for his efforts we would not have a record of Parsons in seminar.

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positive attitude toward prior intellectual tradition was one of the most significant differentiating characteristics of sociology. In economics, theory and the past history of theories are separate matters. The prevailing attitude among economists is that “the classics belong to the past” or to a specialized area in economics called the history of economic thought, but in sociology, and especially among the “new” economic sociologists, the history of sociology lies at the core of many of the ongoing debates. Indeed, “the classics are constantly reinterpreted and taught” (Swedberg and Smelser 1994: 4). Not only theoretical sociology but also the analytical and methodological frameworks of the field continue to evolve in constant interaction with past debates. The classical writers in sociology remain part of the canon taught today.

Talcott Parsons’ writings are indisputably classics of American sociology. Two writings in particular are constantly cited in the literature as among his best works: *The Structure of Social Action* ([1937] 1949) and (with coauthor Neil J. Smelser) *Economics and Society* (1956). These two works alone are enough to qualify Parsons as the preeminent American sociologist of the twentieth century, but there are scores of other books and articles as well (see Parsons 1967: 539–52). Today, more than a quarter of a century after Parsons’ death and a full thirty years since he dominated sociological discourse, Parsons’ theories still serve as flashpoints in many debates.

Many sociologists engage in what Jonathan Turner called “ritual criticism” of Parsons (Turner 1991: 203). Still, despite the criticisms and attacks, very few can challenge the claim that Parsons was the preeminent figure in twentieth century sociology in America (Turner 1991: 51). During the turbulent 1960s, things began to unravel. Parsons’ conceptual framework, once adopted by many scholars, became an object of ridicule and disdain. Many sociologists openly stated their objections to Parsons and his scholarly projects. This practice expanded in frequency after George C. Homans delivered his attack on Parsonian “structural-functionalism” in his presidential address before the American Sociological Association in 1964 (Homans 1964). Homans was Parsons’ colleague at Harvard University, and the attack was evidence of a widening schism in American sociology. We shall say more about Homans’ criticism below.

Parsons worked his entire life to reconcile the insights of modern economics with modern sociology and to explore how an authentic economic sociology could be developed. Today, there is a subfield within sociology named “economic sociology.” Members who pay their dues to the American Sociological Association can declare themselves part of this research group. Had Parsons lived another thirty years, he might be pleased that this subfield now exists. He most assuredly would have been saddened by the fact that his contributions to the field are overlooked and sometimes completely ignored (Krippner 2001). The “new” economic sociologists say little about Parsons’ work except to criticize it.

Mark Granovetter and several of the major adherers to this subfield of the “new” economic sociology are explicitly opposed to Parsons’ ideas about economy and society and yet there is some family resemblance between their methods and “Parsons’s intellectual maneuverings a half-century before” (Krippner 2001, p. 799). This is a bit unusual, because sociologists are usually generous with past attribution. That anomaly motivated this special invited issue of the *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, which has long stated its support of this effort to help unify the social sciences by exploring their special competencies and taking stock of their unique insights. It is time for another Parsons revival or, at the very least, a “second look.”

## I

**The March 10th Seminar**

IN THE EARLY MORNING HOURS of March 10, 1973, the famed Harvard sociologist Talcott Parsons drove from his home in Massachusetts to the campus of Brown University to present a rather special seminar. The March 10th seminar was not his first appearance at Brown and probably not the first of his seminars. The evidence in the Parsons Archives at Harvard suggests that there were several past visits, including one as far back as 1970 (Rueschemeyer 1970: 10).

There was great excitement at Brown about the March 10th visit. Professors Martin U. Martel, Robert M. Marsh, and Dietrich

Rueschemeyer, all members of the sociology department at Brown University, had invited him to come.<sup>1</sup> They had planned something truly special, a uniquely different academic event.<sup>2</sup> Martel intended to make this particular seminar an historic event. He arranged to have the entire seminar videotaped by expert technicians from Rhode Island Junior College under the direction of Mr. Alan Sondheim of the Rhode Island School of Design. The taping went exactly as planned.

In a follow-up letter to Parsons dated April 27, 1973, Martel explained that he had prepared a typed transcript of the March 10th session from the videotape and “the video-project has aroused so much interest that it has become a half-time job for several of us, and we only are hoping to obtain as professionally competent and complete a historical record as possible” (Martel 1973: 2). In later correspondence, referring to a subsequent visits by Parsons to Brown to deliver the Culver lectures, Martel jokingly referred to the “second coming” of the great sociologist but credited this hagiographic remark to an “unnamed ‘student’” (Martel 1974: 1).<sup>3</sup> Such hagiography from the Brown faculty may have come mostly from Martel himself, who remained a close friend and admirer of Parsons.

In his follow-up letter to Parsons dated May 1, 1973, thanking Parsons for the seminar, Marsh confessed:

Frankly, I still feel quite new to the idea of using videotape as a scholarly source; but having looked over the transcription and seen part of the recording, I do think they both together provide a resource and perspective on your work that was not available in the literature before. Martel and others have put in a good deal of time seeking the technical help and funds to work up these materials properly so [that] you could consider their wider distribution. Some of our faculty have been exploring the possibility of starting an interdisciplinary library series of videotapes and books on the “Masters of Social Science” which would permit distribution to the widest audience of serious scholars and students. (Marsh, May 1, 1973:1)

A follow-up seminar was planned for May of 1973, and that one was also to be videotaped.<sup>4</sup>

The March 10th seminar was held in Maxcy Hall at Brown, home of the sociology department. About a dozen people attended this

session, including several graduate students, several professors, and Professor Hunter Dupree, the accomplished historian of science (from Brown's history department). The seminar consisted of Parsons seated around a large table with those in attendance asking questions and Parsons answering (see the photos in the frontispiece of this issue).

We were able to locate the original transcript of the seminar held on March 10th. That transcript was first given to Andrew Savchenko by Professor Marsh. Laurence Moss discovered an identical copy in perfect shape, safely housed and brilliantly catalogued among the Parsons Papers at the Harvard University Archives in box 6 of HUG (FP) 42.62. The transcript of the entire March 10, 1973 seminar is now reproduced in full in this volume.

The version that we publish in this issue has been compared against the archived copy at Harvard University, and what editing we have done is limited to supplying some missing first names, always within brackets. In cases where variation in the spelling of names occurred (such as the name of Raymond L. Goldstein, variously spelled "Goldsteen"), we allowed that variation to remain in the published version below since neither of us saw any point in trying to "improve" on the transcript when our main purpose is to preserve it.

We wish to make clear that some of the information presented in the March 10th seminar and the conversations that ensued is known to the scholarly community outside New England. First, Martel published an article titled "Dialogues with Parsons (1973-74)" in the *Indian Journal of Social Research* that included long passages from the March 10 transcript and apparently from several of the other seminars and lectures that followed in subsequent months at Brown University (Martel 1976). Unfortunately, this article contains a confusing variety of spellings of names and presentation dates, making its use as a reliable device for tracking down manuscripts and videotapes somewhat problematic. The editors also learned from the Brown University records that Martel's professional correspondence was bequeathed to the John Hay Library at Brown University for the benefit of future generations of scholars. Unfortunately, the John Hay library staff sadly reported that the valuable videotapes are not available, and if they were part of the Martel legacy, they were perhaps "misplaced."<sup>5</sup> There is, however, good news.

The editors have found another videotape and a large number of audio recordings of Parsons' voice. These finds are in the Harvard University Archives at Pusey Library and they are catalogued and carefully preserved (although the labeling is cursory and inexact). Could this videotape be the missing videotape from the March 10th seminar? Perhaps it is the one made on May 1973? We hope to view the videotape, but in order to do this we need to exhume an older playback machine.<sup>6</sup>

We mentioned that some of the information presented at the March 10th seminar was communicated to the scholarly community in other ways beside the transcripts and besides the videotape. It turns out that the first half the seminar (that is, the morning part of the seminar) tracks quite closely with what Parsons himself said about his own development as an economist-turned-sociologist in an important article published in *Daedalus* one year later (Parsons [1974] 1977). The *Daedalus* piece is an amazingly comprehensive discussion of how Parsons came to develop his system theory and who were the main influences on his work. Still, this piece lacks the more free-wheeling back-and-forth conversational tone of the afternoon seminar session on March 10. Future researchers are encouraged to compare the transcripts of the seminar that is reproduced below with the more formal autobiographical account in the 1974 *Daedalus* article.

It must be remembered that when Parsons drove to Brown University in 1973, his position as the major American sociologist was coming under increasing criticism by the radical sociologists of the late 1960s and 1970s (Marsh 2005). In their view, Parsons had not appreciated what Marx had to say about "classes" and their interests and about conflict as the dynamic element in social change facilitated by the conditions surrounding "commodity" production.

But the Marxists were the least of Parsons' problems. Parsons' own colleague at Harvard University, George C. Homans, challenged his conceptual distinctions and declared them worthless. While hardly radical in tone or content, Homan's 1964 address to the American Sociological Association dealt Parsons' structural functionalist theory the most devastating blow of all. Homans concluded that "with all its talk about theory, the functionalist school did not take the job of theory seriously enough. It did not ask itself what a theory was,

and it never produced a functional theory that was in fact an explanation” (Homans 1964: 818). Homans was complaining about Parsons.

These criticisms of Parsons’ theory damaged his reputation. That is why the editors of this issue of the *AJES* concluded that publishing the March 10th transcript in its entirety would be useful. We concluded that it would be a significant contribution in helping scholars understand Parsons in a more balanced way. This conclusion is corroborated by three leading sociologists who offered to read the March 10th transcript and prepare short commentaries on it. Professors Robert Holton, Giuseppe Sciortino, and Richard Swedberg provided their expert reactions to that conversation of more than three decades ago.

Holton points to the “profound interdisciplinary” texture of Parsons’ theories and how the simple publication of this transcript might help break down the textbook stereotype of Parsons. He is optimistic that there is still something to be learned from a careful rereading of Parsons’ contributions. As for Parsons’ future legacy, Holton is quite optimistic that future researchers will find his work important. Holton points to the centrality of money as a medium of exchange and suggests that through the phenomenon of property rights, money has an analytical connection to the medium of influence.

In his comment, Giuseppe Sciortino reminds us that Juergen Habermas once said that Parsons was looking for solutions to the problems other theorists were only starting to realize needed to be addressed. According to Sciortino, while many of the issues Parsons discussed in his seminars have been described as “controversial,” they cannot be dismissed as irrelevant for contemporary sociology. For example, Parsons retained a strong respect for economics but strongly opposed extending the insights of economics to areas where they do not truly belong. Classical economics and especially Marxian economic theory does not belong in the subsystems of society because Marxian economics offers a fundamentally flawed understanding of markets. Sciortino also cautions against the overuse of the money metaphor in the discussion of generalized symbolic media of exchange. Three of the media, namely, power, influence, and value commitment, only resemble money and are certainly not money themselves.

Richard Swedberg harks back to some unexplored territory that is

worth remapping as we work to improve the subfield of economic sociology: Parsons' relationship with Joseph Schumpeter, especially their participation along with Harvard graduate students in a seminar on the nature of rationality during the early 1940s. This seminar at Harvard spawned some literature that was directed toward a volume that never made it to press. Parsons later confessed, "I remember having reacted rather coolly [to the proposal to publish the papers] and in fact I let it die. I am not wholly clear about my motives, but I think they had to do with the feeling that I needed a relatively complete formal break with economics" (Parsons [1974] 1977: 32–3). Swedberg suggests that we should detail more completely the relationship between Schumpeter and Parsons, especially in light of Parsons' remark that his ideas about pure economics were learned from Schumpeter. Schumpeter heralded the "general equilibrium" approach that was much criticized and attacked from within the economics professions, especially around the time of the March 10th seminar.

Swedberg points to those places in the March 10th seminar in which Parsons stated that an economist must possess some sociological ideas. Schumpeter's strong opposition to the transformation of economics from a theoretical to an empirical discipline—a kind of specialized psychology—is a major point of difference between the two thinkers. Parsons went on to become a student of modern Freudian psychology but, despite this contrasting emphasis, Schumpeter shared with Parsons a concern that sociology might lose its theoretical coherence and fragment into a loosely related series of empirical research projects. Unfortunately, much of contemporary sociology seems sadly fragmented this way. Swedberg is correct that the Schumpeter-Parsons connection deserves a fresh look.

## II

### **New Insights into Parsons's Work**

THE EDITORS OF THIS ISSUE would be the last to deny that Talcott Parsons had an impenetrable style of writing. Boy, did he ever! At places and in selected works, it seems almost like a secret code he needed to showcase what many agree is a complex theoretical edifice. This style



did not help to make his ideas popular. Almost without exception, followers and critics of Parsons, as well as neutral commentators, reflect on the density of his writing and the obscurity with which he expresses simple ideas. However, those who attended Parsons' lectures, seminars, and presentations recall that he was capable of expressing himself more clearly when he wanted to. These transcripts are evidence that he could speak with forceful lucidity and engaging style, while not losing the theoretical precision that his works are famous for.

Apart from the stylistic and personal attributes of Parsons' intellectual persona, the March 10th transcript illustrates the multidisciplinary appeal of Parsons' theoretical project. Political scientists and philosophers, historians and economists were present at the seminar alongside sociologists, actively participating in the discussion and asking questions relevant to their respective disciplines. This participation of nonsociologists in what was originally conceived as a sociological seminar and their familiarity with Parsons' writings demonstrates that classical functionalism of Parsons could serve as an interface for communication between different disciplines within the broad domain of social sciences. The fact that this has yet to happen would have disappointed Parsons greatly.

The five essays that make up the second half of this special issue of the *AJES* explore Parsons and the precise connection between his work and some of the ideas in the "new" economic sociology. Let us showcase these connections.

Milan Zafirovski insists that Parsons had a version of economic sociology that still has relevance today. The theme of his chapter is best expressed in his subtitle: "Bridges to Contemporary Economics." Parsons came to reject the approach by which aggregate social and economic phenomena are built up and composed out of the separate voluntary acts of individuals. That approach is sometimes termed "methodological individualism" in economics.

Parsons' *systems* approach toward understanding the economy was a "holistic" approach, in which sociological phenomena put limits on and gave shape to economic processes. The economy is *contained* in the broader notion of "society." How that containment is described and maintained over time—the equilibrium notion—was something

that Parsons intended to be his major contribution to social science. Zafirovski suggests that the long-standing typography of “market structures” often taught in the university might be reinterpreted by sociologists as “sociological types” of market situations. This would be a bridge connecting Parsonian insights directly to some of the staples of contemporary economics.

The chapter coauthored by Paul Dalziel and Jane Higgins makes a startling point. When in 1937 Parsons offered a précis of Vilfredo Pareto’s ideas in his seminal work *The Structure of Social Action*, he may have misinterpreted Pareto’s thoughts. This misstatement of Pareto, entirely unintentional, had the unfortunate consequence of misleading generations of sociologists who relied on what Parsons had said about Pareto (Parsons [1937] 1949). A more careful reading of Pareto suggested that he did not separate the rational types of human action from the nonrational types of human action. Nothing was so neatly compartmentalized. Rather, Pareto’s considered view was that while human behavior is nearly always rational from the agent’s personal, *subjective* point of view, it can appear quite the opposite from the point of view of the sociologist examining and evaluating that same behavior. The sociologist is in a privileged position to pass judgement and somehow stands outside the world of the acting man. This was Pareto’s view, as it was Parsons’.

Furthermore, a careful reevaluation of Pareto’s ideas about economics and sociology shows that Pareto’s ideas probably gave shape to Parsons’. A more sympathetic reading of Pareto in light of Parsons’ advanced sociological projects establishes that the Pareto-Parsons line of discussion anticipated some of the major points of contemporary economic sociology. Dalziel and Higgins break new ground when they try to set the historical record straight. Their insights pave the way for a more systematic discussion of to what extent Parsons owed his fundamental reconsideration of the boundary between economics and sociology to Pareto. The modern “economic sociology” school may be unknowingly catching up to Pareto through the work of Parsons.

In the following two chapters, Professors John Holmwood and Jens Beckert each underscore the continuing relevance of Talcott Parsons’ work today in light of the rebirth of interest in economic sociology

during the last two decades. Holmwood dislikes the attempt in sociology to try to account for sociological phenomena in terms of utility-maximizing agents whose behaviors get aggregated in some simple way to constitute what some refer to as “collective behavior.” Parsons realized early in his career that the professions produced a version of “economic man” that was very different from the neoclassical economist’s version of economic man. What was so different was the role of “attitudes of social responsibility and professional duty,” which intruded, shaped, and influenced selfish economic calculation. A doctor would not prescribe extra tests and treatments (even when it might be personally profitable for him to do so) for the simple reason that this overselling of medical services is “unprofessional.” With Parsons, we have the idea that social interactions give rise to certain features or “emergent properties” that exist to shape human action and that are replicated through existing institutions. These emergent properties are real and measurable but are themselves not reducible to the choices made by separately acting individuals.

Jens Beckert insists that Parsons really came of age in the second part of his massively productive career when he pioneered the idea of symbolic communication and anticipated the ideas of the “embeddedness” school. Beckert credits all of this advanced material to the “systems-functionalist” period around the 1950s, culminating in the master work with Neil Smelser (Smelser and Parsons 1956). The many writers who flock to Mark Granovetter for their economic sociology might consider taking a second look at what Parsons had to offer as well. Parsons, like Granovetter, rejected the reductionist idea that social events can be explained by modeling individuals as pursuing their private goals with little or no consideration of societal institutions. But unlike some extreme sociologists who reject individual choice altogether as real and interesting and advance the strange idea that individuals are like “marionettes being lead by the strings of their functionally integrated culture,” Granovetter advocated his concept of “social embeddedness.” Social embeddedness was for Granovetter a compromise idea, somewhere in between the two extreme points of rational calculation, individualism and cultural determinism (Granovetter 1985).

However, Beckert is skeptical of this development and especially

offended as to the large number of Granovetter-inspired scholars who criticize Parsons unfairly. Parsons has become the undeserved whipping boy for the social embeddedness movement. Beckert argues that the “new” economic sociology is not a successful replacement for the old economic sociology created by Talcott Parsons.

According to Beckert, Parsons got there first, ahead of the Granovetter school, and did a much better job than the Granovetter group. The heart of the Granovetter approach has to do with the importance of “networks of social relations” that economic agents find valuable. But the clear linkages between “networks” and human action is never made quite clear among Granovetter’s admirers. Beckert suspects that this important connection will never be made clear at all. Parsons’ vision about economics and sociology being complements and not substitutes is the superior idea for the development of the fledgling field of economic sociology. According to Beckert, all the clues and cues for a better approach are already there in Parsons’ seminal work with Smelser (Parsons and Smelser 1956). According to Beckert, while Parsons’ economic sociology was largely ignored at the time of its emergence, latter-day economic sociologists chose to confine their discussion of Parsons’ theory to strong criticism, when praise is what should be given.

The last paper in our issue is by Alexandra Hessling and Hanno Pahl, who demonstrate the continuing importance of Parsons’ economic sociology. Parsons provided analytical tools that are useful toward helping us understand the modern economic system, draped as it is in the new global financial order. The authors look for theoretical foundations for their study of the global system of finance and find them in Parsonian theory, as suggested in the writings of Niklas Luhmann. Hessling and Pahl try to explain the uncoupling of financial markets from the real economy by using Parsons’ ideas. They consider Parsons’ ideas alive and well in the 21st century.

### III

#### **Conclusion**

WE HAVE SAID MUCH about Talcott Parsons’ theories and methods but not as much about his demeanor and sense of humor. According to veteran participant Marsh, during the March 10th seminar,

Parsons had the annoying practice of giving *extremely* long answers to each question we asked him. Indeed, a pause he might take after a lengthy disquisition might be interpreted by the audience as an indication that had (finally) concluded his response to the question, and someone would venture to direct a new question to the master. But no, Parsons had only paused perhaps to light a new cigarette, and had yet more to say on the previous question, so the next question had to bide his or her time (Marsh 2005).

Dietrich Rueschemeyer, another Brown University professor present at the March 10th seminar and also at many other Parsons events held at Brown during the 1970s, recalled a precious moment from one of Parsons' many encounters with the Brown faculty. (Rueschemeyer does not remember which particular visit, but the group was at lunch with Parsons in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and having a relaxed conversation.) As Rueschemeyer explained it, Martin Martel surprised everyone by suddenly "remembering an argument that had erupted the day before in [the sociology] department about a Ph.D. student taking unreasonable risks with his dissertation [research]." Martel put the question to Parsons himself and asked Parsons over lunch, somewhat "out of the blue: 'Are you a gambler?'"

Rueschemeyer recalls Parsons pounding on the table and exclaiming, "A gambler? No. I should say not that at all." Perhaps feeling that Parsons did not understand the question, Martel replied "But you took intellectual risks" over the years. Parsons' reply was "Oh, yes. That's true. But those are different [risks], not at all like poker, [because in the academic world] you never know whether you won" (Rueschemeyer 2005). Indeed, how true.

*Laurence S. Moss*  
and  
*Andrew Savchenko*

### Notes

1. Robert M. Marsh was influenced by Robert Merton while studying at Columbia University. Merton had studied with Talcott Parsons. Martin U. Martel, like Marsh was a "second generation" Parsonian. Martel was influenced by Robin Williams (another Parsonian) when preparing his dissertation at Cornell University. Both Marsh and Martel were active in inviting Parsons and making the many needed arrangements. Of the two Brown soci-

ologists, Martel was intensely interested in Parsons' work over the years and maintained a close intellectual and personal interaction with the great professor. The editors are grateful to Professor Robert M. Marsh for his personal recollection of that Parsons seminar sent to the editors by private correspondence (Marsh 2005). Professor Martel remained a close family friend of Talcott Parsons and his family and distinguished himself over the years as a staunch advocate of racial tolerance and understanding. After Parsons' death in 1979, Martel continued as an expert on race and ethnicity, heading up Brown's Center for Race and Ethnicity until his death on December 20, 1995. The close personal and intellectual relationship between the "conservative" Parsons and the "radical" Martel gives lie to the claim that Parsons' approach toward analyzing society rules out or privileges one political position over another. It is "as advertised" just social *science*.

2. During the winter months of 1970, Dietrich Rueschemeyer invited Talcott Parsons to come and give a lecture and a talk. On March 25, 1970, Rueschemeyer thanked Parsons for visiting the university and expressed his appreciation, regretting that "there wasn't more time to talk" (see Rueschemeyer March 25, 1970:1). The historical evidence suggests that Parsons was a welcomed and frequent visitor to Brown University, which has an enclave of Parsons admirers including Rueschemeyer, Robert M. Marsh, and Martin U. Martel, who all directly and indirectly contributed to this issue and the preservation of the March 10th transcript.

3. In October 1973, Martel wrote to Parsons about the lecture series at Brown University entitled "The Evolution of Societies." This series would consist of three presentations on February 27, March 27, and May 1, 1974. Again the expectation was that these lectures would be videotaped and result in a major publication. These lectures were financed as part of the Brown University Culver Lectures. It was historic for two reasons. First, the lecturer was the famous Talcott Parsons. Second, Brown University had never before invited a sociologist to be the Culver lecturer (see Martel October 1973). The story of the Culver Lecture series and the follow-up publications is most properly a topic for a future issue of this journal.

4. This videotape and the transcript of that videotape have not been found, but the search is continuing. Our search for these transcripts is underway and ongoing and the proper subject for a future issue of this journal.

5. Thankfully, the Harvard University Archives have two full boxes of audio and video recordings, the "tapes of Talcott Parsons." We suspect that the videotape in one of these boxes is the one in question, but playing it back on modern equipment is virtually impossible and solutions are underway. The transmission of information from one historical media to another more accessible media is a vibrant field of commerce in New England and should not be a problem. Harvard University archivist Ms. Michelle Gachette is in correspondence with one of the editors, and we shall announce our

findings in a subsequent issue of this journal. Hopefully, we can provide a CD version for all scholars through the auspices of Harvard University Archives in conjunction with the *AJES*. The tapes and audio recordings of Parsons are loosely described on the Parsons shelf list with the remark “many of these are unidentified at the time of processing since no equipment is easily available to the Archives” (see Parsons Papers at Harvard University Archives, in boxes 1 and 2 of HUG (FP) 15.80). As this issue of the journal was on its way to press, I connected to Mr. Alan Sondheim who remembers the March 10 seminar taping and the technical problems they tried to overcome. Sondheim explained that “the tapes were black-and-white EIAJ format, which is a very old standard. It is very difficult to find machines to play back these tapes—but worse . . . these tapes tend to deteriorate—they literally stick to themselves and to the machines and won’t run. There is a way to restore them for literally just one run” (Sondheim, 2006). The editors will try their best in the months ahead to find and subsequently restore the video of the March 10 seminar.

6. Efforts are now being considered to move the tapes to professionals who have the proper equipment to view it and perhaps transfer the information to the modern DVD format. See note 5, above.

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