THE FOUNDATIONS OF AN AMERICAN DISCIPLINE:
EDWARD A. ROSS AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA, 1901-1906¹

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INTRODUCTION

Edward Alsworth Ross (1866-1951) was appointed Professor of Sociology at the University of Nebraska during the spring of 1901, after being curtly dismissed from Stanford University the previous December in a controversial freedom of speech case (cf., Weinberg 1972). Ross was the first Professor of Sociology, per se, at Nebraska. During the five years (1901-1906) he taught at Nebraska, Ross' publications instrumentally shaped the character of the new discipline of sociology in the United States. On the basis of his scholarly work at Nebraska, Ross became recognized as one of the foremost American sociologists of the twentieth century.² This paper reviews the interpretive context of Ross' Nebraska work and surveys the major intellectual contributions of his monographs from this period.

Ross (1936: 87) wrote fondly of his days at Nebraska, "My lustrum at Nebraska was happy, for three sons were born to us and all thrive." He recalled, "the air there has a winey effect, pleases the lungs as sparkling Burgandy pleases the palate. Many a day I found that just to respire was intoxicating" (Ross 1936: 87). If the invigorating prairie air had an expansive effect on the size of Ross' family, it clearly profited his work as a scholar. By virtually all accounts, his Nebraska period was the most intellectually productive and sociologically significant.

The works published and begun while at Nebraska insured Ross' niche in the sociological pantheon. Counter to Kolb's (1948) premature dismissal of the lasting relevance of Ross' influence, three of Ross' Nebraska era works have been revived, with new introductions by modern scholars (cf., Borgatta and Meyer 1959; Weinberg, Hinkle, and Hinkle 1969; and Weinberg 1973). Joyce O. Hertzler ([1929] 1979: 45-46), a Ross student and later chair of the Nebraska department, observed:

The first year (1901) saw the appearance of [Ross'] epoch-making monograph, *Social Control*, which after nearly thirty years of stupendous change and advancement in sociology is still the leading book in the field and bids fair to take its place among the classics of the science. In 1905 the *Foundations of Sociology* appeared, a volume of essays whose keen criticism was a bold challenge to contemporary thought and whose constructive theory is still referred to for the tenets of sociology.

And, Weinberg (1972: 58) concludes:

Three books were published by Ross during this period: *Social Control: A Survey of the Foundations of Order*, in 1901; *Foundations of Sociology*, in 1905; and *Social Psychology*, in 1908. These works contain his most significant contributions to the development of sociological thought in the United States.

Ross' departure from Nebraska in 1906 marked the end of his most intellectually productive and creative period.

Curiously, Ross' foundational Nebraska period receives little play in the chronicles of modern American sociology. For example, in the Schwendinger's (1974: 495) account, Ross' Nebraska years disappear in a linguistic slight of hand:

Ross left Stanford and after a few years elsewhere ultimately received a position at the University of Wisconsin. [Emphasis added].

Perhaps modern interpreters of the period are caught up in the more popular but less scholarly work that Ross authored after leaving Nebraska (for a complete bibliography, see Hertzler 1951). Weinberg (1973: xxx) observes:

After 1907 Ross began more and more to neglect the serious monograph for the popular essay, to publish easily-written social commentary rather than to engage in the more taxing and less lucrative research required for the scholarly publication.

Borgatta and Meyer (1959: iii) suggest that the sheer volume of Ross' popular work at Wisconsin may account in part for his partial obscurity in modern accounts of the discipline:

Perhaps it is because Ross is often judged by later, and less distinguished, writings rather than by the truly creative contributions of his early years. Ross was so prolific a writer that it is possible to lose his best work in the mass of his total production.

Unfortunately, to lose sight of Ross' best work is to overlook his phenomenal years at Nebraska.

Ross's major works and the discipline of sociology in the United States emerged together with the early twentieth-century progressive movement.³ The progressive era gave impetus to many social and judicial reforms in the United States. With Albion Small and Amos G. Warner, Ross was exposed to the early ideals of the progressive agenda at John Hopkins University by Richard Ely, an eminent political economist whose work helped define the framework of the progressive era (Crunden 1984: 15-19). Ross became a

leading promoter of progressivism in the United States in the early twentieth century.

While at Nebraska, Ross made several intellectual contributions to the foundations of a progressive sociology. Ross' analyses at Nebraska helped establish the new discipline on a firm foundation in both academic and public circles in the United States. This paper outlines the treatises Ross published and/or developed between 1901 and 1906 at Nebraska. The following works are discussed, in turn: *Social Control*, *The Foundations of Sociology*, *Sin and Society*, *Social Psychology*, and *The Principles of Sociology*.

SOCIAL CONTROL

The publication of *Social Control* in 1901 established Ross' reputation as an important sociological theorist. Although trained as an economist, Ross concluded that economics as a discipline was unable to account for the link between individual action and economic processes. In this Ross was influenced by his close friendship with Lester Ward and his study of Ward's sociology (e.g., Ward 1883). Ross "later asserted that his association with Ward was the equivalent of a postdoctoral course" (Borgatta and Meyer 1959: x). He found the current grand theories of social process inadequate, viewing them as static reflections of European social structures not applicable to the United States.⁴ As a result, Ross devised and defined his own theoretical perspective called "social control."

Starting with the premise that individuals are self-seeking and self-interested, Ross analyzed the establishment of social order and the control of self-interest for the betterment of society (Weinberg 1972: 79). Albion Small, editor of the powerful *American Journal of Sociology*, invited his friend Ross to submit articles on the subject of "control." Ross agreed, and published nineteen articles in *AJS* under the heading of "Social Control" (Ross 1896-1901).

The articles solicited by Small grew into Ross' first major sociological treatise, published soon after Ross came to Nebraska. *Social Control* identified the mechanisms of social control, considered their origins, and explored the institutional processes through which agents of control are maintained. Ross contended that social control was a necessary component for the continued existence of any society.

Ross divided *Social Control* into three sections. The first outlined the "grounds of control," the second examined the "means of control," and the third surveyed the "system of control." The intellectual problem, Ross believed, was to produce a systematic explanation for the nature of social control. He asked:

By what means is the human struggle narrowed and limited? How has violence been purged away from it? How has the once brawling torrent of conflicting personal desires been induced to flow smoothly in the channels of legitimate rivalry, or even for a time to

vanish underground in those numerous cooperations where conflict is absent until it comes to dividing the results? (Ross 1901: 4-5).

In answer, Ross examined the roles of affection, community, justice, and natural order as factors in social control. Only when the mass becomes a society and its needs for survival prevail over any singular needs of individuals, do these factors become prevalent. But, in the struggle to maintain order, society is not always challenged by individual interests alone. Instead, the challenge often pits the majority group against a minority group. Ross observed that the need for social control was warranted by the interests of the various groups within society (Ross 1901: 55-57).

Ross concluded that the nature of social control was neither simple nor monolithic. Durkheim's theory of "common sentiments" did not satisfy Ross as an explanation of social control. Nor did he find Adam Smith's 1759 theory of "moral sentiments" satisfactory. "The fact is," Ross stated, "that society interferes with the course of the individual in some cases from sentiment and in other cases from self-interest" (Ross 1901: 63).

Ross hypothesized that social control is more than a set of common sentiments. Laws that regulate a society are bounded by the institutions and needs of society, and, more specifically, by the interests of particular groups within society. Ross carefully distinguished between social control and class control. The latter is a coercive system, regulating serious clashes of social interests. Social control, however, originates in power that is entrusted, not taken, by one group to another (Ross 1901: 78).

The power bestowed upon one group by another is regulated through various agencies of social control. Each agent can, in turn, be both repressive and beneficial to society, or to specific groups within society. Public opinion, for example, enforces moral values with less expense and bureaucracy than does law. Yet, public opinion is often a unanimous, imprecise reaction whose immediate vengeance can be swift, but whose memory is short-lived:

The unfitness of public opinion to serve as Social Will is shown again by its inability to uphold at the same time in their respective spheres the ethics of amity and the ethics of enmity But while public opinion thus falls into confusion, the less sentimental and more highly evolved opinion that speaks through law and religion and national ideals will be found adjusting itself intelligently to the moral dualism demanded by the situation. In certain directions, on the other hand, unenlightened public opinion pushes regulation to excess. It is possible for the vague feelings against vegetarianism, or long hair, or "bloomers" ... to run together into a hostile and imperious public sentiment. To the ignorant, unlikeness is an affront, nonconformity an outrage, and innovation a crime. Give full play to this feeling, and you have the intolerant multitude, eager to stretch everyone on its Procrustean bed (Ross 1901: 100-101).

For reasons such as these, Ross deduced that several means of control regulate one another. Education, for example, exposes people in a society to diversity of thought. Likewise, an understanding of law, cultures, ceremonial rituals, art, and social values are essential to the productive direction of public opinion. Each means of control serves as a check and a balance on the others, insuring the stability of society.

Ross concluded that social control would enhance equal opportunities for individual mobility within society. But, for this to happen, the means of control must be continually reformed to account for changes in the fabric of the social order. Without a progressive outlet for reform, static processes of class control develop which impede the rights and opportunities of the commoner. The emergence of a parasitic class that lives off the work of others -- and which controls the mobility of others -- is detrimental to a society. The parasitic class stifles individual opportunity and democratic principles, demarcates rigid cleavages in the social order, and produces an overall mistrust among social groups. While a healthy society is based on a democratic ethos and open competition, a society controlled by a single class uses force rather than law to enforce order.

THE FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIOLOGY

In *The Foundations of Sociology*, his first thoroughly Nebraska book, Ross (1905) defined the scope and nature of sociology. He dedicated the work to "My Honored Colleague, Professor George Elliott Howard, equally renowned for the eminence of his scholarship and the loftiness of his character" (Ross 1905: v). It is here, Hertzler (1951: 599) noted, that "the basic elements of Ross' sociological theory" are found. Ross' *Foundations* also originated in a series of journal articles. In 1902, Ross was invited to present a short series of lectures at Harvard University and Professor Frank Taussig arranged to publish the lectures in *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* (Ross 1901-1903).⁵ Ross elaborated on his foundational perspectives in eight *AJS* articles published under the title "Moot Points in Sociology" (Ross 1903-1904). These articles formed the basis of Ross' newest book.

Ross' *Foundations* opens with a discussion of "the scope and task of sociology," followed by a distinction drawn between sociology, economics, and history. Ross then assessed theoretical and methodological applications within sociology, specifically the relation of "social laws" to sociology, and "the unit of investigation in sociology." Afterwards he discussed "the characteristics of the mob," and "the properties of group-units." This established the ground for an examination of "the social forces," the processes that regulate social action, and the nature of causation. He then focused on "the factors of social change," and followed with a consideration of the "recent tendencies in sociology," "the causes of race superiority," and "the value rank of the American people."

In the preface to *Foundations*, Ross called for sociology to be descriptive, but not ahistorical; theoretical, but also applicable. Sociology, Ross

asserted, must have pragmatic social use. Without it, there is no point to the historical, descriptive, and theoretical components of the discipline. Ross (1905: vii-ix) wrote:

To the student of society present themselves the questions, *What is? What has been? What tends to be? What may be?* The first calls for descriptive sociology; the second evokes historical sociology; the third summons into being theoretical sociology; the fourth is a demand for practical sociology We seek truth not merely for the pleasure of knowing, but in order to have a lamp for our feet. We toil at building sound theory in order that we may know what to do and what to avoid. Hence all the labors of social investigators finally empty into practical sociology The solution of the larger social problems demands not only special data but also the light of general principles. The heaping together of all the pertinent facts does not equip us to deal successfully with the drink problem, the woman question, race friction, or the factory labor of children We must have, moreover, some notion of what has been and what tends to be in this particular sphere of social life, lest we waste our strength in vainly trying to dam a stream of tendency we might be able to guide.

Thus, Ross mapped the foundations of a socially responsible, pragmatic sociology.

To be useful, Ross held that sociology must overcome the past methodological tendency to focus on large units of analysis. Instead of comparing "a few huge and only superficially integrated complexes of phenomena -- such as nations, epochs, and civilizations," Ross (1905: 75) counseled, the discipline should "generalize on the basis of numerous minute and exact resemblances." Specifically, he argued (Ross 1905: 80):

The more minute the fact or relation we study, the more frequent will be the cases of its occurrence, and the more likely they are to be so-similar that they can be treated as equivalents."

Pragmatically adopting a straightforward empiricist line, Ross posited that analyses of like-units enhances the sociologist's ability to explain the occurrence of a relationship. This, he argued, allows sociologists to make more definitive statements about the social order. Generalizations made from the observation of smaller units improve one's ability to causally explain social relationships. By smaller units, Ross (1905: 80-81) had in mind empirically observable, countable events such as suicides, lynchings, feuds, mobs, insurrections, riots, custom imitations, interracial marriages, etc.

Ross noted that causation can only be discerned if relations under investigation are observed frequently over time. Moreover, a causal explanation must include a "motive," a mechanism without which the observed relationship cannot occur. If causation is to be explained, sociologists need

to identify why "a few omnipresent needs or conditions or influences incline many wills in the same direction" (Ross 1905: 80). Researchers focusing on small units can "by the simple counting of cases . . . measure the degree of sympathy or repugnance between one kind of social phenomenon and another" (Ross 1905: 80). He prophesied (Ross 1905: 81):

The statistical method, which enables us to measure social phenomena exactly and to substitute quantitative truths for qualitative, constitutes an instrument of precision, which certainly is destined to be applied to sociological problems in ways yet undreamed of.

Astutely, Ross did not confuse measurement with explanation, and he eagerly anticipated the development of statistical methods only so far as they could be useful in applied problem solving.⁶

For Ross, the scientific justification of sociology lay in its claim to units of analysis left largely unexplored by other disciplines. He identified five major categories of units particularly important to sociological analyses. First, an especially significant unit of analysis is "the group." Ross (1905: 87) wrote:

In truth, people are ever clasping and unclasping hands, uniting now for a day, now for a life. Could we run history through a biography, we should see groups forming, dissolving, and reforming, like the figures of dancers on the floor of a ball-room. What, then, is more natural than to conclude: "The group is the true unit of investigation in sociology"?

Yet, he observed, the group does not exhaust the units to which the sociologist must attend.

To Ross, the units of sociology are "products," of which the group is but one. Social "relations" constitute another, regulating exchange and prestige within and between groups. Likewise, social "institutions" cannot be neglected, they form "a grouping or relation that is sanctioned or permitted by society" (Ross 1905: 88). Beliefs and actions sanctioned by society produce a fourth unit, the "social imperative." The final sociological unit is the "uniformity," forms of "belief, action, or feeling, which are in no wise binding on the individual" (Ross 1905: 89). As products of society, these units both precede and survive the individual. "To the onlooker they appear as gods or fates, moulding the lives and disposing upon the destinies of ordinary men. Nevertheless, they have all risen at some time out of the actions and interactions of men" (Ross 1905: 90-91).

For Ross, the products of society are the units of sociology, and the processes which generate them are their causes. To this extent, Ross was clearly a system builder. The products are continually recreated or reformed by three principle social processes. Geographical barriers which similarly affect all individuals within the physical surroundings are the "preliminary processes." Those that differentiate and segregate groups are "processes of

socialization." Finally, "reconstructive processes" produce changes by disturbing the social order either through population shifts, economic trends, or technological developments. He cautioned that the sole study of "products to the neglect of processes leads men to impute to an institution a kind of individuality, to imagine that it is endowed with a vitality of its own" (Ross 1905: 93).

For Ross, sociologists must not equate social change with social progress. Theoretical sociology identifies the static product of a society and explains how dynamic social processes alter these products. Practical sociology concentrates on social progress, where Ross defines progress as a "better adaptation to given conditions" (Ross 1905: 185). Social progress is the amelioration of society, brought about by a "social will" equipped "with adequate knowledge, using appropriate means, and striving toward an intelligently conceived goal" (Ross 1905: 255). Social progress is pragmatic and relies upon the continual reform of social products. Understanding a society's products and processes is essential to direct the course of practical sociology. "The promotion of progress," Ross (1905: 185) surmised, is "our greatest practical concern."

SIN AND SOCIETY

Sin and Society is a short, popular tract in which Ross explicated the pragmatic consequences of applied sociological analysis for U.S. society. During 1904, Ross presented colloquia on the Nebraska campus⁷ in which he explored the problems of political and corporate corruption in the United States (themes much later articulated in the sociological novels of Mari Sandoz). Ross accused public officials and private entrepreneurs of greedy self-interest. These were matters of sin and society, writ large.

These themes, begun at Nebraska (Ross 1906a, 1906b), appeared during 1906-1907 in six articles Ross wrote for the *Atlantic Monthly*.⁸ Again, his articles became the basis of a book. In *Sin and Society*, Ross (1907) contended that American society was undergoing a dramatic transformation in which "community" was becoming rapidly replaced by "society".⁹ The simplicity of personal exchange within the economic system was giving way to the complexities of an impersonal, bureaucratic economy. A central problem, Ross believed, was the inability of the judicial system to adapt to these changes, thereby giving tremendous opportunities for exploitation to persons in positions of power -- at the expense of the common worker.¹⁰

Given the exigencies of dynamic social change, particularly the closing of the American frontier, Ross called for the judicial system to decide cases on an adaptive basis benefiting all parties rather than mechanically on the basis of static, defunct precedents. The rigidity of legal precedents should not unfairly benefit the wealthy and powerful in an era of reduced opportunities for common folk. Ross' progressive analysis of inequities in legal institutions impressed many leading Americans, including Theodore Roosevelt (who endorsed *Sin and Society* in a letter published in the book) and Oliver Wendell Holmes (Ross 1936: 99-100; Weinberg 1973: xxxvii-xxxix).

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Ross' (1908) influential *Social Psychology* was published well after his arrival in Wisconsin, but the volume was completed before Ross left Nebraska. His work was deeply influenced by the writings of French sociologist Gabriel Tarde. Ross' (1905b) early ideas are reflected in a paper on "The Present Problems of Social Psychology" presented in 1904 at the International Congress of Arts and Science in St. Louis, at the request of Albion Small.¹¹ When Ross left Nebraska, George Howard inherited Ross' social psychology course, and noted: "The manuscript of the book later published as *Social Psychology* (1908) was given me for use when Ross left for Wisconsin."¹²

In *Social Psychology*, Ross developed a full discussion of the relation of mass society to social behavior, an analysis prefigured in an early study by Ross (1897) on "The Mob Mind." A mob, in Ross's scheme, is defined by the characteristics of irrationality, instability, individual imitation, and transitory nature. But the mob, as distinct from a crowd (a collection of individuals in a single location), may be spatially dispersed. Advances in communication technology increase the spatial reach of suggestion and imitation. Through imitation, a collective action results that is greater than the sum of its individual behaviors (Ross 1897: 395). Thus, Ross explained fads, fashions, crazes, and the forces that shape public opinion and the social will.

In his paper for the 1904 Congress of Arts and Science, Ross asserted that groups studied sociologically should include not only those within a population but also those between populations. Especially relevant are cultural and racial differences which may be the consequences of socialization within groups as opposed to innate differences between peoples (Ross 1905b: 470). Ross' interest in the group as a primary unit of analysis led him to suggest investigations of the relations between groups and structures within groups.

In *Social Psychology*, Ross pursued themes identified in *Social Control* and *Foundations*. In particular, he focused on the sociological origins of psychological phenomena, i.e., those that "arise in consequence of human association" (Ross 1908: 9). Processes leading to the formation and alteration of public opinion were of special interest to Ross because of the potential link between public opinion and social action. Ross considered humans generally subject to suggestion, but the degree of suggestibility is socially conditioned. In cultures ruled by tradition, custom, and/or rigid caste lines, group members are less easily swayed by innovations. Conversely, societies marked by dynamic change, urbanization, and/or the possibility of upward mobility experience rapid adoption of the "latest" popular conventions.

Rational social reform is frustrated, on the one hand, by the maintenance of archaic patterns deeply rooted in traditional custom. On the other hand, rapidly changing public opinion is too irrational at root to allow

institution of significant reform. The hope of future progress, in Ross' view, lies in the wide diffusion of *rational* imitation, in opposition to *conventional* adoption of the most recent fad. In the present, however, Ross perceived a melange of trends. Custom, convention, and rational imitation are all thrown together, in conflict, frustrating the social equilibrium of a potentially rational society. Ross (1908: 362) wrote:

If, then, our time is full of contradictions, it is because our culture is not allowed to achieve an equilibrium. The steady afflux of new examples, inventions, and discoveries produces confusion.

While Ross admired science for its ability to proceed rationally, "purged from all regard for prestige" (Ross 1908: 294), he concluded that the future was likely to be crowded with multitudes of creeds and beliefs, of which science "can be but one" (Ross 1908: 364).

Ross' personal attitude toward future social changes that would eventually overtake his own work was remarkably healthy and characteristically pragmatic. According to Borgatta and Meyer (1959: xii):

Ross viewed his own contributions humbly, as marks to be built upon, as expendable contributions to be discarded as more adequate knowledge became available. Yet, having relinquished his brand of "social psychology," he says, in a sporting spirit, "But, didn't I have a run for my money!"

PRINCIPLES OF SOCIOLOGY

A later work, Ross' *Principles of Sociology* (1920), also benefited from the "intoxicating" Nebraska air and, no doubt, from the atmosphere of progressive, turn-of-the-century intellectual collegiality at the University of Nebraska. In his retrospective assessment of Ross' work at Nebraska, George Howard observed:

Nor were these books the whole fruit of the period. One evening a group of colleagues were invited to [Ross'] study to listen to the readings of the chapter headings of a proposed book on the "Principles of Sociology." Fifteen years were to pass before the magnum opus appeared (1920), but members of that little group may find in it many a heading and many an epigram which recall the delightful hour.¹³

Perhaps partially in memory of those happy times, Ross dedicated the first edition of *Principles* to his former Nebraska colleague, Roscoe Pound.

ROSS' NEBRASKA LEGACY

Ross' approach to sociology contributed at least four enduring intellectual themes, all developed or significantly refined during his work at the University of Nebraska. First, Ross enriched the scope of sociology through his pragmatic critique of sociological methodology. He insisted that the social sciences, and sociology in particular, must incorporate units of analysis that lend themselves to empirical examination and the discovery of social causation. He noted the importance of building theoretical generalizations and laws, first through the observation of regularities in the units, and second as a deductive test of theories. Ross, together with a handful of like minded social scientists, oriented the fledgling discipline toward socially pragmatic, empirically-grounded research.

A second and equally important contribution was Ross' insistence that sociology be practical. He argued that a principal objective of sociologists was to directly apply social theory and research toward practical problems. An abstract sociology with little practical application to contemporary problems had little use to anyone, and none at all to Ross. His conception of sociology was particularly instrumental in early attempts to reform the judicial system in the United States (cf., Hill Forthcoming). In later years, his popular analyses of social problems in China, Latin America, the Soviet Union, and the United States directed academic and public attention to the potential usefulness of the sociological perspective.

Third, Ross explicated and refined a major tradition in social psychology.

Finally, Ross must be credited with originating and defining the concept of social control. *Social Control* stood, not only as a theoretical and analytical examination of the causes and consequences of social control, but also as a progressive statement of reform in the United States. Numerous sociologists explored the concept and ramifications of social control — especially in works by Nebraska sociologists who admired Ross' ideas, including George E. Howard (1911), Joyce Hertzler (1928), and Roscoe Pound (1942). Ross' analysis of social control, more than any other facet of his work, led him to critically examine the existence of political and economic corruption in the United States and speak strongly and articulately of the need for judicial, economic, and other social reforms.

NOTES

1. A debt of gratitude is acknowledged to Mary Jo Deegan in whose enlightening graduate seminar this work began.
2. This is evident from his frequent and congenial correspondence with the leading economists and sociologists of his day, especially: Richard Ely, Frank Taussig, John Hobson, Lester Frank Ward, Franklin Giddings, and Albion Small. This correspondence is found in the Ross Papers, microfilm edition 1982, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin (hereafter "Ross Papers").

3. A general introduction to the progressive era is found in Crunden (1984). Deegan (1988) outlines the importance of the progressive era for the discipline of sociology. The specific impact of the era on Ross' work is discussed in Weinberg (1972), Scifres (1964), and Ross (1936); and is documented in Ross' personal papers and correspondence. In the 1890s, before the progressive era began, Ross was a populist and supporter of Nebraska's William Jennings Bryan.
4. Ross wrote in an exciting era of disciplinary development when well-read scholars, including Ross, dipped deep and often into works of social theorists such as Addams, Durkheim, Gilman, Gumplovicz, Maine, Marx, Mill, Simmel, Small, Smith, Spencer, Tarde, Tonnies, Ward, and others.
5. Taussig to Ross, 30 March 1901, Reel 3, Ross Papers.
6. Perhaps Ross' most thoroughly statistical analysis, *Changes in the Size of American Families in One Generation*, was published in 1924 although conceived in 1911. Unfortunately, Ross "found no means of carrying it out then" (Baber and Ross 1924: 3). The analysis confronted the population problem, the "one problem to which all Western peoples are paying far more attention in this new century than ever before" (Baber and Ross 1924: 5).
7. Ross' talks were reported in the campus newspaper, *The Daily Nebraskan*: "Dr. Ross Speaks, Discusses Political Corruption and Its Evils," 18 October 1904, p. 1, col. 4; and "Prof. Ross at Convocation, Gives Instructive Talk on Political Decay and Interpretation," 5 April 1906, p.1, col. 6.
8. For references to the remaining *Atlantic Monthly* articles, as well as Ross' other writings, see Hertzler (1951).
9. The similarity to Tonnies' concepts is striking, but Ross contended (1901: 452) that he came to these ideas prior to his familiarization with Tonnies' work.
10. This view was then being developed in greater detail and more thorough technical analysis in the sociological jurisprudence of Ross' friend and colleague, Roscoe Pound (cf. Hill-Forthcoming).
11. Small to Ross, 2 July 1904, Reel 3, Ross Papers. The International Congress of Arts and Science was held at the 1904 World's Fair Exposition in St. Louis. Many distinguished scholars were invited to participate. In addition to Ross, other invited sociologists included: Jane Addams, Franklin Giddings, Charles Henderson, George E. Howard, Graham Taylor, William I. Thomas, Ferdinand Tonnies, George Vincent, Lester Ward, and Max Weber. Albion Small was a vice-president to the Congress.
12. G.E. Howard, "Sociology in the University of Nebraska," elsewhere in this issue.

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The Edward A. Ross Papers at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, in Madison, Wisconsin, provide rich insights into Ross' life and work. For details of the microfilm edition (available through interlibrary loan), see Miller and Aber (1986). Stern's (1938-49) useful publication of the correspondence between E.A. Ross and Lester Ward appeared in the *American Sociological Review*.

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"The fact is we are behind the times."

-- G. E. Howard

In 1904, with the publication of *A History of Matrimonial Institutions*, George Elliott Howard became an internationally recognized expert on marriage and family. Howard's work marked the start of serious sociological study of marriage and family at the University of Nebraska, a tradition that continues to the present day. This paper introduces Howard's theoretical perspective on marriage as a social institution, locates his work within a new wave of empirically rigorous and intellectually robust American sociology, and notes Howard's practical focus as a sociological spokesperson on "the divorce question."

Howard's three-volume *magnum opus* appeared in the spring of 1904, near the end of his one-year appointment as Professorial Lecturer in History at the University of Chicago. September 1904 found Howard at the University of Nebraska as Professor of Institutional History. He became Professor and Head of the Department of Political Science and Sociology in 1906.

Howard's capital as a sociologist multiplied rapidly during this period. He rejoined his former colleague from Stanford University, Edward A. Ross. Ross moved to Nebraska in 1901 at the invitation of Chancellor Benjamin Andrews, following Ross' controversial dismissal from Stanford (Howard was forced to resign from Stanford for supporting Ross). Howard's Nebraska circle also included Roscoe Pound, the founder of American sociological jurisprudence. Pound was appointed Dean of the University of Nebraska College of Law in 1903.

Howard's sociological work took root in the progressive intellectual milieu that characterized the University of Nebraska at the turn of the century. In September 1904, he accepted Albion Small's invitation to address the prestigious Congress of Arts and Science at the St. Louis Exposition on the topic of "Social Control and the Function of the Family." Howard went on to ask, "Is the Freer Granting of Divorce an Evil?" in a landmark paper presented in December 1908 at the third annual meeting of the American Sociological Society. As the nation's acknowledged expert on family and society, Howard returned to the American Sociological Society in 1911 to present his further thoughts on "Social Control of the Domestic Relations." In 1917, the historian-turned-sociologist was honored by election to the presidency of the American Sociological Society. The foundation of this accomplishment was Howard's solid interdisciplinary preparation.

Howard's rigorous interdisciplinary training and expertise are particularly manifest in his *History of Matrimonial Institutions*. C. Wright Mills

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