**GOOD ON PAPER:
SOCIOLOGICAL CRITIQUE, PRAGMATISM, AND SECULARIZATION THEORY**

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This manuscript has been published in final form as
Dromi, S.M. & Stabler, S.D. 2019. "Good on paper: Sociological critique, pragmatism, and
secularization theory." *Theory & Society* online first
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11186-019-09341-9>

ABSTRACT

Recent years have seen numerous sociological disagreements devolve into heated debates, with scholars openly accusing their peers of being both empirically wrong and morally misguided. While social scientists routinely reflect on the ethical implications of certain research assumptions and data collection methods, the sociology of knowledge production has said little about how moral debates over scholarship shape subsequent research trajectories. Drawing on the new French pragmatic sociology, this article examines how sociologists respond to criticisms of the moral worth of their research. The article outlines three typical responses: (1) accepting the criticism and changing direction completely; (2) accepting the criticism but changing discursive framing to incorporate existing research without being subject to critique; and (3) navigating through the debate by devising new research directions that do not trigger such criticism. To demonstrate, the article looks at how sociologists of religion responded, in their published scholarship, to criticisms of secularization theory as depreciating religious people and spiritual experience. Across the responses, we show that sociologists have included moral considerations in their empirical investigations, and have switched between a diverse set of moral justifications to address -- and also avoid -- criticism. We conclude by demonstrating that this model can be extended to other domains of sociological inquiry, including the study of gender-based wage inequality and methodological nationalism. The article highlights the importance of mapping the moral frameworks sociologists use for the sociology of knowledge and the sociology of morality.

KEYWORDS

Morality; pragmatic sociology; knowledge production; secularization; valuation; religion

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Publications that spark heated controversies among scholars are nothing new for sociologists. In such debates, critics focus not only on methodological rigor of their peers, but also on the perceived moral character of the authors under scrutiny. From the dispute over the ethical status of an ethnographer's purported criminal complicity (Lewis-Kraus 2016), through the fierce criticisms of an article suggesting that children to same-sex parents are disadvantaged (Hirschman 2016:618-20), to the controversy surrounding a comparison of transgender identification to *transracial* identification (Brubaker 2017; Walters 2017; Winnubst 2017)—wherever one turns, they find fervent debates over the ethical underpinnings of sociological research practices and assumptions. Through such repeated waves of rebuke, certain avenues of research come under fire and become hard to traverse for the working sociologist. Given that numerous moral minefields exist in the discipline, how do sociologists navigate such contentious research areas? Do sociologists truly discard a research avenue once it is tainted by moral critique?

Recent advances in the sociology of knowledge production suggest that moral consideration do, in fact, play a significant role in research-related decisions. While the examples above might be extreme cases, sociologists of knowledge have shown how the seemingly routine functions of scientific practice propel normative debates about the future direction of sociological research (Camic, Gross and Lamont 2011). Lamont (2009), for example, demonstrated that scholars frequently use their understandings of moral character to evaluate other scholars when making funding decisions. Scholars have shown similar findings in other scientific fields (Abend 2014; Illouz 2008; Timmermans 2017). Overall, research in this area suggests that social scientists take moral considerations into account in ways that are

consequential for their research programs (Abbott 2018; Gorski 2013; Hirschman 2016; Rodríguez-Muñiz 2015).

In this paper, we ask how sociologists collectively negotiate morally contentious research areas. We consider a criticism or a justification of a scholarly work to be *moral* when it denounces or defends a certain practice by relating it to a certain conception of the common good (Dromi and Illouz 2010). To investigate this form of moral reasoning¹, we trace the ways sociologists criticize what they see as detrimental research practices, as well as the ways other parties justify alternate research approaches in response. In the context of social scientific discourse, evaluating practices in light of the common good involves reflecting upon the consequences of scientific claims for society at large, for example by pointing to contradictions between a research finding and commonly held notions of civic equality or to the detrimental effects of research methods on specific populations. We analyze these processes as they unfolded in the sociological debates over the phenomenon of secularization, which erupted in a new round of debate in the sociology of religion in the 1970s and continues to reverberate in contemporary sociology.

To theorize these debates and their outcomes, we draw on a strand of pragmatic sociology that links the critical impulses of everyday social interactions to collectively held

¹ We use the term *moral* in the formal sense, to denote understandings of good/bad or right/wrong, and not in the substantive sense, which refers to a person or a situation's alignment with collectively held standards of morality ("she is a good person, therefore she is moral"). See Hitlin and Vaisey 2013 and Tavory 2011 for full discussion of this distinction.

cultural frameworks (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005 [1999]; Boltanski and Thévenot 1999; 2006 [1991]; Lamont and Thévenot 2000)². We adapt this approach for analyzing scholarly debates and identify three primary ways sociologists respond to moral critiques. In all three outcomes, sociologists express an awareness and sensitivity to the moral implications of their research practices, although how they deal with the criticism varies. In the first outcome (“delegitimization”), some sociologists reject former types of conduct in favor of new ones, thereby accepting the critique and radically altering research practices. In the second outcome (“reform”), some sociologists partially reform their existing practices in face of criticism. In the third outcome (“reconstitution”), sociologists use the debate as a jumping off point to frame new research questions. Thus, the second and third responses to criticism are compromises that allow sociologists to continue their engagement with their research while displaying sensitivity to the gravity of the critique at hand. This entails acknowledging the ethical problems the critique highlights, but also adopting new discursive registers in order to transcend them in constructive ways³. Overall, even though practicing sociologists may be more interested in presenting new findings about social phenomena than in pondering upon the philosophical justification for their

² For an overview of the various approaches that consider macro phenomena using a pragmatic approach see Gross 2018.

³ While this study cannot provide an exhaustive layout of all the courses sociological controversies may take or to predict their outcomes, it highlights the most common ways sociologists handle uncertainty about the moral worth of their work. For instance, this article does not address what happens when scholars actively *ignore* moral critiques.

study, our analysis of their debates shows that sociological conversations regularly invoke competing conceptions of the good that shape research trajectories.⁴

Crucially, this article does not suggest that the statements sociologists make while arguing over sensitive topics are not also valid methodological or empirical claims in themselves. However, in our view, scholars (and readers) involved in morally-charged debates will often interpret research claims as demonstrating a moral stance. Readers may thus interpret statements of empirical findings (e.g., “African Americans incarceration rates quintuple those of whites”) or methodological criticism (e.g., “surveys that allow only two genders exclude a range of additional possible categories”) as direct normative statements (e.g., “the prison system contradicts the principle of equality before the law” or “insensitive research practices deny some social groups’ right to recognition”). Thus, we demonstrate that sociologists of religion have made competing fact claims in order to articulate alternative values, but we do not suggest that they *only* valued these facts as tools in ideological conflict. Instead, we show that scholars have debated the implications of different theories of secularization by conducting rigorous empirical inquiries, each of which aligned with different ways of understanding the moral motivations of research. In this sense, the theoretical and empirical innovations we overview are part of a central—but often underemphasized—dimension of contemporary sociological practice.

This article makes three contributions to the literature. First, the article contributes to new developments in pragmatic sociological theory (Gross 2009; Timmermans 2017; Timmermans

⁴ This paper does not offer suggestions on how to resolve such conflicts, but rather highlights their endemicity in the production of sociological knowledge.

and Tavory 2012). Existing work in this area has highlighted the role of local schemas of evaluation in shaping the ways scientists interpret research (see Timmermans 2017:164-6) and has already opened up inquiry into how the practice of social science entails implicit questions about the moral worth of social scientific inquiry (Camic, Gross and Lamont 2011; Hirschman 2016). However, with the legacy of symbolic interactionism still reigning over much of contemporary pragmatic sociological research (see also Gross 2018), current work in this area has highlighted micro level interactions, and has neglected the ways micro-level factors of moral-cum-scientific justification aggregate into *macro*-effects across the field over time (see also Abbott 2018). By demonstrating the utility of the new French pragmatic approach, we show how such macro-pragmatic processes work in a domain close to home for many working academics—the contours of scholarly debate.

Second, this article contributes to the burgeoning study of altruism, morality, and social solidarity (Jeffries 2014) by providing sociologists tools to study moral dispute within academic communities. Unlike pragmatic sociology, much of the recent work in the American sociology of morality has been interested in predicting behavior in relation to ethical predispositions or standards (Miles 2015; Stets and Carter 2011; Vaisey 2009; 2014). Our article provides a model of inquiry in the sociology of morality that does not seek to predict individual behavior but rather to understand how broad notions of best practices and acceptable policies emerge (see also Cohen and Dromi 2018).

Third, this article intervenes in recent conversations about the ethical underpinnings of sociological research. Numerous scholars have taken to specifying the normative directions sociologists should take and the “good society” they should promote in their research practices.

These scholars largely assume that sociologists-at-large lack a clear vision of a good society toward which to orient their efforts. To fill this dearth, scholars have drawn on advances in neuroscientific research (Turner 2013), on the “capacities” approach (Lukes 2008; Nussbaum and Sen 1993), and on the revival of a (critical) scientific realism (Gorski 2013; Sayer 2011) to revivify sociology’s moral core. In contrast, the current article highlights that working sociologists are largely aware of the moral frameworks that justify their work, and often engage them when research demands it.

This point is relevant for the literature on public sociology as well (Burawoy 2005; Gans 2016; Mooney Nickel 2013). Public sociologists tend to distinguish between public and academic sociologists, and relegate the work of normative engagement to the former (Collins 2007). By contrast, we show that academic sociologists often orient their work toward a vision of the public good. As the analysis will show, in the scholarly exchanges between sociologists researching questions of secularization, scholars simultaneously regarded the academic rigor *and* the public value of the work at hand. We thus underline that academic sociology is more engaged with moral concerns than public sociologists believe.

MORALITY AND SOCIOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION: EXISTING APPROACHES

Sociologists have made a long way since Weber’s (2009) classic call for sociologists to embrace value neutrality. For one, the critiques of the post-war consensus around positivism (Collins 1991; Lukes 1974; Mills 1959) and the theories of social movement activists who flooded sociology departments in the 1960s (Calhoun and Van Antwerpen 2007; Steinmetz and Chae 2002) have made a significant dent in the disciplinary ethos of value freedom. More

pointedly, the Foucauldian project of uncovering the power-laden underpinnings of social knowledge (Foucault 1980), as well as work by Bourdieu (1988) and Gouldner (1970) that revealed the class- and profession-based biases in academic work, further questioned whether scholarship and morals could be disentangled.

Recent work has highlighted three main ways in which morality and academic scholarship are intertwined. First, sociologists have noted that the very definition of a social problem requires taking a moral stance on how one ought to assess the key indicators of relevance (Gorski 2013; Putnam 1982; Sayer 2009). Abbott (2016), for example, has criticized sociologists for taking the concept of inequality to mean *injustice* (rather than a neutral descriptor) and operationalizing it as a normative-cum-empirical term in their research. Others have similarly noted that sociologists pursue topics “thick” with meaning, wherein “[a]ttempting to replace [evaluative terms] with non-evaluative descriptions is likely to result in a loss of descriptive adequacy” (Sayer 2009:777). Second, sociologists have demonstrated that disciplinary gatekeepers deem scholarship dealing with morally-polluted issues unworthy of publication. For instance, 19% of surveyed working sociologists agreed that arguments about how a vulnerable populations’ culture causes increased poverty are “likely motivated to legitimize the racially-ethnically stratified status quo” (Horowitz, Haynor and Kickham 2018:467). More generally, sociologists have pointed to an implicit “analytic ontology” (Hirschman 2016:606) that shapes the kinds of social processes researchers and publics consider morally worthy of investigating. Third, public sociologists have claimed that, given the public preoccupation with questions of morality, working sociologists should attune themselves to

explicitly ethical concerns (Burawoy 2016; Collins 2013; Uggen and Inderbitzin 2010)⁵. For example, public sociologists have underlined that “social justice” – itself a claim to certain moral truths – can be an important way for sociology to translate its concerns to the broader society (Abraham and Purkayastha 2012). Beyond these approaches, comparative-historical sociologists have also investigated the moral assumptions that constitute the historical trajectories of different disciplines, like business, economics, and psychology (Abend 2014; Fourcade 2009; Illouz 2008)⁶. In what follows, we apply a similarly historical approach to suggest that the *empirical* diversity of a field is in many ways an outcome of the *moral* diversity of its practitioners.

TOWARD A SOCIOLOGY OF SOCIOLOGICAL CRITIQUE

One perspective that can help link the specific claims scholars make in a debate to the wider macro trends in moral thinking they mobilize is the new French pragmatism (see also Gross 2018:98-101). This literature sees individuals as capable of grasping complex logics of worth and applying them to concrete situations in their daily lives (Boltanski 2011 [2009]; Boltanski and Thévenot 1999; 2000; 2006 [1991]). Such an approach differs from American pragmatism because it emphasizes the broad, preexisting logics of evaluation actors employ to determine the moral stakes for particular situations⁷. Thus, the new French pragmatism helps

⁵ This trend in itself provoked other scholars to argue that sociology is morally biased because of the reigning dominance of social justice frameworks (Lukianoff and Haidt 2018; Smith 2014).

⁶ Recently, psychologists have similarly made attempts at self-inventory (Duarte et al. 2015).

⁷ Moreover, Boltanski and Thévenot’s self-labeling as “pragmatic” has been in itself controversial, see Quéré and Terzi 2014:95-99.

identify the frameworks of ethical reasoning that inform debates (in social science or elsewhere) (Blok and Meilvang 2015; Silber 2003)⁸. Using this approach provides us with four distinct advantages.

First, pragmatic sociology assumes that individual actors are aware and critical of complex ethical orders, even if they do not articulate their understanding as a refined or systematic philosophy (Lemieux 2014)⁹. Pragmatic studies of critique describe “the actor’s sense of justice—or, more precisely, their sense of injustice” and build “models of the competence with which actors have to be endowed in order to face ordinary critical situations” (Boltanski and Thévenot 1999:364; see also 2006 [1991])¹⁰. This perspective aligns with recent work on the social dimensions of cognition that shows that actors are responsive to multiple moral codes, which they elaborate through reflection and critical engagement with research (Camic and Gross 2004; Camic, Gross and Lamont 2011). Following the same line of reasoning allows us to analyze sociologists’ sense of the value of their work.

Second, in contrast to Bourdieusian approaches to academia (Bourdieu 1991), pragmatic sociology makes the epistemological decision not to seek out unseen factors that may predetermine the stances individuals express (see particularly Boltanski and Thévenot 2000:211-

⁸ For a broad overview of the background, development, and applications of the new French pragmatic sociology see Blokker 2011 as well as the other articles in the same issue. Lemieux (2014) also expands on the intellectual background of Boltanski and Thévenot’s project and its early reception in France.

⁹ However, in his later book *On Critique* (2011 [2009]: chapters 3-5), Boltanski identified the limitation to actors’ awareness and critical abilities in specific institutional and political contexts.

¹⁰ Boltanski elaborates on the bases for individuals’ critical capacity and the conditions for critique in chapter 2 of *On Critique* (2011 [2009]).

3). Instead, pragmatic sociology bases its analyses on the explicit views actors mobilize. In this, pragmatic sociology departs from field theory, which provides tools to predict the positions academics take according to their social position and background (Bourdieu 1998)¹¹. The latter approaches imply that the positions disputants occupy explain their positions in ethical disputes over scientific method¹². While this is a fruitful approach in many instances (e.g. Loveman 2014), we share the French pragmatist concern that such a characterization risks disowning actors of their claim to moral efficacy by reducing their sensibilities to their economic trajectory, religiosity, race, sexual orientation, or any social status.

Third, pragmatic sociology is geared to study sites of political disagreement, and sociology is a prime example of such sites. Academics and nonacademics often interpret sociological findings as bearing political implications and demanding further debate (Hirschman 2016). Thus, a sociological claim—say, that the children of same-sex marriage have different life outcomes than those of heterosexual marriage (e.g. Regnerus 2012)—can be perceived as taking a *political* position against same-sex parent’s adoption rights. The ensuing public outcry can elicit a scholarly debate over the theoretical framing of the questions researchers pose and the research norms they use (e.g. Cheng and Powell 2015). Thus, disagreements over scientific

¹¹Nevertheless, the new French pragmatic sociology owes much to Bourdieu, see Potthast (2017). Susen (2014b: 314-318) usefully lays out the multiple points of convergence (and divergence) between Boltanskians and Bourdieusians. Bénatouïl (1999:387-388) further highlights the interests the two approaches share.

¹² However, recent scholarship has countered this claim by emphasizing that moral justifications may function as a distinct form of “moral capital” in the Bourdieusian sense (Ignatow 2009; Swartz 2010; Valverde 1994). Yet, much like the new French pragmatism, such research owes much to Bourdieu’s theory, but also departs from it in significant ways (Curtis 1997).

matters in sociology are laden with political meanings and are open to engagement with the wider public. Classificatory-cum-cultural debate, then, is an endemic feature of the social sciences (Abbott 2018; Gorski 2013). Pragmatic sociology helps make sense of such debates because, according to Boltanski, it aims “to understand the practice of critique and, thus, understand why it is so difficult to criticize” (Boltanski, Honneth and Celikates 2014 [2009]: 562).

Fourth, pragmatic sociology focuses on the fragile resolutions of conflict by examining how parties achieve agreement (or, at the very least, agree to let matters rest) despite abysmal differences between their worldviews (see Cordero 2017)¹³. Some disagreements culminate with one side prevailing over the other, but many other controversies end with a compromise. Such compromises emerge as actors devise ways to continue to cooperate without pursuing their disagreement further, out of a pragmatic intention to maintain their joint interaction. Scientists similarly may harbor strong disagreements with each other, but will often find ways to cooperate despite such differences in order to be able to move forward with their own research. Focusing on how sociologists criticize, but also continue to work in face of critiques, will help explain how moral debates within the discipline can generate new types of research¹⁴.

¹³ In contradistinction to field theory’s focus on struggles between actors over symbolic capitals (e.g., Go and Krause 2016, Krause 2014).

¹⁴ Within the confines of this article we cannot possibly do justice to the breadth and depth of work as ornate as that of Boltanski, Chiapello, Thévenot, and their collaborators. In addition, a burgeoning auxiliary literature exists on their approach. For a collection of articles providing some sense of this work see Susen and Turner 2014 .

Critical moments: *When* sociologists respond to critique

A pragmatic sociological analysis of scholarly debates begins with “critical moments”. Critical moments interrupt routine interactions, as “people, involved in ordinary relationships, who are doing things together... and who have to coordinate their actions, realize that something is going wrong; that they cannot get along any more; that something has to change” (Boltanski and Thévenot 1999:359). From this position, actors investigate the conditions that have caused this disjuncture and the various pathways they can pursue to resolve the ensuing sense of frustration. These moments take on a moral dimension when actors draw on competing conceptions of the common good in order to justify their own position and to criticize other actors.

Sociologists involved in generating such debates will usually insist that the issue at hand—be it methodological, empirical, or theoretical—bears wider implications for the welfare of society or groups therein. In this sense, sociologists are active participants in fostering a “critical moment”, and—if criticized—will seek ways to address or circumvent the denunciation by appealing to broad systems of moral logic. In what follows, we first outline the micro-level strategies sociologists typically employ to respond to such critique, and then describe the macro-level systems of logic they use to justify the worth of their work.

Delegitimation, reform, reconstitution: *How* sociologists respond to critique

Although some scholars may ignore moral criticisms of their research practices, others routinely engage with their critics. Their responses typically fall into three different camps¹⁵. The first is the *delegitimization* of former types of conduct and their ultimate replacement with reformed ones. In this register, sociologists accept the criticism on its own terms and jettison previously-held interpretations to adopt new practices. The second is the acquiescing to *partial reforms*, with the understanding that future critiques may be waged against this compromise. Here, we see sociologists acknowledging the criticism, but employing different discursive registers to create more comprehensive models to understand the phenomena in question. The third response is a *reconstitution*¹⁶ of the supposed problem. Here, sociologists reformulating the issue under debate and use this new perspective to redirect research strategies¹⁷. Scholars taking this route will acknowledge that the critique is important, but will also employ a logic of moving past the debate onto new (and perhaps more pertinent) areas, thereby evading criticism.

Thus, hypothetically, a group of sociologists studying income inequality may be faced with criticism about the use of the categories “white”, “black”, and “other” in their regression

¹⁵ In order to model the three most common types of responses, we draw on Boltanski and Chiapello’s model of critiques of capitalism, as developed in *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (2005 [1999]), and adapt this model to track scholarly debates as well. This model is partially derived from Garfinkel’s (1967) more generalized model of the responses to perceived injustice.

¹⁶ Boltanski and Chiapello originally used the term *mystification* to highlight the evasive features of this response. However, we adopt the term *reconstitution* from Clayman’s (1995:107) discussion of Garfinkel to point to the generative sides of this type of discourse.

¹⁷ Although the three types of responses are largely contemporaneous, reconstitution will usually begin at a somewhat later stage than the other responses.

models: “Doesn’t the category ‘other’ fold within itself dozens of different races, which may have variable outcomes?”; “Shouldn’t the category ‘black’ differentiate between African-Americans and African migrants to the U.S. whose experience is different?” And, most importantly, “Doesn’t the use of such simplistic categories feed into public policy that then harms the same populations that these studies purport to represent?”¹⁸

One response to such criticism could be *delegitimizing* the entire subfield of quantitative income inequality studies. This would involve tagging the subfield as oppressive to nonwhite populations, and advocating other research methods that involve a reflexive engagement with the meaning of “race” in relation to inequality (e.g., ethnographic studies). A second response to the critique might be *partially reforming* existing categorizations of race, for example by comparing three-race-categories research with more refined research using alternative categorizations of race (e.g. through the study of variations by skin tone). This way, scholars following this path accept the critique, but claim that their reformed models are those that best serve the populations in questions. Finally, a third response might be to agree with the claim that the use of three racial categories is pernicious, but then use the question of racial categorization to launch a new type of research (e.g. about how interview subjects understand race categories). This path *reconstitutes* the emphasis on racial categorization by agreeing with the critique and generating new research that incorporates it (rather than advocating a direct overturning of the previous paradigm or seeking to create compromise categories). One may conjure up similar debates arising around questions on the extents to which gender and race are biologically determined, as well as related

¹⁸ For a compelling example of such discussion see Zuberi (2001).

sociobiological questions. Crucially, each approach demonstrates one way of balancing a concern about the moral implications of the research with a pragmatic orientation toward action.

Cités: *What sociologists say in response to critique*

As sociologists raise critiques or take one of the routes outlined above to respond to critique, how do they determine what constitutes *moral worth*? What is the repertoire of moral logics available to sociologists, and how do they mobilize it?

Cités: Logics of worth

Boltanski and Thévenot's notion of *cité*¹⁹ provides a way to map the orders of worth sociologists invoke when they criticize research or respond to criticism. Cités are systems of logic, each of which establishes one way of evaluating worth. Each cité specifies relevant categories for evaluation, the adequate methods for establishing worth, and the expected investment for achieving a status of greatness. Each cité excludes and disqualifies all other methods of evaluation: an object deemed worthy by one cité of evaluation could be considered ordinary by a different cité and unworthy by a third cité.

Each cité formalizes a commonsense way for actors to measure worth and to make claims about the justness of social arrangements. For sociologists, cités are usually implicit in the ways they frame the importance of their research. One sociologist may claim that researchers must form strong ties with disadvantaged groups in order to give them voice, and that any research

¹⁹ While this term is typically translated as “city” or “city-state”, these English versions do not fully capture Boltanski's intended meaning, and we choose to retain the French *cité*. Similar concerns have led others to translate the term as *polity*, *world*, and *regime*.

that does not do so is oblivious to social suffering. Another sociologist may claim that sociology must use large-scale datasets to study (and help alleviate) economic inequality, and that any other research would be a waste of time. And yet another sociologist may say that works of sociology must provide theoretical innovations that will help us understand social life, and that any other work is inferior. All three would thus be making claims about the social good and how sociologists should help achieve it, but each of these claims is based on a different idea of moral worth: strong, intimate social bonds in the first case, equality in the second case, and creativity in the third case. In other words, each of these claims draws on a different *cit* – the first revolving around domestic value, the second around civic, and the third around artistic. Boltanski, Thvenot, and Chiapello identify seven *cits*, which we list in Table 1 along with key measures of worth we specify for application to academic debates, as well as a corresponding sociological expression that exemplifies each.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Tests of worthiness

The *cits* actors use as they debate with others prescribe the types of evidence they will marshal. Each *cit* defines not only the basis for worth, but also the types of proof and measurement methods relevant to establish worth – in other words *tests* (*preuves*²⁰). For example, while one university administrator may evaluate professors based on their research productivity, another administrator may see their service to the university as crucial. Whereas

²⁰ Lamont (2012) translates *preuve* as *trial*, but we follow Boltanski and Thvenot’s (1999) own translation to *test*.

most in academia will agree that both are important, most will also agree that the two measures are based on different metrics, or in other words represents different *cités*. In addition, the ways to evaluate each *cité*—the tests—are diverse, and are often grounds for dispute in themselves. Continuing with the academic example, administrators may agree to evaluate a professor for tenure based on her research productivity, but may disagree on the appropriate indicators: quantitative counts of publications and impact factors, or the quality and perceived sincerity of her recommendation letters? Both sides of a debate can use the same *cité*, but disagree on its practical implications (Thévenot, Moody, and Lafaye 2000). Thus, each *cité* defines a category of evaluation, and also includes a host of definitions, facts, and fact-finding procedures that allow actors to reach conclusions about the worth of a particular circumstance²¹.

Methodologically, using *cités* for the analysis of sociological debates allows us to distinguish between a simple debate over methods and a moral debate over the contribution of research to a greater social good. Scientists certainly argue with each other frequently, as part of their work, without turning issues into questions of principles. The concept of *cité* identifies how morality interjects into sociologists' critiques and justifications. In what follow, we trace the contours of the debates over secularization in the last four decades to demonstrate these principles in action.

²¹ Several different types of tests exist, about which we cannot go into detail here. See Boltanski 2011 for full details.

THE “FOURTH GREAT AWAKENING”: THE SECULARIZATION THESIS RECONSIDERED

The founders of sociology understood religion in terms that forecasted its ultimate decline. Weber was not positive about the decline of religion, but at the same time theorized that rationalization was teleologically linked to modern social development. The Marxian argument that religion is an opiate of the masses portrayed religious decline as a positive development that would do away with the superstructural legitimation of exploitation. Up until the 1970s, the view that religion is antithetical to modernity, that mass secularization is underway, and that this is essentially a positive process remained consistent throughout American sociology (Bender 2011; Gorski 2005).

However, the rapid growth of religious movements in the late-twentieth-century cast considerable doubt on the viability of the secularization thesis. As a response, scholarship beginning in the late 1970s started challenging the notion that religious decline is an inherent aspect of modernization, and instead claimed that religious actors were involved in multiple aspects of the transition to modernity (Calhoun 1983; Gorski 2003). Moreover, the emergence of new religious movements suggested to sociologists of religion that religion should not be considered a thing of the past (Bellah 1976; Stark and Bainbridge 1979; 1980; 1987). The global religious revival that began in the 1970s, the Moral Majority, and the high levels of American religious participation continued to challenge the notion that secularization was underway (Bender 2011; Gorski and Altinordu 2008). A growing number of sociologists claimed that these empirical developments made the discipline’s commitment to secularization theory parochial (Casanova 2006; Warner, VanAntwerpen and Calhoun 2010).

This work also disputed the normative implications of traditional secularization theory by highlighting the positive, forward-thinking effects of religion and religious actors. Historical sociologists thus showed that religious movements provided revolutionary actors with counterhegemonic ways of thinking, inspiring democratizing social change and revolution (Calhoun 1983; Casanova 1994)²². Ample work in that era also pointed to the social capital gains religious affiliation provides (Stark and Bainbridge 1980). Scholars criticized the general assumption among sociologists that new religious movements were cults, and advocated their recognition as legitimate forms of religion (Stark and Bainbridge 1979; 1987). Overall, these scholars were not only criticizing secularization theory for its empirical failings, but also for its devaluation of religion's potential for social good. Articulating the general discontent of these scholars with the working assumption of their peers, Rodney Stark (1999) demanded that sociologists of religion "carry the secularization doctrine to the graveyard of failed theories" (270).

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

These critiques followed the logic of what Boltanski and Thévenot call the *Civic Cité*, which ascribes value to social arrangements that promote equality, civic participation and social wellbeing. Thus, what may have been an empirical criticism of existing sociological assumptions became a moral denunciation as well. The ensuing debates, waging from the early eighties until present day, took three distinct paths, each of which relied on a different definition of the

²² For similar arguments in the recent literature see (Dromi 2016; forthcoming; Stamatov 2013; Young 2006).

common good and the ways research on religion should contribute to it. Table 2 summarizes these paths and the *cité* that characterized each. In what follows, we describe these paths in detail.

Delegitimation

One vocal group of critics of the secularization thesis demanded to displace existing accounts, and to replace them with a reworked model of religion and society. This new wave of sociologists of religion rejected the notion that the forces of modernization negatively impacted religious belief. Instead, these sociologists re-conceptualized religious life using market models to offer explanations about why religion remained vibrant during the transition to modernity (Finke and Stark 1992; Iannaccone 1994). According to these theorists, as state control of religious orthodoxy waned over time, market mechanisms became dominant and propelled religious innovation, thereby increasing religious participation (Finke and Stark 1992; Stark and Finke 2000). While secularization theory had seen atheism as the final outcome of modernization, the failure of communist states to eradicate religious practice served as proof positive of the inefficiency of states to enforce an anti-religious dogma (Froese 2008; Yang 2010).

Boltanski and Thévenot defined the *Market Cité* as a framework of evaluation that links competitive markets with just social arrangements. Taking Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* as a prototype, the *Market Cité* sees the good society as one in which actors can compete freely in an open market. In this way, sociologists of religion linked the theoretical gains of the new "Religious Economies Model" (REM) with a set of moral claims. REM posits that, much like the invisible hand that supposedly guides economic markets, a series of naturally occurring rules

govern the religious market and constitute a modicum of self-regulation (Iannaccone, Finke and Stark 1997; Stark and Finke 2000). A good society thus exists when religious denominations are free to compete over adherents. Not surprisingly, then, scholars like Anthony Gill (2007) developed REM-based models to demonstrate that the origins of religious liberty is tied to the way religious minorities organized to fight religious oppression. Gil concluded that “promoting religious freedom and the spiritual vitality that results from it would be desirable public policy” (229).

Partial reform

While REM theorists denounced secularization theory, other researchers advocated a series of conceptual reforms that aimed to square new critiques with old models. Rather than looking at market dynamics, these sociologists examined civic ones. The *Civic Cité*, according to Boltanski and Thévenot, assigns moral worth to collective social productions, and sees value in those activities that foster equality and solidarity. This approach to the critique of secularization theory grew increasingly appealing to scholars as concerns about religious politics became pertinent beginning in the late-1990’s. In adopting an alternate register than REM theorists, these approaches turned attention to religious traditions as sources of human liberation and critiqued secularization theory’s claim to neutrality as political naiveté.

In the American scene, Stephen Warner (2005; 1993) led this argument by reconceptualizing the religious market hypothesis as merely another dimension of an emergent new paradigm in the sociology of religion that sees American religion as unique because of its “defacto congregationalism.” According to Warner, the American tradition of separation of church and state led to local religious autonomy that made the U.S. a place of vibrant religious

participation—as long as all actors involved shared a liberal commitment to tolerance. Scholars built on Warner’s emphasis on incorporating organizational processes into market models, and moved to explain the historical tensions between religion and politics as a result of shifting alliances between elites, rather than an outcome of inherent tensions between the two (Chaves 1994; Demearth et al. 1998; Smith 2003).

Moreover, scholars increasingly noted that part of the critique against the secularization thesis had assumed that the secularization theorists themselves viewed the process as singular. Following the REM’s emphasis on understanding the dynamic nature of the secularization processes, reform minded scholars worked to attune the sociology of religion to multiple types of religion-society relations by systematizing divergent findings and theories about the role of religion in the modern world into a coherent theoretical framework (Chaves and Gorski 2001). Numerous distinct visions of secularization could play along within the discipline, as long as all scholars recognized that secularization is a multifaceted process replete with “core” and “sub-” theses that are culturally- and historically-variant (Bruce 2011; Gorski 2000; Gorski and Altinordu 2008).

However, this emphasis on the multiplicity of secularization processes also meant that reforming scholars adopted a distinct (and at times oppositional) moral stance in relation to the REM approach. These sociologists had strong historical precedence for the critique of market models: scholars hoping to highlight the divide with REM scholars cautioned that “[t]he idea that politics could itself be a source of ultimate values that compete with religious values, or that free markets are not natural occurrences but political constructions, is as foreign to them as it is to their friends in economics” (Gorski 2005:176-7).

In good Weberian fashion, then, sociologists undertook a project to explore the potential meanings of contemporary religious ethics for politics because “[r]eligious traditions are now confronting the differentiated secular spheres... [and] [i]n many of these confrontations, it is religion, which, as often as not, appears to be on the side of human enlightenment” (Casanova 1994:234). Building on this notion, sociologists compared contemporary Europe and the United States and revealed how the aggressive forms of secularism (e.g., French or Turkish *laïcité*) may silence dissenting political voices by depicting them as mere religious fanatics (Kuru 2009). In these studies, sociologists refocused attention toward the limits of religious freedom and suggested that “[l]egally enforced religious freedom as a political goal denies and conceals the profound ambivalence [of law] towards religion” (Sullivan 2005:154). Thus, calls like Charles Taylor’s for a radical revision to the concept of secularism (2011) were not just appeals for academic reconsideration, but rather normative pleas to recognize that “[W]e think that secularism (or *laïcité*) has to do with the relation of the state and religion [...] whereas in fact it has to do with the (correct) response of the democratic state to diversity” (2011:36).

To their credit, REM scholars addressed these complaints by reworking their approaches with greater attention to the broader forms of solidarity the *civic cité* values. Notably, REM scholars worked to deepen their analysis of state regulation of religion by examining how legal favoritism shaped religious market competition, how legal restrictions on religious groups promoted inter-religious conflict, and how independent judiciaries protected minority religions (Finke and Martin 2014; Fox and Tabory 2008; Grim and Finke 2010). Moreover, Finke and Stark revised their influential *Churching of America* (2005 [1992]) to underline that their embrace of market mechanisms had been driven by an attempt to understand the role of religious

innovators in the process of secularization. In turn, they embraced the term secularization, and defined it (following Stark and Bainbridge 1987) as a “self limiting process that leads not to irreligion, but revival” (45).

However, while REM scholars signaled their interest in a more civic-minded approach to the study of religion, they also recurrently emphasized that civic equality was important because it shaped the market of religious innovations. Finke (2013), for instance, summarized these developments in the field by noting that “religious minorities are the groups most frequently targeted [for religious regulation] and are also the source of many religious innovations” (306). Finke quickly reminded readers that this mattered because “even when restrictions are targeted only at minority religions, they have consequences on how the entire religious market operates and grows” (ibid). While thinking through questions of minority representation certainly resonated with the concerns of the *civic cité*, the larger emphasis still underlined an ideal of religious innovation in a free market²³. Reform, it appears, could only go so far.

Reconstitution

A third path the debate over secularization took was generating new and more efficient definitions for the study of the changing relations between religion and society. This path

²³ Similarly, when Fox and Tabory (2008) found that areas with both *high* and *low* levels of state support for religion predicted increased religious attendance compared to areas with middling levels of state regulation, the authors still emphasized that a free religious market was better because their “scaled measures that capture the essence of what the intertwining of state and religion actually entails suggest that government involvement in religion leaves some people religiously cold” (268).

towards the *reconstitution* of the study of religion followed the *Industrial Cité*, which, according to Boltanski and Thévenot, places moral value on professional competency and expertise. A sociology that best serves society, in this view, integrates critique into new research directions that generate meaningful findings. Debates within the sociology of religion in recent years have taken a similar turn by asking how the critique of secularization promotes or hinders scholarly research, without delving into the morally contentious debate over the extent to which secularization is, in fact, occurring.

On the one hand, reconstitution entailed an acknowledgment of the effectiveness of the critique of secularization. Efforts to mobilize the notion that the secular contains valuable information about religion launched a host of studies into secularists, atheists, “the spiritual not religious” and the religious “nones” (Baker and Smith 2009; Lim, MacGregor and Putnam 2010). Others continued to study religious groups, but have turned toward ethnographic methods to underline the performative dimensions of “lived religion” (Ammerman 2013; Lichterman 2012). Scholars have argued that material objects shape religious, spiritual, or secular identity—for example dress (Tavory 2010; Winchester 2008), icons (Bender 2010; Winchester 2017), or buildings (Brenneman and Miller 2016; Cadge and Konieczny 2014). In the main, these efforts took the critique to heart by attempting to pluralize the objects that form the core interest of the study of religious agency. Rather than religious participation rates or ideologies of secular domination, attention now turned toward the ways actors account for their use of the categories of the religious and the secular *in situ*.

On the other hand, scholars of religion have increasingly tried to move past the debates about secularization by focusing on the modes of categorizing religious, spiritual, or nonreligious

experience (Riesebrodt 2010; Wuthnow 2014). Such scholars routinely note in review articles that the field is persistently biased towards the concerns of Evangelical Protestantism (Smilde and May 2015, Smith et al 2013). That is, the field has remained biased in terms of the groups researchers choose to study (White American Christians), the findings they report (those that show positive outcomes associated with religious participation), and the questions they ask (“is religious participation declining?”). In order to generate new research without becoming embroiled in debates about the empirics and normative implications of secularization, these scholars have advocated the study of religious boundaries within more generalizable frameworks of culture, power, and authority (Edgell 2012; Guhin 2014; Levitt 2013). Rather than an “answer” to the secularization question, this work builds on the increased attention to religion the secularization debate created in order to generate novel questions (see especially Edgell 2012:258).

The converse also seems to hold: where interest in secularization and market theories persists, scholars have turned to alternative frameworks to circumvent existing critiques and continue research. Thus, while critics assailed the field for an overemphasis on “positive socio-evaluative findings [in relationship to religion] and a focus on Christianity and the U.S. context” (Smilde and May 2015:285), others worked to resituate such studies as contributions to the “public sociology of religion” (Markofski 2015). Public sociology of religion seeks to make scholarly contributions to public debates pertaining to religion and civil society. Rather than allow critique to destroy research questions, scholars rebuilt their justifications for the contribution of their research. For instance, Fenggang Yang (2016) took his Presidential

addresses at the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion to bemoan the definition wars surrounding religion:

defining religion is not a simple matter in an ivory tower. For believers, a proper definition of religion has serious consequences for self-identification and sociopolitical classification that may affect the level of freedom or privilege one enjoys vis-à-vis others in society... the definition of religion sometimes can be a matter of life and death.

While this appeal to the civic realm allowed Yang to urge his listeners to move beyond the debates about religion, he was also couched his argument from the position of a working academic. For Yang, the debates around secularism had been important, but had become a distraction. Putting them to bed was of crucial significance for reasons of *funding*. As he put it, “why would your colleagues and administrators in the departments of sociology, psychology, political science, economics, and other disciplines want to allocate scarce resources to the study of the indefinable?” (8).

Reconstitution, then, entails counter-veiling tendencies: extending the critique empirically, while simultaneously working to contain its meaning so as not to consume the study of religion wholesale. In this, reconstitution builds upon the existing controversy by embracing *tenants* of the critique while also using the debate to expand the production of social knowledge. Take the work of Winnifred Sullivan as another example: from declaring religious freedom “impossible” because both religion and politics seek to claim final hegemony over social action (2005), then moving toward a reconceptualization of law in the wake of secular critique (2011), her recent work with Lori Beaman has turned towards understanding the *Varieties of Religious Establishment* (2013). In this book, Sullivan and Beaman aim to move beyond “a simple

assessment of the existence of establishment and attendant assumptions about whether it is ‘good’ or ‘bad’ to refocus attention to what we consider to be more important and interesting questions and concepts”. According to them, “if establishment is the default, it might be possible to set aside the freedom-disestablishment association that stifles more innovative and insightful analysis” (Sullivan and Beaman 2013:7). The critique of secularism was no longer on the side of innovation and insight, and as such, it was no longer useful for further exploration.

DISCUSSION

Our analysis has shown that debates over methods of inquiry often carry considerable moral value for scholars. We demonstrated this by examining the debates that ensued once scholars began pointing to the continuing role of religion in the world, despite the long-standing thesis that secularization is part and parcel of modernization. We outlined three scholarly responses to such criticisms: the first being acceptance of the critique and concrete methodological change; the second being partial change of methodological practices without radical reform of research practices; and the third being the adoption of practices that acknowledge the critique but also divert attention from it. Finally, we linked the claims sociologists invoked to broad systems of evaluation – *cités* – and demonstrated how these seemingly technical debates resonate with particular moral frameworks. This way, rather than see the secularization debate as a conflict between religious scholars (who concoct evidence supporting their own wish for religion to return to public life) and secularist ones (who cherry-pick data aligning with their desire for religion to dissipate), we have shown that a plurality of views on the relations between religion and the common good underpinned this conversation.

The sociology of religion is commonly described as one of the areas where the discipline deals most directly with topics tied to sociologists' own personal convictions (e.g. Smilde and May 2015). Is our approach, then, applicable only to subfields that study values and beliefs? Not in the least. A brief glance at the debates over the status of the nation state in the last thirty years shows a similar pattern to the secularization debates. Numerous late-twentieth-century scholars have raised impassioned critiques of sociologists who assume that social boundaries are coterminous with national ones (Beck 1998, Castells 1997, Urry 2002), have called for a complete overhaul of the sociological toolkit. These scholars linked such "methodological nationalism" to primordiality, exclusion, and ignorance, making their contribution to the social sciences "at once theoretical, empirical and normative" (Fine 2003:465). While some scholars proceeded to completely delegitimize research that remains within nation-state boundaries (Archibugi and Koenig-Archibugi 2003; Kaldor 2003; Touraine 2003), other sociologists devised ways to acknowledge the moral critique of nation-centered research without abandoning their line of research altogether. Some sociologists partially reformed their research by agreeing that globalization requires a rethinking of the role of the nation-state in sociological research, but also pointing to the enduring salience of nationality in social life, especially for transnational migrants (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004; Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). Other sociologists proceeded to put aside the question of whether the nation-state remains a durable category of sociological analysis, and—while agreeing that this question should be pursued elsewhere—turned their efforts to generating new research that evades the critique of methodological nationalism. One example of this strategy is using debates about cosmopolitanism in order to leverage local, nationally bounded research that does not deal directly with the question of

whether the nation remains a viable category for social research (for example, examining how various actors talk about cosmopolitanism on different scales (Lamont and Aksartova 2002)).

These patterns are certainly not confined to the more humanistic sides of sociology, but are also apparent in areas of the discipline more connected to the health sciences. The debates over the effects of breastfeeding on mothers' subsequent wages provide one example.

Breastfeeding experienced a rapid rise in popularity beginning in the 1980s (Li et al. 2005), with advocacy groups popularizing a positive image of intensive parenting and highlighting the health benefits for children (Weiner 1994). In the early 2000s, however, feminist critics highlighted the deleterious effects breastfeeding programs have on mothers' labor force outcomes. These scholars asserted that a lack of scientific proficiency among epidemiologists produced inaccurate policy recommendations that reinforced existing ideological stances against women's full participation in the labor market, and thus tied a methodological critique of existing research to a moral one (Law 2000). And yet, sociologists found paths around this highly sensitive roadblock to research as well. Some researchers acknowledged the stakes for women in this debate, and investigated the various pathways that connect work outcomes and breastfeeding in order to shed light on the mechanisms that link wages and intensive parenting. These researchers contended that developing better measures to comprehend the challenges for women who balance labor market and family life is the best response to the critique (Fein, Mandal and Roe 2008; Mandal, Roe and Fein 2010; Ogbuanu et al. 2011; Ryan, Zhou and Arensberg 2006). Other scholars endorse the critique of breastfeeding, and use the investigation of breastfeeding and women's work outcomes as a means of understanding different forms of (gendered) inequality more generally (Colen and Ramey 2014; Rippeyoung and Noonan 2012). Thus, in different ways,

public health related sociological research has also grappled with the moral consequences of breastfeeding, and has created pathways to acknowledge the issue but also to produce new research.

A salient criticism of *On Justification* is that this work is not as attuned as it should be to questions of inequality (Quéré and Terzi 2014; Schwarz 2013). While we agree that the epistemological stance the French pragmatists advocate in this book presupposed equal access to logics of justification across different actors, this does not preclude the possibility that the discourse of science can—at times—provide a counter weight to institutional inequalities. Indeed, such pathways to moral critique *through* the discourse of scientific practice are more pervasive than observers often realize. Its mammoth size notwithstanding, *On Justification* has a relatively modest aim: to theorize critical moments in debates and the solutions actors devise in response to them, and to schematize the history of those solutions that help actors make sense of their critical competencies (Boltanski and Thévenot 1999). For this reason, pragmatic sociology charts a terrain that can and should serve as a powerful research program for academic discourse.

Moreover, Boltanski's later book *On Critique* also provides an analysis of domination and institutional constraints on critique, which could be fruitfully used to expand on our approach (see also Susen 2014a:184-185)²⁴. Further research should examine the critical strategies authors employ in different institutional positions (in terms of academic rank, visibility within the discipline, and type of academic institution), in order to expand on the role of

²⁴ See also Boltanski's remarks on his pragmatic sociological approach to inequality in Boltanski, Honneth and Celikates 2014[2009]:589-590. See also Susen 2014a:181-184 and 186-188.

institutional hierarchies in these processes. In this way, responsiveness to particular justifications could be mapped as a variable effect of power relations and institutions. Such an approach would likely benefit from developments in institutional and Bourdieusian analyses of academia (e.g. Krause 2016), and from new research methods, such as automated text analysis methods (Bonikowski and Gidron 2015). Expanding the analysis in these directions will help systematically reflect on the different types and levels of critique, the choice of strategy of response, and the configurations of circumstances that make one response more likely than another.

The analytic framework this article develops provide several additional directions for future research. One direction would be expanding the research into other disciplines, such as economics, political science, or anthropology, and comparing disciplinary self-understandings. Similar concerns could animate a variety of comparisons across different sociological sub-disciplines. Since the three debates analyzed in the current article are interdisciplinary, additional research is needed in order to compare these debates to discussions in more insular areas of sociology (such as quantitative stratification research). Another direction may be comparing sociological critique across venues. Methodological debates are hardly confined to published articles and books – on the contrary, conference sessions and op-eds are often the sites in which debates are voiced²⁵. Finally, while the current study is U.S. focused, cross-national comparison

²⁵ For example, the *New York Times* published a collection of opinion pieces titled “Can Predictive Policing be Ethical and Effective”, in which social scientists and commentators debated the ethics of the use of social science methods to pre-empt criminal activity (<http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2015/11/18/can-predictive-policing-be-ethical-and-effective> [retrieved 12/15/15]).

could evaluate whether cultural differences (such as the ones analyzed in Lamont and Thévenot 2000) lead to different uses of *cités* in scholarly debates.

It seems, however, that a comparison closer to home is the most telling. During what American cultural anthropologists call the *crisis of representation*, anthropologists developed a deep concern about their complicity with systems of domination. In response, they began experimenting with new ways of representation that did not position ethnographic subjects as mere objects of analysis, but rather saw them as aware and active subjects (Marcus and Fischer 1986). These methods prescribed an intensified self-reflexivity about power asymmetries between researchers and their ethnographic sites. This revamped anthropological reflexivity succeeded as a moral project, but has also been criticized for depriving anthropology of its critical edge. As anthropologist Richard Edgerton noted, the intensely cautious anthropologists of the 1990s lost their ability to generalize claims about a society, let alone evaluate the health of social groups. This, claimed Edgerton, leaves anthropology with no ability “to distinguish what is harmful for human beings from what is beneficial to them” (208), or to identify “sick societies” (Edgerton 1992)²⁶.

To address this shortcoming, Edgerton advocated a renewed emphasis on normativity within the field. As a result, anthropology and neighboring disciplines (such as Science and Technology Studies) have developed their own movements that reflect on the contributions of science to the social good (e.g. Holbraad, Pedersen and de Castro Jan 13, 2014; Manders-Huits

²⁶ See also Gellner (1982)

2011; Verbeek 2008). Only recently, however, have sociologists imagined something similar for themselves (Abbott 2018; Gorski 2013), and many of their attempts to systematize morality and sociology have assumed that working sociologists at large do not have a working moral vocabulary. Yet, when we use pragmatic sociology to examine sociological debates, we find that the mechanisms of moral critique are already built into scholarly debate. In this sense, we hope the work here can motivate other sociologists to take stock of their own local moral landscapes. Perhaps, reproduced across the discipline in this way, such an effort could ensure that sociology is seen for what it is: a systemized reflection on moral practice with immense public significance.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors contributed equally to this paper and are listed alphabetically. The authors are indebted to Jeffrey C. Alexander, Ron Jacobs, Michèle Lamont, Ann Mische, Margarita Mooney, Philip Smith, and Eleanor Townsley for invaluable feedback on this project. The authors also thank Matthew A. Andersson, Thomas Lyttleton, and Candas Pinar for their comments on previous versions of this paper. Finally, the authors thank the editors and reviewers at *Theory & Society* whose input has greatly improved the final article.

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TABLE 1 – CRITIQUES, PARAPHRASED RESPONSES, AND CORRESPONDING CITÉS FOR SECULARIZATION DEBATE

	Critique	Delegitimation	Partial Reform	Reconstitution
Claim	“The argument that religion is going to die with modernity ignores the potential for social good that religion holds”	“Secularization thesis is all wrong. The world is becoming more religious because different denominations have increased freedom to compete over adherents”	“Religious identities are important because they challenge the norms of political power structures. Secularism must be understood as a political stance. ”	“While critiquing secularization revealed the limitations of the field, the concepts of “secular” and “religious” remains useful to the extent they help produce novel insights.”
Cité	Civic Cité	Market Cité	Civic Cité	Industrial Cité
Definition of common good, morality	Equality, public welfare, solidarity	Market competitiveness	Equality, public welfare, solidarity	Professional competency, expertise
Test - how does one determine moral worth based on this city?	Does research take account of the potential for social good that religion holds?	Does research account for individual level interests and market mechanisms that promote religious participation?	Does research recognize the historical variability of our notions of “religion” and “secularity”?	Does the research use the categories of “religion” and “secularity” in ways that its research subjects and/or its reading public think are adequate?

TABLE 2 – CITÉS AND THEIR SOCIOLOGICAL EXPRESSIONS

Cité	Measure of worth	Hypothetical example claim
Civic Cité	Collective interest	“Sociology by definition promotes civil values that make this society a better one. Any research that does not promote civil values (e.g., by helping overcome inequality) is not good research.”
Domestic Cité	Kinship, loyalty, tradition	“Sociologists are morally obliged to deeply understand and to give voice to local community experience.”
Cité of Industry	Productivity, efficiency, expertise	“Good sociological work provides tools to accurately measure social phenomena, in order to inform policy makers. Inefficient research practices undermine the discipline as a whole.”
Cité of Inspiration	Grace, nonconformity, creativity	“Developing creative and significant theoretical advances is the purest form of sociology, and gives meaning to sociological research. Work that is not theoretically innovative is insignificant.”
Charismatic Cité	Reputation	“Scholar A is the most well-known and highly regarded expert in this area. Sociologists who critique scholar A are uninformed and often heinous.”
Market Cité	Price, competition	“Sociologists need to study the barriers that prevent individuals from participating as equals in the market. Free market competition will resolve social problems.”
Projective Cité	Mobility, networks	“Sociologists need to study the international networks, flows, and interactions that now characterize our world, and to cooperate with international scholars in doing so. Not doing so reinforces an old and pernicious world order.”