

# **Problem Solvers or Professional Scholars? State-Sociologist Relationships and the Professionalization of Chinese Sociology, 1979-2000**

Yunpeng Chen

## **Abstract**

This paper focuses on state-sociologist relationships in China and the evolution of Chinese sociology in the late twentieth century. Based on analyses of journal articles, state-funded sociological projects, and oral histories of Chinese sociologists, this paper uncovers an emerging divergence between academic and applied sociologists, a trend that first appeared in the early 1980s and became evident by the end of the century. Taking an ecological perspective, the paper suggests that this decoupling resulted from competition over turfs within academic and political ecologies. While academic sociologists gradually cultivated a collective disciplinary consciousness due to their engagement with particular Western theories, methods, and a variety of research themes, applied sociologists remained loosely connected, lacking a unified research paradigm, and were thus marginalized within the academic community. Despite having avenues for policy-oriented research through central and local social science academies and governmental research institutes, applied sociologists did not secure their turf in the political arena. This research challenges the prevailing state-centered narratives that focus primarily on the Chinese state's efforts to cultivate and domesticate professionals and academics. Instead, it argues that the professionalization of Chinese sociology is the unintended consequence of the state's waning interest in sociological research during the 1990s, which afforded sociologists greater autonomy to determine the trajectory of their discipline.

## **Introduction**

Studies on the relationships among experts, expert knowledge, and politics have increased exponentially during the past fifty years. The earliest scholarship focuses on the intellectual groups that may have the potential to become the new political elite, such as technical experts (Bell 1999), the New Class (Gouldner 1979), or the alliance between Communist cadres and intellectuals (Konrád & Szélenyi 1979). After the 1980s, scholars of intellectuals shifted their focus from predicting "our best card in history" (Gouldner 1979) to detailed research on the formation and evolution of expert knowledge (Eyal, Szélenyi and Townsley 1998; Mitchell 2002), on the reification of an expert group (Eyal 2013), and on the patterns of interaction between the state and experts (Fourcade 2009; Bernstein 2001; Weir and Skocpol 1985). Recent studies on Chinese experts also reflect this tendency. In contrast with previous scholarship that classified Chinese intellectuals by their relationships to the Chinese Communist Party

(CCP) (Goldman, Cheek and Hamrin 1987), sociologists now devote more attention to the CCP's strategies to domesticate academics and professionals (Perry 2020; Li Jing 2015; Sleeboom-Faulkner 2007), the mutual constitution between China's socialist construction and intellectuals (U 2019), and the ascendancy of Chinese engineers to political power (Andreas 2009).

Compared with the rich scholarship on the state's connections with lawyers, economists, and engineers, state-sociologist relationships have not received much scholarly attention. The reason is at least twofold. First, sociologists are relatively invisible in the political arena, especially in the United States. Although American sociologists once actively engaged in policy research during 1950-1980, the Reagan administration's cut in federal research funding for sociology terminated sociologists' collaboration with the federal and state governments (House 2019). Nor is sociology an influential discipline in American society, which prompts some sociologists to call for a public sociology (Burawoy 2005). The second reason is that since the 1980s, economists have gradually occupied the policy tasks previously undertaken by sociologists, such as poverty alleviation in America (Abbott 2001). Unlike the fragmented American sociologists who were usually critical of Reagan's neoliberalist reform, the ideologies and methods of economists were flexible and compatible with various kinds of economic policies (Reay 2012).

However, sociologists are not entirely ivory tower academics in other countries. For example, Scandinavian sociologists were more policy-oriented than their American counterparts (Burawoy 2005), partly due to their social democratic traditions and limited disciplinary differentiation. By contrast, Taiwanese sociology has a long tradition of criticizing the sociopolitical system and supporting democratic movements (Chengpang Lee 2020; Tzeng 2012), even though many Taiwanese sociologists got their Ph. D.s from American universities. Nevertheless, none of these sociological traditions constitute a challenge to the policy-indifferent American sociology, which still occupies the dominant position "in terms of the number of PhDs, investment in research, control of prestigious journals, membership in national associations," etc. (Burawoy 2016, 954).

This paper concentrates on the state-sociologist relationship in the People's Republic of China, an authoritarian state that banned sociology for over two decades. Only after Deng's accession to power in the late 1970s did the CCP start to change its suspicious attitude toward sociology, as it believed that sociology would help solve social problems and provide advice on social policies. Ironically, despite the party's effort to establish a pragmatic and policy-oriented discipline, it was American-style academic research that became the mainstream of Chinese sociology in the 1990s. Like their American counterparts, Chinese sociologists also failed to expand their influence in the government. Why did Chinese sociologists become more professional than policy-oriented?

Based on the analyses of journal papers, state-funded sociological projects, and the oral histories of Chinese sociologists, this paper argues that a divergence between academic and applied sociologists

had already occurred in the early 1980s but only became evident by the late 1990s. While academic sociologists usually held degrees in sociology and worked at universities or the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), most applied sociologists worked at local academies of social sciences (ASSes) and governmental and social research institutes (GSRIs), mastering sociological knowledge by attending crash courses, participating in conferences, or self-study. Taking an ecological perspective, this paper suggests that the separation of academic and applied sociologists resulted from their competition over turfs in academic and political ecologies. In the academic ecology, both groups of sociologists published papers in the same journals in the 1980s, but academic sociologists gradually developed a paradigm for professional sociological research and squeezed applied sociologists out of academic journals. Whereas in the political ecology, despite the state's support of policy-oriented sociological works, few received as much attention from the state as economists' policy research. Only those prominent sociologists who straddled between political and academic ecologies could influence government policies. However, the Chinese state's lack of interest in sociological research had an unintended consequence: it gave Chinese sociologists much autonomy to decide on the future of their discipline, allowing them to embrace Western sociological theories and methods with fewer political constraints.

This paper is divided into seven sections. I will first introduce the ecological approach to state-sociologist relationships and explain why it is more suitable than other perspectives. The second and third sections will examine data on journal papers and state-funded research projects. After the data analysis, I will discuss in the following three sections the evolution of Chinese sociology during 1979-2000 by periods. Section seven concludes the main points and contributions of this paper.

I shall first explain what sociology refers to in this paper before moving to the next section. While sociology and anthropology are two different disciplines in the United States, anthropology (as well as demography and folkloristics) in China is a sub-discipline of sociology, which means that Chinese anthropologists and sociologists might publish papers in the same journals and attend the same sociology/anthropology conferences, especially in the 1980s when both disciplines had just been restored. By contrast, demography, folkloristics, and ethnology had never been banned by the CCP. They already had professional journals in the early 1980s, and scholars of these disciplines also conducted sociological research after 1979. Fei Xiaotong, a prominent sociologist who presided the recreation of Chinese sociology, noted in the 1980s that Chinese sociologists' diverse academic backgrounds resulted in their lack of disciplinary consciousness, making sociology a "residual" discipline discussing topics ignored by other social scientists (Xu 1991, 4)<sup>1</sup>. Considering the difficulties in specifying what counts as sociological research—a problem that had also beset Chinese sociologists for two decades after the re-establishment of

---

<sup>1</sup> This may not be peculiar to Chinese sociology, as sociology is indeed a discipline "organized around an archipelago of particular subject matters" rather than organized around a theory or method (Abbott 2001, 140).

sociology—I shall not provide a clear-cut definition of sociology in this paper. Instead, I will focus on how the boundary of sociology was eventually constructed during these two decades, with brief discussions on the development of anthropology and demography.

### **An Ecological Approach**

My approach to state-sociologist relationships in China draws upon ecological theories in the sociology of professions. In his seminal work *The System of Professions*, Andrew Abbott (1988) argues that professions constitute an ecological system in which they compete for control over a task. To secure their niches in this ecology, professions tend to establish their jurisdictions using abstract knowledge. The jurisdiction of a profession may expand or contract under the influence of internal and external forces. In a later paper, Abbott (2005) extends this ecological theory to account for the competition within states and universities. He specifies three components of ecology: actors, locations, and the connections between them, and how different ecologies are linked to each other through these components.

The ecological view sheds insights on the studies of academics in three aspects. First, it enables us to triangulate sociologists' social positions at a particular time. For example, American sociologists once straddled the political and university ecologies in the 1960s but later retreated to universities when the lack of government funding made their control of political tasks untenable. Second, it points out how a profession safeguards its jurisdictional boundary by adjusting its core tasks and abstract knowledge. In other words, the ecological theory looked at the modification, reconstruction, and disposal of their jurisdictional claims during their competition with adjacent professions. Third, the ecological view specifies the linkages of two ecologies (hinges and avatars in Abbott's term), through which changes in one ecology affect the events in the others (Abbott 2005).

The ecological approach also challenges state-centered perspectives widely applied to studies of Chinese professions and academics. Instead of focusing solely on the CCP's strategies to cultivate and tame professionals and academics (Perry 2020; Sleeboom-Faulkner 2007), the ecological approach attends to the fragmentation of political and social elites, different patterns of interactions between the state and academics, and academics' strategies to protect their turfs from the state's interference. As I will elaborate in later sections, it was the state's *lack* of attention to sociology in the 1990s that encouraged a group of academic sociologists to advance their research paradigm by incorporating Western social theories and methods, which facilitated the transition of Chinese sociology to professionalism.

### ***Sociological Studies***

One of the most efficient ways to get the whole picture of Chinese sociology is by looking at its top journals. A contemporary Chinese sociologist can name at least three top Chinese journals in their

research areas. However, back in the 1980s, there were only a few journals of social sciences, including those only for internal dissemination. Among these journals two were the most influential: *The Chinese Journal of Sociology* (CJS, or *Shehui*) and *Sociological Studies* (*Shehuixue Yanjiu*). CJS is the first sociological journal after the re-establishment of sociology. Founded by Shanghai University (then a branch of Fudan University), CJS started publication in 1981 and immediately became a forum for sociologists to exchange ideas. Despite its achievements, however, CJS did not become a professional journal until 2005. Professional sociological research accounted for only a tiny part of CJS papers in the 1980s, whereas the majority of papers were short essays, opinions, news reports, etc.

Compared with the unprofessional CJS, *Sociological Studies* positioned itself at the beginning as an academic journal focusing on “sociological theories, methods, history, and practice” (*Sociological Studies* 1986). The journal was run by the CASS and published the first issue in 1986, although its history could be traced back to *Sociology Messages* (*Shehuixue Tongxun*) founded in 1981. During 1980-2000, *Sociological Studies* was the only academic sociological journal in China, and its papers were usually authored by prominent Chinese sociologists. But the journal also published papers written by less professional researchers from ASSes and GSRI in these two decades. This coexistence of professional and non- (or less) professional papers makes *Sociological Studies* an appropriate starting point for examining the development of Chinese sociology.

The data for the following analysis includes 1,226 academic papers published in *Sociological Studies* from 1986 to 2000. By academic papers I mean both research papers and critiques, but they do not include book reviews, reports, short essays (usually one or two pages long), conference minutes, and papers that were already published before 1949. Each paper was coded in terms of four categories: the publication date, the authorship, the type of research, and the research area. The authorship-based classification categorizes *Sociological Studies* papers according to the author’s institution, including domestic universities, the CASS, local ASSes, GSRI, and foreign institutions. The category enables us to trace the changes in the cohort of authors and identify the critical junctures that make these changes occur, as shown in Figure 1<sup>2</sup>.

The second classification is based on the type of research, including professional research, policy-oriented research, surveys, and opinions. My conception of professional research draws on Burawoy (2005, 267), which defines it as “multiple intersecting research programs, each with their assumptions, exemplars, defining questions, conceptual apparatuses, and evolving theories.” But my definition of policy-oriented research differs from Burawoy’s policy sociology, as I refuse to see professional

---

<sup>2</sup> Here I use percentages rather than actual numbers because the number of papers varies each year, especially in the late 1990s when the editorial board accepted lengthy papers without increasing the number of pages.

sociology as the “*sine qua non*” of policy research (267), especially during the formative years of Chinese sociology when the standards of professional research are still unclear. Here I use the term “policy-oriented” rather than “policy” for two reasons. Firstly, it is usually hard to figure out who sponsored the policy-related research in *Sociological Studies*. It was a common practice among Chinese sociologists in the 1980s to provide pages of policy suggestions without specifying who their client was. Secondly, given that the CASS, ASSes, and GSRI have internal reference (*neican*) systems for central and local governments (Zhu 2011), the policy suggestions in *Sociological Studies* papers usually are less influential than those in *neican* journals. I also replace Burawoy’s critical and public sociology with surveys and opinions, as few papers fit in the former two categories<sup>3</sup>. By surveys I mean the mere descriptions of data or investigations of organizations without relating them to social theories, and opinions refer to papers filled with theses but lack serious reasoning. Figure 2 shows the percentage of these four types of research.

Based on the findings of Figures 1 and 2, we can identify two turning points in the history of *Sociological Studies*. The first one is the year of 1990, when universities’ share of papers plummeted to 24 percent but surged to 45 percent in the next year. It is likely that the student movement in 1989 affected the careers of university sociologists. The second turning point occurred in 1998 when non-professional research—together with the ASS and GSRI authors—was eventually squeezed out of the journal. As I will discuss in the following sections, the journal’s transition to professionalism relates to the change in its editorial board. There seems to be a rupture in 1994 when the share of professional papers dropped around 20 percent. But this “rupture” was not real, as the decline in professional papers was caused by the limited increase in the share of survey and opinion papers, most of which came from ASSes and GSRI. More importantly, this decline did not challenge the dominant position of professional research (and universities) in *Sociological Studies*.

The third type of classification is based on periods divided by these two ruptures. Figure 3 combines these three categories and divides *Sociological Studies* papers by their institution<sup>4</sup>, period, and type of research. It is evident that each institution experienced its transition to professionalism, but the level of professionalization varies across institutions. In general, universities were the base of professional research, while GSRI mainly conducted policy-oriented research. In between were the CASS and ASSes that are neither as professional as universities nor as policy-oriented as GSRI. But compared with ASSes,

---

<sup>3</sup> I should note that most critical papers published in *Sociological Studies* during these two decades are not critical sociological works in Burawoy’s sense, as they primarily focus on the logic errors or methodological mistakes of the papers they critique. Some papers even use the official Marxist view to disparage other scholars’ works. Therefore, few of these works could be regarded as representing “the conscience of professional sociology” (Burawoy 2005, 268).

<sup>4</sup> The figure does not include foreign institutions because over 90 percent of their papers were already professional from 1985 to 1990. They never published any survey or opinion papers.

the CASS was more professional than policy-oriented. Moreover, survey and opinion papers almost ceased to appear in the journal by the end of the century, but their shares in journal papers declined at different rates in different periods. Opinion papers had already lost favor in the second period (1991-1997), while the share of survey papers declined only after 1997.

The fourth type of classification is based on research topics, including social stratification and inequality, reform and development, social security and control, theories and methodologies, culture/education/psychology, family and marriage, lifestyles and living conditions, work and profession, urban and rural development, demography, historical sociology, and others<sup>5</sup>. Except for theories/methodologies and historical sociology, which are dominated by professional sociological papers, the other 11 research themes are open to all four types of research. Figure 4 shows the number of papers divided by institution, period, and research topic. It demonstrates that the authors from universities were primarily concerned with theories and methods throughout these three periods, whereas other institutions were more interested in concrete social problems and social policies. It also indicates that GSRI researchers were more sensitive to the socioeconomic reforms during each period, such as reform and development in the 1980s and social security in the 1990s.

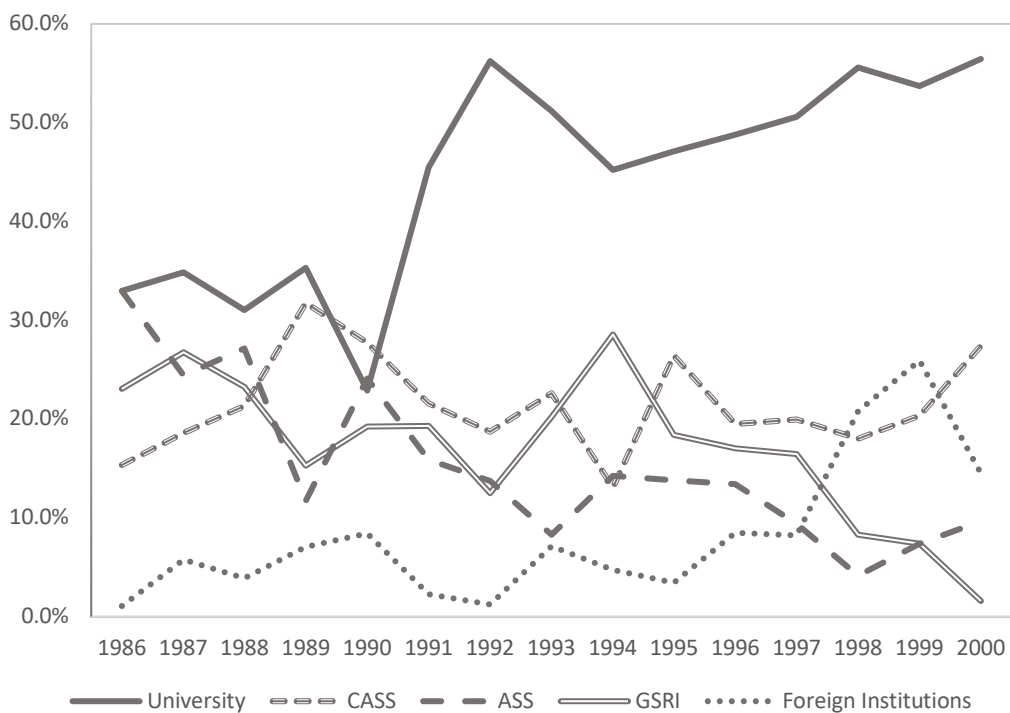
These four figures delineate the basic characteristics of *Sociological Studies* during 1986-2000. First, the journal experienced two ruptures—in 1990 and 1998—that divided its history into three periods. In the last two periods, authors from universities gradually dominated *Sociological Studies*. Second, *Sociological Studies* started its transition to professionalism at the beginning of the second period. By the end of the 1990s, non-professional papers (especially survey and opinion papers) had almost disappeared from the journal. Third, university researchers were champions of professional sociological research, whose research interests lay primarily on theories and methods. In contrast, GSRI were the base of policy-oriented research, focusing on policy-related issues like reform and welfare.

But one may wonder if these ruptures were peculiar to *Sociological Studies*. Is it possible that ASS and GSRI researchers had only been squeezed out of the journal but still conducted their non-professional research elsewhere? Or is it likely that most policy-oriented sociologists published their papers in other places, such as *neican* journals? To answer these questions, I shall look at the National Social Science Fund of China (NSSFC), a state fund sponsoring research projects with social and political significance.

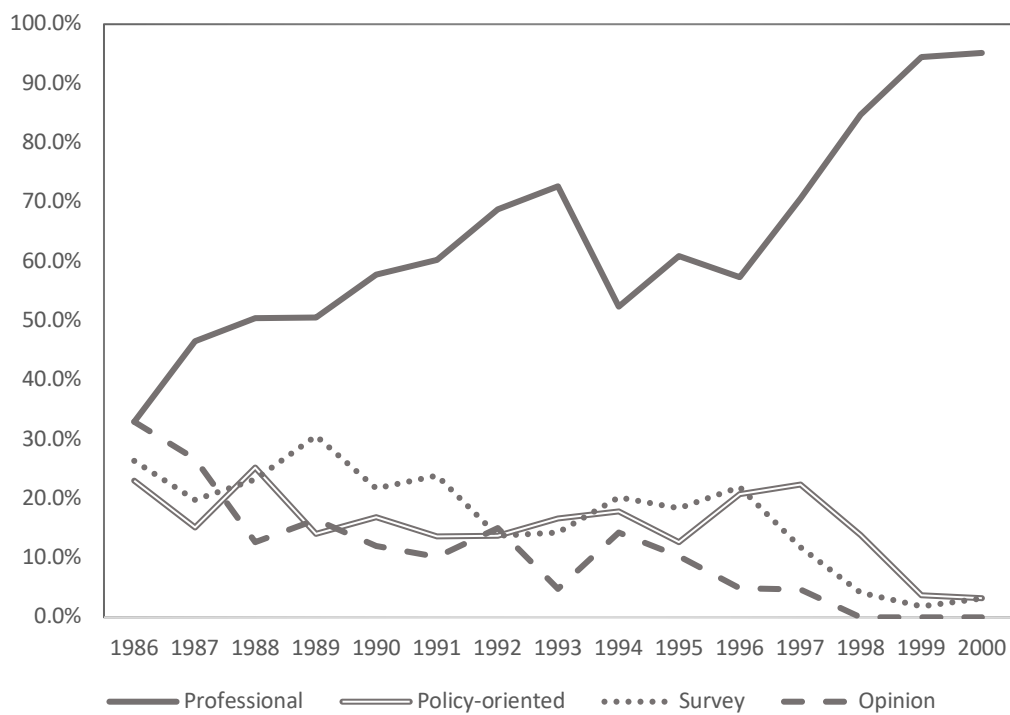
---

<sup>5</sup> This classification is based on Wei and Xing (1996), but I have renamed these research topics and added three new ones.

**Figure 1. Percentage of Papers in *Sociological Studies* by Institution**

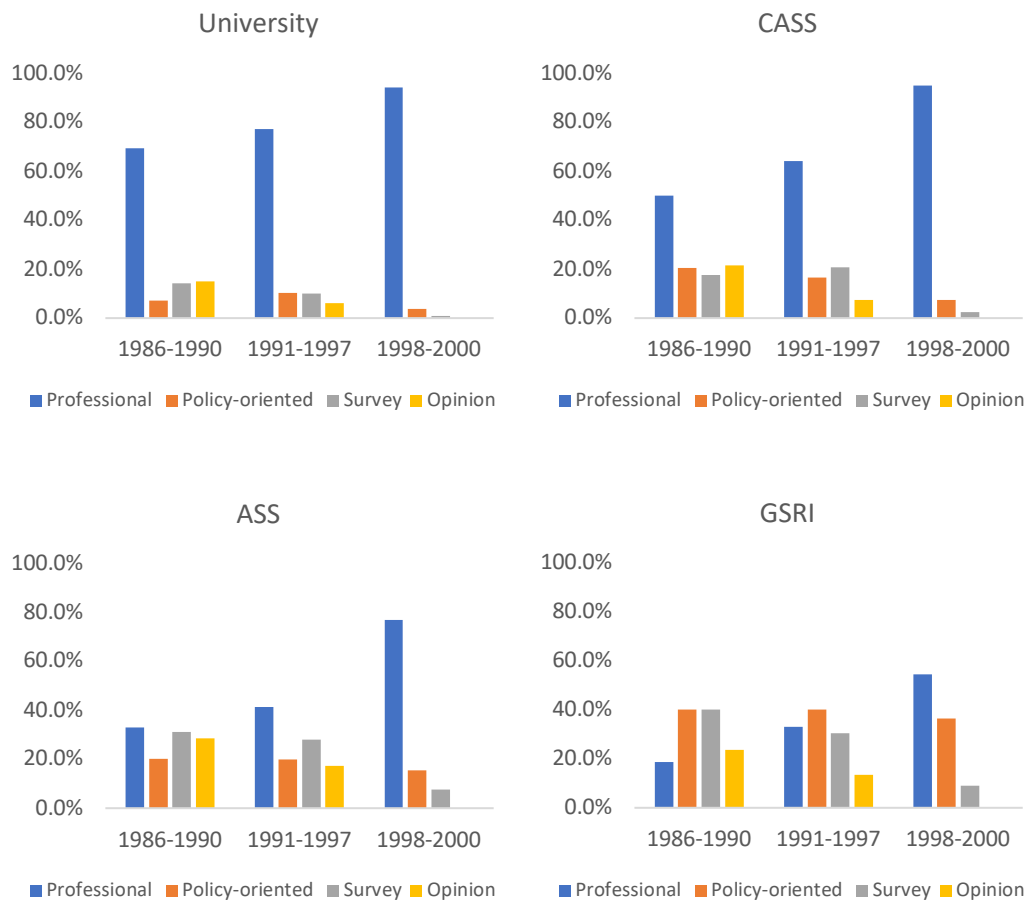


**Figure 2. Percentage of Papers in *Sociological Studies* by the Type of Research**





**Figure 3. Percentage of Papers in *Sociological Studies* by the Type of Research, Period, and Institution**



**Figure 4. Number of Papers in *Sociological Studies* by Institution, Period, and Research Topic**



## NSSFC

In contrast with the academic *Sociological Studies*, NSSFC research projects were more policy-oriented. The NSSFC was established in 1986 and operated by the National Office for Philosophy and Social Sciences (NOPSS). But throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the Institute of Sociology of the CASS (IoS) was responsible for selecting and evaluating NSSFC sociological projects (Shen 2021). The NSSFC's research project system provides a way for Chinese sociologists to participate in policy-making processes (Li Peilin 2021), although it is unclear to what extent these research reports can affect policies.

Table 1 shows the distribution of the NSSFC projects approved during 1994-2000. This data was retrieved from the NSSFC official website, but only the post-1994 data is accessible to ordinary users. The second to fifth columns show the number and percent of NSSFC projects undertaken by two institutions each year. Instead of dividing the institutions into five categories, as did in my analysis of *Sociological Studies*, here I combine the CASS and universities as “pro-professional-research institutions” and ASSes and GSRI as “pro-policy-oriented-research institutions.”<sup>6</sup> This new classification enables us to examine if ASSes and GSRI were excluded from the more policy-oriented NSSFC sociological projects. The four rightmost columns display the number and percent of professional and policy/problem-oriented projects. Given that the final reports of NSSFC projects were not available on the official website, the only method to distinguish different types of projects is to look at project titles. If a project title shows a causal relation or correlation between two variables, contains sociological concepts, or indicates that the project is a review of sociological theories or historical research, this project belongs to the category of professional analysis. If a project title contains words like *zhengce* (policy), *duice* (countermeasure), *zhanlue* (strategy), *wenti* (problem), or other terms indicating the project's contribution to sociopolitical reform and development, this project is a policy/problem-oriented project<sup>7</sup>.

Two facts could be drawn from the data on NSSFC projects. First, although universities and the CASS took a larger share of the NSSFC sociological projects approved during 1994-2000 (except in 1995, as it was the final year of China's ninth Five-Year Plan), around forty percent of the projects were undertaken by ASS and GSRI researchers. Notably, the IoS in the 1990s intentionally supported the projects of non-governmental research institutes, as they usually lacked access to research funds (Shen 2021). Given this background, it is legitimate to argue that by the end of the 1990s, ASS and GSRI researchers had maintained control over their turf within the NSSFC. The second fact is that NSSFC

---

<sup>6</sup> Here I do not include foreign institutions because the NSSFC projects only opened to domestic scholars and institutes during 1994-2000.

<sup>7</sup> The way I define professional projects may overestimate their share in all the NSSFC projects, as the project reports may not be as professional as their titles indicate (but it is less likely for a professional paper to have an unprofessional title). Nevertheless, the share of professional projects was stable at 40 percent after 1997, indicating that non-academic research still dominated the NSSFC.

projects also went through a transition to professionalism. From 1994 to 2000, the percentage of professional projects has risen from 15 percent to 44 percent. Nevertheless, the policy/problem-oriented projects still dominated NSSFC sociological studies in the late 1990s, indicating that the NSSFC was still a crucial platform for applied sociological research.

A cross-classification of NSSFC sociological projects sheds more light on the professionalization of NSSFC projects. Table 2 presents the number and percentage of research projects by the type of research and institution. The table testifies to the leading role of university and CASS sociologists in promoting professional sociological research, as they conducted most of the professional projects (as displayed in the second and sixth columns). In contrast, ASSes and GSRI were more inclined to conduct policy-oriented research. From 1998 to 2000, the share of policy/problem-oriented projects in all ASS and GSRI projects stabilized at about 70 percent.

Now is the time to answer the questions I raised at the end of the last section. The answer is yes—ASS and GSRI sociologists were still active in policy-oriented research platforms, such as NSSFC sociological projects. They were champions of applied sociological research that aims to address social problems or give political suggestions, and their turf in these research areas had not been challenged by their professional counterparts.

The analysis of Sociological Studies and the NSSFC reveals a divergence between two groups of Chinese sociologists: *academic* sociologists and *applied* sociologists. Academic sociologists published papers in academic journals and undertook professional sociological research projects funded by the state. Most of them came from universities and the CASS, but some ASS and GSRI researchers later joined this academic group. Applied sociologists focused on policy-relevant social issues and conducted research applicable in the fields of social security, socioeconomic reform and development, labor policies, etc. Members of this applied group were mainly from GSRI and ASSes. Unlike their academic colleagues, applied sociologists did not take particular social theories, methods, and paradigms (especially those from Western sociology) as prerequisites for sociological research, which made them inferior to their academic colleagues in terms of publishing papers in professional journals. But applied sociologists had their own platforms to make their voices heard, such as the policy-oriented NSSFC. To sum up, by the end of the 1990s, these two sociologist groups had decoupled from each other and occupied different turfs in academic and political ecologies.

**Table 1. Distribution of NSSFC Sociological Projects During 1994-2000**

	Total	Pro-Professional Institutions (University/CASS)		Pro-Policy-Oriented Institutions (ASS/GSRI)		Professional Research Projects		Policy/Problem-Oriented Research Projects	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
		1994	20	13	65%	7	35%	3	15%
1995	6	2	33%	4	67%	0	0%	6	100%
1996	64	47	73%	17	27%	20	31%	44	69%
1997	29	17	59%	12	41%	11	38%	18	62%
1998	28	17	61%	11	39%	10	36%	18	64%
1999	33	20	61%	13	39%	11	33%	22	67%
2000	39	22	56%	17	44%	17	44%	22	56%

**Table 2. Number and Percentage of NSSFC Sociological Projects by Institution and Research Type**

	Total	Pro-Professional Institutions (University/CASS)				Pro-Policy-Oriented Institutions (ASS/GSRI)			
		Professional Research Projects		Policy/Problem-Oriented Research Projects		Professional Research Projects		Policy/Problem-Oriented Research Projects	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1994	20	3	23%	10	77%	0	0%	7	100%
1995	6	0	0%	2	100%	0	0%	4	100%
1996	64	14	30%	33	70%	6	35%	11	65%
1997	29	10	59%	7	41%	1	8%	11	92%
1998	28	7	41%	10	59%	3	27%	8	73%
1999	33	7	35%	13	65%	4	31%	9	69%
2000	39	12	55%	10	45%	5	29%	12	71%

But how could we explain the separation of academic sociologists from applied sociologists? Is it because ASSes and GSRI had more access to the political elite, making them suitable for policy-oriented research? According to this functionalist view, the competition between these two groups of sociologists would cease once they were entirely separated. If this view held true, it would be hard to explain why some professional sociologists frequently complain that *sociologists* neglected policy research in the past and need to do more in the future (Li Qiang 2019; Feng 2019). One may also take a state-centered perspective and argue that the Chinese state's domestication of sociologists facilitates the divergence of sociologists: one group embraced Western sociological paradigms and became policy-indifferent scholars, while the other group was absorbed into the state bureaucracy and conducted policy-related research. But this view is also problematic. First, it cannot explain why the CASS—the CCP's most influential think tank—produced more professional papers than policy-oriented ones. Second, as I will discuss below, most applied sociologists did not have much clout in national and local government agencies.

Instead of functionalist or state-centered perspectives, I argue that the separation between academic and applied sociologists resulted from their competition over the turfs in academic and political ecologies. While academic sociologists gradually developed a disciplinary consciousness based on peculiar theories, methods, and an archipelago of research areas, applied sociologists failed to create their paradigms of sociological research. As a result, applied sociologists were marginalized in the academic ecology and retreated to the political ecology, where they still had a say in social, economic, and political affairs. The following three sections will elaborate on sociologists' strategies to defend their turfs, the changing relationships between the state and different groups of sociologists, and the influence of Western sociological research on Chinese sociology in different periods.

### **The Formative Period (1979-1989)**

Sociology was introduced to China in the late nineteenth century. Before the CCP came to power in 1949, China already had a sizable cohort of sociologists, many of whom graduated from elite universities in Western countries, especially the United States. In the early twentieth century, Columbia University was the ideal destination for Chinese sociology students, but Columbia's status as the sociological mecca was challenged in the 1930s by the University of Chicago, partly due to the rise of the Chicago School of Sociology and Robert Park's visit to China (Sun 1987). Park influenced a whole generation of Chinese sociologists, including Fei Xiaotong and C. K. Yang. In his later years, Fei could still recall Park's lectures on community studies at Yenching University. He also remembered that Park once led some Yenching students to visit different types of neighborhoods in Beijing, including slums and

red-light districts (Fei 1994). Park's emphasis on participant observation and community-based research later became a tradition of Chinese sociology.

But the glory days of Chinese sociology ended in 1953, when the CCP banned sociology because of its bourgeois characteristics (Yan 2010). During the anti-rightist movements, sociologists became targets of attack by the radical Maoists. In 1958, Kang Sheng (then a member of the Central Committee of the CCP) delivered a sensational speech on sociology, in which he said that

Those who conduct sociological research in China have two aims. By conducting surveys in rural areas at home, they become familiar with the CCP's activities in villages, which enables them to prevent or stop peasant movements from happening and defend the interests of the landlord class. By conducting surveys on factories, they become familiar with the CCP's activities in cities, which enables them to protect the interests of the bourgeoisie. By conducting surveys on minority groups, they can better propagate the KMT's Han chauvinism and drive a wedge between Han and ethnic minorities, which enables the ruling class<sup>8</sup> to suppress the minorities... Their goal is to eliminate and repress CCP's revolutionary movements. (IoS 1990, 2)

Although Kang's charge is ridiculous, his speech reflects the party's deep concern about the nature of sociological knowledge. Unlike natural sciences that are essentially unpolitical, sociology is a highly political discipline and has already trespassed on the party's turf. As a revolutionary party with a long tradition of conducting social investigations in rural areas, the CCP was alert to and dismissive of sociologists' survey practices in urban and rural communities. According to the party's view, bourgeois sociology was incompatible with socialist China because the discipline was built on theories and methods borrowed from capitalist states, and studies of social phenomena should fall into the category of Marxist historical materialism (Yan 2010). As a result, sociology became a "forbidden area" (Rossi 1985, 1) for more than three decades. The previous sociologists had to shift their research focus to history, minority groups, or demography, if they were still permitted to stay in academia (Yan 2010).

Sociology regained the CCP's attention only after Deng's accession to power. In March 1979, the NOPSS held in Beijing a sociology forum that invited previous sociologists, workers in public sectors, and sociology enthusiasts. At the forum, Hu Qiaomu, President of the CASS, gave a speech claiming that it was necessary to "restore the reputation" (IoS 1990, 3) of sociology. The forum participants eventually reached a consensus on the role of sociology in China, arguing that a socialist state still has social problems that necessitate a discipline to provide explanations and give policy suggestions. They also

---

<sup>8</sup> It refers to the bourgeoisie and landlords.

refuted the view that historical materialism can replace sociological studies and legitimized sociological research by making Marxism the theoretical guidance of sociology (4). As for the relationship between Chinese and Western sociology, the participants acknowledged that the development of Chinese sociology needed foreign theories and methods, but the ultimate goal was to create an indigenous sociological paradigm. Ten days after the forum, Deng delivered a critical speech that endorsed these views. He urged his comrades to “catch up with the missed courses” on sociology and other social science disciplines (5), which is the first time that sociology gained official recognition from a CCP leader.

Fei Xiaotong, now appointed as President of the Chinese Sociological Research Association (CSRA, later the Chinese Sociological Association, the CSA), was put in charge of reestablishing Chinese sociology. When Fei visited the United States in 1979, his Yenching classmate and roommate C. K. Yang, now a professor of sociology at the University of Pittsburgh, paid a special visit to Washington D.C. to meet Fei. During their meeting, Yang invited Fei to visit Pittsburg and suggested he rely on the resources from Pittsburg and the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) (King 2021). CUHK established its sociology department in the 1960s with the guidance and support of C. K. Yang and his Pittsburg colleagues. In Yang’s view, CUHK should function as an incubator for Chinese sociologists and a bridge between Mainland and Hong Kong sociologists in the future. Rance P. L. Lee, Yang’s student and Professor of sociology at CUHK, remembered that his supervisor once told the Dean of CUHK’s sociology department that he needed a student who “should come back and teach in Hong Kong, assist in developing CUHK’s sociology department, make the department a base of sociology that will promote the development of sociology in Mainland China in the future” (Rance Lee 2021). Therefore, when China eventually reestablished sociology in the late 1970s, CUHK already had a Pittsburgh-trained sociology cohort ready to assist their Mainland colleagues.

In September 1979, C. K. Yang visited China with his colleagues Burkhart Holzner and Jiri Nehnevajsa. They were received by Vice Premier Yao Yilin, who endorsed their views on the necessity of sociological training in China (Holzner 2007) and hoped to increase the academic communication between Chinese and American sociologists (IoS 1990). Around the same time, Lin Nan, then an assistant professor of sociology at SUNY-Albany, visited Mainland China and heard that China was reestablishing the previously banned sociology. He then wrote a letter to the CSRA, saying that he was a sociologist teaching at a US university and would like to help China cultivate sociology students and promote sociological research (Lin 2021). The CSRA later invited Lin to give a course at the Nankai Workshop of Sociology (the Nankai Class), making him a well-known figure among young Chinese sociologists in the 1980s.

But during 1979-1982, only four universities had sociology departments: Shanghai University (1980), Sun Yat-sen University (1981), Nankai University (1982), and Peking University (1982). The



lack of funding, faculty, and support from central and local governments were the major obstacles for universities to establish sociology departments. When Peking was eventually permitted to establish a sociology department in 1982, the university allocated only 10,000 yuan (about 20,000 in 1982 dollars) and five classrooms as the startup fund for the sociology department (Department of Sociology at Peking University 2012). Compared with Peking University, sociologists at Sun Yat-sen University (SYSU) had obtained funding from Rockefeller Foundation and Lingnan Foundation (thanks to C. K. Yang's support), which enabled SYSU to establish the sociology department much earlier than other top universities (He 2011). SYSU's geographical closeness to Hong Kong also allowed the department to share resources and faculty with CUHK. Shanghai University established China's first sociology department in 1980, with firm support from the university (Deng Weizhi 2015) and the Shanghai Municipal Government (Chen 2018).

The lack of faculty was a more serious issue. By the time China restored sociology, the pre-1949 sociologists were at least in their fifties (Fei was 69 in 1979). To produce a sizable cohort of sociologists within a short period of time, the IoS of the CASS and the CSRA decided to provide two crash courses for students interested in sociology. Participants of these two courses consisted of university lecturers, CASS, ASS, and GSRI researchers, and delegates from State-owned enterprises (SOEs) (IoS 2010). Fei was responsible for the design of these courses. On one hand, he invited those pre-1949 sociologists and some prominent scholars of other disciplines to teach the history, tradition, and development of Chinese sociology. On the other hand, with the support of C. K. Yang and the Lingnan Foundation, Fei invited Pittsburgh and CUHK sociologists to lecture on statistics, sociological theories, modernization, etc. (IoS 2010). Students who graduated from the courses later became the first generation of sociology researchers since the re-establishment of sociology. But compared with their predecessors and successors, most of these sociologists never held any sociological credentials. Apart from attending sociological courses and conferences, they also acquired sociological theories and methods by self-study. It is also notable that these students had already worked for years and possessed knowledge from other disciplines before their embrace of sociology.

It is evident that crash courses were not enough for training professional sociologists. But in Fei's view, it would also be too long to train graduate sociology students according to the traditional tutorial model. This dilemma had beset Fei until he met Su Tuo, who was then leading the re-establishment of Nankai's sociology department. Su (2021) suggested Fei draw on the Nankai model of training philosophers in the 1960s, selecting several students from other departments to study sociological theories for at least a year and recruiting them as sociology lecturers after graduation. Fei adopted this suggestion. With support from the IoS, Nankai started a one-year course on sociology (the Nankai Class) and enrolled 43 senior undergraduates from 18 top universities in 1981, of whom most majored in philosophy

(Department of Sociology at Nankai University 2019). Apart from the domestic sociology professors, the Nankai Class invited five sociologists teaching in Western countries, including Lin Nan (SUNY-Albany), Che-Fu Lee (Catholic University), Peter Blau (Columbia), Barbara Hazard (Free University of Berlin), and Johannes Berger (Bielefeld University) (269). These Western sociologists brought the Class Western social theories and methods, and Professor Qian Jianye's accurate translation also made these theories and methods more attractive and comprehensible to Chinese students (Department of Sociology at Nankai University 2019). The 43 students of the Nankai Class became China's first group of *academic* sociologists after 1978. Many have later become prominent sociologists in China (such as Sun Liping, Cai He, Wang Sibin, and Song Linfei) and America (Bian Yanjie and Zhou Xueguang).

The 1980s witnessed an increasing academic communication between Chinese and American sociologists<sup>9</sup>. Many American sociologists visited China during this decade. Among them were Alex Inkeles (who visited China in 1983 and gave a seminar on modernization), Alice S. Rossi (who visited China in 1985 as a member of the US delegation of sociologists and anthropologists), William L. Parish (also a member of the US delegation), Hubert Blalock (giving a lecture on social statistics in 1984), Martin Whyte (who visited China almost every year in the late 1980s), John R. Logan (who taught statistic methods at Nankai), Wen-Hui Tsai (giving a lecture at PKU on social theories and social transformation in 1985), George Ritzer (teaching a two-week course on contemporary sociology at Shanghai University), Erik Olin Wright (invited by CASS in 1988), Lewis Coser (giving a lecture at Peking in 1988), to name but a few (Department of Sociology at Nankai 2019; IoS 1990; Rossi 1985)<sup>10</sup>. The theories and concepts these US sociologists developed appeared frequently in the papers of Chinese sociologists.

From 1982 to 1989, Chinese sociology was gradually expanding its turf in academia. By 1989, there were already ten universities having sociology departments or majors. The other universities are Renmin University (1984), Fudan University (1986), Shandong University (1986), Wuhan University (1986), Huazhong University of Technology (HUT, 1987), and Nanjing University (1988). Some of them offered M.A. programs in sociology, but only Peking University and the IoS of the CASS matriculated

---

<sup>9</sup> Here I do not list American demographers that came to China during the 1980s, as they were not invited by China's sociological institutions but by demographic ones. In contrast with American sociologists who usually visited universities, the CASS, and ASSes and gave lectures there, American demographers were permitted to visit GSRI and even advise China's policymakers. For example, Nathan Keyfitz visited China in 1982 and "had a nearly unrestricted opportunity to visit factories, hospitals, and other institutions and to meet peasants in Hebei and Sichuan Provinces" (See Keyfitz 1982, iii). He also communicated with village officials on issues like population control and increasing production (iii).

<sup>10</sup> Although these sociologists were prestigious in America, many of them were at the end of their academic careers. By contrast, some Chinese American sociologists—most of them were from Taiwan—were not as famous as these big names but might have more impact on their Chinese students, as there was no language barrier between them and their students.

Ph.D. students in the 1980s (Department of Sociology at Peking University 2012; IoS 2010; Wang Yumin 1989a). Sociology also had a relatively large cohort of researchers, with around 800 professors and researchers at universities, the CASS, ASSes, and GSRI in 1991 (Fei 1994). By the late 1990s, the number of institutes of sociology at ASSes had outnumbered university departments. According to Wang Yumin (1989b), 24 ASSes had established sociological research institutes by 1989. Despite the lack of data on the research staff at these institutes, we have reasons to believe that most sociological researchers worked at the CASS, ASSes, and GSRI rather than universities during the 1980s<sup>11</sup>.

Sociologists also started undertaking research projects sponsored by central and local governments in the 1980s. During China's Sixth Five-Year Plan (1981-1985), sociologists launched three national key projects (*guojia zhongdian keti*), including Studies on Small Towns in Jiangsu Province, Family Survey in Five Cities, and Studies on Chinese Population (IoS 1990). The first two projects were led respectively by Fei Xiaotong and Lei Jieqiong. Both Fei and Lei were well-known pre-1949 sociologists and taught at the sociology department of Peking University after 1982; both were not members of the CCP but kept close relationships with the party elites and government officials; both were elected as the Vice-Chair(wo)man of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress in 1988. Lei was even appointed Vice Mayor of Beijing in the early 1980s. The sociologist-cum-official identity made Fei and Lei influential figures in political and academic ecologies, enabled them to channel resources into sociology, and helped them turn their research findings into government policies. Their research areas – family issues and small towns studies – were also popular topics among Chinese sociologists in the 1980s (Figure 4).

Another linkage between sociology and the state was the Open University of Chinese Sociology (OUCS). The OUCS was founded in Feb 1985 and had 29 provincial branches. Its first president is Yuan Fang, Professor of Sociology at Peking University and President of the CSA (IoS 2010). In 1985, the OUCS enrolled 26,000 students across the country, of whom 75 percent were cadres and 35 percent were officials (Song and Lei 1986). Therefore, the OUCS played a significant role in expanding the influence of sociology among the CCP cadres. OUCS graduates believed that the school's sociological courses were helpful for solving the problems they encountered at work. For example, Wang Chengmian, a civil servant of the Family Planning Committee of Funing, Jiangsu Province, used demographical theories he learned at the OUCS to predict China's next population peak. His report was later published in a *neican* journal of the National Family Planning Committee (Hu 1993).

---

<sup>11</sup> In the 1980s, sociology departments at Chinese universities were *teaching* institutes rather than *research* institutes. The faculty size was usually small, as each university enrolled only a few dozens of undergraduate sociology students each year.

On the other hand, the OUCS also popularized sociological knowledge to make it understandable to ordinary people, which expanded the influence of sociology among the masses. The following anecdote reflects how popular sociology was in the 1980s. It says that there was a couple from Shanxi Province who did not get along well. The husband later went to the OUCS and took a course on the sociology of the family. After he graduated from the OUCS and came home, he changed his previous arrogant attitude toward his wife, which was unbelievable in the wife's view. Having witnessed her husband's change, the wife also became interested in sociology and hoped to take courses at the OUCS (Song and Lei 1986). But OUCS's popularity did not last long, as the Ministry of Education did not recognize OUCS diplomas as degree certificates (Li Zhenwen 2014). The number of applicants for the OUCS plummeted in the 1990s, which eventually led to its closing in 2000.

During the formative period, Chinese sociology got rid of its bad reputation as an evil bourgeois discipline and legitimized its scholarship as conducive to China's reform and modernization. Taking Marxism as overarching theoretical guidance, Chinese sociology ignored the epistemological conflicts between Marxist and Western theories and methods. Fei played a critical role in the re-establishment of Chinese sociology. On one hand, he was engaged in studies on small towns in Southern Jiangsu Province, which were highly regarded by CCP cadres (IoS 1990). On the other hand, he helped cultivate a new generation of Chinese sociologists within a short period of time and—based on his connections with Western sociologists—facilitated the academic communication between China and Western states.

Moreover, in contrast with the first generation of post-1978 economists who were interested in East European economic theories (Li Jing 2015), the first generation of post-1978 sociologists (both university-trained and crash-course-trained) had more contact with Western sociologists (especially American sociologists) and preferred Western sociological concepts. The young sociologists' preference for Western theories may relate to Fei's connections with Western scholars (especially C. K. Yang). But there are another two reasons. First, unlike economics, sociology in the Soviet Union and East Europe "took on a precarious existence as an ideological instrument of the party-state" (Burawoy 2016, 953). The seminal works of East European sociologists were usually critical of the state-socialist regime and thus unacceptable to Chinese leaders.<sup>12</sup> Second, although sociologists had fewer resources and social influence than economists, sociologists' marginal position in the political ecology gave them much autonomy to absorb foreign social theories. It was extremely rare for a 1980s Chinese sociologist to write her articles

---

<sup>12</sup> To be sure, there are some Eastern European sociologists visiting China in the 1980s, including Mihailo V. Popović (1984), János Farkas (1988), and Tóth József (1988) (Department of Sociology at Nankai University 2019, 271; IoS 1990, 207-208, 210). None of them were dissident scholars. (I noticed that Iván Szelényi once submitted a paper to the First International Conference of Urban Anthropology held in Beijing in 1989, but I have not found any data suggesting that Szelényi *attended* to the conference in person.) I did not find any Soviet sociologists who came to China during the 1980s, probably because the Sino-Soviet relations had not been restored before Gorbachev visited China in 1989.

without using Weberian or Parsonian concepts like function, status, etc., though they were not necessarily Weberianists or functionalists.

### **The Post-Tiananmen Period (the Early to Mid-1990s)**

The student movement in 1989 triggered a crisis in Chinese sociology, though few Chinese sociologists had been directly involved in the Tiananmen protest. Unlike their East European counterparts, Chinese sociologists were more conservative and pro-regime, focusing on trivial social issues rarely discussed by economists and political scientists. This unpolitical attitude was criticized by many sociologists in the late 1980s (Fang and Wang 1989; Wang Yumin 1989c; Lei Hong 1990). For example, Fang and Wang (1989) pointed out that sociologists had wasted at least three opportunities to expand their influence in the political sphere: the emergence of the household responsibility system, the impact of technological innovation on society, and urban reform. Sociology's failure to answer these questions made the discipline almost invisible to the public and the state. As a result, when some sociologists eventually decided to probe into political issues, such as corruption, the government's lack of transparency, and public supervision (Pan 1989), they deliberately gave their book series a sensational title: *Sociologists' Warnings to Society (Shehuixuezhe dui Shehui de Jinggao)*.

Despite sociologists' pro-regime attitude, conflicts between sociologists and the state still existed. For example, the Institute of Sociology of the Shanghai ASS once ran a newspaper called *Society (Shehui Bao)* during 1985-87. Deng Weizhi, a sociologist who later became the Dean of the Sociology Department at Shanghai University, was the associate editor-in-chief responsible for the newspaper's content. Deng Weizhi was determined to make *Society* a newspaper that should "offer great help to the government by scolding it slightly (*xiaoxiao ma, dada bangmang*)" (Lan 2013, 8). Therefore, *Society* published numerous news reports and articles on sensitive topics, including reformist intellectuals' speeches, issues related to the Cultural Revolution, political reforms, etc., which made it a target of attack by CCP cadres (Lan 2013). These cadres claimed that *Society* was a newspaper of rumors propagating bourgeois liberalism (Deng Weizhi 2015). By the end of 1986, *Society* was forced to change its name to *Sociology (Shehuixue Bao)* and stop publishing non-academic articles. In 1987, *Sociology* was asked by the CCP Shanghai Municipal Committee to stop publication. Deng Weizhi (2015) recalled that an official from Shanghai Municipal Government told him that this decision was made from "above" (143), indicating that Beijing saw the newspaper as a threat to the regime.

It is unclear to what extent *Society* affected the party leaders' view on sociology. But after the repression of the Beijing student movement, sociology once again became a scapegoat, a sensitive discipline like political science and journalism (Bureau of Foreign Experts Affairs 1990). The editorial note of a CJS paper referred to some CCP cadres' attitudes toward sociology:

Is sociology a nitpicking and trouble-making discipline? Many people (including even a few leaders) once had this kind of doubt. After reading this article, you will understand that this is a complete misunderstanding or at least [sic] the ignorance of sociology. To give you an analogy, the thorns of roses may prick your hands, but will you say that roses are no longer beautiful because of their thorns? (Ding 1990, 2)

The party's distrust of sociology led to a plunge in university enrollment in 1989. The Department of Sociology at Peking University enrolled 32 college students in 1988; in 1989 they enrolled only 20 (Department of Sociology at Peking University 2012). SYSU's sociology department stopped the enrollment of undergraduates in 1989, but it matriculated 33 in 1988 (Li Wenbo 2011). The IoS of the CASS, one of the only two institutions with Ph.D. programs in the 1980s, stopped taking Ph.D. students in 1989 (IoS 2010). It also affected the careers of university professors. In 1990, only 24 percent of *Sociological Studies* papers came from universities, whereas in 1989 the figure was 35 percent (see Figure 1).

The CCP's negative view towards sociology had baffled Chinese sociologists, as few of them had ever attempted or were powerful enough to challenge the party's policies.<sup>13</sup> When the party asked all sociological institutions to study the spirit of The Fourth Plenary Session of the Thirteenth Central Committee of the CCP, which included the party's view on the 1989 student movement and bourgeois liberalism, the editorial board of *Sociological Studies* claimed that their previous work did not violate this spirit (the Editorial Board, 1989). Instead, they wrote a five-page article defending sociology's contribution to social stability.

During this decade [1979-1989], sociologists have conducted numerous studies on contemporary issues, studies ahead of time, and comparative analyses. It is very touching to read many of these papers. These works filled with sociologists' wisdom are so accurate in their prediction of the future, which makes people clap and shout bravo. For example, [sociologists] have made relatively scientific warnings about crime issues, the serious social problems brought by the overheated economy, the disastrous outcomes caused by the neglect of ideological and political work, the unbearable inequality in the distribution of income, the tendency of the shock of bourgeois lifestyles to Chinese society, and even the student movement and social upheavals...

---

<sup>13</sup> Unlike the reformist economists who allied with former General Secretary Zhao Ziyang (Li Jing 2015), sociologists had almost no clout in the political arena and could hardly affect any national policies.

Unfortunately, many insightful analyses have not received much attention from the relevant government departments and policymakers, which led to the failure to resolve the social problems timely and even exacerbated the social problems...

We can imagine that if the power of sociology was stronger, the voice of sociology louder, and if [the government] paid much attention – even some attention – to sociology and took steps to solve problems, the stability of our society would be significantly enhanced, and our economy would rely on a more desirable social environment. (The Editorial Board 1990, 2)

In other words, the paper emphasized that the party's ignorance of sociology and reliance on economic theories had led to the disastrous social and political crisis in 1989. And now it was the time to listen to the voice of sociology, as it is a discipline that has a particular function in “maintaining social stability” (5)—one of the CCP's national policies during 1989-1992. By redefining sociology as a conservative and ameliorative (rather than reformative) discipline whose core task is to stabilize and optimize social structures (The CJS Editorial Board 1989; Lai 1990), sociologists sought to defend their professional knowledge and protect their turf in the academia and political spheres. To some extent, the maintenance of social stability had replaced historical materialism as another cloak of legitimacy for Chinese sociologists by the early 1990s.

But the anti-sociology attitude did not last long. By the fall of 1990, the enrollment of sociology students had increased to around the same number as before 1989. International academic communication, which had been terminated in 1989 and 1990, was restored in 1991. He Zhaofa, Dean of the Department of Sociology at SYSU, noted in an interview that his department was collaborating with the University of Lyon to research the Guangzhou citizens' attitude towards technology, although he also worried about the Westernization of Chinese sociology (Zheng Li 1990).

Another important event was the International Symposium on Chinese Sociological Studies in 1991, sponsored by Ford Foundation and held by the CASS<sup>14</sup>. The symposium invited 40 sociologists and anthropologists from America, France, Britain, Sweden, The Netherlands, Hong Kong, and Taiwan (IoS 1993; Lu 1991), including Martin Whyte (Michigan), Andrew Walder (Harvard), Myron Cohen (Columbia), Helen Siu (Yale), Arthur Wolf (Stanford), David Parkin (SOAS), Isabelle Thireau (EHESS), Stephan Feuchtwang (LSE), etc. (Zhang 1991). It is notable that most of the American (and British) scholars who attended this conference were anthropologists rather than sociologists, and they kept close

---

<sup>14</sup> I shall also note that the CASS held the First International Conference of Urban Anthropology from December 1989 to Jan 1990 and invited fifteen foreign anthropologists and urbanists to attend the conference (Tan 1990).

connections with each other: Walder was Whyte's Ph.D. student at Michigan; Siu's supervisor at Stanford was Wolf, who was a Cornell Ph. D. and had some collaboration with then-Cornell professor G. William Skinner<sup>15</sup>; Cohen, Wolf, and Whyte all studied both Mainland China and Taiwan. Many of them were regarded as scholars of Chinese studies and worked in East Asian research institutes (such as Walder and Cohen), which partly explains the multidisciplinary backgrounds of these American attendees.

Although the enrollment of sociology students and scholarly communication with Western sociologists went back to normal in the early 1990s, sociological research did not get much support from the state. Throughout the 1990s, sociologists from universities and ASSs in the 1990s had limited access to government funding. Li Peilin (2021), the Deputy Director of the IoS during 1993-1998, recalled that the IoS undertook only a few government research projects during 1989, most of which were launched by the IoS director. Compared with the CASS, sociology departments at universities usually received fewer funds from central and local governments. The lack of funding impeded the development of quantitative research based on extensive survey data, as social surveys usually required a large amount of money and the government's support. Like the status of American sociology in the 1980s (House 2019), Chinese sociologists also sought to conduct less costly research or use public data. The surge of historical sociology papers in *Sociological Studies* during 1991-1997 reflects this tendency (Figure 4)<sup>16</sup>. However, the rise of historical sociology in China born no connections with that in America. None of the Chinese historical sociologists ever cited the works of Skocpol, Tilly, or Mann, and none of these American historical sociologists visited China in the early 1990s.

Compared with central and local governments, foreign institutions were more generous in providing research grants in the 1990s. Su Li (1998), a law professor at Peking University, said that it would be impossible for him to investigate the operation of the judicial system at grassroots levels without funds from the Ford Foundation. In Shanghai ASS, the research projects sponsored by foreign foundations and universities account for 29 percent of all the projects conducted during 1991-1995 (Wang Lijuan 2020). From 1990 to 2000, over one-third of Peking's sociology projects were funded by foreign institutions, including Western and Hong Kong universities, international organizations, foreign research institutes, the Ford Foundation, and the Rockefeller Foundation; most of these projects focused on China's socioeconomic transformation, development, and problems (Department of Sociology at Peking University 2012, 181-186). The cooperation with foreign institutions provided Chinese sociologists with

---

<sup>15</sup> My thanks to Andrew Abbott for this valuable information.

<sup>16</sup> The surge in the number of historical papers in *Sociology Studies* during 1991-1997 might relate to Editor-in-Chief Zhang Zhuo's growing interest in historical analysis. He published several historical papers in the journal and later a book on the history of Chinese modernization.



opportunities to study Western sociological methods and theories and thus promoted sociological research (Wu Shusong 2020), but it could hardly expand sociologists' influence in the political arena.

To be sure, sociologists who straddled political and academic ecologies did affect government policies. In the late 1990s, Li Peilin wrote a paper for *Yaobao* (the CASS's *neican* journal) calling for an expansion in university enrollment to address the severe unemployment issues in northeast China. This policy suggestion was later endorsed by the CCP leaders and eventually became a national policy in 1999 (Wang Jin 2015). Song Linfei (2021), a Nankai Class alumnus, was absorbed into the bureaucracy and appointed President of Jiangsu ASS in 1997. He has advised the Jiangsu Provincial Government and the Jiangsu Committee of the CCP for more than 20 years but retains his professorship at Nanjing University. In some cases, government officials might participate in the NSSFC policy/problem-oriented projects conducted by the CASS and ASSes. Ding Shuimu (2020), the first president of the IoS of Shanghai ASS, recalled that Shanghai officials' participation in these projects helped them get more information before implementing local policies, but sociologists' cooperation with government officials also provided the former a channel to impact policymaking processes.

GSRI researchers also conducted lots of social surveys and policy-oriented studies, as they could rely on funds from their own institutions<sup>17</sup>. Compared with university and CASS sociologists, GSRI researchers were less interested in sociological theories and concepts, but they sometimes developed complex statistic models to explain their findings (probably influenced by economics rather than sociology). In previous sections, I have shown that GSRI researchers were more sensitive to socioeconomic reforms and problems in the 1990s, such as the SOE reform, the establishment of the social welfare system, crimes, immigration, etc. (Figure 4). Despite GSRI researchers' contributions to applied sociology, most of them were versatile researchers who specialized not only in sociological research but also in economic analysis or public administration. The names of these GSRI give a glimpse of this phenomenon: Office of Research and Development, Department of Society, Bureau of Social Security, to name but a few. It was not rare to find a GSRI sociology researcher publishing papers in journals of other disciplines.

In general, sociology in the post-Tiananmen period failed to win over the support of state officials. It became a sensitive discipline after the 1989 student movement, facing the threat of being banned for a second time. Its self-portrait as a defender of social stability was not echoed by government officials, and later the radical economic reform made this portrait outdated. The lack of government funding became an obstacle for Chinese sociologists to further their research, although some could seek financial support from foreign foundations and research institutions. Similar to the case in the 1980s, only

---

<sup>17</sup> During 1991-1997, around one-third of survey papers and half of policy-oriented papers in *Sociological Studies* were published by GSRI researchers.

those sociologists who had relationships with government officials or GSRI who worked for the government could influence state policies in the 1990s. However, compared with these well-funded researchers, Chinese academic sociologists took another route and eventually distinguished themselves from applied sociologists in the late 1990s. I shall now turn to this story.

### **The Professional Period (the Late 1990s)**

Before discussing the divergence between academic and applied *sociologists*, let us first examine the divergence between academic and applied *sociology*. In the first issue of *Sociological Studies*, sociologists had already touched upon the distinction between *theoretical* and applied sociology and introduced the development of applied sociology in America (Chu 1986). Three years later, Journal Editor Zhang Wanli (1989) wrote a review paper on the achievement of Chinese sociology in the past decade, where she mentioned that the debate among Chinese sociologists on the relationship between theoretical and applied sociology had not reached any consensus. Despite this heated debate, however, one-third of the papers published during the formative era are neither theoretical nor applicable to social governance (Figure 2). They are mere descriptions of data or opinions without serious reasoning.

A professional sociologist may find this debate weird, as any type of applied research requires theories for guidance. But this was not common sense for Chinese sociologists in the 1980s. Nor was the fact that sociology is a discipline like economics and philosophy. Even Fei Xiaotong once regarded sociology as “a residual social science” focusing on social problems neglected by other disciplines (Xu 1991, 4). After the 1989 movement, “whether sociology is a discipline” was still an issue that “deserve[s] analysis” (Lei Jieqiong 1990, 8).

Although the pragmatic image of Chinese sociology had attracted students from various backgrounds to join the cohort of sociologists, the lack of “a discipline’s axis of cohesion” (Abbott 2001, 140) made sociologists a highly fragmented group in academia. In 1985, He Zhaofa pointed out that Chinese sociology was “chaotic, fickle, low-level, and outdated” (Zheng Li 1990), and these terms were still suitable to describe Chinese sociology in the early 1990s (Lei Jieqiong 1990).

To make sociology a proper discipline, some sociologists sought to set norms for sociological research. The first paper in *Sociological Studies* that called for the professionalization of sociology was authored by Qiu Haixiong (a Nankai Class alumnus who later received his Ph.D. in sociology at CUHK) and Yan Xiangjun. Starting with a survey of sociologists’ attitudes toward the pragmatic characteristics of Chinese sociology, Qiu and Yan (1991) found that 78 percent of respondents (most of them were university professors) agreed that sociological research has social value because of its applicability. However, only 30 percent believed that sociologists preferred applied research to theoretical studies. In their view, this mismatch indicated that university sociologists were unsatisfied with being regarded as

scholars of social surveys and problems, but they could not change the situation as most CSA members were non-professional researchers originally from other departments and disciplines. These unprofessional sociologists had power and resources but refused to support academic research, simply because those professional sociological studies lack applicability. Some even claimed that “the papers I cannot understand are not papers at all” (14). At the end of the paper, Qiu and Yan suggested that Chinese sociologists absorb foreign sociological theories and methods and indigenize them to explain the big issues of Chinese society (16-17).

The increasing academic communication with Western sociologists since 1991 also facilitated the professionalization of Chinese sociology. Apart from inviting foreign sociologists to give lectures in China, Chinese universities and ASSes also sent sociology students and researchers to study abroad, many of whom were sponsored by foreign foundations and universities. In the late 1980s, the Lingnan Foundation sponsored several SYSU sociology students and lecturers to pursue M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in the United States (Cai 2021). Nankai’s sociology department once held a joint doctoral program in sociology with SUNY-Albany and matriculated 12 Ph.D. students in 1986, although this program was not officially recognized by the Ministry of Education (Department of Sociology at Nankai University 2019). By 1989, there were already hundreds of Chinese students studying sociology outside of Mainland China (Deng Fang 1989), and for these students the most popular destination was American universities.

Although many Chinese sociology students chose to stay abroad after graduation, those who came back brought home new understandings of sociology. Bao Zhiming (2021), a Ph.D. student at Peking University during 1989-1994, initially majored in linguistics at college. He later turned to sociology because he agreed with Fei’s pragmatic idea of advancing Chinese society with professional knowledge. Yet Bao’s view towards sociology changed after he went to Japan as a joint Ph.D. student. He found that Japanese sociologists were pure academics who studied sociology for sociology’s sake. Their mission was to explain and advance disciplinary knowledge rather than solve social problems. Following these scholars, he later portrayed himself as a professional sociologist and never conducted any policy-oriented projects after returning to China.

Influenced by Western sociological works, the previous debate over *theoretical* and applied sociology was gradually transformed into a discussion on the relationships between *academic* and applied sociology. In his 1994 paper coauthored with Zhao Wei, Cai He (a Nankai Class alumnus and professor of sociology at SYSU) challenged the dominant classification that categorizes sociological studies into theoretical, positive, and policy-oriented ones. Instead, they argued that positive research should be a dialogue between theories and empirical evidence rather than a superficial description of survey data (Cai and Wei 1994). Feng Xiaotian, a sociology professor at the HUT, also published a series of papers in the mid-1990s discussing sociological methods. In his 1997 paper in *Sociological Studies*, Feng (1997)

distinguished social research methods from the survey methods widely used in GSRI and ASS papers. Instead of taking participant observation, literature analysis, and experiments as social investigation methods (*shehui diaocha fangfa*), Feng suggested Chinese sociologists follow the Western classification of sociological methods and take investigation methods as part of (rather than the whole) social science methods. At the end of this paper, he urged his colleagues to study Western sociological methods systematically before creating the Chinese sociological paradigms.

Even today, the unanimous call might still be fresh in our minds for “studying and drawing upon primarily modern sociological theories and methods from the West” when discussing the Sinicization of sociology...Now it is time to get the whole picture of “sociological methods” and to distinguish “survey methods” from “social science methods,” because our empirical research will not progress until we have realized [this distinction], because we cannot communicate efficiently with our foreign counterparts until we have shared the same “language!” (Feng 1997, 28-29)

This shared language eventually became the consensus among academic sociologists in the last few years of the 1990s. Several events happened during this time. First, there were changes in the editorial board of *Sociological Studies*, China’s only academic sociological journal from 1980 to 2000. During 1986-1997, the editorial board consisted of seven to ten members, but only three were sociological researchers; the others were either professional or temporary editors (IoS 2010). In 1997, the then editor-in-chief-cum-editorial director (also the founding editor-in-chief) visited abroad (Shen 2021), which led to a reshuffling of personnel at the journal’s editorial board. Lu Xueyi, President of the IoS of the CASS, became the new editor-in-chief, and the new editorial director was Shen Yuan. Both Lu and Shen strongly supported professional sociological research<sup>18</sup>. Several academic sociologists joined the editorial board and became journal editors, who also intended to transform *Sociological Studies* into a top journal for professional sociological papers. In the first issue of 1998, the new editorial board published a long paper. This time the topic was the disciplinary consciousness of sociology.

What is the academic consciousness of sociology? This is a question that deserves further conceptualization and clarification during the development of Chinese sociology. Generally speaking, the academic consciousness of sociology was a conscious intention and demand to

---

<sup>18</sup> To be sure, Lu and Shen conducted much policy-oriented research. But unlike many ASS and GSRI researchers, they were particularly interested in sociological methods and theories and their application in policy-oriented studies (see Shen 2021).

answer the meaningful questions that have their positions in the system of academic sociology (*shehuixue xueshu tixi*) by using sociological concepts and methods and from sociological perspectives...Only the questions that can be located in the system of academic sociology have academic values...the sociological perspectives were not determined by us, but by the founders and leading representatives of our discipline, and these perspectives were accumulated and matured in the history of sociology (the Editorial Board 1998, 2-3)...

The journal's emphasis on sociological concepts, methods, and theoretical and empirical contributions was natural for professional sociologists. Yet for GSRI and ASS researchers who never had any formal sociological training, their unprofessional survey or policy-oriented papers would no longer be accepted by *Sociological Studies*<sup>19</sup> unless they met the criteria mentioned above.

At the same time, overseas Chinese sociologists were getting influential in Chinese academia. By the end of the 1990s, Chinese sociology students who took Ph.D.s from Western universities in the late 1980s and stayed abroad after graduation had become tenured professors<sup>20</sup>. Some had (re)established contact with their counterparts in Mainland China, especially those who wanted to restart their research on Chinese society. They also started translating their previous papers into Chinese or introducing cutting-edge Western sociological research to domestic sociologists. As a result, these overseas Chinese sociologists became the new bridges between Western and Chinese sociology researchers. They were also exemplary sociologists with numerous followers at home.

The hiring of Mainland Chinese sociologists at US elite universities also reflects a change in Chinese studies in America. Since the late 1980s, American sociologists of China have gradually distinguished their research from the previous area studies and published papers in the mainstream sociological journals. The central figures who led this change were Victor Nee and Andrew Walder<sup>21</sup>. Both Nee and Walder were engaged in theoretical debates over the core questions of the discipline in the 1990s—the nature of state socialism and the post-communist transitions—and thus brought “the sociology of China into the mainstream” (Guthrie 2000, 728). Although Nee and Walder had already cooperated with Mainland Chinese sociologists to study market transitions in the 1980s, their English works did not receive much attention from Mainland Chinese sociologists at the time. The first

---

<sup>19</sup> During 1998-2000, GSRI published only four policy-oriented papers, of which three were conducted by research institutes of the State Council. The authors of these three papers all held M.A. or Ph.D. degrees in sociology.

<sup>20</sup> Most of them were teaching at American universities, such as Bian Yanjie, Xie Yu, Zhao Dingxin, Zhou Min, and Zhou Xueguang.

<sup>21</sup> According to Web of Science database, Nee published 12 papers in *American Journal of Sociology* and *American Sociological Research* during 1984-2000, while Walder published 10 papers in these two journals before 2000. Both Nee and Walder were the most-cited sociologists of Chinese Studies.

*Sociological Studies* paper that cited Nee's 1989 AJS paper on market transition was authored by Li Lulu (Renmin University) in 1995, and the first critique of Walder's paper on work units (*danwei*) was published in 1996 by Cai He (SYSU). Things changed in the late 1990s when *Sociological Studies* became professionalized and encouraged authors to engage in theoretical dialogues with domestic and foreign sociologists. Introduced by overseas Chinese sociologists, Nee and Walder became well-known among Chinese sociologists, and their research areas, such as socioeconomic development, social mobilities, institutional change, etc., became the most promising research topics in Chinese sociology (Bian 2002). Meanwhile, these overseas sociologists also followed Nee and Walder to make the Chinese case significant in sociology. The citation rates of their papers were also increasing as these overseas sociologists were getting famous in China and America.

To sum up, the separation between academic and applied sociologists became apparent twenty years after the re-establishment of sociology. Academic sociologists had found their axis of cohesion: a sociological system constructed by particular theories, concepts, and methods. The increasing communication with Western sociologists and the growing influence of overseas Chinese sociologists also facilitated the professionalization of Chinese sociologists, making them resemble their American counterparts. The applied sociology researchers who failed to master these theories and methods were marginalized in the community of sociologists, although there were still platforms for policy-oriented research. Unlike the interdependent relationship between applied and academic economists in America, applied sociologists failed to establish their "avatar" in the political arena (Abbott 2005, 265). The reason is plain. Chinese applied sociologists had never become an influential group in the state and society. They never had a core task or an axis of cohesion that helped secure their jurisdictions or settlements within professional and academic ecologies. They never established sociological institutions within the political ecology. When academic sociologists gradually dominated universities, journals, associations, and conferences, applied sociologists had no other choice but to imitate their academic colleagues and study a new type of sociological knowledge—unless they no longer saw themselves as sociologists.

## **Conclusion**

This paper takes an ecological perspective to explain the professionalization of Chinese sociology. Using *Sociological Studies* data, NSSFC data, and oral histories of Chinese sociologists, this paper reveals a divergence between academic and applied sociologists in the 1990s. Academic sociologists were composed of university professors and CASS researchers, whereas applied sociologists were mainly from ASSes and GSRI. Both groups of sociologists used to publish papers in the same academic journal and undertook state-funded policy-relevant research projects, but their differences became apparent as time proceeded.

By the late 1990s, academic sociologists had secured their settlements in Chinese academia with a set of abstract theories, methods, and concepts, most of which were borrowed from Western sociology. Compared with applied sociologists who lacked formal sociological training, many academic sociologists held degrees in sociology or at least took one-year sociological programs like the Nankai Class. As sociology students, they had access to Western sociological works and opportunities to take courses or lectures given by Western (as well as Hong Kong and Taiwan) sociologists, especially in top universities. Some even received scholarships to study sociology abroad and—if they came back—brought foreign sociological theories and methods to domestic scholars. Influenced by Western (especially American) sociological paradigms, most sociology students conducted professional sociological research at the beginning of their academic careers. Their scholarly works were getting more complex and analytical in the 1990s, partly because of the increasing academic communication with Western sociologists. As university-trained (and CASS-trained) academic sociologists proliferated and eventually dominated sociological journals and associations, academic sociology eventually became the mainstream of sociological research in China.

On the other hand, applied sociologists almost lost their turf in academia, though they managed to preserve some platforms to conduct policy-oriented research, such as NSSFC projects. Most applied sociologists were previously scholars from other disciplines (or not scholars at all) who later joined the cohort of sociologists, and they mastered sociological knowledge mainly by attending crash courses, participating in academic conferences, self-study, etc. Unlike university students, ASS and GSRI researchers generally lacked opportunities to communicate with Western scholars, thus being less influenced by Western sociological paradigms. But their close relationships with government officials enabled them to conduct social surveys and investigations and provide policy suggestions to governments, though it was unclear whether government officials would adopt these suggestions. Despite their influence in the political arena, applied sociologists never developed abstract knowledge to safeguard their jurisdiction. They even failed to build applied sociological institutions in the government or develop a shared identity as applied sociologists, as many of them were versatile scholars who also conducted research in neighboring disciplines. As a result, this fragmented applied sociology gradually became marginalized in academia and the political field.

This paper challenges a prevalent view claiming that Chinese sociologists, like other reformist intellectuals, had abandoned the grand revolutionary narrative in the 1990s and became conservative professional scholars focusing solely on academic issues (Feng 2019). My analysis suggests that both groups of sociologists were already conservatives in the 1980s and even sought to expand their political influence after the Tiananmen Protest by portraying sociology as a defender of social stability. Their failure to become leading policy advisors was related to the CCP's preference for economic theories and

their failure to produce unique theories and methods that made their policy research more persuasive to the party. This paper also indicates that the professionalization of Chinese sociologists was promoted by those university-trained (and CASS-trained) sociologists rather than triggered by a political event, as the transition to professionalism started in the mid rather than early 1990s.

Instead of seeing Chinese sociologists as domesticated academics, this paper provides a more comprehensive view of state-scholar relationships. First, it highlights sociologists' strategies to legitimize their knowledge in academia. By taking on different ideological cloaks, such as historical materialism and social stability, sociologists successfully dispelled the state's worries over applying Western (especially American) social theories and methods to Chinese social problems. Second, the paper argues that the transition of Chinese sociology to professionalism was primarily driven by the internal competition between two groups of sociologists. The state played a limited role in the professionalization of Chinese sociologists, partly due to its concentration on economic reforms rather than social problems during 1980-2000. As a result, Chinese sociologists had more autonomy than economists to decide on the development of their discipline. But some sociological works—academic and policy-oriented—did receive the state's attention, most of which were conducted by prominent sociologists who straddled between political and academic ecologies (such as Fei Xiaotong, Lei Jieqiong, and Li Peilin). Known for their professional research and close relationship with the political elite, these sociologists play a crucial role in shaping the state's view toward sociology and expanding the influence of sociology in society.

The ecological perspective can also shed light on the recent development of Chinese sociology. As China became more concerned with social security and welfare during Hu Jintao's presidency (2003-2013), the CCP invested substantial resources to support sociological studies, expecting sociologists to offer professional advice on addressing social problems (Wu Xiaogang 2015). President Xi Jinping's emphasis on the modernization of China's system and capacity for governance also provides sociologists with new opportunities to conduct policy research. On the other hand, the expansion of academic sociology has significantly changed the demographic structures of ASSes and GSRI. Like universities and the CASS, ASSes and GSRI are now recruiting university-trained sociology graduates as researchers while at the same time strengthening their policy-oriented research. Apart from being scholars or policy advisors, some sociologists are working part-time as business consultants or best-selling authors, thanks to China's economic growth and the rise of a consumer society in the past decades. How did these changes in political, professional, and academic ecologies affect applied and academic sociological research? Have applied sociologists developed their professional theories and methods or been assimilated into the academic group of sociologists? By looking into the cooperation and competition among various groups of Chinese sociologists, their foreign counterparts, the state, and the market, this



ecological approach will provide insightful answers to these questions and a holistic view of state-sociologist relationships during the past 40 years.

## References

- Abbott, Andrew. 2005. "Linked Ecologies: States and Universities as Environments for Professions." *Sociological Theory*, 23: 245-274.
- Abbott, Andrew. 2001. *Chaos of Disciplines*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Abbott, Andrew. 1988. *The System of Professions: An Essay on the Division of Expert Labor*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Andreas, Joel. 2009. *Rise of the Red Engineers: The Cultural Revolution and the Origins of China's New Class*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Bao, Zhiming. 2021. "Xiang Feilao Nayang Tuidong Shehuixue de Xueke Jianshe." [Promoting the disciplinary construction of sociology as did Fei Xiaotong.] In *Chongjian Zhongguo Shehuixue* [The reestablishment of Chinese sociology], edited by Zhou Xiaohong, 145-173. Beijing: The Commercial Press.
- Bell, Daniel. 1999. *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting*. New York: Basic Books.
- Bernstein, Michael. A. 2001. *A Perilous Progress : Economists and Public Purpose in Twentieth-Century America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Bian, Yanjie. 2002. "Sociological research on reform-era China." *Issues & Studies*, 38: 139-174.
- Burawoy, Michael. 2016. "The Promise of Sociology: Global Challenges for National Disciplines." *Sociology*, 50(5): 949-959.
- Burawoy, Michael. 2005. "2004 American Sociological Association Presidential address: For public sociology." *The British Journal of Sociology*, 56 (2): 259-294.
- Bureau of Foreign Experts Affairs (BFEA). 1990. "Guojia Weiguo Zhuanjia Ju Guanyu Bianzhi Pingqing Waiguo Wenjiao Zhuanjia "Bawu" Jihua de Yijian." [The BFEA's guideline on the recruitment of foreign humanities and education experts during the Eighth Five-Year Plan]. In *Zhishifenzi Zhengce Wenxian Huibian* [Collections on the policy documents on intellectuals], edited by Office of Intellectuals, The Organization Department of the Central Committee of the CCP, 579-584. Shenyang: Liaoning University Press.
- Cai, He. 2021. "Toushi Zhuanxing Shiqi de Zhongguo Shehui." [To grasp the essence of Chinese society during the transition period.] In *Chongjian Zhongguo Shehuixue* [The reestablishment of Chinese sociology], edited by Zhou Xiaohong, 198-221. Beijing: The Commercial Press.
- Cai, He and Zhao Wei. 1994. "Shehuixue de Shizheng Yanjiu Bianxi." [Differentiating and analyzing positive sociological studies]. *Sociological Studies*, 3: 8-12.

- Chen, Hon Fai. 2018. *Chinese Sociology: State-Building and the Institutionalization of Globally Circulated Knowledge*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Chu, Zhaorui. 1986. “Yingyong Shehuixue zai Guowai.” [Applied sociology in foreign states.] *Sociological Studies*, 1: 97-106.
- Deng, Fang. 1989. “Zhong Mei Shehuixue de Shinian Jiaoliu dui Zhongguo Shehuixue de Yingxiang.” [The impact on Chinese sociology of the scholarly communication between Chinese and American sociologists during the past decade.] *Sociological Studies*, 3: 106-112.
- Deng, Weizhi. 2015. *Deng Weizhi Koushu Lishi*. [The oral history of Deng Weizhi.] Shanghai: Shanghai Bookstore Publishing House.
- Department of Sociology at Nankai University. 2019. *Shehuixue cong Zheli Qibu*. [Sociology started from here]. Tianjin: Nankai University Press.
- Department of Sociology at Peking University. 2012. *Beijing Daxue Shehuixuexi (1982-2012)*. [Department of Sociology at Peking University (1982-2012).] Beijing: Printed by the author.
- Ding, Shuimu. 2020. “Wode Shehuixue Yanjiu Zhilu” [My journey of sociological research]. In *Chuxin Buhuo: Shehuixuesuo Sishi Nian* [Staying true to the original inspirations for forty years: the fortieth anniversary of the establishment of IoS of Shanghai ASS], 28-37. Shanghai: Shanghai ASS Press.
- Ding, Shuimu. 1990. “Jianlun Shehuixue Weihu Shehui Wending de Zuoyong.” [A brief discussion on the role of sociology in maintaining social stability.] *Chinese Journal of Sociology*, 5: 2-4.
- Eyal, Gil. 2013. “For a Sociology of Expertise: The Social Origins of the Autism Epidemic.” *American Journal of Sociology*, 118: 863-907.
- Eyal, Gil., Iván Szelényi and Eleanor Townsley. 1998. *Making Capitalism without Capitalists: Class Formation and Elite Struggles in Post-Communist Central Europe*. London: Verso.
- Fang, Ming and Wang Jie. 1989. “Huigu yu Zhanwang: Kaichuang Zhongguo Shehuixue Fazhan Xinjumian.” [Retrospect and prospect: Breaking new grounds for Chinese sociology.] *Sociological Studies*, 1: 2-11.
- Fei, Xiaotong. 1994. “Lüetan Zhongguo de Shehuixue” [A brief discussion on Chinese sociology]. *Sociological Studies*, 1: 2-8.
- Feng, Shizheng. 2019. “Xueke Shengtai, Xueke Lian yu Xinshidai Shehui Zhengce Xueke Jianshe” [Disciplinary ecology, disciplinary chain, and the development of social policy as a discipline in the New Era]. *Sociological Studies*, 4: 20-30.
- Feng, Xiaotian. 1997. “Shehui Diaocha Fangfa Haishi Shehui Yanjiu Fangfa? – Shehuixue Fangfa Wenti Tantaoshi Yi.” [Social survey methods or social research methods? An analysis of the sociological methods (part one).] *Sociological Studies*, 2: 23-32.
- Fourcade, Marion. 2009. *Economists and Societies: Discipline and Profession in the United States, Britain, and France, 1890s to 1990s*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

- Goldman, Merle, Timothy Cheek and Carol Lee Hamrin. 1987. *China's Intellectuals and the State: In Search of a New Relationship*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Gouldner, Alvin W. 1979. *The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class*. London and Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press.
- Guthrie, Doug. "Understanding China's Transition to Capitalism: The Contributions of Victor Nee and Andrew Walder." *Sociological Forum*, 15(4): 727-749.
- He, Zhining. 2011. "Wode Fuqin—Dailei de Posui Jiye." [My father—A tearful and shattered memory]. In *Chuan Cheng yu Fazhan: Jinian Zhongshan Daxue Shehuixuexi Jianxi 80 Zhounian, Fuban 30 Zhounian*. [Inheritance and development: celebrating the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment and the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the reestablishment of the Department of Sociology at Sun Yat-sen University], edited by Li Wenbo, 213-240. Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press.
- Holzner, Burkart. 2007. "C. K. Yang: Sociology in China and the Encounter of Civilizations." In *Social Change In Contemporary China: C. K. Yang and the Concept of Institutional Diffusion*, edited by Wenfang Tang and Burkart Holzner, 17-29. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- House, James S. 2019. "The Culminating Crisis of American Sociology and Its role in Social Science and Public Policy: An Autobiographical, Multimethod, Reflexive Perspective." *Annual Review of Sociology*, 22: 1-26.
- Hu, Anning. 1993. "Dui Bashi Niandai Woguo Shehuixue Yingyong Zhuangkuang de Fansi" [Reflections on the application of sociology studies in our country.] *Social Sciences in Nanjing*, 4: 87-91.
- IoS (Institute of Sociology, CASS). 2010. *Zhongguo Shehui Kexueyuan Shehuixue Yanjiusuo Suozhi*. [Annals of the IoS of the CASS]. Beijing: Published by the author.
- IoS (Institute of Sociology, CASS). 1993. *China Yearbook of Sociology (1989-1992)*. Beijing: Encyclopedia of China Publishing House.
- IoS (Institute of Sociology, CASS). 1990. *China Yearbook of Sociology (1979-1989)*. Beijing: Encyclopedia of China Publishing House.
- Keyfitz, Nathan. 1982. "Population and Employment in China." Working paper, International Institute for Applied System Analysis, A-2361, Laxenburg, Austria.
- King, Yeo-Chi. 2021. "Tansuo Xiandai Zhongguo de Weida Zhuanxing." [Exploring the great transition of modern China]. In *Chongjian Zhongguo Shehuixue* [The reestablishment of Chinese sociology], edited by Zhou Xiaohong, 3-31. Beijing: The Commercial Press.
- Konrád, György and Iván Szelényi. 1979. *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power*. New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich.
- Lai, Qu. 1990. "Zhixu: Shehuixue Lilun de Hexin – Jiantan Shehuixue yu Shehui Wending." [Order: the core of sociological theories – a discussion on sociology and social stability.] *Chinese Journal of Sociology*, 6: 2.
- Lan, Chengdong. 2013. "'Shehuibao' zai Gage Langchao zhong de Qiluo." [The rise and fall of *Society* during the Reform]. *Yanhuang Chunqiu*, 4: 8-10.

- Lee, Chengpang. 2020. "Making Taiwan Relevant to Sociology: A Case Study on the Publication Pattern in the Major US Journals." *International Journal of Taiwan Studies*, 4(2): 289-309.
- Lee, Rance P. L. 2021. "Zhongguo Shehuixue de Chongjian yu Liangan Sandi de Jiaoliu." [The reestablishment of Chinese sociology and the communication between Mainland, Hong Kong, and Taiwan.] In *Chongjian Zhongguo Shehuixue* [The reestablishment of Chinese sociology], edited by Zhou Xiaohong, 32-58. Beijing: The Commercial Press.
- Lei, Hong. 1990. "Dui Woguo Shehuixue Chongjian Shinian Lai Xueke Yanjiu de Gaiguan yu Sikao" [Review and thoughts of the development of sociological studies in the past decade since the reestablishment of sociology in our country]. *Sociological Studies*, 2: 30-36.
- Lei, Jieqiong. 1990. "Lei Jieqiong Jiaoshou de Jianghua." [Professor Lei Jieqiong's speech.] *Sociological Studies*, 6: 3.
- Li, Jing. 2015. "Taming a Profession: State and Economists during China's Economic Reform, 1978-2012." PhD diss., University at Albany, State University of New York.
- Li, Peilin. 2021. "Guanzhu Zhuanxing he Fazhanzhong de Zhongguo Shehui" [Focusing on the transitional and developing Chinese society]. In *Chongjian Zhongguo Shehuixue* [The reestablishment of Chinese sociology], edited by Zhou Xiaohong, 328-357. Beijing: The Commercial Press.
- Li, Qiang. 2019. "Tuijin Shehuixue de 'Shehui Zhengce Xueke' Jianshe" [Promoting the construction of social policy as a discipline in sociology]. *Sociological Studies*, 4: 1-9.
- Li, Wenbo. 2011. "Shehuixuexi de Fuban yu Fazhan (1981-2011)." [The reestablishment and development of the sociology department (1981-2011)]. In *Chuan Cheng yu Fazhan: Jinian Zhongshan Daxue Shehuixuexi Jianxi 80 Zhounian, Fuban 30 Zhounian*. [Inheritance and development: celebrating the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment and the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the reestablishment of the Department of Sociology at Sun Yat-sen University], edited by Li Wenbo, 93-146. Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press.
- Li, Zhenwen. 2014. "Woxiao Shehuixue de Chuangjian yu Fazhan Suoyi" [Trivial memories of the establishment and development of the sociology department at our university.] *The Oral History of Huazhong University of Science and Technology*. Last modified on May 26, 2014. [http://xsyj.hust.edu.cn/info/1004/1402\\_1.htm](http://xsyj.hust.edu.cn/info/1004/1402_1.htm).
- Lin, Nan. 2021. "Lide Liyan, Wuwen Xidong" [To establish morality and thoughts, without asking if they originate in the West or the East.] In *Chongjian Zhongguo Shehuixue* [The reestablishment of Chinese sociology], edited by Zhou Xiaohong, 59-83. Beijing: The Commercial Press.
- Lu, Xueyi. 1991. "Zhongguo Shehuixue Yanjiu Guoji Taolunhui Kaimuci." [The opening speech to the International Symposium on Chinese Sociological Studies.] *Sociological Studies*, 6: 8-9.
- Mitchell, Timothy. 2002. *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Pan, Yunkang. "Shehuixue zhe dui Shehui de Jinggao Congshu Wenshi" [the coming out of the book series *Sociologists' Warnings to Society*]. *Sociological Studies*, 5: 115.

- Perry, Elizabeth J. 2020. "Educated acquiescence: how academia sustains authoritarianism in China." *Theory and Society*, 49: 1-22.
- Qiu, Haixiong and Yan Xiangjun. 1991. "Chongjian hou de Zhongguo Shehuixue de Shiyong Xingge – Jiantan Shehuixue de Xueke Jianshe Wenti." [The pragmatic characteristics of the post-1979 Chinese sociology – discussing the disciplinary construction of sociology] *Sociological Studies*, 6: 10-19.
- Reay, Michael J. 2012. "The Flexible Unity of Economists." *American Journal of Sociology*, 118 (1): 45-87.
- Rossi, Alice S. 1985. *Sociology and Anthropology in the People's Republic of China: Report of a Delegation Visit, February–March 1984*. Washington, D.C.: National Academy.
- Shen, Yuan. 2021. "Zhuanxing Shehui de Xueshu Kouwen" [The academic inquiry into the transitional society]. In *Chongjian Zhongguo Shehuixue* [The reestablishment of Chinese sociology], edited by Zhou Xiaohong, 622-645. Beijing: The Commercial Press.
- Sleeboom-Faulkner, Margaret. 2007. "Regulating intellectual life in China: the case of the Chinese academy of social sciences." *The China Quarterly*, 189(1), 83-99.
- Song, Linfei. 2021. "Zuo Jingshi Zhiyong zhi Xuewen." [Conducting research for the benefits of the state and the people.] In *Chongjian Zhongguo Shehuixue* [The reestablishment of Chinese sociology], edited by Zhou Xiaohong, 646-674. Beijing: The Commercial Press.
- Song, Shuwei and Lei Tao. 1986. "Zhongguo Shehuixue Hanshou Daxue zai Jiankang Chengzhang." [OUCS is growing healthily]. *Chinese Journal of Sociology*, 3: 52-53.
- Su, Li. 1998. "Falü Shehuixue Diaocha zhong de Quanli Ziyuan – Yige Shehuixue Diaocha Guocheng de Fansi." [Power relations in the legal sociological research: reflections on the sociological investigation process.] *Sociological Studies*, 1998, 6: 31-40.
- Su, Tuo. 2021. "Wo yu Zhongguo Shehuixue: Dashidai Ciyu de Yuanfen." [Me and Chinese sociology: a good fortune granted by the great era.] In *Chongjian Zhongguo Shehuixue* [The reestablishment of Chinese sociology], edited by Zhou Xiaohong, 705-732. Beijing: The Commercial Press.
- Sun, Chung-Hsing. 1987. "The Development of the Social Sciences in China before 1949." PhD diss., Columbia University.
- Tan, Shen. 1990. "Qidong Woguo Dushi Renleixue Chuangjian de Qiji." [The opportunity to initiate the establishment of urban anthropology in our country.] *Sociological Studies*, 3: 53-56.
- The CJS Reviewer. 1989. "Shehui Xuyao Ta: Shehuixue." [Society needs it: Sociology]. *Chinese Journal of Sociology*, 10: 1-2.
- The Editorial Board. 1998. "Zhongguo Shehuixue de Xueshu Yishi." [The academic consciousness of Chinese sociology.] *Sociological Studies*, 1: 2-4.
- The Editorial Board. 1990. "Shehuixue Yaowei Shehui Wending Zuogongxian." [Sociology should make contributions to society.] *Sociological Studies*, 1: 1-5.

- The Editorial Board. 1989. "Benkan Bianjibu Taolun Guanche Shisanjie Sizhong Quanhui Jingshen Shenhua Shehuixue Yanjiu." [The editorial board discussing the implementation of the spirit of The Fourth Plenary Session of the Thirteenth Central Committee of the CCP and the advancement of sociological studies.] *Sociological Studies*, 6: 111.
- Tzeng, Albert. 2012. "Framing Sociology in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore." PhD Thesis. University of Warwick, UK.
- U, Eddy. 2019. *Creating the Intellectual: Chinese Communism and the Rise of a Classification*. Oakland: University of California Press.
- Wang, Jin. 2015. "Li Peilin: Xueshu Shi Shehui de Liangxin." [Li Peilin: academic research is the consciousness of society.] *Guangming Daily*, August 6, 2015, 11.  
[https://epaper.gmw.cn/gmrb/html/2015-08/06/nw.D110000gmr\\_b\\_20150806\\_1-11.htm](https://epaper.gmw.cn/gmrb/html/2015-08/06/nw.D110000gmr_b_20150806_1-11.htm)
- Wang, Lijuan. 2020. "Shehuixue Suo de Zaoqi Lishi." [The early history of the Institute of Sociology.] In *Chuxin Buhuo: Shehuixuesuo Sishi Nian* [Staying true to the original inspirations for forty years: the fortieth anniversary of the establishment of IoS of Shanghai ASS], 129-146. Shanghai: Shanghai ASS Press.
- Wang, Yumin. 1989a. "Zhongguo Dalu Shehuixue Xi (Zhuanye) Jianbiao." [Table of the sociology departments (majors) in Mainland China]. *Sociology Studies*, 4: 7.
- Wang, Yumin. 1989b. "Zhongguo Dalu Sheng (Shi, Zizhi) Yishang Shehuixue Xuehui Jianbiao." [Table of the sociological societies (at or above provincial (municipal or autonomous regional) level) in Mainland China.] *Sociological Studies*, 4: 5-6.
- Wang, Yumin. 1989c. "Zhongguo Shehuixue Shinian Gaiguan." [A brief review of the development of Chinese sociology in the past decade.] *Sociological Studies*, 2: 1-9.
- Wei, Yidong and Xing Runchuan. 1996. "Shehuixue Yanjiu Wenxian Jiliang Yanjiu" [A bibliometric research on *Sociological Studies* papers], *Sociological Studies*, 2: 1-11.
- Weir, Margaret and Theda Skocpol. 1985. "State Structures and the Possibilities for 'Keynesian' Responses to the Great Depression in Sweden, Britain, and the United States." In *Bringing the State Back In*, edited by Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol, 107-163. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wu, Shusong. 2020. "Xiyang Guren Qing: Wo yu Shehuixue Yanjiusuo." [An elderly man's affections: me and the Institute of Sociology]. In *Chuxin Buhuo: Shehuixuesuo Sishi Nian* [Staying true to the original inspirations for forty years: the fortieth anniversary of the establishment of IoS of Shanghai ASS], 54-64. Shanghai: Shanghai ASS Press.
- Wu, Xiaogang. 2015. "Toward a Professional Sociology of China." *Chinese Journal of Sociology*, 1(1): 6-14.
- Xu, Miaofa. 1991. "Shehuixue Xueke Diwei" [The disciplinary status of sociology]. In *Shehuixue Zhengming Daxi (1949-1989): Shehuixue juan* [Book series on the debates in social sciences (1949-1989), volume of sociology], edited by Deng Weizhi, 2-8. Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House.

- Yan, Ming. 2010. *Zhongguo Shehuixue Shi: Yige Xueke yu Yige Shidai* [The history of Chinese sociology: A discipline and an era]. Beijing: Tsinghua University Press.
- Zhang, Wanli. 1991. “‘Zhongguo Shehuixue Yanjiu Guoji Taolunhui’ Zongshu.” [The overview of the International Symposium on Chinese Sociological Studies.] *Sociological Studies*, 6: 1-4.
- Zhang, Wanli. 1989. “Shinian Shehuixue Lilun Fangfa Yanjiu de Huigu he Fansi.” [Reflections on sociological theories and methods developed in the past decade.] *Sociological Studies*, 4: 19-32.
- Zheng, Li. 1990. “Zhongguo Shehuixue: Fazhan yu Wenti— Fang Zhongshan Daxue Shehuixue Xi He Zhaofa Jiaoshou.” [Chinese sociology: development and problems – an interview with He Zhaofa, professor of Sociology at SYSU.] *Chinese Journal of Sociology*, 10: 2-4.
- Zhu, Xufeng. 2011. “Government Advisors or Public Advocates? Roles of Think Tanks in China from the Perspective of Regional Variations.” *The China Quarterly*, 207: 668-686.