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# Introduction

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This book is an outcome of the mid-term Research Council Conference of the International Sociological Association (ISA), which Ann Denis, as Vice President for Research of the ISA (2002–2006) organized at the University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Canada in May 2004. Some of the local members of the Scientific (Program) Committee (Ann Denis, Victor Armony, Karen March, Joseph-Yvon Thériault) developed the conference theme, in consultation with its international members (Ari Sitas, ISA Vice-President for Programme, 2002–2006 and Piotr Sztompka, ISA President, 2002–2006). Our challenge was to provide an opportunity for representatives of the Research Committees, Working Groups, and Thematic Groups of the ISA (who collectively make up its Research Council), to discuss contributions/approaches of their respective specialized branches of sociology in a collective reflection around a common theme. Our chosen theme was *Conflict, Competition, Cooperation: Contemporary Sociological Theory and Research in the XXIst Century*.

In our call for papers, addressed both to representatives from the ISA Research Council (as well as the ISA Officers and members of the ISA Executive Committee's Research Coordinating (sub)-Committee) and to members of the Canadian Sociology and

Anthropology Association and l' Association canadienne de sociologues et anthropologues de langue française, the national associations which were co-sponsoring the conference, we invited participants to discuss how specialized fields of sociology contribute to the description, interpretation and explanation of conflict, competition and cooperation as contemporary processes of social and societal relations. The conference and this *Handbook* provide an unparalleled opportunity to share, identify commonalities among, and establish links between different fields of research. At the same time it has allowed us to document and extend our analyses – both theoretical and empirical – of these social processes in societies throughout the world.

In our elaboration on the theme, both in the call for conference papers and in the subsequent invitation to submit revised papers for publication, we provided the following guidelines to participants.

**Conflict, competition, co-operation:** these classical notions within sociology remain very pertinent for the analysis of the aspirations and realities within and among contemporary societies in our globalizing world. **Equally these are notions which can have distinctive meanings, depending on the field of sociology, the theoretical approach, and/or the cultural context, both within and across societies.**

We went on to point out that **theoretically** these notions may be conceived of as being on a continuum, as being unconnected, mutually exclusive poles of social relations, or as being intertwined (and perhaps complementary). From some theoretical perspectives, we noted, only one – conflict, for instance – is considered key to the analysis of social (and societal) relations; from others, two – competition and cooperation, for instance – are concurrently important.

We suggested that the **importance and the meaning** of these concepts can also **vary within a particular field of sociology** due to diverse theoretical, methodological and epistemological perspectives. These variations may be – but are not necessarily – related to the specifics of national sociologies, to addressing international comparisons, or to questions of particular salience within a given socio-historical context.

In addressing conflict/competition/cooperation, one may also ask: **from whose perspective and at what level of analysis?** Analysis may be from the perspective of, for example, the majority, one or more minorities, and/or (relative) equals. It may be at the macro, the meso or the micro level – about societies, states, nations, or groups (local, national or transnational), which are based on such criteria as ethnicity, gender, social class, occupation, kinship etc. The possible impact of individuals' multiple (and potentially conflicting) social locations and identities may be a preoccupation.

How and to what extent can **actors choose or are they constrained** to participate in social relations characterized by cooperation, competition, conflict? Again this question can be addressed at one or more of the micro, meso, or macro levels.

**In brief**, in their papers participants were invited to present a **synthesis of how and to what extent the themes of conflict, competition, and cooperation are examined within contemporary analyses in the field of specialization** of the Research Committee, Working Group or Thematic Group they represented.<sup>2</sup> In relation to one or more of the

main topics of analysis in this field of specialization, and bearing in mind the questions suggested above, they were invited to consider **what types of questions are addressed, what types of explanations are proposed, and, perhaps, what some of the main empirical findings are.** Where social policy (national or international) is of relevance, the authors were encouraged to consider its implicit theoretical agenda, and the constraints that it imposes on the options of conflict, competition, cooperation in social and societal relations, and/or the constraints which other socio-political factors impose on it. **Authors were encouraged to highlight alternative approaches, tensions, and contradictions within the field, drawing on material from several societies, and, ideally, from more than one region of the world.** In short, within the analytical framework of the classical notions of conflict, competition and cooperation, an invitation was launched which aimed to be very inclusive, providing 'space' for contributions from the wide range of specialities and approaches represented within the International Sociological Association.

Ann Denis and Devorah Kalekin-Fishman, then a member of the Research Coordinating Committee (2002–2006) and now Vice President for Publications (2006–2010), have worked together on this *Handbook*. Authors of each of the 52 presentations at the conference were invited to revise and submit their papers for consideration for publication. While some had already committed their paper to another publication outlet, and for others the time-lines or the focus of the book were not appropriate, a total of 28 chapters have been accepted, double the number initially anticipated for publication. Given the rich selection available, the publication, originally to have been a special journal issue and/or a regular length monograph volume, was transformed, at Sage's recommendation, into a *Handbook*.

Using the prisms of conflict, competition, and cooperation for focusing on what it means to be doing sociology, researchers

from the global South as well as from the global North were able to provide integrative descriptions of theoretical orientations, salient sub-fields of sociology, and sociological interpretations of general and specific social problems. Thus the collection introduces readers to ways in which the focal concepts are used in diverse fields of sociology and how they are applied to research by scholars from different national traditions working within the same discipline. The material covered is of interest to researchers and practitioners in anthropology, psychology, economics, political science as well as in sociology. Both experts in the sub-fields and those with a more general interest in them will find the chapters informative and engaging. Because the chapters all deal with issues that are relevant to contemporary reality, the *Handbook* is appropriate for university use, especially for graduate seminar courses but also for advanced undergraduate courses that focus on research, analysis, and application.

Following this Introduction, the chapters have been divided into four main sections: (1) 'Analyses of Approaches to Research'; (2) 'Trends in Conceptualizing Conflict, Competition and Cooperation in Sub-fields of Sociology'; (3) 'Research on Social Issues – Interweaving Processes'; (4) 'Illustrative Case Studies'. The concluding chapter highlights the commonalities, divergences, insights, and challenges which have been presented.

The six papers in Part 1 ('Analyses of Approaches to Research') provide a disciplinary overview of how conflict, competition, and cooperation figure in broad orientations to sociology. Their dialectical inter-relationship is evident on the macro, meso, and micro levels when examined through the lens of theories of alienation (Langman and Kalekin-Fishman, 'Alienation: Critique and Alternative Futures'), and when considering the concept of belonging (Yuval-Davis, 'Identity, Citizenship and Contemporary, Secure, Gendered Politics of Belonging'). They show that the processes can be traced in research that focuses on the level of wide-ranging governmental practices (Hogsbro,

Pruijt, Pokrovsky and Tsobanoglou, 'Sociological Practice and the Socio-Technics of Governance'), and in the development of appropriate methodologies in a specific field (Banakar, 'Law through Sociology's Looking Glass'). Further permutations of the three processes can be seen to characterize developments in the analysis of community organizations (Reis, 'New Ways of Relating Authority and Solidarity') as well as in 'New Collaborative Forms of Doing Research' (Jimenez).

With the complexification of the social world, sociology has responded by making room for sub-fields each of which focuses on a different domain. Thus, in Part 2 of the *Handbook* ('Trends in Conceptualizing Conflict, Competition, and Cooperation in Sub-fields of Sociology'), the seven chapters sketch how conflict, competition, and co-operation are theorized and underlie research in the sociology of development and social transformations (Schuerkens), health sociology (Riska, Annandale and Dingwall), sociology of the professions (Evetts, Gadea, Sanchez and Saez), sociology of sport (Ohl), sociology of the arts (Marontate), sociology of childhood (Van Krieken and Bühler-Niederberger) and the study of social mobility (Moulin and Bernard). Although the articles make no pretense to being exhaustive, the sub-fields described in this section provide insights into the range of interests that sociologists deal with as well as into the diverse ways in which an orientation to processes can be adapted to different aspects of social life.

Part 3 of the *Handbook* ('Research on Social Issues – Interweaving Processes') is devoted to discussions of some of the problems – and betimes to the types of solutions – that can be better understood with the help of theories of conflict and / or competition and / or cooperation. In the seven articles, researchers present sociological approaches to problems that arise in Health, Illness and Mortality in Less Developed Countries (Ram and Ram) and in Military Peacekeeping Operations (Segal, Dandeker, and Whitestone). They also look at how reductions of social

benefits are raising new problems worldwide, among them, Health Care (Browne). Additional problems are pin-pointed in the domain of economic life: Markets and Labour (Webster and Lambert) and Political Consumerism (Silvestro). The two remaining chapters relate to the problems that computer development has created – Digital Futures (Schulz), and to the prevalence of Crime in Rural Communities (Donnermeyer, Jobs, and Barclay). This last article constitutes a reminder that crime is not exclusively a function of modern urbanism.

By contrast with the first three sections which provide wide-ranging views of orientations, sub-fields and problems, the eight chapters of Part 4 present 'Illustrative Case Studies' which exemplify the workings of conflict, competition, and cooperation in particular contexts. Koc brings findings from research on the distribution of food throughout the world. Gohn describes how different theoretical orientations interpret social movements in Brazil as moved by conflict *or* by competition *or* by cooperation. Armony analyzes the meanings of social justice and social mobilization in El Salvador and in Honduras by examining the discourse of activists in responses to open questions. Sitas looks at industrial relations in South Africa, while Pereira explains how Singapore's continuously evolving investment strategy

illustrates the impact of choices by the State on national economic outcomes. Teune looks at attitudes toward democracy among heads of local councils in Sweden, Russia, and Poland, and presents insights into how the local may be aligned with global institutions to reduce conflicts. De Oliveira discusses how modes of address reflect and guide the tangling and untangling of negotiation. Finally, five researchers, Couton, Denis, Laczko, Pietrantonio, and Theriault, examine different aspects of ethno-linguistic diversity in both Canada and more specifically in Quebec, with a special emphasis on how the issues are often dealt with in contradictory ways between the two jurisdictional levels.

In the final chapter of the *Handbook*, we sum up implications for the development of sociology in the twenty-first century of the various meanings of conflict, competition and cooperation that are elaborated in the kaleidoscope of approaches presented here.

## NOTES

1 Authors' names are listed alphabetically, since both contributed equally.

2 In the case of those not representing a Research Committee, Working Group or Thematic Group, participants were asked to examine the issues in the field of research in which they had an interest.