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A British Connection? A quantitative analysis of the changing relations between American, British and Canadian sociologists

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Is Canadian sociology facing a crisis? Depending on one's point of view and temperament, one can always provide arguments for comfort or alarm. Although we recognize that some debates are difficult, if not impossible to settle, we are also convinced that most questions framed in terms of "crisis" are unfalsifiable and particularly ill-suited for constructive analysis, and can easily lead to tavern-like discussions and grandiose pronouncements. McLaughlin's recent discussions of Canadian sociology's future (McLaughlin, 2004, 2005, 2006) and the debate they have fuelled provide an illustration of such artificial polemics created by an inadequate formulation of the question and insufficient methodologies to provide an answer.

McLaughlin emphasizes the institutional weakness of the Canadian sociological tradition. This institutional weakness would be a reflection of Canadian sociology's historical connections to the kind of social sciences practiced in the United-Kingdom and consequently explains its meagre appeal to the American scientific field (McLaughlin, 2004 and 2005). Assuming that British sociology is a "weakly institutionalized discipline" and that Canadian sociology is excessively embedded within this British tradition, it should surprise no one that McLaughlin concludes that "this has hurt the development of a strong sociological perspective in Canada" (McLaughlin, 2004: 89). Combined with two other major factors — the "flatness" or non-hierarchical nature of the Canadian education system and the left-wing orientation of Canadian sociology (McLaughlin, 2004) — the "British flavour" pervading Canadian universities has not only hampered the development of a "distinct and

serious discipline” but threatens to make it “cease to exist in Canada in anything more than name alone” (McLaughlin, 2005: 6).

In reading McLaughlin’s articles it is unclear whether he believes the “Englishness” of Canadian sociology to be either a cause or the effect of a vague but persistent anti-American sentiment among Canadian scholars. This “relative indifference even hostility to American sociology” (McLaughlin, 2005: 19) nevertheless is treated as self-evident. “Far too much of Canadian sociology has become dominated by a knee-jerk anti-Americanism, leaving us vulnerable to falling uncritically in with trends in the European-oriented critical humanities.” (McLaughlin, 2004: 92) Since the article provides the reader with no empirical evidence of such implicit “xenophobia”, one is reluctant to take the author’s word for it as the very existence of a homogeneous “American sociology” is dubious at best, given its high diversity in methods and approaches.

Is McLaughlin correct in assuming that the continuing reliance of Canadian scholars on British sociology is “something that can be seen in terms of faculty hiring, university governance, and culture as well as the intellectual orientation of Canadian institutions of higher education” (McLaughlin 2004: 89)? Should readers believe him when he claims that American sociology is neglected by Canadian social scientists? We leave to others to assess if McLaughlin is right in arguing that England, “the homeland of empiricism, classical liberal political and economic thought, Fabian socialism and analytic philosophy”, truly “remains a relative backwater with regards to the discipline of sociology” (McLaughlin, 2005: 16). What appears more problematic in our eyes is that throughout his three lengthy papers, the author mainly relies on quotations from a few Canadian sociologists, vague intuitions and unquestioned judgements to substantiate his claims. The only fact offered as hard evidence of the embedment of Canadian sociology within a British tradition is that “even as late as 1997, faculty in sociology departments with M.As and PhD. Programs in Canada where *ten times more likely* to be trained in Britain than faculty at equivalent institutions in the United States” (McLaughlin, 2004: 90, emphasis by the author).

Yet, the detailed analysis of the academic origins of Canadian faculty members hardly supports McLaughlin’s conclusion. If indeed, to use his data, 11% of them were trained in Britain in 1997, three times more (35%) were trained in the United-States and 42% of them were trained in Canada. These numbers appear to indicate an American *domination* over Canadian universities. Inferring the continued British influence on Canadian sociology from the fact that 11% of Canadian sociology department faculty hold a British Ph.D. as opposed to 1% in the USA is intriguing to say the least. It should be obvious that the dominance of a tradition (or of any other trait for that matter) in a given country should not be evaluated in light of the comparative distribution of that

trait *between* countries but through a measure of its distribution *within* that country. Hence, from the fact that British trained sociologists are almost absent in US sociology departments one cannot conclude (even using fuzzy logic) that British trained sociologists are dominant in Canada because they are present there in a larger proportion than in US. If among Canadian sociologists a tenth is trained in Britain and a third in the USA — that is *three times* as much —, one is hard pressed to conclude from such proportions that British sociology is dominating the Canadian field (a fact well noted by Johnston, 2005: 515). The only conclusion one can infer from McLaughlin's numbers is that the 95% of nationally trained sociologists in US sociology departments signals the complete autonomy (or, if one prefers, autarchy) of academic reproduction. By comparison, one can interpret the much lower proportion of locally trained Canadian sociologists as an absence of autonomy (and a measure of dependency) or as a measure of the openness of Canadian university to foreign approaches and traditions.

In our view, resisting falling into flimsy psychology, one should try to evaluate — approximately but objectively — the degree to which Canadian scholars have been interacting with American and British sociology. “Domination” by one or the other could then acquire a more precise meaning by being defined in quantitative terms. We have underlined above how the only numbers provided by McLaughlin already suggest that American-trained sociologists are more influential (three times as much) on the Canadian scene, than their British-trained colleagues. Using many different indicators of the intellectual orientation of Canadian sociologists and of interaction between sociologists from different countries one can see if they converge toward that conclusion or not. In presenting a cartography of Canadian sociology, through a series of indicators such as geographical origin of faculty's highest diploma, level of international collaborations, country of publications and referencing practices,¹ our goal in this paper is to provide the reader with a better understanding of the influences to which sociologists have been exposed over the last quarter of the century in this country. By using quantitative indicators instead of impressionistic feelings, this approach also provides a way to assess the national autonomy and openness of Canadian sociologists to other sociological traditions.

Geographic Origins of Diplomas

A first indicator which helps to characterize the influence of foreign traditions on Canadian sociology is provided by data compiled from the “sociology departments” section of the *Commonwealth University Yearbook*. Table 1

1. For a discussion of the research methods employed by Canadian sociologists, see Platt (2006).

shows that in 1970, after the rapid growth of Canadian universities in the 1960s, 63.4% of faculty had received their highest diploma from an American institution, 17.5% from a Canadian institution, and only 7.8% from a British institution. With such a huge proportion (2 out of 3) one could easily talk of an “American invasion of Canada” (Steele and Matthews, 1970) during the 1960s.

As could be expected, with the development of graduate studies in Canadian sociology departments and a consequent indigenization (Cormier 2002), the proportion of Faculty with an American diploma decreased steadily through time. Nevertheless, in 2005 those with their highest degree from a university south of the border still represented 31% of the body of professors teaching and researching in Canadian sociology departments. By contrast, the proportion of British trained scholars remained marginal in Canadian institutions and never rose above 12%. Only at the beginning of the 21st century did Canadian-trained sociologists become predominant in their departments, with a slight majority (52.3%) in 2005. However, these Canadian trained graduate students who arrived in Canadian sociology departments over the past 25 years were quite obviously supervised by a great number of American trained professors who constituted almost two-thirds of the Faculty body in the 1970s and early 1980s. In brief, if the selection of countries in which to pursue graduate education is any indication of Canadian students’ “xenophobic sentiments”, then “the residual anti-Americanism in our culture” (McLaughlin, 2005: 9) appears rather thin.² In fact our data suggest a *strong* influence of American sociology in Canadian universities — notwithstanding the fact that many American sociologists who moved to Canada in the 1960s and 1970s, in opposition to the Vietnam War, were very critical of their government and society (Hagan, 2001). It is interesting to contrast these trends with the situation in francophone Quebec sociology departments. As Table 2 shows, the proportion of highest degrees obtained in France is much higher than those obtained in USA. It should be noted however that the strong presence of France is essentially an effect of the first wave of hiring during the 1970s, most faculty hired then being still active. Since the mid-1980s, around 60% of the new professors received their highest diplomas from Quebec institutions (Warren, 2005). Hence, as in the rest of Canada, indigenization followed the development of Ph.D. programmes in sociology during the 1970s and 1980s.

2. Moreover at the level of content, one does not detect any major difference between Canadian and American curriculum. Although Canadian sociology undergraduate programs offered more theory courses than their American counterparts in 1994, this was mainly due to the latter’s decreased compulsory sociology courses. Glimpsing at the content of the theory courses, the differences appear slim (Guppy and Arai, 1994).

Table 1. Origin of highest degree of Full time Canadian sociologists

Year	Canada		USA		UK		France		Other		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
1960	16	30.2	25	47.2	7	13.2	3	5.7	2	3.8	53
1970	76	17.5	276	63.4	34	7.8	14	3.2	35	8.0	435
1975	164.5	24.4	397	59.0	46.5	6.9	19	2.8	46	6.8	673
1980	208.5	29.2	380	53.2	50	7.0	37	5.2	38.5	5.4	714
1985	203.5	30.6	349	52.4	51	7.7	26	3.9	36.5	5.5	666
1990	284	37.1	339	44.3	64	8.4	37	4.8	41	5.4	765
1995	207	41.2	196	39.0	55	11.0	28	5.6	16	3.2	502
2000	234	44.9	190	36.5	63	12.1	21	4.0	13	2.5	521
2005	238	52.3	141	31.0	53	11.6	16	3.5	7	1.5	455

Source: Commonwealth University Yearbooks. In rare cases when faculty acknowledged two equally high degrees received in two different countries, the number was split in two.

Table 2. Origin of highest degree of Full time French-speaking Quebec sociologists

Year	Canada		USA		UK		France		Other		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
1960	6	54.5	4	36.4	0	0	1	9.1	0	0.0	11
1970	8	29.6	5	18.5	0	0	9	33.3	5	18.5	27
1975	14	29.8	13	27.7	0	0	13	27.7	7	14.9	47
1980	10	16.4	12	19.7	2	3.3	32	52.5	5	8.2	61
1985	7	16.7	10	23.8	1	2.4	21	50.0	3	7.1	42
1990	26	34.2	10	13.2	4	5.3	31	40.8	5	6.6	76
1995	27	34.6	9	11.5	4	5.1	30	38.5	8	10.3	78
2000	9	26.5	7	20.6	3	8.8	15	44.1	0	0	34
2005	13	38.2	5	14.7	3	8.8	13	38.2	0	0	34

Source: Commonwealth University Yearbooks.

All years : Université de Montréal and Université Laval — except 1975 to 1995 when Université du Québec à Montréal was also included.

International collaborations

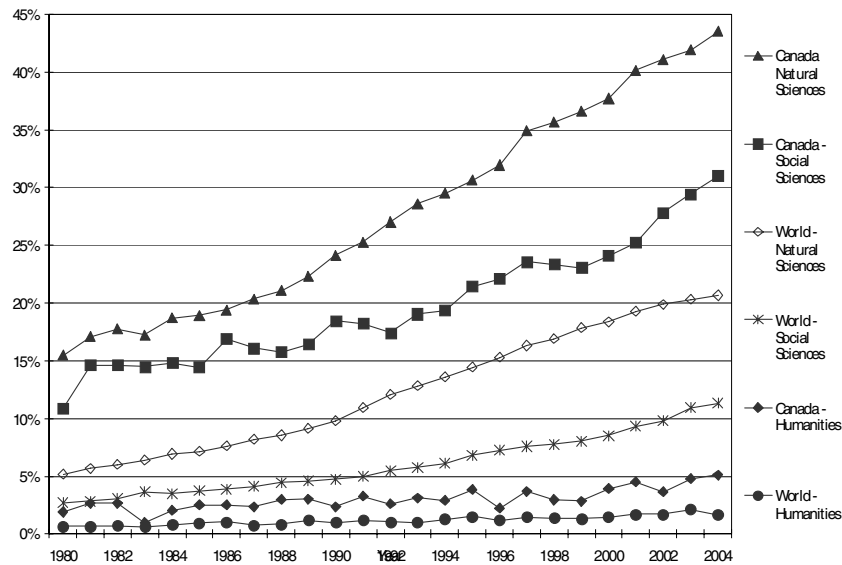
Calculating the number of joint publications with authors from different countries³ enables us to measure trends and patterns in international collabora-

3. We use the addresses to identify countries of origins of authors. The bibliometric data presented here comes from the Canadian Bibliometric Database (CBD)TM. The Observatoire des sciences et des technologies (OST) built the Database using information from the Thomson ISI databases on CD-ROM: the Science Citation IndexTM, the Social Sciences Citation IndexTM and the Arts and Humanities Citation IndexTM. Although these three databases list several types

tions. This particular mapping of the collaborative activities of social scientists provides yet another indicator of Canadian scholars' willingness to build networks with other scholars around the globe, including our neighbour south of the border.

Before coming to the case of sociology, it is worth looking at the general trends in international collaboration in the natural and social sciences. Figure 1 shows a steady growth in the proportion of papers written in international collaboration. At the world and Canadian levels, the natural sciences have a stronger propensity to collaborate, in stark contrast with the humanities where this practice, which remains an exception, does not rise significantly over the period

Figure 1: International collaboration trends in NSE, social sciences and humanities, Canada and the world, 1980–2004



Source: Observatoire des sciences et des technologies (OST) using SCI, SSCI, and AHCI databases.

of documents, only articles, research notes and review articles are generally used for bibliometric studies because they are the main knowledge dissemination media. The use of these data bases for social sciences disciplines has two main limitations (Archambault *et al.* 2005): the lack of coverage of research output in any media other than journal articles; and its limited coverage of articles published in language other than English. We would like to thank Vincent Larivière for his contribution to the production and formatting of the bibliometric data and Kris Murray for the construction of Table 1 and Table 2.

covered here. The social sciences stand between these two major disciplinary groupings and their growth tends to follow that of the pure sciences, with the consequence that nearly one-third of Canadian publications in the social sciences are now (in 2004) the result of international collaborations. This greater internationalisation of the Canadian scientific field may be explained by the attraction exercised by prestigious and well established foreign scientific institutions, and by the academic networks built during graduate studies. More generally, it is well established that smaller countries manifest a greater tendency to write papers in international collaboration. By contrast, large countries like the USA have a much lower level of international collaboration than the world average (Gingras, Godin and Foisy, 1999).

For sociology,⁴ the proportion of international collaboration, (as measured by co-authors addresses) rose from an average of 13% in the 1980s to a little less than 18% in the 1990s (Gingras and Larivière, 2005). But over and above these general trends, the question may be raised: With whom do Canadian sociologists tend to publish? To assess McLaughlin's statement of the weak influence of American sociology in Canada, we have to look more closely at the relationships between Canadian sociologists and their British and American colleagues. Indeed, given the academic training of Canadian sociologists⁵ stated above, one would expect Canadian sociologists to work with American scholars in roughly 33% of all collaborations and with British scholars for 10% of all collaborations. Any major departure from these levels would indicate stronger or weaker influences of these national traditions (whatever they are). If, for instance, 50% of Canadian papers in social sciences were published in collaboration with British colleagues, there would be a clear indication of a privileged connection in Canada to the kind of social sciences practiced in the United Kingdom. As we can see in Table 3, this is clearly not the case.

The collaborative partner most often chosen by Canadian sociologists is undoubtedly the USA, totalizing more than half of all papers written with foreign colleagues. In second place one finds the UK, followed by France. This should come as no surprise. Geographic proximity, as well as culture and language ties naturally influence collaboration. Obviously these findings underscore the remnants of ancient colonial ties: McLaughlin is right in arguing that the publishing practices of English speaking Canadian sociologists betray their "historical colonial relationship to the British Empire" (McLaughlin, 2004: 89) but these remnants are precisely that: remnants, and their weight is negligible as compared to the actual strength of the links with the USA. For

4. "Sociology" is here defined by a corpus of 93 source journals in the ISI databases.

5. Our use of the term "Canadian sociologists" means "faculty members teaching in sociology departments."

Table 3. Major countries of international collaboration in sociology (1981–2003)

Country	Canada		Quebec	
	N	%	N	%
United States	616	54	106	42
United Kingdom	133	12	19	8
France	52	5	45	18
Australia	50	4	8	3
Others	300	26	73	29
All Countries	1,151	100	251	100

Source: OST's CBD™ using SSCI and AHCI databases.

Quebec, the same can be said of France, whose presence is essentially explained by collaborations initiated by French-speaking Quebec sociologists. Among francophone sociology departments, France ranks second as a partner, followed by the United-Kingdom in third place and Belgium (not shown) in fourth place, just above Australia.

Places of Publication and Referencing Practices

The place of publications of Canadian sociologists also provides an insight into their connection with American and British sociology (Fournier and Trépanier, 1985).⁶ One would expect Canadians to rush their papers into British journals if the domination of that tradition were as important as MacLaughlin suggests. As can be seen from Table 4 however, about half of the papers by Canadian sociologists appeared in sociological journals published in USA and less than 15% in Britain. The presence of France is essentially due to francophone sociologists working in Quebec universities. In light of these data it is hard to argue that the British influence is comparable to the American one.

Whereas Table 4 is based on the analysis of 93 sociological journals over 25 years, Douglas Baer arrives at the plausible conclusion of a “greater affinity between Canadian and British sociology than there is between American sociology” (Baer, 2005, 497) on the basis of the analysis of the content of only four journals over a ten-year period (1993–2003). True, when comparing only the “top three” USA journals (*AJS*, *Social Forces*, *ASR*) with the major UK journal (*BJS*), the Canadian “affinity” with British sociology may appear slightly higher than with American sociology but this is a biased measure of the

6. Journals have been attributed to countries in which they are published using the Ulrich's database which contains data on journals published around the world in all languages. For details on this source see Archambault, *et al.* (2005).

Table 4. Place of publications of Canadian sociologists (1981–2003)

Country	Canada		Quebec	
	N	%	N	%
USA	550	51	516	47
Canada	196	18	214	19
Other Countries	147	14	178	16
UK 143	13	170	15	
France	40	4	28	3
N 1,076	100	1,106	100	

Source: OST CBD™ using SSCI and AHCI databases.

journals publication market. We have here a clear case where the difference in interpretation is an effect of the methodology employed. Whereas Baer uses presence of Canadians in so-called “top journals”, without looking at the total distribution of their papers, we make our comparison on the basis of the total number of Canadian papers, which is the only way to produce a valid measure of the relative weight of the American and British influence on Canadian practices. Logically, one must first look at the general distribution of countries among those journals, as we show in Table 5. A first striking observation is that all these journals are in fact national forums catering to local scholars. With more than 90% of the papers in the three American Journals coming from authors located in USA, and between 84% and 95% of authors in the two Canadian sociology journals coming from Canada, the *BJS* seems an exception with only 60% of local authors (looking more like an “Anglo-Saxon” or even “Commonwealth” journal than a strictly British one).

As far as Canadian presence in *BJS* is concerned, it is still lower than the American presence in this journal (10% versus 14%), Australia not trailing far behind (6%). These numbers point toward the role of English as the dominant language of the field as well as to the remnants of colonial heritage already mentioned above. All things considered, over the past twenty-five years Canadian sociologists published their papers three times as much in American sociological journals than in British ones (Table 4). Our data show that the “arm of history” of Canada’s colonial relationship to the British Empire, mentioned by Baer, does not reach long enough to seriously grasp Canadian sociologists’ collar.

While international collaborations and place of publications are a reflection of social networks, an analysis of the references contained in their published papers is more indicative of their intellectual content. Table 6 shows the country of origin of the journals cited by Canadian sociologists. Once again, American-based journals received the largest part (two-third) of the references while

Table 5. Country of origin of papers published in the major American, British and Canadian journals (1981–2003)

Country	<i>Am. J. of Soc.</i>		<i>Am. Soc. Rev.</i>		<i>Brit. J. of Soc.</i>		<i>Soc. Forces</i>		<i>Can. J. of Soc.</i>		<i>Can. Rev. of Soc. and Ant.</i>	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
USA	1,020	91	1,276	94	107	14	1,257	94	41	9	25	5
UK	31	3	18	1	454	60	13	1	15	3	11	2
Canada	37	3	36	3	79	10	43	3	385	84	523	95
Australia	9	1	10	1	49	6	9	1	2	0	3	1
Other Countries	102	9	85	6	123	16	80	6	35	8	10	2
World	1,122	100	1,353	100	760	100	1,343	100	456	100	548	100

Source: OST using SSCI and AHCI databases.

British-based journals received only 13%. As expected language and cultural ties explain the fact that French-speaking Quebec sociologists are the only ones to refer significantly to French sociology journals (11%) (Fournier 1972), their Anglophone colleagues showing scant interest in them.

Conclusion

Contrary to McLaughlin's assumption, the "British version of the discipline" has neither previously (in the past 25 years), nor currently had an "enormous influence in Anglo-Canadian sociology" (McLaughlin, 2004: 90). Obviously, "the institutional context and history of our disciplinary practice in Canada are far more British *than is the case in the US*" (McLaughlin, 2006: 119, our emphasis.); however such a truism (the *weak* influence of UK sociology in USA) cannot confirm the converse, that is: the *strong* presence of British sociology in Canada. In fact, the converging results of the above indicators paint a quite different picture in which American sociology is everywhere central: be it in terms of training, international collaboration, place of publication or referencing practices, the British presence remains, for all these indicators, much lower, fluctuating between 10% and 15%. By contrast, USA represents about half of the references and international collaborations with Canadians, slightly more than the proportion of Canadian sociology faculty trained south of the border.

Given its historical ties to this country and the UK and its geographic proximity to the former — not to mention its primary language of publication (English) — Canadian scholars are more likely to work with these two countries than with any other ones. These results should have been expected for anyone familiar with the debates surrounding the Canadianisation movement (e.g.

Table 6. Countries of origins of journals cited by Canadian sociologists (1980–2004)*

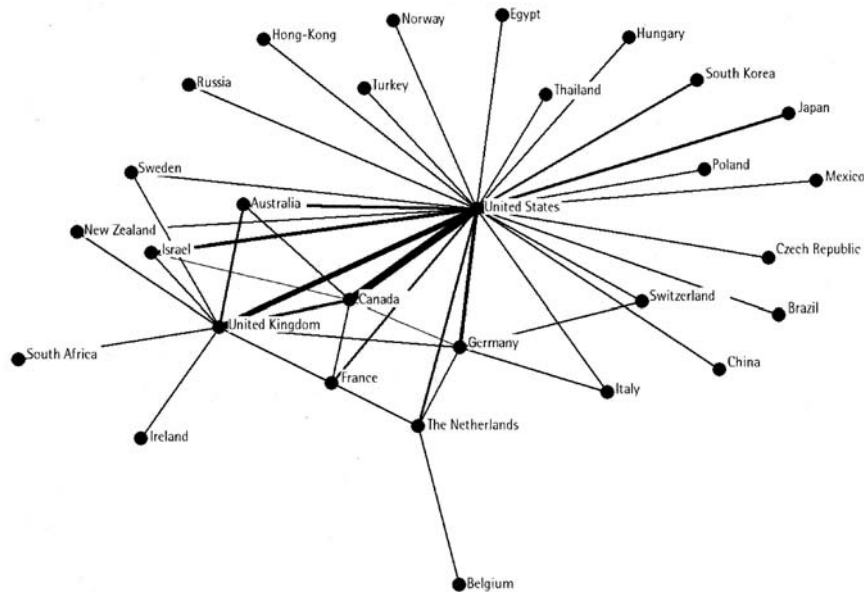
Citing University/ Year	Total Articles	USA		UK		Canada		France		Quebec		Other		All references	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Canadian-English Universities	763	7,729	68.1	1,445	12.7	1,249	11.0	156	1.4	77	0.7	699	6.2	11,355	100
1980–1984	132	1,111	72.2	122	7.9	180	11.7	25	1.6	30	1.9	71	4.6	1,539	100
1985–1989	146	1,172	63.2	218	11.8	299	16.1	40	2.2	22	1.2	103	5.6	1,854	100
1990–1994	159	1,785	69.8	312	12.2	267	10.4	29	1.1	9	0.4	154	6.0	2,556	100
1995–1999	190	1,980	66.9	441	14.9	277	9.4	31	1.0	9	0.3	221	7.5	2,959	100
2000–2004	136	1,681	68.7	352	14.4	226	9.2	31	1.3	7	0.3	150	6.1	2,447	100
Quebec-English Universities	142	1,205	63.5	347	18.3	188	9.9	20	1.1	8	0.4	129	6.8	1,897	100
1980–1984	15	137	62.3	31	14.1	26	11.8	5	2.3	7	3.2	14	6.4	220	100
1985–1989	27	180	65.7	37	13.5	46	16.8	0	–	0	–	11	4.0	274	100
1990–1994	39	322	67.4	67	14.0	34	7.1	9	1.9	0	–	26	9.6	478	100
1995–1999	36	392	61.5	139	21.8	58	9.1	5	0.8	1	0.2	42	6.6	637	100
2000–2004	25	174	60.4	73	25.3	24	8.3	0	–	0	–	16	5.6	288	100
Quebec-French Universities	187	1,271	51.9	266	10.9	312	12.7	265	10.8	76	3.1	261	10.6	2,451	100
1980–1984	17	46	53.5	0	–	26	30.2	6	7.0	3	3.5	5	5.8	86	100
1985–1989	25	224	45.7	50	10.2	58	11.8	71	14.5	38	7.8	49	10.0	490	100
1990–1994	33	156	48.3	24	7.4	46	14.2	43	13.3	4	1.2	50	15.5	323	100
1995–1999	56	314	49.4	47	7.4	100	15.7	86	13.5	11	1.7	77	12.1	635	100
2000–2004	56	531	57.9	145	15.8	82	8.9	59	6.4	20	2.2	80	8.7	917	200
All Universities	1,092	10,205	65.0	2,058	13.1	1,749	11.1	441	2.8	161	1.0	1,089	6.9	15,703	100

* English Canadian universities include: Carleton, Toronto, Western, UBC, Simon Fraser, York. Anglophone Quebec Universities: McGill, Concordia, and Bishop's. Francophone Quebec Universities: Laval, Montréal, Réseau de l'université du Québec (UQ), Sherbrooke.
Source: OST using SSCI and AHCI databases.

Kornberg and Tharp, 1972). But they also reflect the fact that the United States is the biggest player in the international scientific field, followed by the United Kingdom. In other words, Canadian social scientists also work primarily with American and British scholars because these countries are the most important loci of the production of science. The USA is the first country for international collaboration among scholars from most countries, while former Commonwealth countries tend to also collaborate with UK (Figure 2).

If there were one general conclusion to draw from the preceding data it would be that over the last 25 years, Canadian sociology, in conformity with the history of scientific disciplines around the world, developed all the tools of a national discipline, including graduate programs, journals, associations (Gingras, 1991), and even textbooks (Hiller, 1981). Another conclusion, more methodological in nature, is that without the use of indicators to define such terms as “influential”, “dominant”, “weakly institutionalized”, the discussion is bound to remain at the level of moral and subjective evaluations. What we proposed here is simply to use the tools of our trade when we aim at being reflexive.

Figure 2. International Collaboration of Countries in Sociology, 1981–2003. (Only fluxes of 10 or more joint papers are shown.)



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