The Chicago School at World War 1: Herbert Adolphus Miller and a Road Not Taken
Jan Balon and John Holmwood

Herbert Adolphus Miller (1875-1951) is a marginal and forgotten figure in the history of sociology. He exists as an outer satellite of the Chicago School of sociology, albeit with no direct connection by training or appointment. His name appears as author with Robert E Park on one of the landmark books of its early period, *Old World Traits Transplanted* (1921), although, as we shall see, even this role is contested. He does not feature in histories of the Chicago school, except, at best, as a footnote, and as someone who did not quite make the cut. Nonetheless, he was part of its milieu sharing its roots in pragmatist philosophy, activism within the settlement movement and progressive politics more generally. His PhD at Harvard between 1902 and 1905 was undertaken with Josiah Royce and William James, and he was closely connected with Mary E. McDowell who had established the University of Chicago Settlement House in 1894. Significant, too, was his strong involvement in the sociology and politics of race relations, including as an educator at 'historically Black' colleges. Although never appointed at the University of Chicago, he spent a significant part of his career – between 1914 and 1924 – at Oberlin College in Cleveland, itself within the Chicago sphere of influence. Moreover, he appeared to be well-networked – he met W.I. Thomas in 1911. This was shortly before Thomas met Park and it was Thomas who recommended him to Oberlin (where Thomas had himself taught for two academic years in 1894 and 1895). In 1924, Miller moved to Ohio State University in Columbus, for reasons that are not entirely clear, but which are implied to be associated with disquiet about his political involvements. In 1931 he was sacked from Ohio State in a case that was taken up by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP 1932). What can we learn about the sociology and politics of knowledge from Miller's fate?

Forgotten figures have become a new topic within the sociology of knowledge. As McLaughlin (1998) has suggested, there is now less confidence in the idea that marginality is to be explained by individual characteristics (for example, concerning the quality of the work, etc) and there is more interest in how the nature of institutions and academic networks serve to render an individual marginal. For their part, Law and Lybeck comment, "it is important to understand who, when, where, and why sociologists became excluded from the canon, how they became 'failures'" (2015: 3). Of course, that also raises issues of how and why they come to be 'rediscovered' and why it matters that they should. In the case of Miller, we will suggest that his fate is bound up with the particular manner in which Chicago sociology itself developed and professionalised, such that the very nature of what would otherwise appear to be his propitious networks meant that Miller came to be aligned with academic practices and political leanings that were being displaced in the development of the Chicago School at its centre.

In this way, Miller's fate has some similarities with that of the women discussed by Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley (2002) who were represented as conducting 'settlement sociology' and as not rising to the standards of a 'proper' science (see also Deegan 1988). In fact, Miller's interests in Bohemian (Czech) migration and the nationalist politics of immigrant communities was sparked by McDowell's own involvement with the

Bohemian community in Chicago, as well as his own engagement while at Oberlin with the large community recently migrated to Cleveland. We can – and will – also draw a parallel with the trajectory of W. E. B. Du Bois. As various writers have suggested, his sociological arguments were neglected within mainstream sociology, notwithstanding their significance and substance (Morris 2015, et). After the end of post-Civil War reconstruction in the 1970s, the imposition of segregation under Jim Crow laws in the South, along with de facto segregation elsewhere in the US, meant that he was denied appointment at the centres of white sociology. At the same time, while his work was (falsely) represented as particular to the experiences of African Americans, it was not taken up by Chicago (or other) sociologists of race relations. His political work became more important and he left academic sociology behind, thereby reinforcing his neglect in mainstream sociology.

In fact, Chicago school sociologists managed both the exclusion of Du Bois and the subordination of other sociologists of colour. In part, it followed from Park's own understanding of race relations as primarily an issue of Southern states and otherwise resolved by a process of gradual assimilation. But it also derived from his earlier role as amanuensis to Booker T Washington from whom he derived his views on race as well as an antipathy to Du Bois (Matthews 1977, Lyman 1992). In the case of Du Bois the exclusion was done straightforwardly and self-consciously by Park (Wilson 2006; Morris 2015). The department did train significant sociologists of colour – for example, Charles Johnson and E. Franklin Frazier – but they took up positions in historically Black colleges, specifically Fisk University in Nashville, and not at Chicago (where a colour bar existed *de facto*, somewhat in contradiction of Park's view of a gradual overcoming of racial prejudice). They continued with the 'official' Chicago position on race relations as being an issue of assimilation as a consequence of the operation of patronage. Park, himself, went to Fisk after his retirement from University of Chicago where he visited part-year from 1936 until his death in 1944. Indeed, E. Franklin Frazier's theoretical approach to race and the role of colonialism became noticeably more radical after he left Fisk University to join Howard University in 1934 and after Park's death though Frazier retained a proper respect for his mentor (Platt 1991, Henry 1995).

Of course, Du Bois (and Frazier, too, though he was of a later generation) was of far greater significance as a sociologist than Miller, but Miller's fate is not without relevance to the history of African American sociology and its reception. Du Bois was a founding member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) iwhich was developing a civil rights agenda in contrast to the quietism of Washington's approach. This coincided with the migration of African Americans to Northern cities, including Chicago, and the merging of a number of progressive African American reform groups into the Urban League in 1911 which worked alongside the NAACP. George Haynes, an undergraduate student at Fisk when Miller was there (and who subsequently spend much of his academic career at Fisk), was co-founder of the League, while Charles Johnson who was a graduate student in Chicago, was its first director of research. Robert Park was the first president of Chicago branch of the Urban League for the first two years after it was established in 1916, although the leading white supporters within the Chicago milieu were from the settlement movement and the School of Civics and Philanthropy – for example, Sophonisba

Breckinridge, Edith Abbott and Mary McDowell (Strickland 1966). Indeed, Park's involvement receded after the war which marked a turning point in the development of Chicago sociology. In contrast, Miller retained his involvement with the Urban League in Cleveland and Columbus where he was chair of the local branch at the time of his dismissal in 1931.

Miller becomes a 'forgotten sociologist' as a consequence of Chicago sociology's eschewal of reformism and its turn to 'science' and the elaboration of proper theoretical conceptualisations of research. In that sense, he is easily seen as representing an earlier moment in the development of Chicago sociology when social research, reform and progressive politics were united. In this respect, he is collateral damage in the evolution of its 'collaborative circle', to use Farrell's (2001) term. Miller is a satellite that left the orbit and gravitational pull of the core group. Yet we do not think that explanation is sufficient. Farrell suggests that there are social structural conditions for collaborative circles, but he has little to say about the racialised and gendered conditions that might apply; these are central to the story of the 'first' Chicago school as it comes to be called in this period of its formation after the first world war. The subordination of female sociologists to the settlement movement and of African American scholars extended to others who continue to work in the older way.

Farrell's account (and of others such as that of McLaughlin) also identifies the special 'creativity' and innovation of the core group as it rebels against orthodoxies to create its own distinctive position. The figure of Du Bois should be sufficient to remind us that those who are excluded might have a greater claim. Du Bois was never part of the collaborative circle, while Miller was removed. We shall suggest, too, that he represented a more fruitful development of Chicago sociological theory than is found within the core group by extending its social psychology to issues of power and domination. In addition, he was alone among the white sociologists of the pre-war generation of Chicago sociologists inspired by pragmatism to steer it toward a radical and progressive position connecting race relations and colonialism (on which Dewey, for example, remained rather timid). Just as Du Bois developed a global (and post-colonial *avant la lettre*) angle to his work through the idea of an *international* 'color-line', so, too, did Miller develop his own arguments to address problems of colonialism and Empire, initially in the context of Slavic nationalism (or as Miller preferred to put it, of the self-determination of oppressed peoples). It was a strategic decision on the part of core Chicago sociologists to align a (temporary) color-line in northern cities with a general process of immigrant assimilation. As Persons (1987: 34) suggests, the main Chicago sociologists conflated race and ethnicity with a rural-urban distinction and, in that way, represented African American migration to the north as posing problems of 'adjustment' similar to that of European peasants migrating to the US. In contrast, Miller continued to have an interest in both race and immigration, what connected them, and how they differed. In that context, we will suggest that he made advances beyond those at the core.

Forgotten figures are less interesting if they never did burn bright. McLaughlin's (1998) account of Eric Fromm's fate within the Frankfurt school collaborative circle, for example,

depends, in part, on his public recognition in the early period of their US exile. Fromm's transgressions appear straightforward and his fate determined by a miscalculation in terms of their consequences. Paradoxically, the moment at which Miller appears to be most connected – his seeming collaboration with Robert Park on the writing of *Old World Traits Transplanted* (1921) – is the moment when the connection is severed. Nor does it appear to be occasioned by conflict. The book was part of a 10-volume series funded by the Carnegie Trust on 'Americanization'. It was planned in 1917 with a schedule to begin in January in 1918 and to be completed by July 1919. Miller was given responsibility for research on Immigrant Heritages and Park was to be responsible for a report on the Immigrant Press (published in 1922). A third Chicago sociologist, Sophonisba P. Breckinridge, was responsible for a volume on housing. She would become professor in the incorporated School of Civics and Philanthropy. The final overview report by the Director of the Project, Arthur T Burns was not published.

Burns was himself a significant figure, both at the University of Chicago and in the social survey movement that was associated with 'settlement sociology' by the Chicago school sociologists (Bulmer 1984). He was primarily an administrative figure and had been first Dean of the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy between 1907-9. The School had been established under a different guise in 1903-4 to teach the first courses in social work associated with the University of Chicago. The relationship was fraught and the university withdrew support in 1905 when it continued under the auspices of the Chicago Commons. It was finally incorporated into the university in 1920, with the Chicago sociologists maintaining their distance. Burns left the University of Chicago to become secretary of the Pittsburgh Civic Commission with administrative responsibility for the Pittsburgh survey conducted by Paul Kellog (Cohen 1991). He then moved to the Cleveland Foundation in 1914 as Director of Surveys with the intention of setting up surveys similar to those of Pittsburgh (Tittle 1992). The latter plan was confounded and Cleveland surveys were oriented to specific social problems, including a major set of surveys on education to which Miller was appointed by Burns to conduct a report into Immigrants and Schooling (published in 1916). Burns was forced to resign in 1917 after political opposition to a report that had seemed to uncover the existence of a new red-light district which became part of a mayoral electoral battle (Tittle 1992: 78). From Cleveland, Burns was appointed to administer the Americanization studies at the Carnegie Trust.

The Carnegie Americanization studies are not widely remarked in the secondary literature on US immigration policy, which is much more concerned with the xenophobic Dillingham Commission and its 42 volume report published in 1911 (King 2000, Mirel 2010). The latter had recommended stringent measures for controlling against poor 'stock', promoting eugenic arguments about unfit 'races', and arguing for a rigorous assimilation to 'American values'. The Carnegie-funded project appears to have missed its moment, notwithstanding that its focus was on identifying appropriate'*methods*' of Americanization, rather than identifying social problems associated with immigration (Lagemann 1987). By 1918 the impetus for it was petering out. It had been conceived during a period of public concern about the patriotism of immigrants to the USA and in the light of possible entry as a combatant in WW1 which took place in early 1917. This was decisive in bringing the war to

an end in November 1918 with allied victory. The impetus to 'Americanization' and its terms had been set by the earlier Dillingham Commission and the Carnegie Project no longer had purchase, or much interest, except perhaps for historians of the Chicago school, and even then it was superseded in importance by the publication between 1918-21 of the 5 volume study of the *Polish Peasant in America and Europe*, by W.I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki which came to be regarded as a landmark in US sociology (Abbott and Egloff 2003).

Indeed, the Carnegie Trust itself shifted its direction of effort away from a direct engagement with social and public policy toward funding the professionalization of social research, following the appointment of a new Director, Frederick Keppel, in 1923 (Lagemann 1989). Significantly, this involved funding the Social Science Research Council which was set up by Charles Merriam, among others, in 1923. It became active in promoting appropriate methodologies for social science involving critical appraisals and symposia on exemplary studies, including in 1939 a volume on *The Polish Peasant* by then Chair of the Chicago Department of Sociology, Herbert Blumer (1939). This rehabilitation of W.I. Thomas and 're-incorporation' into the post-1920 Chicago School continued with an ESRC-funded Committee on W.I. Thomas's Contributions to Social Science with which published a volume of his papers on social behavior and personality (Volkart 1951) with, as we shall see, collateral damage to Miller's reputation.

Although Miller is connected by authorship to Park, his connection was most clearly with Thomas, who had recommended him to his post at Oberlin and who was himself also closely involved in the settlement movement which was part of Miller's milieu in both Chicago and Cleveland. The Volkart volume published a chapter from *Old World Traits,* where it was announced that the book, "while published over the names of Park and Miller, was primarily the work of Thomas" (Volkart 1951: 259). Volkart referred readers to a letter from Arthur Burns. Ostensibly, the reason was the scandal associated with Thomas's name. However, this had taken place in April 1918 and, seemingly, had not impeded his work on the project until the point of publication some three years later. And, of course, we have seen that Burns and Miller were familiars from Cleveland.

Winifred Raushenbush, biographer to Robert Park and employed by him as assistant on his Immigrant Press project in 1922, describes some of the circumstances, though her description is not trustworthy. She notes that Miller withdrew from the project in 1918, citing a notice in the November *American Journal of Sociology* to that effect and that Miller had taken up work for the 'League of Central European Nations' (more generally known as the Mid-European Union). He had become secretary to it and would be based in Washington and Pittsburgh. Indeed, according to the Survey magazine (1918), Burns was also involved with Miller in the activities associated with the Mid-European Union. The Mid-European Union published its first detailed declaration of independence and aims at the end of October after some months of organizing, so Miller's active involvement in the Carnegie project had ceased some time before.

Raushenbush describes Park as taking over from Miller, and that, "he knew there would be difficulties. Miller had employed a large staff, started many projects, and spent a considerable share of his $14,700 budget… [Park] probably would not have taken on the

study of immigrant heritages if it had not been possible for him to employ his friend William I. Thomas, then living in New York to assist him" (1979: 88). In fact, it was Miller who arranged for Thomas to take over and direct the project. Thomas had just completed the *Polish Peasant Study* and had neither income nor immediate employment. Indeed, according to the Survey magazine (1918), Burns was also involved with Miller in the activities associated with the Mid-European Union.

Of course, the friendship between Park and Thomas was such that the two were engaged in close discussion about their respective projects. Indeed, they shared an apartment. But Thomas's role directing the Immigrant Heritages project is evident even from Raushenbush's description of Park providing Thomas with readers' letters from a New York Yiddish newspaper that he had had translated – "Thomas, who had spent years painfully acquiring letters for his famous five-volume study, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, was delighted by the accessibility of this material and asked Park's permission to use [it] … (Raushenbush 1979: 91). This is a request between project directors, not from an assistant to the director (however senior the assistant). Raushenbush further comments that, "if Park had been handling the immigrant heritage study from the beginning, he would have broadened it into a study of immigrant communities, of which their heritage from the old country is a part" (1979: 89). The comment is puzzling because the organization of immigrant communities was the topic of another volume in the programme, *The Immigrant in the Neighbourhood* by John Daniels.

Although Raushenbush comments on the large staff employed by Miller with the implication that this was a concern for Park, there is evidence that there were difficulties between Park and some of the researchers that reflect less well on him. For example, Eleanor Ledbetter, a librarian at Cleveland Public Library had already developed a relationship with Miller through their common interest in the Slavic community in Cleveland and joined the Carnegie project in November 2018 (Jones 2013). However, she left in January, citing, according to Jones, "a conversation she had with Helen Horvath, a local Americanization teacher and Hungarian immigrant, about what was involved. Horvath had reacted negatively to what she viewed as patronizing and offensive survey questions proposed by Robert Ezra Park, an associate of Herbert Adolphus Miller on the Carnegie Corporation Americanization study." (2013: 257).

We will return to what this suggests about underlying intellectual differences between Miller and Park, for the moment we will merely point out that Ledbetter was reflecting an approach that she shared in common with Miller and derived from their mutual interests and criticism of the idea of Americanization. When Miller withdrew from the Carnegie study he had been involved in Slavic nationalist movements in Chicago and Cleveland for about a decade. This was a consequence of his involvement with the Chicago Settlement movement and his friendship with Mary E. McDowell. The Czech sociologist, Alice Masaryk. stayed in the settlement between 1903 and 1907, and her father Thomas (also a sociologist, philosopher and future president of a newly independent Czechoslovakia) was a visitor to the university and to the settlement in 1902 and between 1910 and 1912. Together with McDowell, Miller was active in petitioning the Austrian authorities for the release of Alice

Masaryk after her arrest on charges of sedition in 1915.[1] Thomas Masaryk was elected President of the Mid-European Union when Miller was appointed secretary and, in his memoir, describes it as “meeting pretty often to discuss all the ethnographical and political problems of the smaller mid-European peoples” (1927: 237).

In short, Miller had bigger fish to fry than the Carnegie study and he was very far from being an insignificant figure. McKee, for example, describes him as a student of Park (1993: 123), while Wacker (1983) suggests that while Miller harboured ‘nationalist’ sympathies toward group consciousness up to the end of the first world war, he subsequently allied national consciousness with racial and class consciousness and saw them as equally ‘pathological’. According to Wacker, his position evolved to be more conservative position than that of Park as more concerned with threats to stability and order (1983: 26). While it is true that Park does come to criticise Miller’s arguments about the ‘pathologies of domination’, the latter is criticising Park’s arguments about steady progress toward assimilation and is, in fact, as we shall see, endorsing a much more radical position than Park. In fact, he was one of the first white sociologists in the US to address Empire as a central issue for sociology and public policy. He received medals for his anti-imperialist advocacy by governments in India and in Korea. Indeed, in a cause célèbre of the American Association of University Professors, Miller was dismissed by Ohio State University in 1931 for speeches in India deemed to be ‘anti-British’ and offensive to the trustees of the university where he had been employed since 1924. In the AAUP’s deposition (1931), it identified that he had also been subject to complaints by parents of students for his liberal attitudes toward race relations, as well as his stances on domestic politics.

In the rest of this paper, we will look at the development of Miller’s sociology in Cleveland, up to his appointment to the Carnegie Americanization project, which we will suggest places him at odds with the positions of Thomas and Park, before going on to discuss his theoretical reconstruction of a social psychology of freedom and oppression that follows on from his experiences with the Mid-European Union.

[1] His reputation in the Czech Republic, understandably, is eclipsed by that of Masaryk but Miller was not only involved in drafting the Declaration of Independence, but also the first Constitution.