



Social Organization and Content in Collective Knowledge Production: Chicago and Columbia's Social Knowledge Shops

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HKT |

Friday, October 25 2024
9:30 a.m.- 11:00 a.m.



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How do key theories in a field come to be, and come to be recognized as touchstones for future scholars? This paper contributes to scholarship in the sociology of social knowledge construction by examining processes of work in parallel research projects at Chicago and Columbia, to describe the relationship between the social organization and substantive arguments of the projects. I draw on archive- and interview-based data to identify key features shaping the knowledge of the two teams, including qualities and affordances of leadership, pressures placed by outsiders, and challenges and opportunities tied to geographic location and dispersion. Further, I address how the availability and activatability of tethers across venues directed the attention of stakeholders inside and outside of a team, shaping their collective research and writing efforts and opportunities to receive credit. I suggest that focusing on the social organization of research can be profitably used to theorize, and then inform and critically examine, continuity and change in social science canons.



Daniel Menchik received his PhD in sociology from the University of Chicago in 2012. His research focuses on several areas of inquiry linked by a broad interest in the cultures and social organization of medicine, science, and other areas of expert work. He has written about how doctors organize their work in a way that enables them to retain control over tasks, strengthen medicine's coalescence, and ultimately, manage its authority. Recently, he has also been studying: the linguistic tools that professionals use to manage expectations in end-of-life interactions; the emergence of the idea of 'levels' in sociology; and the automation of expert knowledge in medicine and other occupations.