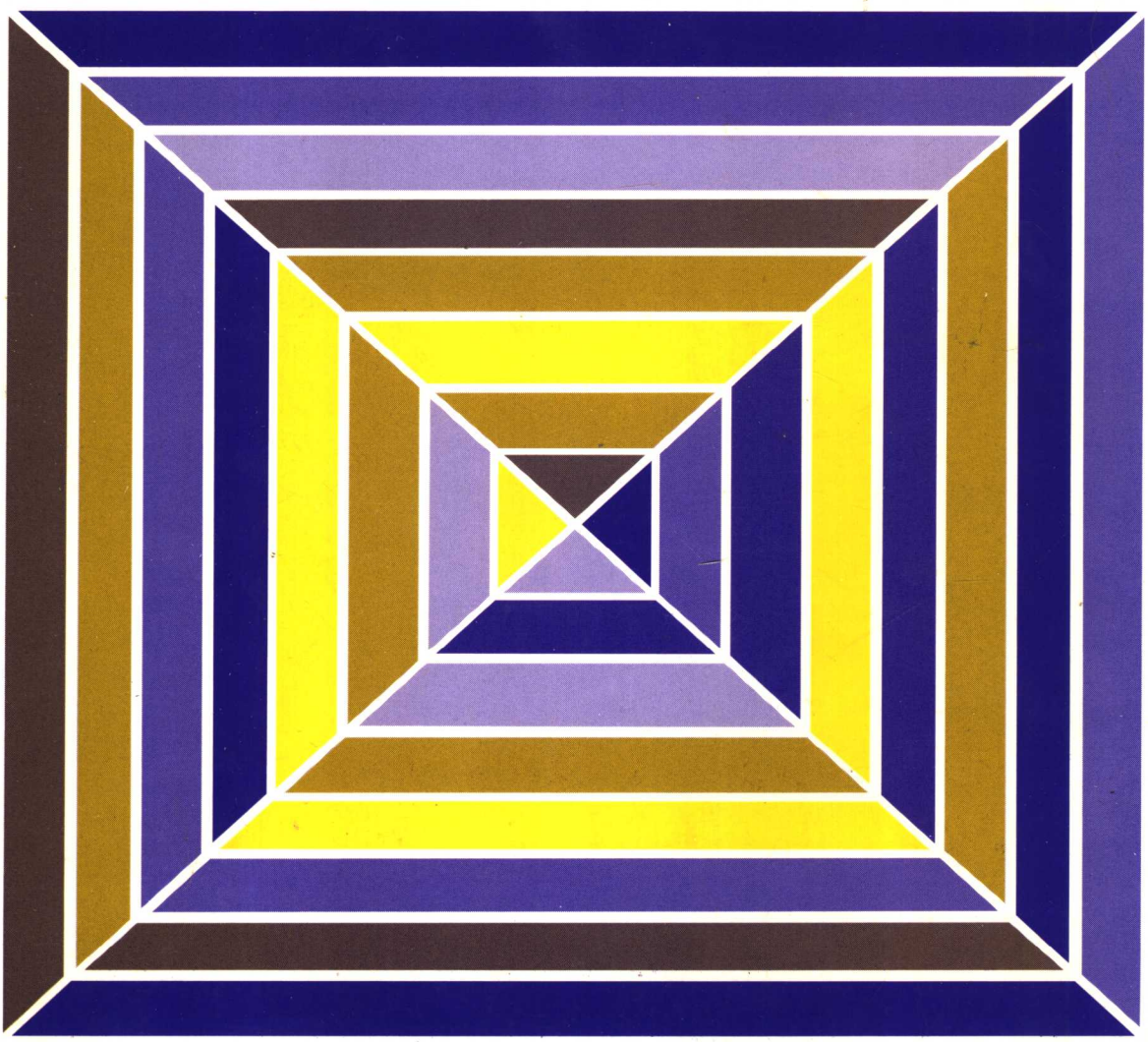
SOCIOLOGY:

WINDOWS ON SOCIETY

John W. Heeren
Marylee Mason

Introductory Readings



Third Edition

SOCIOLOGY: WINDOWS ON SOCIETY

THIRD EDITION

John W. Heeren
California State University, San Bernardino

Marylee Mason
Chaffey College

Review Questions and Applications by
Patricia Bergman, Ingrid Herman Reese, Jeanne Kohl, and the Editors

ROXBURY PUBLISHING COMPANY

NOTE TO INSTRUCTORS:

A comprehensive, 155-page **Instructor's Manual / Testing Program** is available from the publisher on request. For each article, it includes the following: general statement, key points, general conclusions, essay questions, and multiple-choice questions. The Testing Program is also available on **diskette**.

Library Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Sociology, windows on society/[selected by] John W. Heeren, Marylee Mason.—3rd ed.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references
ISBN 0-935732-53-5
1. Sociology. I. Heeren, John W., 1944- . II. Mason, Marylee, 1948- .
HM51.H396 1994
301—dc20 93-38019
CIP

SOCIOLOGY: WINDOWS ON SOCIETY, THIRD EDITION

Publisher: Claude Teweles
Editors: Anton Diether and Dawn VanDercreek
Cover Design: Allan Miller and Associates, San Diego, California
Typography: Synergistic Data Systems, Pasadena, California

Printed in the United States of America

ISBN 0-935732-53-5

ROXBURY PUBLISHING COMPANY
P.O. Box 491044
Los Angeles, California 90049-9044
(213) 653-1068

INTRODUCTION

Any anthology for introductory sociology has two somewhat contradictory obligations. These are 1) to be interesting, current, and accessible to its readers and 2) to fairly represent what the discipline is all about. We say these are contradictory requirements because introductory students are not necessarily interested in, or able to fully understand, the many sociological studies that are published. Moreover, sociologists are not always concerned with examining issues that are timely or topical, nor do they write for student readers. To strike a balance between these contradictory ideals, we have tried to emphasize sociological substance without sacrificing interest and readability.

The Readings

Unlike texts that rely on authors' interpretations of sociological material, ***Sociology: Windows on Society, Third Edition***, offers authentic, primary-source articles from both contemporary works and the classical literature of sociology. The anthology thus encourages student debate about actual sociological issues, as opposed to writers' interpretations of those issues.

The classic selections include readings from the works of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim. While other social sciences have moved away from their founders, sociology periodically returns to the classics for fresh insights. This is the nature of the field. The selections included here are both central to the classic tradition and highly readable.

The Third Edition offers contemporary articles focusing on topics of current interest, including gangs, the new urban ethnic immigrants, the overworked American, downward mobility in the Rust Belt, the underclass, AIDS, affirmative action, and the sharing of domestic chores.

The anthology maintains an emphasis on gender. This issue is central to the everyday reality of people in all societies and fundamental to many social and political issues in the United States. Moreover, gender has been at the heart of a considerable part of the most exciting sociological research in recent years. In addition to this emphasis on gender, we have enlarged the focus on ethnicity and multicultural concerns. This edition reflects the growing importance of this issue in recent American history and its significance to sociological researchers. As a discipline, sociology has an abiding interest in the role of ethnicity in social relations.

It should be said that the selections were chosen to challenge preconceived notions and conventional wisdom about the topics covered. This brings home to students the distinctive power of a sociological viewpoint (for example, MacAndrew and Edgerton's analysis of the social component in drunken behavior). The book is designed to motivate students to discover, through the sociological perspective, the hidden nature that often lies in familiar aspects of everyday life.

As the title suggests, the selections in this anthology can be viewed as "windows" on our social world. Students learn how sociology allows us to see everyday activities in a new light, from the familiar (Caplow's article on the striking regularities of Christmas gift giving patterns) to the exotic (Harris' study on India's worship of the sacred cow).

A few of the articles in ***Windows*** may be difficult for some students. Nevertheless, we have decided to include these selections for two reasons. First, they are important in representing what the discipline of sociology is all about and, in fact, do so more accurately than, for example, articles by non-sociologists written for national news magazines. Second, we feel it is important to maintain certain standards and expectations about the level of work required in college, even in first-year courses. Our hope is to offer opportunities for students to master difficult material. This raises their level of knowledge and skills with likely benefit to their self-esteem. Several methods for helping students master the more challenging articles are included in the ***Instructor's Manual/Testing Program***.

Organization

Windows is divided into five units. Unit One introduces the enterprise of sociology. Unit Two features topics relating to the intersection of culture, social organization, and the individual. The third unit considers various forms of social inequality based on class, ethnicity, gender, and age, while the fourth unit focuses primarily on social institutions. Unit Five addresses

issues confronting a society in flux.

The book includes biographical notes on the authors of the articles, as well as references and footnotes, at the end of each selection instead of at the back of the book.

The text can stand alone or be used to supplement any of the texts commonly used for the introductory course in sociology. Some of the selections have been condensed to make them more accessible to students; however, the sense of the material itself has not been altered.

The chart on page vi cross-references topic areas that commonly appear in introductory sociology texts to related selections in this anthology. Both the primary and secondary emphases of each chapter are listed. This will facilitate use of ***Windows*** as a supplement to any major text.

Review questions and suggested applications follow each selection. The applications can serve as class or small group projects; they offer students an opportunity to experience how the process of sociological research is conducted.

A comprehensive, 155-page ***Instructor's Manual/ Testing Program*** accompanies the text. It summarizes the conclusions of each article, lists key points, and provides both essay questions and multiple-choice questions. The Testing Program is also available on diskette.

We hope that these materials will aid instructors in making ***Windows*** as effective as possible.

Acknowledgements

Together with the editors, we would like to express our appreciation to the individuals whose feedback and revision suggestions helped us prepare the Third Edition.

Dedication

We wish to dedicate this book to our students and children. As we have taught them, they have taught us much in return.

John W. Heeren
California State University, San Bernardino

Marylee Mason
Chaffey College

USES OF SELECTIONS

Sociology: Windows on Society, Third Edition, will comfortably stand alone as a single assigned text. However, some instructors may chose to use this anthology to supplement another text. These instructors may find the following chart helpful, which groups the selections in ***Windows*** by topic. Primary and secondary emphases are listed separately.

Generic topics for an introductory sociology course	***Windows*** selections in which the topic is a primary emphasis	***Windows*** selections in which the topic is a secondary emphasis
Introduction	1, 2	4, 5, 6, 8
Research methods	3, (12), (16), (17), (33), (34)	8, 9, 21, 37, 38
Culture	4, 5, 6, 8, (17)	27, 33, 38, 39
Social organization	6, 7, 10, (29), (33)	20, 23, 30, 39
Socialization	8, 9, 10, (31)	29, 37
Social interaction	11, 12	9, 18, 21, 35, 37, 38
Class stratification	13, 14, 15, (12), (29), (39)	20, 26, 34
Ethnic inequality	15, 16, 17, (24), (38)	29, 33
Gender inequality	18, 19, (9), (11), (21), (28)	20, 22, 26, 36
Age inequality	20	22, 32
Family	21, 22, (6), (19), (28)	8, 11, 12, 23, 38
Political institutions	24	20, 26, 32, 38
Economy	23, 25, 26, (39)	5, 13, 14, 18, 30, 33, 38
Religion	27, 28	3, 5
Education	29, (2), (8)	9
Health and medicine	30, (12), (20), (37)	34
Popular culture	31, (17), (32)	35, 36
Deviance	32, 33, 34, (3), (4), (19), (23)	6, 8, 29, 35, 36, 37
Collective behavior	35, 36	28, 37, 38
Demography and urbanization	37, 38, (15), (16), (39)	3, 32, 33, 34, 35
Technology and change	39, 40, (5), (26), (27)	21, 30

(Parentheses indicate an alternative primary use for the selection)

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

- **Nancy Tatom Ammerman** teaches sociology at the Center for Religious Research and the Candler School of Theology at Emory University.
- **Joel Best** teaches sociology at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. He is the author of *Threatened Children* (1990) and the editor of *Images of Issues*.
- **Theodore Caplow** is Commonwealth Professor of Sociology at the University of Virginia. His books include *The Sociology of Work*, *Two Against One: Coalitions in Triads*, *Toward Social Hope*, and *The Academic Marketplace*. He is also one of the principal investigators and authors working on the Middletown III Project.
- **Dwight Conquergood** teaches in the Performance Studies Department at Northwestern University.
- **Dana H. Davidson**, with a degree in early childhood education, has experience in preschool teaching, administration, and teacher training.
- **Timothy Diamond** teaches at Loyola University. He is currently working on a book on nursing home aides.
- **Paula Dressel** teaches sociology at Georgia State University.
- **Emile Durkheim** (1858-1917) is considered one of the principle founders of modern sociology. His major works include *The Division of Labor in Society* (1893), *Rules of Sociological Method* (1895), *Suicide* (1897), and *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912).
- **Robert Edgerton** is on the staff of the Neuropsychiatric Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles.
- **Barbara Ehrenreich** is a social critic, writing columns for *Time* magazine and other publications. She is also the author of *The Worst Years of Our Lives*, *Fear of Falling*, *For Her Own Good*, *Hearts of Men*, and several other books.
- **Kathleen Ferraro** teaches sociology at Arizona State University.
- **Mark Fishman** teaches sociology at CUNY-Brooklyn College and is the author of *Manufacturing the News* (1980).
- **Barbara Garson** is the author of *All the Livelong Day* and of the plays *Macbird*, *Going Co-op*, *The Department*, and *The Dinosaur Door*. Her articles and stories are widely published, and she has received several national awards and fellowships.
- **Marvin Harris**, a well-known contemporary anthropologist, has published numerous books including *Cows, Pigs, Wars and Witches*, *Cannibals and Kings*, *Our Kind*, and a textbook, *Culture, People and Nature*.
- **Arlie Hochschild** teaches sociology at the University of California, Berkeley. She is the author of *The Second Shift* and *The Managed Heart*.
- **Gerald T. Horiuchi** teaches sociology at California State University, Fresno.
- **Martín Sánchez Jankowski** teaches sociology at the University of California, Berkeley, and is Chair of the Chicano/Latino Policy Project sponsored by the Institute for the Study of Social Change, also at Berkeley.
- **Christopher Jencks** teaches sociology at Northwestern University. His books include *Inequality* (1972) and *The Urban Underclass* (1991).
- **John Johnson** teaches sociology at Arizona State University.
- **Rosabeth Moss Kanter**, a Professor at Harvard Business School, is the author and editor of numerous books, including *Commitment and Community*, *The Change Masters*, and *Men and Women of the Corporation*.
- **Zella Luria** is a psychologist at Tufts University.
- **Craig MacAndrew** recently retired from the School of Social Sciences at the University of California, Irvine.
- **Michael Martin** teaches in the department of Human Development and the Family at Northern Illinois University.
- **Karl Marx** (1818-1883) is best known for *The Communist Manifesto* (published with Friedrich Engels in 1848) and *Das Kapital* (1867, 1885, 1894). Although Marxism is typically considered a political movement, its concern with social issues reflects Marx's connection to and interest in sociology.

- **Michael Messner** teaches sociology in the Program for the Study of Women and Men in Society at the University of Southern California.
- **C. Wright Mills** (1916-1962) was a leading critic of modern American civilization. Among his books are *White Collar*, *The Power Elite*, *Sociology and Pragmatism*, *Power, Politics and People*, and with H.H. Gerth, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*.
- **John Mirowsky** teaches sociology at Ohio State University. A major contributor to professional journals, he was the recipient of the 1985 Reuben Hill Award of the National Council on Family Relations. He is currently studying the effects of optimism vs. realism and personal control and interpersonal support on distress.
- **Charles Moskos** teaches sociology at Northwestern University. His books include *The American Enlisted Man*, *The Peace Soldiers*, and *A Call to Civic Service: National Service for Country and Community*.
- **Katherine S. Newman** teaches anthropology and is a Fellow of the Center for American Culture Studies at Columbia University.
- **Diana M. Pearce** is the Director of the Women and Poverty Project.
- **David M. Petersen** teaches sociology at Georgia State University.
- **Catherine E. Ross** teaches sociology at Ohio State University. She has published extensively in numerous journals and is currently studying the interplay of job conditions, parental responsibilities, and marital arrangements for women and their effect on mental health.
- **Lillian Rubin** is a psychologist and a sociologist. She is Alumni Professor of Interpretive Sociology at CUNY-Queens College. Her books include *Worlds of Pain*, *Women of a Certain Age*, *Intimate Strangers*, *Just Friends* and *Erotic Wars: What Happened to the Sexual Revolution?*.
- **Kent L. Sandstrom** is a Ph.D. candidate in sociology at the University of Minnesota. He is the coauthor, with Gary Alan Fine, of *Knowing Children: Participant Observation with Minors* (1988). He has also published articles on media conceptions of community planning and parental attitudes toward youth work.
- **Walter E. Schafer** teaches sociology at California State University, Chico.
- **Juliet Schor** teaches economics at Harvard University.
- **JoEllen Shively** teaches sociology at the Center for Research on Social Organization at the University of Michigan. Her current research includes (1) a comparison of U.S. Indian reservations (where only native Americans live) with reservations where the proportion of whites is equal to or higher than the proportion of native Americans, particularly with regard to socioeconomic status, assimilation, and ethnic identity, and (2) a study on perceptions of films by gender and race.
- **David A. Snow** teaches sociology at the University of Arizona.
- **Deborah Tannen** teaches linguistics at Georgetown University and is the author of the widely acclaimed *That's Not What I Meant!* An internationally recognized scholar who has lectured all over the world, she has received grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the National Science Foundation. She has made her scholarly research available to the general public through articles in *The New York Times Magazine*, *New York* magazine, *The Washington Post*, *The Boston Globe*, and *McCalls* magazine.
- **Barrie Thorne** teaches sociology at the University of Southern California. Her books include *Language, Gender, and Society*, *She Said, He Said*, and *Language and Sex: Difference and Dominance*.
- **Joseph J. Tobin**, who has training in anthropology and psychology as well as a degree in human development, teaches at the University of Hawaii, Manoa.
- **Max Weber** (1864-1920) is another of the founders of modern sociology. His major works include *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, and *Methodology of the Social Sciences*.
- **David Y. H. Wu**, a Taiwanese cultural anthropologist, works at the East-West Center in Honolulu, Hawaii.
- **Louis A. Zurcher, Jr.** was the Ashbel Smith Professor of Social Work and Sociology at the University of Texas previous to his death in 1987. His numerous books include *The Mutable Self: A Self-Concept for Social Change*, *Poverty Warriors*, and *Social Roles: Conformity, Conflict, and Creativity*.

Note: Biographical information has been provided where available. Some authors do not appear on this list.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

UNIT ONE
THE SOCIOLOGICAL ENTERPRISE

What is the sociological enterprise? Sociologists study social groups, the interaction within and between groups, and how human behavior is affected. An empirical research study or a theory provides the sociologist with a window view of what is going on in a particular society. The more that sociologists perfect their research techniques and refine their theories, the better our window vantage point on the inner workings of that society.

Expanding on the analogy of windows, under certain conditions of light and darkness, every window becomes a mirror. We hope that the "windows" offered in this anthology will give students not only a sociological perspective of society–but also of themselves.

This unit examines different aspects of the sociological enterprise. The first article discusses the "sociological imagination," a distinctive vision of sociology as a discipline. The following two articles demonstrate the diversity of style in sociological analysis.

1

The Sociological Imagination

C. Wright Mills

Sociology has a unique place among the social and behavioral sciences. As a discipline, it studies many of the same phenomena as other social sciences but from a distinct vantage point. For example, both sociologists and economists study unemployment; yet, while economists are more interested in how the rate of unemployment is associated with other economic indicators, sociologists are more likely to be concerned with the broader social context within which joblessness occurs. Is unemployment, they might ask, the result of social policies adopted by government or multinational corporations? More importantly, sociologists may want to learn the social consequences of unemployment. Does the crime rate rise? Does the incidence of family disruption or domestic violence increase?

Like psychology, sociology is concerned with the individual. Rather than studying the individual in isolation, however, sociologists prefer to examine how each person is socially situated and affected by society. How has his or her life been shaped by social class, ethnicity, gender, age, and so forth? Moreover, how is one's self-expression related to social circumstances? For instance, a person who is shy by nature is more likely to behave differently when forced to take center stage in a social event, such as a family celebration.

In the following selection, Mills presents his version of the distinctive focus of sociology. In his view, the sociological imagination is reflected by the place of the individual in society and the place of that society in history. Mills takes particular interest in the phenomena of conflict and social change. Ironically, in the late 1950s, when this piece was written, Mills did not foresee that a greater consciousness of gender would render the use of the term "men" for both men and women obsolete. Nevertheless, his ideas still serve to this day as an excellent guide to the nature of sociology.

Nowadays men often feel that their private lives are a series of traps. They sense that within their everyday worlds, they cannot overcome their troubles, and in this feeling, they are often quite correct: What ordinary men are directly aware of and what they try to do are bounded by the private orbits in which they live; their visions and their powers are limited to the close-up scenes of job, family, neighborhood; in other milieux, they move vicariously and remain spectators. And the more aware they become, however vaguely, of ambitions and of threats which transcend their immediate locales, the more trapped they seem to feel.

Underlying this sense of being trapped are seemingly impersonal changes in the very structure of continent-wide societies. The facts of contemporary history are also facts about the success and the failure of individual men and women. When a society is industrialized, a peasant becomes a worker; a feudal lord is liquidated or becomes a businessman. When classes rise or fall, a man is employed or unemployed; when the rate of investment goes up or down, a man takes new heart or goes broke. When wars happen, an insurance salesman becomes a rocket launcher, a store clerk, a radar man, a wife lives alone, a child grows up without a father. Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both.

Yet men do not usually define the troubles they endure in terms of historical change and institutional contradiction. The well-being they enjoy, they do not usually impute to the big ups and downs of the societies in which they live. Seldom aware of the intricate connection between the patterns of their own lives and the course of world history, ordinary men do not usually know what this connection means for the kinds of men they are becoming and for the kinds of history-making in which they might take part. They do not possess the quality of mind essential to grasp the interplay of man and society, of biography and history, of self and world. They cannot cope with their personal troubles in such ways as to control the structural transformations that usually lie behind them.

Surely it is no wonder. In what period have so many men been so totally exposed at so fast a pace to such earthquakes of change? That Americans have not known such catastrophic changes as have the men and women of other societies is due to historical facts that are now

quickly becoming "merely history." The history that now affects every man is world history. Within this scene and this period, in the course of a single generation, one sixth of mankind is transformed from all that is feudal and backward into all that is modern, advanced, and fearful. Political colonies are freed; new and less visible forms of imperialism installed. Revolutions occur; men feel the intimate grip of new kinds of authority. Totalitarian societies rise, and are smashed to bits—or succeed fabulously. After two centuries of ascendancy, capitalism is shown up as only one way to make society into an industrial apparatus. After two centuries of hope, even formal democracy is restricted to a quite small portion of mankind. Everywhere in the underdeveloped world, ancient ways of life are broken up and vague expectations become urgent demands. Everywhere in the overdeveloped world, the means of authority and of violence become total in scope and bureaucratic in form. Humanity itself now lies before us, the super-nation at either pole concentrating its most coordinated and massive efforts upon the preparation of World War Three.

The very shaping of history now outpaces the ability of men to orient themselves in accordance with cherished values. And which values? Even when they do not panic, men often sense that older ways of feeling and thinking have collapsed and that newer beginnings are ambiguous to the point of moral stasis. Is it any wonder that ordinary men feel they cannot cope with the larger worlds with which they are so suddenly confronted? That they cannot understand the meaning of their epoch for their own lives? That—in defense of selfhood—they become morally insensible, trying to remain altogether private men? Is it any wonder that they come to be possessed by a sense of the trap?

It is not only information that they need—in this Age of Fact, information often dominates their attention and overwhelms their capacities to assimilate it. It is not only the skills of reason that they need—although their struggles to acquire these often exhaust their limited moral energy.

What they need, and what they feel they need, is a quality of mind that will help them to use information and to develop reason; in order to achieve lucid summations of what is going on in the world and of what may be happening within themselves. It is this quality, I am going to contend, that journalists and scholars, artists and publics, scientists and editors are coming to expect of what may be called the sociological imagination.

The sociological imagination enables its possessor to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals. It enables him to take into account how individuals, in the welter of their daily experience, often become falsely conscious of their social positions. Within that welter, the framework of modern society is sought, and within that framework the psychologies of a variety of men and women are formulated. By such means the personal uneasiness of individuals is focused upon explicit troubles and the indifference of publics is transformed into involvement with public issues.

The first fruit of this imagination—and the first lesson of the social science that embodies it—is the idea that the individual can understand his own experience and gauge his own fate only by locating himself within his period, that he can know his own chances in life only by becoming aware of those of all individuals in his circumstances. In many ways it is a terrible lesson; in many ways a magnificent one. We do not know the limits of man's capacities for supreme effort or willing degradation, for agony or glee, for pleasurable brutality or the sweetness of reason. But in our time we have come to know that the limits of "human nature" are frighteningly broad. We have come to know that every individual lives, from one generation to the next, in some society; that he lives out a biography, and that he lives it out within some historical sequence. By the fact of his living he contributes, however minutely, to the shaping of this society and to the course of its history, even as he is made by society and by its historical push and shove.

The sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society. That is its task and its promise. To recognize this task and this promise is the mark of the classic social analyst. It is characteristic of Herbert Spencer—turgid, polysyllabic, comprehensive; of E. A. Ross—graceful, muckraking, upright; of Auguste Comte and Emile Durkheim; of the intricate and subtle Karl Mannheim. It is the quality of all that is intellectually excellent in Karl Marx; it is the clue to Thorstein Veblen's brilliant and ironic insight, to Joseph Schumpeter's many-sided constructions of reality; it is the basis of the psychological sweep of W. E. H. Lecky no less than of the profundity and clarity of Max Weber. And it is the signal of what is best in contemporary studies of man and society.

No social study that does not come back to the problems of biography, of history and of their intersections within a society has completed its intellectual journey. Whatever the specific problems of the classic social analysts, however limited or however broad the features of social reality they have examined, those who have been imaginatively aware of the promise of their

work have consistently asked three sorts of questions:

(1) What is the structure of this particular society as a whole? What are its essential components, and how are they related to one another? How does it differ from other varieties of social order? Within it, what is the meaning of any particular feature for its continuance and for its change?

(2) Where does this society stand in human history? What are the mechanics by which it is changing? What is its place within and its meaning for the development of humanity as a whole? How does any particular feature we are examining affect, and how is it affected by, the historical period in which it moves? And this period—what are its essential features? How does it differ from other periods? What are its characteristic ways of history-making?

(3) What varieties of men and women now prevail in this society and in this period? And what varieties are coming to prevail? In what ways are they selected and formed, liberated and repressed, made sensitive and blunted? What kinds of "human nature" are revealed in the conduct and character we observe in this society in this period? And what is the meaning for "human nature" of each and every feature of the society we are examining?

Whether the point of interest is a great power state or a minor literary mood, a family, a prison, a creed—these are the kinds of questions the best social analysts have asked. They are the intellectual pivots of classic studies of man in society—and they are the questions inevitably raised by any mind possessing the sociological imagination. For that imagination is the capacity to shift from one perspective to another—from the political to the psychological; from examination of a single family to comparative assessment of the national budgets of the world; from the theological school to the military establishment; from considerations of an oil industry to studies of contemporary poetry. It is the capacity to range from the most impersonal and remote transformations to the most intimate features of the human self—and to see the relations between the two. Back of its use there is always the urge to know the social and historical meaning of the individual in the society and in the period in which he has his quality and his being.

That, in brief, is why it is by means of the sociological imagination that men now hope to grasp what is going on in the world, and to understand what is happening in themselves as minute points of the intersections of biography and history within society. In large part, contemporary man's self-conscious view of himself as at least an outsider, if not a permanent stranger, rests upon an absorbed realization of social relativity and of the transformative power of history. The sociological imagination is the most fruitful form of this self-consciousness. By its use men whose mentalities have swept only a series of limited orbits often come to feel as if suddenly awakened in a house with which they had only supposed themselves to be familiar. Correctly or incorrectly, they often come to feel that they can now provide themselves with adequate summations, cohesive assessments, comprehensive orientations. Older decisions that once appeared sound now seem to them products of a mind unaccountably dense. Their capacity for astonishment is made lively again. They acquire a new way of thinking, they experience a transvaluation of values: in a word, by their reflection and by their sensibility, they realize the cultural meaning of the social sciences.

Perhaps the most fruitful distinction with which the sociological imagination works is between "the personal troubles of milieu" and "the public issues of social structure." This distinction is an essential tool of the sociological imagination and a feature of all classic work in social science.

Troubles occur within the character of the individual and within the range of his immediate relations with others; they have to do with his self and with those limited areas of social life of which he is directly and personally aware. Accordingly, the statement and the resolution of troubles properly lie within the individual as a biographical entity and within the scope of his immediate milieu—the social setting that is directly open to his personal experience and to some extent his willful activity. A trouble is a private matter: values cherished by an individual are felt by him to be threatened.

Issues have to do with matters that transcend these local environments of the individual and the range of his inner life. They have to do with the organization of many such milieux into the institutions of an historical society as a whole, with the ways in which various milieux overlap and interpenetrate to form the larger structure of social and historical life. An issue is a public matter: some value cherished by publics is felt to be threatened. Often there is a debate about what that value really is and about what it is that really threatens it. This debate is often without focus if only because it is the very nature of an issue, unlike even widespread trouble, that it cannot very well be defined in terms of the immediate and everyday environments of ordinary men. An issue, in fact, often involves a crisis in institutional arrangements, and often too it involves what Marxists call "contradictions" or "antagonisms."

In these terms, consider unemployment. When, in a

city of 100,000, only one man is unemployed, that is his personal trouble, and for its relief we properly look to the character of the man, his skills, and his immediate opportunities. But when in a nation of 50 million employees, 15 million men are unemployed, that is an issue, and we may not hope to find its solution within the range of opportunities open to any one individual. The very structure of opportunities has collapsed. Both the correct statement of the problem and the range of possible solutions require us to consider the economic and political institutions of the society, and not merely the personal situation and character of a scatter of individuals.

Consider war. The personal problem of war, when it occurs, may be how to survive it or how to die in it with honor; how to make money out of it; how to climb into the higher safety of the military apparatus; or how to contribute to the war's termination. In short, according to one's values, to find a set of milieux and within it to survive the war or make one's death in it meaningful. But the structural issues of war have to do with its causes; with what types of men it throws up into command; with its effects upon economic and political, family and religious institutions, with the unorganized irresponsibility of a world of nation-states.

Consider marriage. Inside a marriage a man and a woman may experience personal troubles, but when the divorce rate during the first four years of marriage is 250 out of every 1,000 attempts, this is an indication of a structural issue having to do with the institutions of marriage and the family and other institutions that bear upon them.

Or consider the metropolis—the horrible, beautiful, ugly, magnificent sprawl of the great city. For many upper-class people, he personal solution to "the problem of the city" is to have an apartment with private garage under it in the heart of the city, and forty miles out, a house by Henry Hill, garden by Garrett Eckbo, on a hundred acres of private land. In these two controlled environments—with a small staff at each end and a private helicopter connection—most people could solve many of the problems of personal milieux caused by the facts of the city. But all this, however splendid, does not solve the public issues that the structural fact of the city poses. What should be done with this wonderful monstrosity? Break it all up into scattered units, combining residence and work? Refurbish it as it stands? Or, after evacuation, dynamite it and build new cities according to new plans in new places? What should those plans be? And who is to decide and to accomplish whatever choice is made? These are structural issues; to confront them and to solve them requires us to consider political and economic issues that affect innumerable milieux.

In so far as an economy is so arranged that slumps occur, the problem of unemployment becomes incapable of personal solution. In so far as war is inherent in the nation-state system and in the uneven industrialization of the world, the ordinary individual in his restricted milieu will be powerless—with or without psychiatric aid—to solve the troubles this system or lack of system imposes upon him. In so far as the family as an institution turns women into darling little slaves and men into their chief providers and unweaned dependents, the problem of a satisfactory marriage remains incapable of purely private solution. In so far as the overdeveloped megalopolis and the overdeveloped automobile are built-in features of the overdeveloped society, the issues of urban living will not be solved by personal ingenuity and private wealth.

What we experience in various and specific milieux, I have noted, is often caused by structural changes. Accordingly, to understand the changes of many personal milieux we are required to look beyond them. And the number and variety of such structural changes increase as the institutions within which we live become more embracing and more intricately connected with one another. To be aware of the idea of social structure and to use it with sensibility is to be capable of tracing such linkages among a great variety of milieux. To be able to do that is to possess the sociological imagination.

Review

1. What does Mills see as the "first fruit" of the sociological imagination?

2. What is the "purpose and task" of the sociological imagination?

3. Why does Mills suggest that the distinction between the "personal troubles of milieu" and the "public issues of social structure" is an essential tool of the sociological imagination?

Application

Select a social problem such as crime, unemployment, homelessness, discrimination, etc. Over the course of the term, gather at least 15-20 articles from newspapers and magazines on the topic. Toward the end of the term, use your sources to write a paper organized around the themes of the "sociological imagination" (i.e., the historical setting, the social structure, and the personal dimensions) and the relationships among them.