SOCIOLOGICAL VISIONS

edited by
KAI ERIKSON

ROWMAN & LITTLEFIELD PUBLISHERS, INC.
Lanham • New York • Boulder • Oxford

ROWMAN & LITTLEFIELD PUBLISHERS, INC.

Published in the United States of America
by Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
4720 Boston Way, Lanham, Maryland 20706

12 Hid's Copse Road
Cummor Hill, Oxford OX2 9JJ, England

Copyright © 1997 by Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Information Available

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Sociological visions / edited by Kai Erickson.
p. cm.
Chiefly papers presented at a conference held at Yale University in April 1992.
Includes bibliographical references.
ISBN 0-8476-8508-X (cloth : alk. paper). — ISBN 0-8476-8509-8 (pbk. : alk. paper)
1. Sociology—Congresses. 2. Social sciences—Congresses.
I. Erickson, Kai, 1931– .
HM13.S573 1997
301—dc21 97-9429
CIP

ISBN 0–8476–8508–X (cloth : alk. paper)
ISBN 0–8476–8509–8 (pbk. : alk. paper)

Printed in the United States of America

™ The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48–1984.

Preface

It became evident early in the fall of 1991 that people at the center of the Yale administration were giving serious thought to what most members of the Yale faculty regarded as unthinkable—either to eliminate the university's already small department of sociology entirely or to cut it virtually in half. The first of those measures, of course, would have been a form of death by execution. The second would have been an amputation so drastic as to produce the same effect. The announced purpose, in either case, was to reduce costs.

The period that followed was long and painful, but it ended well for those who view sociology as one of the most important of the liberal arts. The administrative architects of the proposal were unable to persuade the rest of the faculty that their plan had any merit, and by the time that season of argument came to an exhausted close every one of them had resigned their positions. It was a conclusive defeat by any measure.

There were lessons to be learned, though. When university officials are asked to survey the academic landscape in search of programs to eliminate, they are being invited to participate in something very akin to a projective test—a process by which subjective leanings and partialities are coaxed to the surface in the name of making policy. Sociology does not always fare well at moments like these. We may never know what reservations about our field worked their way into the debate; indeed, many of the people most actively involved may not themselves know. But those reservations, whatever their form, still circulate through Yale (and other universities) like hidden underground flows. So there are good reasons for being wary. In the end, however, the commotion ended without having changed anything. Sociology at Yale is probably more secure now than it was before, and one can sense a general agreement throughout the campus that no modern university can claim distinction or even a minimal

level of intellectual coverage without making a firm commitment to the discipline. The same general agreement now seems to prevail at most—alas, not all—of those other once-troubled campuses.

For sociologists at Yale, the main tasks of that season were to impress on university authorities how reckless their proposal was and to impress on other people in the community how important sociology is to the life of a major university.

One of the most conspicuous of our arguments was a five-day conference, the proceedings of which are presented here. We called it "Sociological Visions," and the announcements we posted throughout the university noted (with an edge everyone on campus understood at once):

> The teaching of sociology in the United States began at Yale one hundred and fifteen years ago. It is particularly appropriate, then, that Yale serve as host for a major gathering of sociologists and a few intellectual neighbors to celebrate the place of the discipline in the world of ideas and in the world of affairs.

Our plan was that major papers would be offered by scholars who are generally identified as sociologists, and that the papers would be followed by commentaries—themselves major statements—by scholars from related disciplines. The papers were offered by Daniel Bell, Robert K. Merton, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Neil J. Smelser, Charles Tilly, William Julius Wilson, Alan Wolfe, and Viviana A. Zelizer, and the commentaries by Denis Donoghue, Jean Bethke Elshtain, Gerald Holton, Michael Katz, Ira Katznelson, and Margaret Weir. (Senator Moynihan may wonder about our including him in the guild of sociologists, but his hosts are certainly prepared to confer the title on him if he is prepared to accept it.)

The conference—and all the other events of that period—seemed to make Yale sociologists uncommonly reflective about the nature of their calling. So in one sense, at least, the prologue with which Part I of the volume opens and the epilogue with which it closes are both products of that experience. I was chair of the Yale Department of Sociology at the time of the conference and thus played an active role in bringing it about, and Paul DiMaggio, now professor of sociology at Princeton, was then professor of sociology at Yale and an important presence in the department.

All the authors whose work is gathered here reflect what might be called "the sociological sensibility," but no one in American sociology does so as surely or as prominently as Robert K. Merton. He presented

试读结束：需要全本请在线购买： www.ertongbook.com

the final paper at the Yale conference. It was different in form from the others as well as substantially longer, so it stood out, and it occurred to us as we wondered how to make a printed volume of what Merton has often called "oral publications" that the final section of the book might focus on him. He has probably done more than anyone in American sociology to formulate and give substance to the special vision that lies at the intellectual core of the discipline, and that is reason enough. But when we learned that he was scheduled to present the annual Charles Homer Haskins Lecture on the seventy-fifth anniversary of the American Council of Learned Societies—a series in which noted scholars are invited each year to speak on their "Life of Learning"—the idea took on new life. The Haskins Lecture is reprinted here with Merton's permission (as well as that of the ACLS), and it constitutes the only portion of the volume, aside from my prologue and Paul DiMaggio's epilogue, that did not originate in the Yale conference.

I have used the word "we" rather casually throughout these comments. By we I mean members of the Yale Department of Sociology and a number of other people who turned out to be particular friends. The conference was the work of many people, but they all would want to join me in a special word of thanks to Steven Brint, Paul DiMaggio, and Charles Perrow; David Fithian, Stephanie Hartwell, and Dan Ryan; Pamela Colesworthy and Ann Fitzpatrick; and in a place all his own, Joseph LaPalombara. Funds were provided by the Institution for Social and Policy Studies, Yale University, and by the John Castle Fund.

Acknowledgments

The editor and publisher wish to thank those listed below for permission to reprint these previously published chapters.

"Sociology as Science, Humanism, and Art" by Neil Smelser, 5–18; "The Two Faces of Social Science" by Alan Wolfe, 19–46; "Commentary on Sociology as Art As Science" by Jean Bethke Elshtain, 47–56; and "History and Sociological Imagining" by Charles Tilly, 57–74 all first appeared as articles in *The Toqueville Review,* vol. xv, no. 1, 1994.

"Social Science: An Imperfect Art" by Daniel Bell first appeared as an article in *The Toqueville Review,* vol. xvi, no. 1, 1995.

"A Life of Learning" by Robert K. Merton was first published as "A Life of Learning," American Council of Learned Societies Occasional Paper no. 25, © 1994 ACLS. Reprinted by permission of the author.

Contents

Preface vii

Acknowledgments xi

PART I

Prologue: Sociology as a Perspective 3
Kai Erikson

SOCIOLOGY AS ART AND AS SCIENCE

Sociology as Science, Humanism, and Art 17
Neil J. Smelser

The Two Faces of Social Science 31
Alan Wolfe

Disciplined Artfulness and the Human Sciences 57
Jean Bethke Elshtain

History and Sociological Imagining 67
Charles Tilly

The Many Enchantments of Money 83
Viviana A. Zelizer

Sociology and History: Terms of Endearment? 95
Ira Katznelson

Social Science: An Imperfect Art 101
Daniel Bell

SOCIOLOGY AND PUBLIC POLICY

Toward a Broader Vision of Inner-City Poverty 123
William Julius Wilson

Race, Localism, and Urban Poverty 153
Margaret Weir

Inner-City as Place 163
Michael Katz

Social Science and Social Policy: A Case Study of Overreaching 169
Daniel Patrick Moynihan

Epilogue: Sociology as a Discipline 185
Paul DiMaggio

PART II

Introduction 219
Kai Erikson

De-gendering "Man of Science": The Genesis and Epicene Character of the Word *Scientist* 225
Robert K. Merton

On Robert Merton, Mary Somerville, and the Moral Authority of Science 255
Gerald Holton

Strange Relation 263
Denis Donoghue

A Life of Learning 275
Robert K. Merton

About the Contributors 297

Part I

试读结束：需要全本请在线购买： www.ertongbook.com

Prologue: Sociology as a Perspective

Kai Erikson

I

Every sociologist knows that awkward moment at the beginning of an introductory course or in the middle of a social gathering when someone asks, "What is sociology, anyway?" Most of us try to maneuver through that moment by muttering something about "the study of human society" or "the study of social life" or something equally indirect. We know we are not adding much precision to the way our craft is being defined when we speak thus, but we are not sure how the question could be answered more crisply. Colleagues in philosophy and history, chemistry and astronomy, psychology and economics—even in such neighboring fields as anthropology and political science—do not seem to share that difficulty to anything like the same degree. Why should that be so?[1]

One problem is that we sociologists tend to think of our discipline as an *approach* rather than a subject matter, as a *perspective* rather than a body of knowledge. What differentiates us from other observers of the human scene is the way we look out at the world—the way our eyes are trained, the way our intellectual reflexes are set, the way our imaginations are tuned. Sociologists scan the same landscapes as historians or poets or economists, but we select different details to attend to closely, and we sort them in different ways. So it is not *what* we see but the *way* we see that gives the field its distinction.

The prime insight of sociology has always been that there are forces out there in the world that give shape and direction to human behavior. When sociologists speak of "society," they are speaking of tides, currents,

forces, pulls—something in the nature of social life that induces people to behave in an orderly way at least some of the time. There are consistencies in the way people think and act, in the way they move from place to place, in the way they view the universe around them, and in the way they relate to one another. Social contexts help shape the way people conduct their lives, and those contexts have a discernable structure.

Sociologists tend to regard (and to speak of) those forces as *things.* One cannot see them or touch them, of course, but we study their properties by observing what happens to the people caught up in them—which is more or less how physicists study the properties of gravity. Human life takes place in a field of force, and we try to learn the secrets of that field in much the same way that other specialists study a galaxy, an organism, a molecular structure, or any other kind of organized matter. Few sociologists would insist that human gatherings are *like* galaxies or molecules, but we would all insist that the eye one trains on human social life is disciplined in the same way as the eye one trains on the things of the physical world.

There is pattern in the way people grow up, become adults, choose occupations, form families, and raise children. There is pattern in the way they become ill, commit crimes, compose music, or think thoughts. There is pattern in the way they make common cause with some of their fellow humans, and pattern in the way they exploit and abuse and even slaughter others of their fellow human beings as if they were not even of the same root species. Sociologists are as aware as their colleagues in the arts and the humanities that societies are made up of individuals who carve their own separate paths through life and are moved by their own private visions. Everyone who lives is a unique personality, a rare and special being. But there are commonalities in the midst of all that singularity that give social life its distinctive design. Every individual biography is at the same time part of a larger historical sweep and is to some extent caught up in it. There are no inconsistencies in that.

The social forces of which sociologists speak operate in such a way as to affect the likelihood that aggregates of people will behave in a certain way: We are dealing here with drifts, tendencies, probabilities, not with how particular individuals will act. To offer a deliberately trivial example: if you will give me a few scraps of information that can easily be contained in a paragraph half the size of this one, I will predict within a fairly small margin of error how many people will attend next year's football game between Princeton and Yale. But I will have no idea whether you (or even I) will be among them. More to the point: if another researcher were to interview everyone who belongs to the population of those who

might attend and ask them what their intentions are in that regard, my prediction (based on such things as past attendance records, weather forecasts, and team performances) is more likely to be accurate than that survey, no matter how well done. Now any experienced director of athletics could make those calculations faster and better than I could, which is what makes this a trivial case in point. But the same logic holds in more complex social scenes. The "you's" and "I's" who make up the social fabric have our own reasons for acting as we do, but the larger aggregates to which we belong are patterned in ways that are not only observable but sometimes even predictable. This is the case for many kinds of physical matter as well. The behavior of a mass is on the whole orderly, but the behavior of its constituent particles, when traced individually, appears to be random. Worlds in motion have structure that is not reflected in grains of sand.

One of the major insights of sociology, then, is that human life is patterned, but another is that those patterns are often imposed on the powerless by the powerful. Clearly, patterning can come from old customs and usages that work their way into the grain of everyday life in ways people are only partly aware of. And, just as clearly, patterning can come from a general sense of goodness or fitness shared by the generality of those who belong to a larger gathering of people. But a good deal of patterning is simply imposed by one group of people on another. It is easy to conclude from this—and many sociologists come close to such a position—that society is best seen as a violent terrain on which class struggles and other contests for power are fought out and that sociology is at its best when it focuses on conflict. That makes good sense up to a point. At the same time, however, there is another important sociological insight to bring to bear on this matter, drawn in part from the observations of Karl Marx—that the outlooks of the powerful are often impressed upon the powerless with such force that they are simply absorbed into the moral reflexes of both on at least some level of consciousness. Thus we are dealing not just with *coercion* but with something akin to *invasion* or what animal ethologists call *imprinting*. So, Marx wants us to note, history offers the astonishing spectacle of peasants marching willingly to war to secure the interests of landlords because they have come to believe that some religious principle is involved. Or workers marching willingly to war to secure the interests of capitalists because they have come to see it a patriotic duty. A violent terrain, maybe, but a patterned one for all that.

Even at its most contentious, moreover, life in society is never a war of all against all. It is always a war of some against some. When the social terrain one has in one's sights is dominated by contests between classes

or ethnic groupings or national states or any of the other divisions into which human beings manage to sort themselves, it seems logical to focus on conflict. But when one readjusts the lens and trains it on a particular class or ethnic group or nation within that larger terrain, it seems logical to focus on the sources of cohesion and solidarity that hold that collectivity together. One observer may be impressed by the sheer ferocity with which Croat and Serb neighbors slaughter one another. Another may be impressed by the ability of either of those ethnic groups to sustain a sense of communality in the face of all the troubles to which they are now exposed. And a third observer, wiser than either of the other two, may be impressed by the degree to which the ferocity and the cohesiveness reinforce each other. It is hard to imagine more chaotic human settings than the most contested parts of Croatia and Bosnia or ones more torn by conflict. But a sociologist would look for (and find) pattern even in the midst of such disorder.

Sociology often has the look of a field devoted to the study of the perfectly obvious. Sir Ernest Gowers, editor of Fowler's *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage,* and, thus, wary trustee of our language, thought he knew why that is so:

> Sociology is a new science concerning itself not with esoteric matters outside the comprehension of the layman, as the older sciences do, but with the ordinary affairs of ordinary people. This seems to engender in those who write about it a feeling that the lack of any abstruseness in their subject demands a compensatory abstruseness in their language . . . [resulting in] . . . a jargon which one is almost tempted to believe is deliberately employed for the purpose of making what is simple appear complicated.[2]

And Murray Kempton, one of the most thoughtful journalists of our time, once described a group of papers he heard at a sociology convention as "the remorseless pursuit of what everyone knew all along."

Well, something can be said for that observation. Compared to archaeologists who dig below the visible surfaces of the earth, to psychologists who try to peer into the hidden recesses of the mind, to biologists who look through instruments at tissues the naked eye cannot make out, to historians who explore a remote past—compared to them, sociologists do indeed tend to focus on those aspects of social life that seem largely familiar. In that sense, we can justly be described as specialists in the ordinary.

The fact is, though, that people in general are not really very well informed about the commonplaces of their own lives, and observers like Sir

Ernest Gowers or Murray Kempton who think they already know enough about the lay of their land or the habits of their fellow creatures have simply missed the point. Many of the things people think they know about the society in which they live really *do* belong to the realm of certified fact (although it did not become fact until specialists in the familiar studied it carefully). But other things turn out to belong to the realm of common lore, and one of the tasks of the sociologist is to try to locate the line between them.

It stands to reason, does it not, that the most tyrannical and hated regimes will provoke the most vigorous protest? In fact, things do *not* seem to work that way most of the time. It is when regimes become more moderate and begin the slow process of change that they provoke the sharpest opposition, because the promise of a better future has created expectations and nourished hopes that far exceed the new opportunities made available. By the same token, the people most likely to riot during uprisings of one kind or another are not the deeply disadvantaged, who tend to be too numbed and dispirited by the circumstances in which they live to do much of anything, but those who have been moving toward new horizons and are frustrated by the slowness of the process.

It stands to reason, does it not, that since the number of single teenage mothers seems to be growing, the number of teenage pregnancies must be going up as well? Apparently not. Recent data indicate that the number of young women who become pregnant has not increased in any significant way over the years, but that the number of pregnant women who subsequently marry has dropped appreciably. And why? One reason may well be that unemployment among the fathers is so high that fewer of them can contribute meaningfully to child support.

It stands to reason, does it not, that the best schools are the most effective in preparing persons for professional success? In fact, the reverse appears to be true. This is not because the best schools do a poorer job of teaching, of course, but because they select students who come from advantaged backgrounds in the first place—those whose life trajectories have been set long before the schools they attend take a hand in shaping their fate.

Sociologists, then, can be said to have a distinctive way of looking out at the world, a distinctive intellectual sensibility. In one sense, at least, the realities we attend to are a prospect unique to those who peer through a special disciplinary lens, and I would like now to try to describe some of the features of that lens.

It might be noted, first, that sociologists are invited by the logic of

their perspective to be more concerned with *general tendencies* than with *particular events.* Our assignment in the world of scholarship has always been to move up onto the plane of generality as soon as our data allow (if not a good deal sooner), studying those regularities that form the substance of everyday human experience rather than those unique persons and moments that stand out as special (and for that reason attract the interest of journalists and dramatists and historians). Dennis Wrong writes of "the intense straining" among sociologists "for universality, for a language that transcends the particular and the commonplace by breaking through its own limits."[3] And, indeed, sociologists are at their wisest when they distrust the individual case as being too idiosyncratic and unrepresentative. Journalists and other observers whose job it is to describe social landscapes often begin their accounts with profiles of particular people, asking them in effect to portray, represent, act out the lives of larger populations. This is a way of focusing attention and establishing a tone, of giving the problem at hand a kind of personality and texture, but it is a strategy that sociologists are rarely in a position to employ. Our task is to draw group profiles with a distinct accent on numbers, percentages, tendencies, underlying structural forces. W. H. Auden wrote: "Thou shalt not sit / With statisticians nor commit / A social science." Well, the committing of a social science depends on information about wholes rather than parts, on the histories of multitudes rather than the biographies of individuals, on general contours rather than particular details. And that, in turn, entails a good deal of sitting with statisticians.

It might also be noted that sociologists are invited by the logic of their perspective to think in terms of *collateral* arrangements rather than *sequential* ones. Our stock in trade has normally been the relations that obtain at any given point in time among people and events and institutions—the way income relates to voting, the way working helps shape personality, the way migration affects urban institutions, the way poverty impacts household composition, and in all such instances, vice versa. Ours is the logic of concomitance, interconnection, comparison, correspondence, nexus. The classics of sociology—Max Weber on the relationship between capitalism and Protestantism, Emile Durkheim on the relationship between suicide and group solidarity—are of just that character. Even when sociologists trace the histories of particular events like revolutions or disasters or migrations or individual lives, the purpose of the research is almost always to draw comparisons in an effort to understand the category to which the cases belong rather than to understand the cases themselves.

And it might be noted, to offer a final example, that when sociologists

试读结束：需要全本请在线购买： www.ertongbook.com