

# **INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY**

**Soc 1101: Summer 2023**

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# **What do sociologists do? What is sociological thinking?**

## **Lecture 2**

# RECALL FROM LAST LECTURE

- **Sociology entails:**
  - **Making the familiar strange through a sociological perspective**
  - **Applying analytical tools to explore various domains of social life**

# RECALL FROM LAST LECTURE:

- **Sociology is:**
  - **The scientific study of the social world**
  - **The study of human social life, groups and societies**
  - **The study of the development, structure, and functioning of human society**
  - **The study of social problems**
  - **The study of human social relationships and institutions**

# I can distinguish the differences between these words:

- **Sociology**
- **Social work**
- **Social science**

# LECTURE OUTLINE

- **What is (and isn't) sociology?**
- **Sociology vs. other social sciences**
- **Goals of sociological inquiry**
- **The sociological imagination**



# **Is sociology a science?**

**A) Yes**

**B) No**

**C) I don't know**

**According to Berger, the difference between sociology and social work is that...**

- A) sociology uses theory, while social work deals with empirical data.**
- B) sociology helps groups, while social work helps individuals.**
- C) sociology is an attempt to understand, while social work is a practice.**
- D) sociology has its origins in philosophy, while social work has its origins in psychology.**



# Berger's "what ISN'T a sociologist" 1

- **A social worker in the practice of helping people**
  - "Sociological insights are valuable to anyone concerned with action in society. But this action need not be particularly humanitarian." (Berger 2)
- **The social worker's theoretical mentor**
  - "Social work is a certain *practice* in society. Sociology is not a practice, but an *attempt to understand*...useful to anyone whose goals involve the manipulation of men, for whatever purpose and with whatever moral justification." (Berger 4-5)

# Berger argues that sociology should be “objective” and “value free.” Discuss the following:

1) What does it mean to be “objective” and “value free” in research?

2) The theme of the 2019 meetings of the American Sociological Association is “Engaging Social Justice for a Better World.”

- What might Berger say in response?
- What would *your* say in response?

Being a sociologist means being a social worker.

- A) Strongly agree
- B) Agree
- C) Disagree
- D) Strongly disagree

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# Berger's "what ISN'T a sociologist"

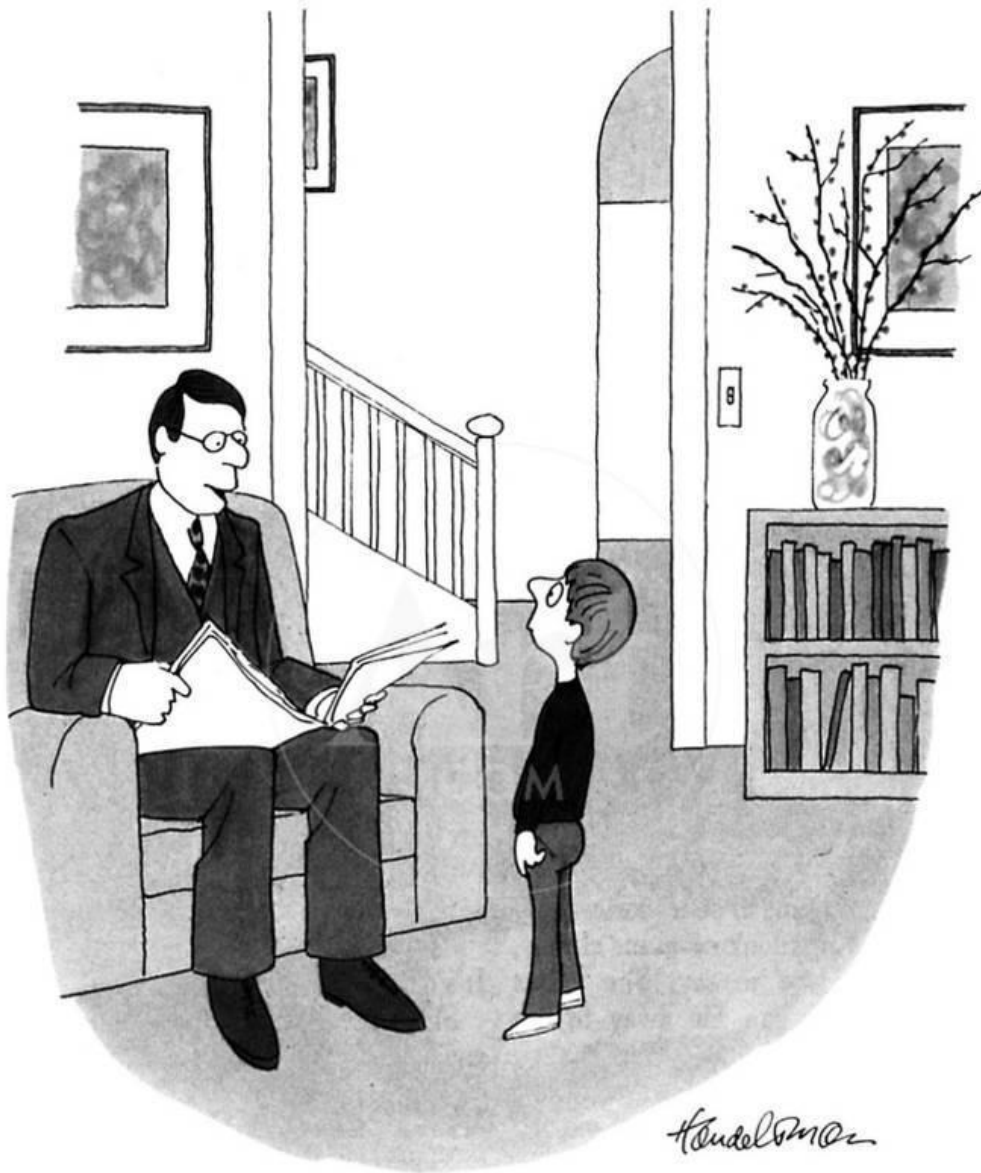
## 2

- **A social reformer**
  - "The sociological understanding of the nature of human solidarity can be employed in the service of both totalitarian and democratic regimes." (Berger 7)
- **A gatherer of statistics about human behavior**
  - "Statistical data by themselves do not make sociology. They become sociology only when they are sociologically interpreted, put within a theoretical frame of reference that is sociological." (Berger 11)

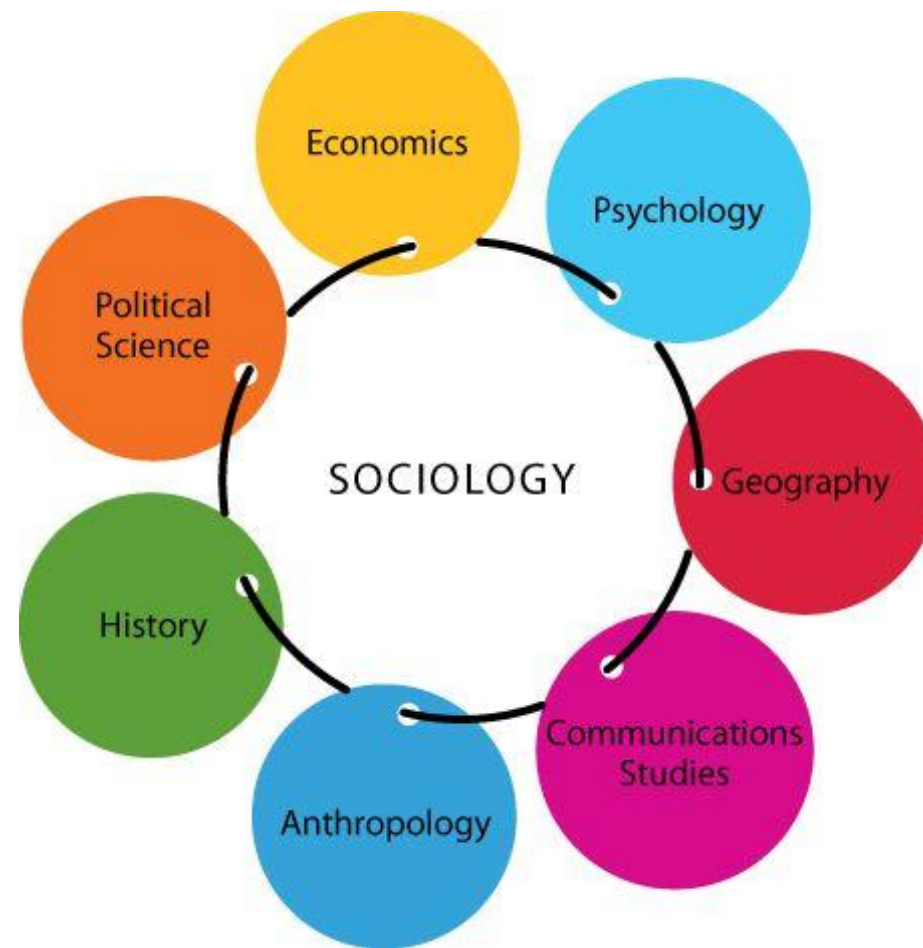
# WHAT THEN IS A SOCIOLOGIST?

- “...someone concerned with **understanding society in a disciplined way**” (Berger 16)
- Someone who “...tries to be objective, to control his personal preferences and prejudices, to perceive clearly **rather than to judge normatively.**” (Berger 16)
- “A person intensively, endlessly, shamelessly **interested in the doings of men.**” (Berger 18)





*"I'm a social scientist, Michael. That means I can't explain electricity or anything like that, but if you ever want to know about people I'm your man."*



# SOCIOLOGY VS ECONOMICS

	Economics	Sociology
<b>HUMAN NATURE</b>	<b>Rational</b> <b>Self-interested</b> <b><u>Atomic utility maximizer</u></b>	<b>Complex motivations</b> <b>Historically &amp; culturally embedded</b> <b><u>Social actor</u></b>
<b>METHODS OF INQUIRY</b>	<b>Quantitative &amp; formal</b>	<b>Quantitative &amp; qualitative</b>

Source: Paul Hirsch, Stuart Michaels, and Ray Friedman. 1990. "Clean Models vs. Dirty Hands: Why Economics is Different from Sociology." Pp. 39-56 in *Structures of Capital: The Social Organization of the Economy*, edited by Sharon Zukin and Paul DiMaggio. New York: Cambridge University Press.



# SOCIOLOGY VS PSYCHOLOGY

	Psychology	Sociology
<b>AREA OF FOCUS</b>	<b>Individual or small-group levels</b>	<b>Group or collective level</b>
<b>BASIS OF EXPLANATIONS</b>	<b>Personal, interpersonal and biological</b>	<b>Institutional, cultural and historical</b>

# GOALS OF SOCIOLOGICAL INQUIRIES

- **Identify group-level variations across populations (describe patterns)**
- **Offer group-level explanations for social behavior (explain patterns)**
- **Unveil meanings individuals attach to their actions (describe/interpret processes)**

# C. WRIGHT MILLS (1916-62)

**How does Mills's concept of sociological imagination help us make the familiar strange?**



Sociologist C. Wright Mills smoking his pipe in his office at Columbia University.

**When Mills writes about the “interplay of man and society, of biography and history,” he was referring to**

- A) historical forces dominating the present.**
- B) the subjugation of women in the 1950’s.**
- C) social structural factors influencing individual outcomes.**
- D) individual factors overriding social structural factors**

# THE INTERPLAY OF MAN AND SOCIETY; OF BIOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

- Many of the outcomes that seem deeply personal to us, are in fact, affected by external societal forces
- A **sociological imagination** can help us to see connections between the individual and the social, placing in necessary context our success and failures

# TROUBLES versus ISSUES

- **Personal troubles of milieu**
  - **Occur within the character of the individual**
- **Public issues of social structure**
  - **Matters that transcend local environments of the individual; they have to do with the organization of institutions within a historical context**



# THE SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION

- **“To be aware of the idea of social structure and to use it with sensibility...is to possess the sociological imagination.” (Mills 11)**
- **A perspective that takes us above our individual experiences to a vantage point that shows us how broad social structures influence our lives**

**Students achieve admission to elite universities, like Cornell, based mainly on merit.**

- A) Strongly agree**
- B) Agree**
- C) Disagree**
- D) Strongly disagree**

# NEXT CLASS

- **Discipline Origins**
- **Optional Readings**
  - **Conley textbook Chapter 1 excerpt**