

American
SOCIOLOGICAL REVIEW

Volume 7

FEBRUARY, 1942

Number 1

CAN SOCIOLOGISTS FACE REALITY?*

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OUR NEIGHBORS, the psychiatrists, have had a great deal to say in recent years about the importance of "facing reality" and "accepting reality-situations." Just what this "reality" may be they never quite explain. Sometimes it appears that nothing is "real" unless it is unpleasant, and that anyone who is happy must be employing some escape mechanism. At other times, "reality" seems to mean environment, anything outside oneself, or any situation as defined by an observer. The term "acceptance" is similarly vague and ambiguous. Sometimes it seems to resemble stoical resignation to pain and deprivation; at other times, it appears merely as abstention from "kidding oneself." Perhaps the psychiatrists are wise in not going beyond their depth into the metaphysics of reality. Perhaps we, too, will do well if we simply observe that some people dodge things they do not like while others seek to modify or remove disagreeable conditions; that some people alternately evade and fight, some fight on almost any occasion, while others form the habit of avoiding every possible difficulty. The modes of escape are varied—physical flight, alcoholism, invalidism, phantasy, dissociation, suicide. Which one is most frequently employed by sociologists cannot be stated with assurance. The research is still incomplete!

The mechanism of sociological flight from reality usually involves verbalization often carried to the point of mass production. It also has some other interesting manifestations. If a sociologist has difficulty in thinking abstractly, he may secure a grant to finance the counting of prostitutes, poolrooms, and privies. If he dislikes meeting people, he may hide away in a library to assemble as many definitions as possible of human nature, society, or psychosocial environment. If he finds research distasteful, he may devote himself to the students, appearing regularly at fraternity dances and football rallies. If the undergraduates annoy him, he may seek refuge in the reading of some European or American obscurantist.

In accordance with the best traditions of objectivity, I shall refrain from calling any of these forms of behavior bad or good. I merely note that, so

* Presidential address to the Thirty-sixth Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Society, New York City, Dec. 28, 1941.

far as I can tell, every one of us tries to avoid some experiences and enters into others with zest, evades some problems and comes to grips with others. Much of this seems to be on a hit-or-miss basis. If we were rational, we would do this with a plan based on the recognized limitations of our competence. We would say in effect, here are some tasks we can perform well; there are some of which we are less sure; but yonder are activities for which we are not fitted. In avoiding the tasks for which we are admittedly not equipped, shall it be said that we are escaping or facing reality? Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that all of us accept some realities and reject others. A wise man once said, "The good Lord never intended anyone to face reality more than eight hours a day anyway."

If these preliminary assumptions are acceptable, we may now restate our problem: what kinds of reality do sociologists face, especially in times of crisis? Let us turn first to programs of the American Sociological Society during the period of World War I.

In 1913, when the holocaust was approaching, the central theme of our annual meeting was "Problems of Social Assimilation." Albion W. Small's presidential address was entitled "A Vision of Social Efficiency." In 1914 after the invasion of Belgium and France, the general topic was "Freedom of Communication" and E. A. Ross's presidential address was on "Freedom of Communication and the Struggle for Right." In 1915, half way between the opening of hostilities and American participation, the program centered about "War and Militarism." In his second presidential address, "War as Determiner," E. A. Ross made this summary of the status of international relations:

The civilized peoples find themselves, therefore, confronting this situation:

1. The treaties between the great powers guaranteeing the security of the little peoples have become "mere scraps of paper."
2. Warfare has become a capitalistic enterprise and fighting a skilled occupation, so that, more and more, success in war hinges on elaborate preparation.
3. The armament and training a militarist government desires in support of aggression may be secured of its people under the pretext that they are necessary for national safety.
4. The prudent preparations a peace-loving people makes for defense may be construed by other peoples as designed for aggression.
5. Armament and training acquired for defense admit of being employed in aggression in case the nation changes its attitude toward international law and morality.
6. The nation that outarms the others runs no risk in so doing and *may* be rewarded for its preparedness by success in war.
7. The nation that is first to disarm or that lags behind the rest in preparation for war runs the risk of being thwarted or beaten.
8. From the foregoing, it follows that the war-loving nations have the power to force the peace-loving nations into the gloomy path of armament or war, whereas the peace-loving nations have no power to force the war-loving nations into the sunny path of peace. The men of Mars set the pace for the rest of the world.

A cool relentless analysis of the situation discloses, then, little ground for hopeful anticipation. On the contrary, the prospect is one of the blackest that humanity has

ever faced: A spread over the world of the policy of competitive armament; an ever larger share of production shunted into the bottomless pit of preparedness; a more general sacrifice of the flowering years of male life to military training; a gradual starvation of such state services as education, research, public recreation, and social amelioration—all this, punctuated from time to time by colossal wars resulting in the slaughter of millions and the laying waste of populous and flourishing areas of the globe.¹

This simple yet accurate analysis of twenty-six years ago might well serve to depict the situation we face today. The papers which followed Ross's kept attention focused on war and its implications. Theodore Roosevelt's paper "Social Values and National Existence" was a plea for preparedness. This was vigorously debated by representatives of the American Peace Society, the Red Cross, *The Survey*, and by several of our professional members. In like manner were presented the possible effects of war on the status of women (Emily Balch), on state socialism (William English Walling), and on government and politics (Simeon E. Baldwin). Finally, Brooks Adams' paper, "Can War Be Done Away With?" was discussed by Roger Babson, Gen. Chittenden, and others.

I was not present at that meeting, but as I read the *Proceedings*, I got an impression of almost religious fervor which I cannot transmit to you, but you must already have noted the character of the speakers. Along with Ross, Dealey, Small, Hayes, Howard, Lichtenberger, Balch, Wolfe, and other sociologists were an ex-president of the United States, a former Governor of Connecticut, a retired Brigadier General, and a prominent socialist. Certainly sociologists who attended the 1915 meeting got a first-hand impression of the thinking of nonacademic men concerning vital issues of the day. The sociologists were challenged by Brooks Adams when he described our government as "the most hopelessly inefficient . . . democracy in the world"² and by Theodore Roosevelt when he said, "if an unscrupulous, warlike and militaristic nation is not held in check by the warlike ability of a neighboring non-militaristic and well-behaved nation, then the latter will be spared the necessity of dealing with moral and social values because it won't be allowed to deal with anything."³

But, despite the challenges and despite the spirit of moral enthusiasm, we find in the 1915 *Proceedings* little evidence that thought was given to what sociologists themselves might do. The papers and the discussions neither reported on past research nor outlined new inquiries to be undertaken. They offered no concrete suggestions for the modification of teaching materials or methods. They proposed no specific extracurricular activities for American sociologists. Perhaps the nearest approach to a practical program was Small's characteristic dictum, "For Americans at the present moment, the first great commandment with promise is: After you have thought as much as you can about the problems of the war, keep on thinking

¹ E. A. Ross, "War as a Determiner," *Pub. Amer. Sociol. Soc.*, X: 1-11, Dec. 1915, pages 9-10.

² *P.A.S.S.*, 1915, X: 124.

³ *Ibid.*, 12.

until you arrive at something to do!"⁴ The participants had started by acknowledging the reality of a great international conflict: they ended with exhortation and exorcism.

But, you may say, the war was still far away; perhaps, as the United States moved toward intervention, sociologists got down to "brass tacks" and considered more directly their own relation to the international scene. Alas, for this supposition! Except in 1917, the war and its implications almost disappeared from the programs of the American Sociological Society. In 1916, the central theme was "The Sociology of Rural Life," the title of George E. Vincent's presidential address was "Countryside and Nation." No major paper was concerned with international conflict in any of its aspects. In 1917, when we were actually at war with Germany, the main topic was "Social Control," and George E. Howard's presidential address was on "Ideals as a Factor in the Future Control of International Society." This address now reads like a bit of wishful thinking, as does Cooley's paper, "Social Control in International Relations." But a good many hard facts appear in other papers; "War as a Crisis in Social Control" by Kelsey, and "Social Control in a Democracy" by Giddings. Going on to 1918, in a meeting planned before the Armistice, the central topic was "Sociology and Education," with President Charles H. Cooley speaking on "A Primary Culture for Democracy." One general session was devoted to the "National Aspect of Education." Otherwise, the "war to make the world safe for democracy" seems to have slipped below the sociologists' horizon. In 1919, the spirit of reconstruction appeared in "The Problem of Democracy" keynoted by Frank W. Blackmar's presidential address, "A Working Democracy." On the whole, papers and discussions were of a general nature, idealistic in tone, hortatory in purpose.

What then shall we conclude from this hasty review of seven annual meetings of the American Sociological Society? I think it is evident that there was occasionally some vigorous discussion of live issues confronting the American people, but the discussion included much wishful thinking, many glittering generalities, and considerable exhortation addressed to the world at large. There was almost no consideration of what sociologists themselves might profitably do in a period of international conflict. This naturally evokes the question: Are we behaving differently today in the face of World War II?

The 1939 and 1940 programs of our Society showed no concentration of attention on any particular subject. The 1941 program looks much the same. With our diversified interests and many semi-independent sections we have almost ceased to attempt integration. However, last year Robert M. MacIver delivered a challenging presidential address in his "Reflections on Sociology during a Crisis." For 1941, the general sessions have obviously been planned with the international emergency in mind. Note the panel

⁴ *Ibid.*, 93.

discussion on the Role of Sociologists in National Affairs, the session on Democracy and Social Control, and the one on Inter-Cultural Relations in the Americas. Besides these general sessions, all of which are concerned with aspects of the present international crisis, the section on Political Sociology is giving its attention to this question: What specific professional help can the American sociologists give to our governments, local and national, in the present world emergency? A special committee has arranged a discussion of sociology and sociometry applied to the immediate problems of defense. The Rural Sociological Society, with its membership overlapping that of the American Sociological Society, is making the central theme of its 1941 meetings "Rural Life and National Defense." Taken together these represent vital attacks on the very practical problem: What are we going to do about it?

No less significant than the programs are certain committees. In October, 1940, MacIver appointed a committee on Participation of Sociologists in the National Emergency. Although seriously handicapped by lack of time and funds, this group, headed by Joseph K. Folsom, did some useful exploratory work. Following its report,⁵ the American Sociological Society sent a formal communication to the United States Civil Service Commission, ordered the establishment of two standing committees, and urged its members to fill out and return schedules for the National Roster of Scientific and Professional Personnel.

The new Committee on Cooperation with the United States Civil Service Commission has been asked to offer its help in classifying positions wherein sociological knowledge and skills may be used to advantage, to make known to various Federal agencies the nature of these skills and bodies of knowledge, and to convey to members of our Society information about openings in governmental agencies. The chairman, T. J. Woolfer, Jr., himself in the Federal service, and his colleagues, have been chosen because of their familiarity with the problems and procedures involved. The other new Committee on the Role of Sociologists in National Affairs has a much less definite, and hence more difficult, assignment. Its chairman, Carl C. Taylor, is also in the Federal service. The other members were so chosen as to represent a wide variety of backgrounds and viewpoints.

In the discussions at Chicago last winter and in the correspondence that has flowed freely ever since, a great diversity of attitudes and opinions has emerged. Some members of our group apparently fear the decline of sociology from the lofty heights of pure science, down the slopes of applied science, into the valley of administrative drudgery. Others, with fewer illusions about sociology's present altitude and purity, are fearful lest participation in the controversial issues of the day injure both our capacity and our reputation for impartial analysis and reporting. Since we have only recently begun to escape from the realm of speculative argument into the realm of

⁵ *Amer. Sociol. Rev.*, April 1941, 6: 255-260.

inductive reasoning based on concrete data, much may be said for this second position. A third set of opinions and attitudes may be symbolized by the phrase "academic business as usual." It is hard to tell to what extent this position represents a rational belief and to what extent it is an emotional escape. In days like these, I fear that "business as usual" means utter failure to recognize the great changes that are so swiftly altering our national and personal destinies.

There are other members of the American Sociological Society who take a position very different from any I have suggested so far. They hold that we should bestir ourselves immediately and in very "practical" ways as a professional group. They would have us adopt resolutions directing the Federal Government in the way it should go. They would give very specific advice, e.g., about cooperation with Russia, appeasing or declaring war on France and Spain, adopting Streit's program of "Union Now." Since the whole body of sociologists obviously cannot remain in continuous session, they would delegate this responsibility to some committee "with power to act." Moreover, since even a committee has its limitations, they think we should keep a paid, full-time representative in Washington to maintain close contact with public officials, to keep members of our craft informed about "inside" happenings, and to advise executives and legislators what to do. Such action has been taken by a group of educational associations. Many sociologists doubt the necessity and the wisdom of attempting to duplicate their efforts. Whether that judgment be sound or not, the state of our finances settles the matter rather conclusively in the negative.

We have no means of learning at this moment just what motives activate those who urge direct participation in national affairs by the American Sociological Society. Some, I am sure, have an honest conviction that our professional group possesses a body of invaluable knowledge and essential skills which are greatly needed by the nation but are in grave danger of being overlooked. Others may be suspected of seeking to utilize the national emergency for the feathering of their own nests. Still others are perhaps men and women who, lacking personal recognition and security, identify the status of our craft with their own unrewarded talents.

Whatever may be the motives of the sociological isolationists or of the sociological direct actionists, we are all faced with the necessity of answering certain questions. Shall we assume that for the present we will best serve the nation by going quietly about our regular work? Or shall we take it for granted that immediate and drastic changes are in order? Put somewhat differently, shall we ourselves propose new ways of being useful or shall we await the call of those in authority? In the effort to answer this question, we might well take inventory of the country's needs and of our own qualifications. We might inquire to what extent the Federal Government really requires our services as sociologists? Perhaps it can more profitably employ some of us as bookkeepers, ambulance drivers, bond salesmen, social

workers, munitions makers, or soldiers. For those who continue in their present positions, perhaps some modifications might well be made in teaching, research, and other professional activities? In seeking the answers to these questions, let us remember that being a member of the American Sociological Society does not automatically qualify a person to administer relief, supervise recreation, direct propaganda, plan military strategy, or organize a new League of Nations. One may or may not be competent in any of these and other fields. Such competence must be determined in each individual case by reference to specific training, practical experience, and evidence of ability to adapt oneself to particular working conditions.

The case for some continuation of research has been so ably set forth in the 1939-1940 report of the Social Science Research Council that I take the liberty of quoting its first paragraph:

Sharing deeply the concern of all Americans with public problems of great immediate import, and watchful for opportunities of useful service in national emergency, the Council during the past year prosecuted steadily as its primary task its program for development of scientific knowledge of human society. In pursuing this long-run objective the Council is making for public service the most effective use of its capacities. Science from its inception in astronomy has never ceased to broaden its scope through the inorganic and the organic worlds and stands now on the threshold of new advances in the social world. Scientific progress in this realm with its possibilities of intelligent direction of social institutions and forces is one of the essentials for the preservation of the freedoms we cherish. The current crisis is a social convulsion due in no small measure to the lack of scientific knowledge of society. In view of the disruption of scientific work abroad which will prevail for years to come, it is upon America that depends success in extending the realm of science in the social fields.⁶

If we accept the Council's position with reference to research in general, the next question is: What kinds of research are so important for the development of sociology that only the most extraordinary circumstances should be permitted to interrupt their progress? Certainly the importance of long-time studies of social control, morale, and race relations is beyond dispute. The same may be said of inquiries into the processes of personal and group adjustment. The continued growth of our science also demands the development and standardization of new tools of research. I have in mind the three-fold testing of methods used by Angell in his study of middle-class families in the depression. I am thinking of the sociometric scales developed by Chapin and others, and of the efforts to achieve reliable methods of prediction especially in the fields of marriage and penology. It is to be hoped that research of these types may go forward with increasing success.

In so far as these studies are directed both at scientific problems and at current situations they may contribute alike to the growth of sociology and to the solution of pressing administrative questions. For example, Lundberg has suggested

⁶ Social Science Research Council, *Annual Report*, 1939-1940, page 1.

that experimental sociometric studies be undertaken regarding morale in the army cantonments. Modern military tactics seem to be especially dependent upon the independent functioning of small, highly integrated units. The interpersonal relations among the men in such units would be quite crucial to their effective functioning under modern conditions. [Lundberg has proposed to undertake] on a small, experimental basis, to begin with, a number of such studies along the lines that have been suggested by Moreno, with adequate measurement of the results to determine to what extent reassignment of men on this basis results in improved morale.⁷

Such studies as these should have both immediate and long-range values.

Studies of race relations are always important; they deserve special attention at a time like this. An adequate theory of race relations would require an understanding of all the basic social processes, especially those of conflict, accommodation, assimilation, and social control. The practical import of race relations today lies, first in the probability that discussion of national defense and of the democratic way of life may stir minorities to new expectations and new demands. Second, strong prejudices already have prevented the full use of our man-power in defense industries. Third, the existence of interracial conflict is a standing invitation to totalitarian propagandists to repeat in America their program *divide et impera*.

Another area of research pertains to civil liberty, one of the most difficult problems for a democratic people in time of emergency. Shall freedom of communication be maintained for all, thus aiding enemies in our midst, or shall it be restricted, thus threatening the very democracy for which we fight? Now the task of sociological research is not to seek a direct answer to this question but rather to find out what civil liberties are in real life, what disagreements exist over their meaning, what conflicts have arisen over their value. Then, adopting a definition of civil liberties in terms of behavior that is actually engaged in, defended, and opposed in real life, let us see what happens when they are curtailed. What factors are associated with their restrictions? Do we find here recurrent sequences of events which may serve to define some of the processes of public opinion? The study of this group of problems should have a double value for sociologists. In the first place, unless there can be considerable freedom of inquiry, freedom to present findings, and freedom to discuss them critically, scientific social research is out of the question. In the second place, by working inductively toward generalizations about the processes of interaction related to civil liberties, we shall be improving the tools of our profession and shall be contributing to that general body of knowledge about human society which is our major concern.

At the same time, our findings should be of some practical value to administrators who must make decisions about freedom of speech, of assembly, and of the press, and of petition. We will not be saying to public officials, "You should do this and avoid that," but we will be saying, "If you do so and so, here is what may be expected to follow. If you want to protect the

⁷ From a letter submitted to the Research Planning Committee.

civil liberties of your own group, you will help your cause by such-and-such treatment of other groups; you will injure your cause by other specified treatment." You may say that this is merely laboring with the obvious, but to me there are serious questions of both theoretical and practical import in this area. As a matter of plain fact, there seems never to have been complete freedom of speech, press, assembly, and petition. There have apparently been degrees of freedom granted to individuals and groups bearing varied relations to those who exercise authority. We have inadequate knowledge of the circumstances under which different degrees of freedom are permitted and likewise inadequate knowledge of what ensues when different degrees of freedom are permitted. We probably would agree that we believe in the Bill of Rights, but we might get into a hopeless argument about what kinds and degrees of freedom should be given to Communists, Catholics, Negroes, Methodists, sharecroppers, and manufacturers. The trouble would doubtless lie less in a diversity of political and social philosophies than in a lack of objectively verified data and logically drawn inferences. Now as the national and international emergency continues, there is likely to be an increasing number of bitter clashes over the nature and propriety of civil liberties. Hence, such research as I have suggested should have immediate practical usefulness as well as permanent value in the development of sociological theory.

The general point of view recommended for research may well be carried over to our teaching. Let us formulate problems of both theoretical and practical import and utilize data from the actual life of real folks. Let us withhold exhortation about saving the world but encourage our students to seek answers to those perennial questions: (1) What have we here? (e.g., what actually goes on in a strike?) (2) How did it come about? (e.g., are there conditions and events which regularly precede strikes and whose absence means there will be no strike?) (3) What difference does it make? (e.g., are there conditions and events which regularly follow strikes and which do not appear apart from strikes?) (4) What are the alternatives? (e.g., by what means could strikes be averted? What byproducts would such preventives entail?) In this manner, we can stimulate the interest of students in the study of human relations; we can lead them from specific cases to general principles, from the strike as a dramatic event to the sociology of conflict; we can provide them with intellectual tools for the broader study of social interaction. At the same time, we can help them to see more clearly what is involved in urgent practical problems like those of strikes in defense industries. Thus, we may lead our students to a much more realistic conception of intergroup conflict than we can by quoting to them a dozen polysyllabic definitions or having them read abstract discussions of the subject. This does not mean that we should ignore the definitions of other scholars or fail to require the students to formulate definitions of their own. A mere collection of unorganized data is probably just as useless

as a collection of abstract definitions. The data need to be organized, classified, compared; else they will not mean very much. Neither will abstract definitions memorized from textbook or lecture notes mean very much unless they are tested by factual data from real life. Obviously in teaching, as in research, it is necessary to integrate fact-gathering and abstract thinking.

If time permitted, methods as well as content of teaching might well occupy our attention. For, if sociology is to amount to anything more than intellectual gymnastics for a few professors, it must be interesting to students, it must be made clear, and students must participate actively in the educational process. This means that we are poor teachers if we "feed our students a textbook," if we require on examination day merely a replica of what was propounded in our lectures, if we parade our erudition by applying long, unusual names to events capable of simple description, or if we substitute entertainment for enlightenment. I doubt that the students respect or understand our involved definitions, our ponderous generalizations, and our polysyllabic neologisms. I also doubt that they respect or benefit from the telling of bedtime stories and enumeration of the trivia of contemporary society. The realistic teaching of sociology will avoid both obscurantism and vaudeville.

Now let us face some of the realities of extracurricular activities. Sociologists are citizens no less than are merchants, manufacturers, machinists, coal miners, and farmers. Just as inevitably and just as properly, we hold and express opinions, support various movements, and vote on election day. During this great emergency, we will volunteer and we will be called upon to do many things outside of our ordinary work. I only hope that we will take part in the activities which we are most competent to share. Some of us will be soldiers, some statisticians, some conciliators in labor disputes; some will sell defense bonds, some will raise funds for relief, some will administer relief, some will organize recreational programs, some will lobby for or against pending legislation. These things we will do as citizens, not as sociologists. Yet our knowledge, our attitudes, and our skills in these areas cannot be unaffected by our experience as sociologists. We do not pretend or desire to achieve a dichotomous, much less a schizoid personality. Being sociologists does not *per se* equip us to do any of the things just mentioned; nor does doing them forfeit our right to be called sociologists. Such outside experience may greatly enrich our teaching and research, just as our academic experience may enable us to render distinctive and valuable services to the community and the nation.

Within the sociological fraternity there are two other questions involving the facing of reality or flight therefrom. The first has to do with our conception and practice of democracy. Some members hold that, unless there be opportunity for everyone to talk *ad libitum* about every subject under discussion, democracy is dead. That such extended talk-fests may prevent action or postpone it until all usefulness is gone apparently means nothing

to these gentlemen. They have lived so long in a world of words that they have lost contact with the world of deeds. They talk about high moral principles but may in action pursue narrowly selfish ends. At the other extreme are those who demand action and preach efficiency even at the cost of forgetting goals. In order to get organizational work done, they would operate the steam-roller ruthlessly. Perhaps both types are more emotional than rational. Perhaps there is another *modus operandi* whereby those who have something to offer may present it, but having done so, may give others the same opportunity. After all, it may be demonstrated that listening is just as fundamental as talking in a democracy. Also, it may be learned that action cannot always be postponed until the remotest aspects of an issue have been explored. Circumstances may make indecision an implicit decision. Suspension of judgment may degenerate into mere drifting or stalling. Discussion is basic in the democratic process but oratorical perpetual motion is not. Surely it reflects on our lack of realism when we cannot thresh out an issue, settle it, and go ahead to other matters; when we cannot refer details to committees or administrators and accept their judgments thereon. Perhaps underneath is something more than ignorance and verbosity. Perhaps it is a species of egotism, taking the position that wisdom consists in agreeing with *us*, that cooperation means doing what *we* want done, that failure to accept *our* judgment involves a moral or intellectual defect, that opposition to *us* constitutes persecution of the righteous. Unfortunately, such disorientation is not wholly absent from the American Sociological Society.

Another very practical issue has to do with national unity. As American citizens, we are all concerned with national unity in a general sort of way, but as sociologists we manifest a great deal of separatism. We divide our attention between regional and national societies, sometimes to the point of ignoring or attacking the American Sociological Society. Now I am an ardent supporter of my regional society. I appreciate the values of an association of scholars who live in a distinctive area, who can conveniently and inexpensively gather in friendly meetings, but I do not see how sociology can develop to best advantage unless there be national exchange of ideas, national teamwork in promotion of research, and national as well as local and regional outlooks in teaching.

Besides our regional societies, we have others devoted to special problems, special methods of research, or special ideologies. Witness the Rural Sociological Society, the Sociological Research Association, the group interested in Sociometry, the Catholic Sociological Society, Alpha Kappa Delta, the Committee on Conceptual Integration. Each of these is supported by a group of persons who deem it of very great importance. Some apparently consider their specialized interests more significant than the general development of sociology in the United States. Others see their specialized interests in relation to the rest of the field. Some who do not belong to a

given specialized society are inclined to condemn it as existing merely to grind somebody's or some clique's private axe. If we are realistic, we will examine carefully the functions performed by general and by specialized societies. We will inquire diligently how these functions may be best performed. We will not be surprised if we find that certain legitimate interests can be promoted most effectively by means of specialized societies, but we will not forget that above all specialized activities is the development of our budding science. We may support some specialized and some regional organizations, but we will not permit them to interfere with the growth of the American Sociological Society.

Behind our frequent substitution of regional for national affiliations, and behind our frequent substitution of specialized for general interests, are several obvious factors. These include the convenience of meeting near our homes, the emotional warmth of small, congenial groups, the habit of concentrating on limited objectives, the existence of schools of thought, and perhaps occasionally peevishness or inability to work with other people, but if we are realists, we will see the place for regional and national, for specialized and general societies. We will divide our support in accordance with our abilities but in no case will we permit national unity to suffer.

It is evident there are many kinds of reality to be faced—realities of discussion and of action, of specialization and of synthesis, of research and of teaching, of professional and of civic activities, of slow-moving mores and of swiftly changing international relations. In respect to these realities, sociologists have responsibilities and opportunities. Have we the insight and the courage to accept them? Have we the ability to work together as a team so as to offer a maximum contribution? Have we the humility to recognize our own limitations? Our call may be to extend the frontiers of knowledge through research; it may be to train a new generation through classroom teaching; it may be to spread sociological discoveries and interpretations through writing and lecturing; it may be something else. In any case, let us neither hide away in an ivory tower nor sally forth with the idea that sociology will save the world. Let us pray that we may be spared both from inferiority feelings and from a Jehovah complex. Let us refrain from playing either with concepts or with unassorted facts. Let us guard against hasty generalizations, but having arrived at legitimate conclusions, let us offer them to the world for whatever they may be worth. Guided by these precepts, we should succeed in facing as much reality as may be necessary.