

## Breakout Group Discussion Questions: "Sociology as a Way of Seeing"

## Group 1: Georg Simmel – "The Stranger"

1. Simmel uses traders as a classic example of 'the stranger'. What features of a trader's relationship to a town illustrate 'the stranger' dynamic?
2. Is it possible for a stranger, in Simmel's sense, to remain a stranger forever? Why or why not?
3. Provide an example of a situation in your life where *you* relate to a group of people as a 'stranger', in Simmel's sense.

## Group 2: C. Wright Mills – "The Sociological Imagination"

1. How does Mills define "troubles of milieu" and "issues of social structure"?
2. Why is it impossible to understand our life chances by only looking only at our milieu? How does the "sociological imagination" help us understand our everyday lives better?
3. According to Mills, does social structure shape *all* of an individual's experiences? Is there room for individual choice within his milieu?

## Group 3: Emile Durkheim – "What Makes Sociology Different?"

1. Laws and classroom rules are some examples of social facts that are *explicit*. What are some examples of *unspoken* social facts? How are these enforced in society?
2. How do you believe Durkheim defines "collective phenomena"?
3. According to Durkheim, do social facts shape *all* individual action? Do individuals have free will, or is everything determined by collective forces?

## Group 4: Michael Burawoy – "Public Sociology"

1. Define 'professional', 'policy', and 'public' sociologies. What are the differences between them?
2. Are they mutually exclusive? Or do they complement one another? Why?
3. Why, for Burawoy, is it important to ask "for whom?" and "for what?" we create knowledge? Are these the same question?
4. According to Burawoy, is it possible to practice social science without "taking a stance" (i.e. without having "value commitments")? Think of a study that practices value-free science?