KURT FINSTERBUSCH received his bachelor's degree in history from Princeton University in 1957 and a bachelor of divinity degree from Grace Theological Seminary in 1960. He Ph.D. in sociology, from Columbia University, was conferred in 1969. He has authored three books: Understanding Social Impact (Sage Publications, 1980); Social Research for Policy Decisions (Wadsworth, 1980), with Annabelle Bender Moe; and Organizational Change as a Development Strategy (Lyman Rieker Publishers, 1987). He is currently a professor of sociology at the University of Maryland, College Park, and is the academic advisor for the Dushkin Publishing Group's Annual Editions: Sociology.

JANET S. SCHWARTZ received her bachelor's degree in sociology from City College of New York in 1972, a master's degree in organizational behavior from Cornell University in 1967, and a doctorate in sociology from Cornell University in 1967. From 1967 to 1983, she taught and conducted research in the sociology departments of Wells College in New York, George Mason University in Virginia, the University of Maryland, and the American University in Washington, D.C. She currently does research and consulting work as an independent sociologist, and her research interests and writings center around the Soviet Union and East European societies, especially on work and organizations, civil-military relations, and social movements.
Preface

The subject matter of sociology is ourselves—people interacting with one another in groups. Sociologists seek to understand in a systematic and scientific way the social behavior of human beings and human arrangements. Sociologists question seemingly familiar and commonplace aspects of our social lives, and offer novel and surprising answers. To study sociology is to explore society in new and dynamic ways.

Sociology is a form of scientific inquiry that gives us the intellectual tools for understanding our world more profoundly. As a discipline, sociology has evolved its own history of ideas and thinkers, research methods, and theories. In this volume, we have put into your hands directly those researchers and writers whose works have enduring value for the study of society.

Sources: Notable Selections in Sociology brings together 44 selections (classic articles, book excerpts, and case studies) that have shaped the study of society and our contemporary understanding of it. We have included the works of distinguished sociological observers, past and present, from Marx and Engels on class to Mills on the sociological imagination to Bernard on the female world and Bell on technology and social change. The selections also reflect the long-standing tradition in sociology of incorporating useful insights from related disciplines. Thus, the volume includes contributions by anthropologists, political scientists, psychologists, ecologists, and economists.

Each selection was chosen because, in our opinion, it has helped shape the sociological inquiry. Each contains essential ideas used in the sociological enterprise, or has served as some kind of a touchstone for other scholars. As a whole, Sources is designed to be an accessible, reasonably comprehensive introduction to sociological classics. We have tried to select readings across a broad spectrum, i.e., the ideas, insights, and themes presented in these selections are not necessarily limited to a particular society. Accordingly, they should enable students to analyze the behaviors and institutions of many nations.

Plan of the book: These selections are well suited to courses that attempt to convey the richness of the sociological perspective and require more than a superficial grasp of major sociological concepts and theories. The selections are organized topically around the major areas of study within sociology: the selections in Part 1 introduce the sociological perspective; Part 2, the individual and society; Part 3, stratification; Part 4, social institutions; and Part 5, society
is good or evil, or predominantly one or the other. But there is great scientific value to the demonstration that every system of leadership is incompatible with the most essential postulates of democracy. We are now aware that the law of the historic necessity of oligarchy is primarily based upon a series of facts of experience. Like all other scientific laws, sociological laws are derived from empirical observation. In order, however, to deprive our analysis of its purely descriptive character, and to bring it upon that status of analytical explanation which can allow transform a formula into a law, it does not suffice to congregate from a unitary outlook those phenomena which may be empirically established; we must also study the determining causes of these phenomena. Such has been our tack.

Now, if we leave out of consideration the tendency of the leaders to organize themselves and to consolidate their interests, and if we leave out of consideration the gratitude of the led towards the leaders, and the general immobility and passivity of the masses, we are led to conclude that the principal cause of oligarchy in the democratic parties is to be found in the technical indispatchability of leadership.

The process which has begun in consequence of the differentiation of functions in the party is completed by a complex of qualities which the leaders acquire through their detachments from the mass. At the outset, leaders arise spontaneously; their functions are accessory and gratuitous. Soon, however, they become professional leaders, and in this second stage of development they are stable and irremovable.

It follows that the explanation of the oligarchical phenomenon which thus results is partly psychological: oligarchy derives, that is to say, from the psychological transformations which the leading personalities in the parties undergo in the course of their lives. But also, and still more, oligarchy depends upon what we may term the psychology of organization itself, that is to say, upon the tactical and technical necessities which result from the consolidation of every disciplined political aggregate. Reduced to its most concise expression, the fundamental sociological law of political parties (the term "political" being here used in its most comprehensive significance) may be formulated in the following terms: "It is organization which gives birth to the dominion of the elected over the electors, of the masters over the mandatories, of the delegates over the delegates. Who says organization, says oligarchy."

Every party organization represents an oligarchical power grounded upon a democratic basis. We find everywhere electors and elected. Also we find everywhere that the power of the elected leaders over the electing masses is almost unlimited. The oligarchical structure of the building antedates the basic democratic principle. That which is oppressor that which ought to be. For the masses, this essential difference between the reality and the ideal remains a mystery.

Chapter 8
Elites

8.1 C. Wright Mills

The Higher Circles

Radical sociologist C. Wright Mills (1916-1962) was a leader of mid-twentieth-century American sociological thought. He believed that social scientists should not be merely disinterested observers, a practice that Mills referred to as "abstracted empiricism," but that they should be activists asserting their social responsibility. In his book The Power Elite (Oxford University Press, 1956), Mills offers his view of the U.S. system of power. In the following excerpt from The Power Elite, he argues that there is a "power elite" in the United States that is composed of a small group of individuals who occupy powerful positions and exert a dominant influence on the country's decision-making process. Mills does not see this group as a deliberately engineered conspiracy but as the outcome of power from democratically elected representatives. By virtue of their positions at the upper levels of the military, the government, and various business organizations, they shape public policy and make the key decisions of the United States.

Mills notes that the American economy shifted from a system of small units to one that is dominated by large and powerful organizations that are intertwined politically and administratively. They are the key economic decisionmakers. Prior to World War II, the military had little or no influence, but since the 1950s, the military has exerted great influence and commanded major resources. Finally, the political leadership has become centralized and has taken on power that, in the past, was dispersed. According to Mills, the "power elite" interact socially and develop a common set of values and beliefs of what they believe is right and good for the United States.

Key Concept: the power elite
They know that the bomb was dropped over Japan in the name of the United States of America, although they were at no time consulted about the matter. They know that they live in a time of big decisions; they know that they are not making any. Accordingly, they consider the present as history, they infer that at its center, making decisions or failing to make them, there must be an elite of power.

On the other hand, those who share this feeling about big historical events assume that there is an elite and that its power is great. On the other hand, those who listen carefully to the reports of men apparently involved in the great decisions often do not believe that there is an elite whose powers are of decisive consequence.

Both views must be taken into account, but neither is adequate. The way to understand the power of the American elite lies neither solely in recognizing the historic scale of events nor in accepting the personal awareness reported by men of apparent decision. Behind such men and behind the events of history, linking the two, are the major institutions of modern society. These hierarchies of state and corporation and army constitute the means of power; as such they are the cause of the consequence not before squelched in human history—and at their summit, there are now those command posts of modern society which offer the sociological key to an understanding of the role of the higher circles in America.

Within American society, major national power now resides in the economic, the political, and the military domains. Other institutions seem off to the side of modern history; and, on occasion, duly subordinated to these. No family is as directly powerful in national affairs as any major corporation; no church is as directly powerful in the external biographies of young men in America today as the military establishment; no college is as powerful in the shaping of momentous events as the National Security Council. Religious, educational, and family institutions are not autonomous centers of national power; on the contrary, these decentralized areas are increasingly shaped by the big three, in which developments of decisive and immediate consequence now occur.

Families and churches and schools adapt to modern life; governments and armies and corporations shape it, and, as they do so, they turn these lesser institutions into means for their ends. Religious institutions provide chaplains to the armed forces where they are used as a means of increasing the effectiveness of its morale to kill. Schools select and train men for their jobs in corporations and their specialized tasks in the armed forces. The extended family has, of course, long been brokered, up by the industrial revolution, and now the son and the father are removed from the family by compulsion if need be, whenever the army or the state sends out the call. And the symbols of all these lesser institutions are used to legitimate the power and the decisions of the big three.

The life-style of the modern individual depends not only upon the family into which he was born or on which he enters by marriage, but increasingly upon the corporation in which he spends the most alert hours of his best years; not only upon the school where he is educated as a child and adolescent, but also upon the state which teaches him throughout his life; not only upon the church
in which on occasion he hears the word of God, but also upon the army in which he is disciplined.

In the imperial state could not rely upon the inculcation of nationalist loyalties in public and private schools, its leaders would promptly seek to modify the decentralized educational system. If the bankruptcy rate among the top five hundred corporations were as high as the general divorce rate among the thirty-seven million married couples, there would be economic catastrophe on an international scale. If members of armies gave to them no more of their lives than do believers to the churches to which they belong, there would be a military crisis.

Within each of the big three, the typical institutional unit has become enlarged, has become administrative, and, in the power of its decisions, has become centralized. Behind these developments there is a fabulous technology: as for institutions, they have incorporated the technology and guide it, even as it shapes and paces their developments.

The economy—once a great scatter of small productive units in autonomous balance—has become dominated by two or three hundred giant corporations, administratively and politically interrelated, which together hold the keys to economic decisions.

The political order, once a decentralized set of several dozen states with a weak spinal cord, has become a centralized, executive establishment which has taken up into itself many powers previously scattered, and now enters into each and every cranny of the social structure.

The military order, once a state establishment in a context of distrust fed by state militia, has become the largest and most expensive feature of government, and, although well versed in shifting public relations, now has all the gait and chary efficiency of a sprawling bureaucratic domain.

In each of these institutional areas, the means of power at the disposal of decision makers have increased enormously; their central executive powers have been enhanced, within each of them modern administrative routines have been elaborated and tightened up.

As each of these domains becomes enlarged and centralized, the consequences of its activities become greater, and its traffic with the others increases. The decisions of a handful of corporations bear upon military and political as well as upon economic development around the world. The decisions of the military establishment rest upon and greatly affect political life as well as the very level of economic activity. The decisions made within the political domain determine economic activities and military programs. There is no longer, on the one hand, an economy, and, on the other hand, a political order containing a military establishment unimportant to politics and to money-making. There is a political economy: linked, in a thousand ways, with military institutions and decisions. On each side of the world—split running through central Europe and around the Asiatic rimlands—are an ever-increasing interlocking of economic, military, and political structures. If there is government intervention in the corporate economy, so is there corporate intervention in the governmental process. In the structural sense, this triangle of power is the source of the interlocking directive that is most important for the historical structure of the present.

The fact of the interlocking is clearly revealed at each of the points of crisis of modern capitalist society—slump, war, and boom. In each, too, of decision are led to an awareness of the interdependence of the major institutional orders. In the nineteenth century, when the scale of all institutions was smaller, the liberal integration was achieved in the automatic economy, by an autonomous play of market forces, and in the automatic political domain, by the bargain and the vote. It was then assumed that out of the imbalance and friction that followed the limited decisions then possible a new equilibrium would in due course emerge. That can no longer be assumed, and it is not assumed by the men at the top of each of the three dominant hierarchies.

For given the scope of their consequences, decisions—and hence decisions in any one of these ramify into the others, and hence top decisions tend either to become co-ordinated or to lead to a commanding indirection. It has not always been like this. When numerous small entrepreneurs made up the economy, for example, many of them could fail and the consequences still remain local; political and military authorities did not intervene. But now, given political expectations and military commitments, can they afford to allow key units of the private corporate economy to break down in slump? Increasingly, they do intervene in economic affairs, and as they do so, the controlling decisions in each order are inspected by agents of the other two, and economic, military, and political structures are interlocked.

At the pinnacle of each of the three enlarged and centralized domains, there have arisen those higher circles which wake up the economic, the political, and the military elites, at the top of the economy, among the corporate rich, there are the chief executives; at the top of the political order, the members of the political electorate; at the top of the military establishment, the elite of the officer-stationed in and around the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the upper echelon. As each of these domains has coincided with the others, as decisions tend to become total in their consequence, the leading men in each of the three domains of power—the warlords, the corporation chieftains, the political directors—tend to come together, to form the power elite of America.

The higher circles in and around these command posts are often thought of in terms of what their members possess: they have a greater share than other people of the things and experiences that are most highly valued. From this point of view, the elite are simply those who have the most of what there is to have, which is generally held to include money, power, and prestige—as well as all the ways of life to which these lead. But the elite are not simply those who have the most, for they could not 'have the most' were it not for their positions in the great institutions. For such institutions are the necessary bases of power, of wealth, and of prestige. And at the same time, the chief means of exercising power, of acquiring and retaining wealth, and of casting in the higher claims to prestige.

—By the powerful we mean, of course, those who are able to realize their will, even if others resist it. No one, accordingly, can be truly powerful unless he has access to the command of major institutions, for it is over these institutional means of power that the truly powerful are, in the first instance, powerful.
Higher politicians and key officials of government command such institutional power; so do admirals and generals, and so do the major owners and executives of the larger corporations. Not all power, it is true, is anchored in and exercised by means of such institutions, but only within and through them can power be more or less continuous and important.

Wealth also is acquired and held in and through institutions. The pyramid of wealth cannot be understood merely in terms of the very rich: for the great inheriting families . . . are now supplemented by the corporate institutions of modern society: every one of the very rich families has been and is closely connected—always legally and frequently managerially as well—with one of the multi-million dollar corporations.

The modern corporation is the prime source of wealth, but in latter-day capitalism, the political apparatus also opens and closes many avenues to wealth. The amount as well as the source of income, the power over consumers' goods as well as over productive capital, are determined by position within the political economy. If one interest in the very rich goes beyond their lavish or their excessive consumption, we must examine their relations to modern forms of corporate property as well as to the state; for such relations now determine the chances of men to secure big property and to receive high income.

Great prestige increasingly follows the major institutional units of the social structure. It is obvious that prestige depends, often quite decisively, upon access to the publicity machines that are now a central and normal feature of all the big institutions of modern America. Moreover, one feature of these hierarchies of corporation, state, and military establishment is that their top positions are increasingly interchangeable. One result of this is the accumulative nature of prestige. Claims for prestige, for example, may be initially based on military roles, then expressed in and augmented by an educational institution run by corporate executives, and cashed in, finally, in the political order, where, for General Eisenhower and those he represents, power and prestige finally meet at the very peak. Like wealth and power, prestige tends to be cumulative: the more of it you have, the more you can get. These values also tend to be translatable into one another: the wealthy find it easier than the poor to gain power; those with status find it easier than those without it to control opportunities for wealth.

If in the one hundred most powerful men in America, the one hundred wealthiest, and in the one hundred most celebrated away from the institutional positions they now occupy, away from their resources of men and women and money, away from the media of mass communication that are now focused upon them—then they would be powerlcss and poor and uncultivated. For power is not of a man. Wealth does not center in the person of the wealthy. Celebrity is not inherent in any personality. To be celebrated, to be wealthy, to have power requires access to major institutions, for the institutional positions men occupy determine in large part their chances to have and to hold these valued experiences.

The people of the higher circles may also be conceived as members of a top social stratum, as a set of groups whose members know one another, are socially and at business, and so in making decisions, take one another into account. The elite, according to this conception, feel themselves to be, and are felt by others to be, the inner circle of the upper social classes. They form a more or less compact social and psychological entity; they have become self-conscious members of a social class. People are either accepted into this class or they are not, and there is a qualitative split, rather than merely a numerical scale, separating them from those who are not elite. They are more or less aware of themselves as a social class and they behave toward one another differently from the way they do toward members of other classes. They accept one another, understand one another, marry one another, tend to work and to think if not together at least alike.