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SOCIOLOGICAL STUDIES 4

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EDITED BY

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Belfast*

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

The concept of role has been central to the development of knowledge about, and measures of, the normative context which mediates between the individual and society. The whole controversy of the primacy of 'nature' or 'nurture' has been contained within this loose-fitting concept of role. On the one hand it depends on dramatic analogy – 'a man plays many parts'; on the other it represents the total sum of socialized human personality responding to the defined needs of specific, structured situations. It is not a happy concept in that it lacks precise meaning and its empirical reference is necessarily rather indirect.

As in the first three numbers on *Social Stratification, Migration and Professions and Professionalization* the purpose of this volume is to raise a number of questions about the adequacy of theoretical concepts used by sociologists and others to describe social phenomena. In particular the adequacy of concepts that have 'passed into the literature' needs constantly to be reassessed in terms of new research findings and varying empirical examples. The editorial aim of the series is not, however, to provide a new 'final' statement in the form of a 'reader' or a set of papers which tidy up the theoretical garden.

In the best sense it is hoped that Sociological Studies will provide *working papers* on a theme of general and continuing interest to social scientists rather than final statements. The international range covered by the contributors together with the intention that they should speculate freely on the problem produces inevitable discrepancies of viewpoint and highlights further problems yet to be resolved. Equally it is hoped that the series will continue to provide, as it has in its initial volumes, a forum for the development and furthering of contemporary theory in the social sciences as this develops from varying traditions and with differing national tendencies and interests.

With the exception of the paper by Professor Heinrich Popitz, which appears for the first time in English translation, each paper has been specially written for this volume. I am grateful to Professor Popitz and his publishers, J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) of Tübingen, for permission to translate and reproduce *Der Begriff der Sozialen Rolle als Element der Soziologischen Theorie*.

Sociological Studies 5 will be devoted to the theme of 'Social Change' and will appear in 1972.

J.A.J.

Belfast
March 1971

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