

The Other Me: An Assignment to Develop the Sociological Imagination by Imagining a Walk in Someone Else's Shoes

Source: Fletcher Winston, Mercer University

This assignment asks you to apply the material learned during the semester and use your sociological imagination to think about who you would be if your biography was different. Please see lesson one and the course reading by Mills regarding the sociological imagination and refer to our discussion of this concept as you prepare your responses in step V. You should also review our material (notes, readings, assignments, etc.) from the semester as you prepare these responses. In deciding on characteristics, do avoid stereotypes and stick to generalities about how society works.

Please submit the completed work for all five steps and staple all of the pages. Points will be deducted for anything, including staples, omitted. While the first four steps are important because they build the foundation for step five (which is the MOST important part and should be the lengthiest and well thought out).

This assignment is comprised of the following five steps:

- I. Complete the "My Interests and Plans" worksheet.
- II. Complete your biography by answering the demographics questions on the "My Biography" sheet.
- III. Complete a new biography by answering the questions *for the other you*. This person has demographics that are extremely different from you. After you complete the biography for the other you, give the other you a new name.
- IV. Carefully think about the demographics of the other you and how his/her new social identity and environment will lead to interests and plans that are different from yours. Complete a new "Interests and Plans" worksheet for the other you according to his/her biography.
- V. Type each of the following questions and answer using full sentences below the question. Responses should reflect meaningful application of what we've learned during the semester and deep, thoughtful analysis. (Again, this is the MOST important question. Spend some time on yours answers).
 1. How are the interests and plans of the other you different? How did you decide upon the interests/plans of the other you? Summarize and explain these differences using sociological concepts.
 2. Thinking about your biographies, identify and discuss at least three opportunities that are different for the other you.
 3. How do you think the other you will turn out differently from you in 10 years? In your response, discuss at least three characteristics that would be different. Why do you think the other you will be different in these ways?
 4. What did you learn about yourself from this assignment?
 5. What did you learn about the sociological perspective from this assignment?

Step 1

Your name _____

My Interests and Plans

Please indicate three of your favorite hobbies or other interests:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

favorite food _____

favorite drink _____

favorite type of book/reading material _____

favorite type of movie _____

favorite movie (be specific) _____

favorite tv show _____

favorite type of music _____

favorite musical artist _____

educational goals _____

intended career plan _____

favorite place to visit _____

Step 2

My Biography

1. What is your gender?

- Masculine
- Feminine
- Other _____ (*specify*)

2. What is your race/ethnicity?

- White
- Black/African American
- Hispanic
- Asian
- Native American
- Other _____ (*specify*)

3. What is your best estimate of your parents' combined annual income for 2014? Please estimate based on the gross income before taxes.

- Less than \$30,000
- \$30,000 to \$49,999
- \$50,000 to \$119,999
- \$120,000 to \$299,999
- \$300,000 or more

4. What are the primary occupations of your parents? *Please be specific.*

father's occupation _____
mother's occupation _____

5. What is the highest level of education completed by either of your parents?

- graduated high school
- some college
- graduated college; four year degree
- master's degree
- Ph.D. or professional degree (e.g. M.D. or J.D.)

6. Which of the following best describe your religious identity? Check the one that most applies to you.

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agnostic | <input type="checkbox"/> Catholic | <input type="checkbox"/> Methodist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Atheist | <input type="checkbox"/> Christian | <input type="checkbox"/> Muslim |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Baptist | <input type="checkbox"/> Episcopalian | <input type="checkbox"/> Presbyterian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Buddhist | <input type="checkbox"/> Hindu | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ (<i>specify</i>) |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Jewish | |

7. In what state have you resided for most of your life? _____

8. For most of your life did you reside in a rural, suburban, or urban area?

- rural/country
- suburban
- urban/city

Step 3

Name of the other you _____

Biography of THE OTHER ME

1. What is your gender?

- Masculine
- Feminine
- Other _____ (*specify*)

2. What is your race/ethnicity?

- White
- Black/African American
- Hispanic
- Asian
- Native American
- Other _____ (*specify*)

3. What is your best estimate of your parents' combined annual income for 2014? Please estimate based on the gross income before taxes.

- Less than \$30,000
- \$30,000 to \$49,999
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Agnostic | <input type="checkbox"/> Catholic | <input type="checkbox"/> Methodist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Atheist | <input type="checkbox"/> Christian | <input type="checkbox"/> Muslim |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Baptist | <input type="checkbox"/> Episcopalian | <input type="checkbox"/> Presbyterian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Buddhist | <input type="checkbox"/> Hindu | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ (<i>specify</i>) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jewish | | |

7. In what state have you resided for most of your life? _____

8. For most of your life did you reside in a rural, suburban, or urban area?

- rural/country
- suburban
- urban/city

Step 4

Name of the other you _____

Interests and Plans for THE OTHER ME

Please indicate three of your favorite hobbies or other interests:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

favorite food _____

favorite drink _____

favorite type of book/other reading material _____

favorite type of movie _____

favorite movie (be specific) _____

favorite tv show _____

favorite type of music _____

favorite musical artist _____

educational goals _____

intended career plan _____

favorite place to visit _____

Step 5 (this is the most important and substantial part! Be thorough, detailed and complete)

Type each of the following questions and answer using full sentences below the question. Responses should reflect *meaningful application* of what we've learned during the semester and *deep, thoughtful analysis*. You may list #1 and then your answer, #2 and then your answer and so on. It does not have to be written like an English essay but it does have to be thorough and complete. Elaborate on any statements/examples you provide. Think about how these pertain to life chances...

1. How are the interests and plans of the other you different? How did you decide upon the interests/plans of the other you? Summarize and explain these differences using sociological concepts.
2. Thinking about your biographies, identify and discuss at least three opportunities that are different for the other you.
3. How do you think the other you will turn out differently from you in 10 years? In your response, discuss at least three characteristics that would be different. Why do you think the other you will be different in these ways?
4. What did you learn about your *self* from this assignment?
5. What did you learn about the sociological perspective from this assignment?