Sociological Imagination - Intro

- We are not ordinarily aware of the connection between the people we are becoming and the types of history-making in which they might take part.
- The shaping of history now (1959) outpaces our ability to orient ourselves with cherished values.

Anomie - Rolelessness

The Sociological Imagination - Part 1

- The first lesson of the sociological imagination is for individual biographies to locate themselves within their history.
- Mills writes, “In many ways it is a terrible lesson; in many ways a magnificent one.”

What could he mean?

- Those who have dedicated themselves to studying the social must ask themselves these three questions:
  1. What is the structure of society?
  2. Where in history is the society located?
  3. Who are the players or actors?
The Sociological Imagination - Part 2

- Private Trouble
  - Within the character of the individual.
  - Within the range of his/her immediate locale.
  - Limited areas of social life of which the individual is aware.
  - Troubles and their resolution reside within the individual.

- Public Issues
  - Matters that transcend the local.
  - Many milieu into the institutions of society as a whole.
  - Values cherished by the public is threatened.

- An issue often involves a crisis in institutional arrangements involving what Marx referred to as: “contradictions” and “antagonisms”.

- Examples from Mills:
  - Unemployment
The Sociological Imagination - Part 2 (Continued)

- Examples from Mills:
  - War
  - Marriage
  - The City

Theory

- **Theory**: Set of statements that seeks to explain problems, actions, or behavior.
  - Effective theories have explanatory and predictive power
  - Theories are never final statements about human behavior.

Durkheim had a Theory

- Suicide a private trouble.
- Suicide a public issue.
  - Durkheim, a skeptic if ever there was one, asked if there were public issues at work in relation to the private trouble of suicide.
  - Durkheim measured statistically significant rates of suicide based on too much or too little integration or regulation.
  - Integration - How connected individuals within a society feel in relation to the society they inhabit.
Durkheim had a Theory (Continued)

- Suicide a public issue.
  - Regulation - How much control a society imposes upon those individuals within that society.
- When there is a balance of integration and/or regulation within a society things are “good” for the population in that society.
- When there is too much or too little integration and/or too much or too little regulation within a society, things are not as “good” for some rate of people within that population.

Durkheim’s Theory of Suicide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Integration</th>
<th>Regulation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Too Much</td>
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<td>Too Little</td>
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The Sociological Eye

- Sociology is difficult because we have been taught (socialized) to see the world in ways that are non-sociological.
  - We have been taught to embrace the principle of individualism.
- Sociologists recognize that the social environment makes some choices easier and others harder for the individual.

Choices

- Without a sociological imagination we are tempted to attack all problems by treating individuals….
- With such a limited perspective, it’s hard to see that some of our worst “problems” are the result of social forces.
Kids Today...

- Anomie - Rolelessness
  - No clear pathways to adult roles.
  - Prolonged adolescence.
  - Delayed economic maturation.
  - Less opportunity to pursue societally-valued adult activities.
  - More leisure, consumption, and grooming opportunities.
  - Earlier onset of puberty.

Couples

- Situated Social Power

- Obstacles to intimacy (housework and sex).
  - Women have to be pleasers.
  - Men have to be tough.

Definition of the Situation - Review

If people define situations as real, they [the situations] are real in their consequences.

-W.I. Thomas

Hernando Washington

- Definition of the situation in South-Side Chicago.

- Public issues of South-Side Chicago.
Paradigms Introduction

- Four ways of knowing things:
  - Aesthetically
  - Morally
  - Empirically
  - Interpretively

- Sociology, the science, seeks to discover / know things empirically.
- Sociology has a(n):
  - Epistemology
  - Methodology
- Sociologists study anything and everything.

- Paradigms are a set of assumptions about the nature of the social world.
- Paradigms are like frameworks or lenses through which observations about the social world are made.
  - What does a paradigm do?
  - What does a paradigm not do?
  - Why have paradigms?

Symbolic Interactionism

- People act depending on their perception.
- People are continuously learning from those around them how to perceive reality.
Symbolic Interactionism (Continued)

- Constant development, transmission, and interpretation of meanings.
- When people attach different meanings to things there is the opportunity for misunderstandings or conflict.
- Dramaturgy - *Ervin Goffman*.
  - Social Performance
  - Frontstage / backstage
  - Scenes
  - Scripts
  - Costumes

Functional Analysis

- Consensus about what values and norms are important.
- Society is a whole made up of many integrated and interdependent parts.
  - Change in one part results in change in another part.
- Society seeks stability or equilibrium.
- Conflict or disequilibrium is dysfunctional or pathological.

Functional Analysis - R.K. Merton

- **Manifest Function**
  - Recognized and *intended* consequences that people observe or expect social pattern, behavior, institution, or structure.

- **Latent Function**
  - Unrecognized and/or *unintended* consequences that people observe or expect social pattern, behavior, institution, or structure.
Functional Analysis - R.K. Merton

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Context (Institutions, patterns, structures)</th>
<th>Manifest Function</th>
<th>Latent Function</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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Conflict Theory

- Within any society there are subgroups of people who ascribe to different and often competing/conflicting values and goals.
- Subgroups are in ruthless competition for scarce resources.
- Conflict is normal.

Conflict Theory - Feminist View

- Gender exists, is social constructed, and has consequences for both genders.
- Sees inequality in gender as central to all behavior and organization
- Proponents tend to focus on macro level
- Broadened social behavior by extending analysis beyond male point of view

Paradigms Handout