

6 March 2017

The Sociological Imagination

- C. Wright Mills (1959)
- Way of describing what we do: looking at social systems (macro) and diversity within systems (micro)
- “The sociological imagination enables its possessor to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals...The first fruit of this imagination-and first lesson of the social science that embodies it-is the idea that the individual can understand his own experience and gauge his own fate only by locating himself within his period, that he can know his own chances in life only by becoming aware of those of all individuals in his circumstances. In many ways it is a terrible lesson; in many ways a magnificent one.” (C. Wright Mills pg.5)
- Differences between “Private troubles” vs. “Public issues”
- **“Private troubles”**
 - Issues that are specific to individuals
 - Personality
 - Individual psychology
 - Health
 - Good luck, bad luck
 - Social processes
 - Not the focus of sociology
- **“Public issues”**
 - Situations caused by social forces
 - Social interaction between different groups
 - Situations beyond the power of a single person to create or solve
 - Poverty
 - War
 - Homophobia
 - Hip-hop culture
 - Focus of sociology
- Don't confuse “private troubles” and “public issues” with the idea of “private” and “public”
- Sociology is concerned with things that happen in homes, personal relationships, etc.
- Means you can distinguish between what is “personal trouble” and what is a “public issue”
- Can distinguish between situations that are caused by the individual and those caused by the social, political, economic and cultural forces of society (van Krieken)
- Means
 - Looking beyond the surface
 - Not just depending on “common sense”
 - An interpretive imagination
 - Understanding that societies change
 - Understanding one's own position in a society
- Most people understand the world and their society through individual experience

- What happens to them, what happens to a neighbour
- Means you do not depend on “common sense” or “natural” explanations of the world
- Uses a critical and analytical approach
- Explore the social forces that shape and influence “common sense”
- Difference between “personal tragedy” and “social problem”, and how this becomes a “sociological problem” → Australia’s low unemployment rate

13 March 2017

Sociology

- A process of “reasoning about the social”: how we think about the society
- Coined by Auguste Comte (1842)
- Interpreting social relations and societies

Emerged in a world that was undergoing profound changes (MESS)

- **French revolution: democracy, citizenship**
 - From a king/queen who can do anything to democracy
 - From kingdoms to nation-state (groups of people have share something in common)
 - Citizenship: particular rights to responsibilities (ex. Right to vote, to health care...)
- **Industrial revolution: shift from agrarian to industrial economy**
 - Development of city (as massive amount of people move from rural areas to urban)
 - Breaking of social bonds, bonds of familiarity (from small village where we all know each other → don’t know anyone on the streets)
 - Development of new ways of knowing each other
 - Emergence of class (working class)
- **Enlightenment: secular and rational ideas**
 - Prior: God = truth/dominant
 - All knowledge is held by the church (not widely disseminated)
 - Most people are illiterate
 - Decline in influence of church
 - Development of printing press
 - Development of scientific thoughts
 - Shift in way of thinking

Major sociologists

- Karl Marx
- Max Weber
- Emile Durkheim
- Talcott Parsons
- Anthony Giddens (contemporary)

Reflexivity: reconsidering one’s position in the social world

- What is your relationship to the people around you
- Interconnectedness (member of a group)
- Associated with ethnicity, gender, age, class...
- Being aware of all the macro and micro relationships around and how they impact the way you understand the world