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The Sociological Imagination

Sociological imagination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - getting under the surface of human interaction, find more interesting ways of understanding what's going on around you - most think that we control our minds, sociologists look for ways in which our thoughts and feelings come from a context which we aren't aware of - a framework that allows us to approach sociology - sociology is justified by the belief that it is better to be conscious than unconscious and that consciousness is a condition of freedom' Peter Berger 1963
Social construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - role of language is central to social construction of reality (Krieken), how phenomena are defined influences their perception and the way people react to them - Social constructionism is a general term sometimes applied to theories that emphasize the socially created nature of social life. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • emphasize the idea that society is actively and creatively produced by human beings. They portray the world as made or invented—rather than merely given or taken for granted. Social worlds are interpretive nets woven by individuals and groups. <p>The term formally entered the sociological vocabulary through Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann 's <i>The Social Construction of Reality</i> (1966),</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Society is a human product. Society is an objective reality. Man is a social product'. Their major case-study of social constructionism was religion (see Berger 's <i>The Social Reality of Religion</i>, 1969), but at the same time the labelling theory of deviance was being developed and popularized, suggesting in parallel fashion that deviance is socially constructed. • educational knowledge was also socially constructed.
Social structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the idea that social relations are organized along patterned lines that endure over time and act as a constraint on the individuals living within them (Krieken p.5) - structuralist perspective - our behaviour arises from the social institutions we belong to which in turn form the social structure "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness" (Marx & Engels, 1951) - "the area of variations that are possible and tolerated is always and everywhere more or less restricted... sooner or later, we encounter a limit that we cannot transcend" (Durkheim 1964, p. 386 see Krieken p.5)
Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "culture" refers to a clearly bounded group, by contrast to other groups - "culture" refers to a specialized realm of expressive activities and artefacts - "the processes by which meaning is created within a community, which is expressed in a set of values and a way of life that is unique to that community and distinguishes it to other communities" (Krieken, p. 6) - "every culture makes assumptions about fundamental phenomena such as relations of time, space and number - these form the framework for the experience of the world and are experienced as absolute, unquestionable truths despite being relative to each other" (Krieken, p. 6)

	<p>- our behaviour in society is constructed on a system of signs and symbols that we unconsciously learn and through which our world gains meaning, called signifiers (Baudrillard 1983)</p> <p>Norbert Elias - change of manners over time</p>
Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Debates over agency have emerged together with these fields, and continue unabated into the present time, with no resolution or consensus in sight. While many agree that agency, action, and actor are basic in some sense, controversies persist over the definition, range, and explanatory status of these concepts. In addition, agency is contested because it connects to core questions in metaphysics, philosophy, and ethics, such as free will, moral responsibility, personhood, and subjective rights. Agency is tied to the legacy of liberal humanism that is part of the core of democratic citizenship. - structural forces influenced the women's rights movement but the free, purposeful actions of women also played a major role (Krieken, p. 7) - we may act in response to our own understanding of the situation rather than simply being moved by external forces (Garfinkel 1967, p. 68, see Krieken 7) - Giddens (1984) theory of structuration, humans are knowledgeable agents who impose their meaning on the world although they are simultaneously constrained by structural forces (Krieken p. 7)
Socialisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Socialization is the process by which humans learn – ways of being and doing considered appropriate and expected in their social environments. - Ways of Seeing, John Berger (1972) portrayal of the nude in classical European painting unconsciously reflects Western cultural attitudes towards women (women as passive object, there for the consumption of men)
Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the constellation of characteristics that people regard as part of their self, including the way they present themselves to others (Krieken, p. 8)
Modernity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The idea of modernity concerns the interpretation of the present time in light of historical reinterpretation. It refers too to the confluence of the cultural, social, and political currents in modern society. The term signals a tension within modern society between its various dynamics and suggests a process by which society constantly renews itself. Central features: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - industrial and capitalist economic structure focused on the repeating accumulation of wealth and profit - emergence of a nation state with fixed boundaries in which governments hold ultimate military power - emphasis on the superiority of rationality over emotion or tradition - focus on progress, societal and scientific - individuals recognised as entitled to certain rights and freedoms - export of characteristics of modern society through colonialism
Colonialism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The term colonialism describes a dominant form of cultural exploitation that developed with the expansion of Europe over the last 400 years.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Got approval from the Pope or other institutions <p>- Edward Said offers the following distinction: “‘imperialism’ means the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory; ‘colonialism’, which is almost always a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlements on distant territory” (Said, 1993: 8).</p>
Settler-colonialism	The practice of European coloniser establishing permanent settlements in their colonies, accompanied by the geographic, economic and cultural marginalisation of the indigenous population
Post-colonialism	Post colonialism (or, often, post-colonialism) deals with the effects of colonization on cultures and societies. However, since the late 1970s the term has been used by cultural critics to discuss the various social, political, and cultural engagements of colonized people with imperial power, as well as the more widespread effects of colonization. It now describes neither a historical period nor a fixed range of societies but is best understood as a discourse generating a specific reading practice
Globalisation	While in everyday language “globalization” usually refers to economic and political integration on a world scale, it also has a crucial cultural dimension in which the media have a central role. Indeed, in sociology and other disciplines that focus on the media, the concept of globalization has had to be adopted so as to take account of a new reality in which global institutions, especially the media, impact upon the structures and processes of the nation-state, including its national culture
De-globalisation	the process of diminishing interdependence and integration between certain units around the world, typically nation-states. It is widely used to describe the periods of history when economic trade and investment between countries decline.
Anthony Giddens (1986) - three kind of sensibility in sociological imagination	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Historical sensibility, how the world we live in today is the product of historical processes 2. Anthropological insight, what is culturally specific about the social world in which each individual lives, variability in humans 3. Capacity for critical thought, questioning everyday thinking
McDonaldization	<p>- reflects the contemporary demands for the rational organisation of social life - usually with the aim of financial profit</p> <p>- creates meaninglessness, stifles creativity and freedom (Ritzer in Krieken)</p>

Reflection

McDonaldization

- Ritzer 1993
- McDonaldization = process of rationalization that Weber found inherent in bureaucracies extended to fast food chains under globalization
- Efficiency, calculability, predictability, control
- Efficiency geared toward minimization of time as the optimal method for accomplishing a task
- Calculability = quantifiable objectives of fast food chains
- Predictability, same results every time they interact with the organization
- Control employees become standardized
- Consumer patterns unified and local cultures westernized
- Some corporations making an effort to deny the rationalization of McDonaldization
- E.g. universities or junk-journalism

- Resistance: slow food movement, opposition to McDonalds, demand for handmade 'authentic' clothes

Public issues/private troubles - unemployment

- Unemployment is something that causes considerable stress on a personal level and impacts personal relationships
- But is located within the societal framework of the combination of government policies, forms of discrimination and inequality
- Creates a deeper understanding of both, prevents stigmatization or blaming of those experiences troubles linked to public issues, allows for development of coherent policies to address these

Structure vs agency

- Women's liberation movement
- Structural forces contributed: employment during war, Vietnam War protests, growth of contraception instruments, growth in prosperity and peace allowing consideration of these issues
- Agency: writings of feminists, actions of suffragettes, increased political involvement
- No definitive way to ascertain contributing factors

Development of Sociology

Sociology as science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'an intellectual practice designed to elicit objective information open to scrutiny and debate' Hamilton (2002, p.6) - sociological analyses are systematic - providing support for sociological analysis with empirical evidence - value-freedom idea, detached from personal subjectivity
...as politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'inherently political because it deals with the organization of society' - Hamilton argues that the arguments made by sociologists are always shaped by their value position and social standpoint - role of sociology is one of emancipation and change
...as interpretation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - interpret and give expression to interesting aspects of social life 'without pretensions to offer scientific knowledge or claims of political significance' (Hamilton 2002, p 27) - range of possible perceptions of human social experience - representation of social reality has become more significant than what they are supposed to represent - identity packages as more variable and diverse
Interpretive sociology	An approach based on the understanding of social action by interpreting the meaning and motives on which the action is based
Functionalism	Explains society in terms of the role of culture in establishing consensus between social groups and the contribution of each component of society makes to the functions of the whole
Conflict theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explains aspects of social formations in terms of fundamental differences of interest among social groups, usually based on economic differences and unequal relations of power • Dahrendorf, amalgam of Marx and Weber sociological approaches, post-capitalist societies • Conflict organised around different issues, no clear divisions between parts of society

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stratification and organization of society rooted in everyday interactions, Collins
Feminist theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A sociological perspective that places women at the centre of its social analysis - examines the position of women in society, their experiences and the issues that concerned them - explains how gender is socially constructed - developed theories on how sexism intersects with class and race - identifying + explaining some of the effects of male regulation and control of women - understanding cultural aspects of women's experience
Postmodernity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - form of social life in which the enlightenment belief in science, rationality and the idea of progress is no longer unquestioningly accepted (Krieken, p 13) - people less likely to believe in grand narratives - characterised by risk and uncertainty, consumption and individualisation - e.g. the US election can be seen as public theatre, the media's concern to entertain and generate audiences for itself - Jean Baudrillard
Public sociology	<p>- Michael Furawoy 2004 address outlining four-fold typology of sociological perspectives across two dimensions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The question of whether sociological knowledge is seen as instrumental (focus on providing solutions to predefined problems) or reflexive (concerned with the goals for which research may be mobilized) 2. The question of the audience for sociological theory and research <p>- Four different sociological orientations - professional, critical, policy and public sociology most attention has been paid to public sociology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - organic sociology, sociologists working with communities and movements <p>Charles Tittle (2004, p.1641) argues that public sociology endangers what little legitimacy sociology currently has, sociologists lose their claim to intellectual authority</p> <p>political neutrality is the condition for sociology to have a voice (John Holmwood 2007, p. 46)</p>
Australian sociology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - throughout the 1920s Australian universities made no serious attempt to develop sociological teaching and research, Jerzy Zufrzycki (1971) argues this is due to Australian society's stability - universities grew in 1960s/70s, so did sociology - size of Aus population provides small marketplace for sociological writing and research, Aus sociologists often look to the 'core', generally derivative of developments in the north at the expense of its understanding as a settler society close to Asia and its attention to Indigenous knowledge - lies in semi-periphery - local bases social science with the capacity to speak globally' Connell (1991)
International sociology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - based around a core of North America, France, UK, Germany, home of theoretical development - scientists working in periphery dependent on those in core - local sociology developing working with local issues

Reflection

Public debates from a sociological perspective

Negative gearing

- Those who argue for it see Australian society as a 'consensus' society that promotes individual good equally, everyone contributes to social good, supposedly egalitarian (characterisation of 'normal' middle class family, nurses, teachers) - consensus theory
- Those who argue against it see it as reinforcing structural inequality, class differentiation, oppression of few by the many (characterisation of excessively rich, third home etc) - conflict theory

Female employment quota

- Egalitarian neoliberal view of personal freedom and agency
- Structuralist view emphasising inequality

Australian sociology

- Australia more stable, sociology less pursued
- Lies on semi-periphery, small population so reliant on North
- Studies of colonisation and indigenous issues
- Isolated to some extent but connected to global intellectual roots

Sociological Theory 1

Classical sociological theory and its problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Karl Marx, Max Weber, Emile Durkheim• Although they are declared to constitute sociology's foundations, sociologists make very little use of their ideas• In the period of classical sociology many of these writers were ignored• Classical core of sociologists formed in order to better convey the essence of sociological imagination to expanding audience of sociology students• Beneficial to draw from a broader canon of writers
Durkheim general	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Critique of an individualistic understanding of social life, human beings born into a social structure that is more than the sum of its parts• Saw religion as the primary force which held society together through the expression, maintenance and reinforcement of the sentiments or values that form the collective conscience• Law and morality exist in the network of interactions between people not in any one person• Crime normal and functional• Didn't focus much on conflict, focused on solidarity
Social facts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• beliefs, moral codes and ways of doing things that exist prior to their entry into the world, human behaviour is directed by this• "ways of acting, thinking and feeling external to the individual and endowed with the power of coercion, by reason of which they control him
Social consensus	a collective conscience consisting of common beliefs and sentiments

Social solidarity	<p>a force binding groups together based on their interdependence rather than their similarity to each other, feeling that individual members are part of the whole</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mechanical solidarity (pre-modern societies) – based on people's basic similarity of beliefs and values (e.g. farmers who all do the same work and believe the same thing), collective mob outrage when someone breaks the rules (retributive law) • Organic solidarity (modern society) - a form of social life held together by people's need for each other's services, support and activities, even though people are different, they rely on each other, punishments are corrective and reformatory (restitution law) • Transition caused by dynamic density, which increases competition creating the need for societies to come up with more efficient ways of doing things
Anomie	<p>the possibility of individuals becoming dissociated from their social context and a decline in social cohesion and moral regulations (1993 [1893] p.5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well-developed justice system can counteract this and compensate for the inequalities and injustices that characterise a society of disparate individuals competing for rational advantage • Contract law important (equal constraint on all parties) • Occupational groups, people who have ideas, interests, sentiments or occupations not shared by the rest of the population, occupy space between state and individual, help constrain social inequality and unjust exercise of power • Marx sees this as happening with the division of labour, individuals alienated in their specialised discipline
Talcott Parsons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People's behaviour is governed by shared norms and values concerning what is correct and appropriate • Economic transactions rely on trust which in turn is based on shared values and norms, vital for social order • Increasing social differentiation, many of the functions of the family becoming outsourced to schools and welfare system, vital for modern society to develop integrating systems of norms and values under which the diverse forms of existence could co-exist
Means of production	<p>the factories, tools and other forms of capital essential for the production of goods</p>
Ideology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideology is a misrepresentation of society operating through the device of partial truth, glosses over the contradictions and conflict built into social relationships • False consciousness of reality helps maintain the existing system • Under capitalism, the ideas of equality and freedom operate to disguise the basic inequality between those who own capital and those who work for a wage salary, workers are not free, forced to work in order to survive • Value judgements relate back to economic system (too much leisure is sinful, commodities bring us happiness) • dominant ideology serves the interest of the ruling class
Alienation	<p>the ways in which the products of human labour activity appear to people as entirely alien objects existing outside themselves</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutions are human creations but appear to have an existence independent of the people that comprise them, experienced as controlling us and not subject to our own capacity to redesign them • People become alienated from the process of social creation and development