

Thinking Sociologically

- Thinking sociologically? We all have knowledge and experience about the social worlds we live in.
- We all have our own theories about people and society.
- **Sociology:** Non-individual explanations.
- Purpose: To question taken-for-granted assumptions and knowledge about the social worlds we live in.
- Explanations about the social world, how it works, why it is the way it is.
- And how it differentially impacts the lives of individuals and groups.
- Step outside of your own world - look back into it from a more 'outside' perspective.
- Conceptual, Theoretical, Empirical research, Analytical capacities all in use.

What Exactly is Sociology?

- No definitive definition, will vary among everyone.
- "The systematic study of society and social interaction." (Little 2013)
- "Sociology can be broadly defined as the systematic study of human society." (Carleton Department of Sociology & Anthropology Website 2017)

It's Complicated...

- Sociology has several theoretical perspectives.
- It has different methodologies, and different levels of analysis.
 - ex) Sarcastic hand-clapping VS Celebratory hand-clapping = micro-level analysis

Sociological Perspectives

- There are several theoretical perspectives.
- Includes:
 - Critical and Feminist
 - Functionalist
 - Symbolic Interactionist

Critical and Feminist

- Critical Sociology - **Critique:** Analysis and assessment.
- Critical Sociology - Inequalities and forms of domination.
- The 'moral/political conscience' of Sociology.

The Sociological Imagination (C.Wright Mills)

- The Sociological Imagination is a method to make connections between ourselves and the society we live in.
- To formulate and address social problems/issues.
- Individual problems then become formulated as social problems as well.
- Individual problems are often also social problems.
- Our problems tend to be formulated in individual terms, AKA, personal explanations.
- This requires individual solutions.

- Sociology challenges the 'myth of individualism'.
- We need to take 3 key factors into account when thinking sociologically and/or when using the Sociological Imagination:
 - History
 - Biography
 - Social Structure
- Page 7 in Textbook 'Making Connections' "The Individual in Society: Choices of Aboriginal Gang Members"
- 2010-2011: The Indigenous incarceration rate was 10 times higher than for the Non-Indigenous population.
- The social problem of overrepresentation.
- In 2013, they made up 23.2% of the federal prison population.
- 4% of the Non-Indigenous population of Canada.
- "The high rate of incarceration for aboriginal peoples has been linked to systematic discrimination and attitudes based on racial or cultural prejudice, as well as economic and social disadvantages, substance abuse and intergenerational loss, violence and trauma." (2013)
- So are life outcomes simply due to individual choices?
- We are all individuals with our own biography, but we're also members of social groups and social categories.
- We live in a society and a current social structure that exists in a historical context.

Durkheim and Functionalism

- **Emile Durkheim (1858 - 1917)**
- What could be a more individual act than suicide?
- Different 'groups/categories' have different suicide rates.
- Social (Non-Individual) factors influence the rate of suicide.
- There is a social reality/context that must be accounted for.

Symbolic Interactionism

- Sometimes called 'micro' sociology.
- Focuses on the meaning and interpretation of social action/behaviour. Gestures, body language, etc.
- 'Reality' is created by people through their interactions.
 - ex) Prof goes on phone for 15 minutes during lecture; it creates reality for others on what they think is really happening.
 - ex) Walking down Rideau at 4:00 AM, and you see a group of loud people huddled together; creates a reality on what your situation is.
- If people define a situation as real, it's real in its consequences.
- What is going on?
- Many sources of information.
- **'Sign Vehicles'** - The symbolic 'traffic' between people; signals.