

SOC 1 - Discussion Week 2

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Reading 1: The Sociological Imagination

Concepts highlighted:

1. Differentiate between personal troubles and public issues
2. Relationship between an individual's biography and history
3. Structural analysis of society - examine the large social, political and economic structures
4. Critical thinking - sociological imagination allowing people to "challenge" status quo
5. Social science and social responsibility - public discourse

Example: Personal trouble vs public issue

- Student loan debt problem
 - Is this a personal trouble or a public issue?
 - Biden Administration forgives additional \$9 billion in student loans (4th October 2023)
- Academic low wage problem
 - Is this a personal trouble or a public issue?
 - UAW UC strike
 - Academic unionism to solve the issue of substandard payment
 - Largest academic strike in the US - 48,000 workers and 10 campuses



Example: Biography and History

- Discrimination of women in workplaces
 - Understanding biography - unequal treatment, traditional roles, evolution of demands over time
 - Understanding history - suffrage movement and feminist movement
- For instance, Tech industry
 - Historically, Ada Lovelace was the first programmer
 - Currently, the ratio of women working in tech is 32%, lesser than the 1984's statistics of 35%

THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT

a handy reference sheet on the three waves of feminism

First Wave



SUFFRAGE

- 19th and early 20th century
- Focused mainly on suffrage, alongside other legal rights
- Mostly active in the UK, Canada, and United States
- Movement succeeded in gaining women the right to vote & other legal liberties

Second Wave



EQUAL PAY

- Began in the US, then spread to Europe, Asia
- Focused mainly on sexuality, reproductive rights, and the wage gap
- Movement succeeded in securing career options for women, and many reproductive rights

Third Wave



PATRIARCHY

- Fights for equality by focusing exclusively on female victims of gender-neutral issues
- Mostly on Tumblr + Facebook
- Mostly middle/upper class US
- Rejects labelling by adopting labels and identities
- Everything is the Patriarchy's fault, also rape culture

Example: Structural analysis of society and Critical thinking

- Imagine, neighbourhood with high crime and drug ratio
- Structural analysis would take into account:
 - Economic inequality
 - Lack of quality education
 - Systematic racism
- Critical thinking - Climate change
- Political and economic interests, prompt individuals to challenge the status quo

Example: Social science and social responsibility

- Impact of affordable housing policies on low-income communities
- Academic journals, engage with policymakers, advocate for change in housing policies, community, organizations, rallies, etc
- For instance, in Seattle LGBTQ pride parade, there were banners displayed to lower the skyrocketing prices of houses

Example: Healthcare disparities

- Personal troubles - individual unable to afford medical treatments - long queues, medical bills
- Public Issues - income inequality, healthcare politics, lobbying, geographic access to healthcare
- Intersection of Biography and History -
 - Biography - income, insurance coverage, geographic location
 - Historical factors - healthcare legislation, insurance options, healthcare resources

Functionalism

Everything has a function, pioneered by Emile Durkheim

- that all aspects of society serve as a function and are necessary for the survival of that society
- All elements are interdependent and serve as a function for overall stability of the society

What are the assumptions? (Society would change if needed to)

Manifest functions vs latent functions? (Example: Schools or formal educational institutions)

What are the manifest/latent functions of robbery?

What is the difference between functionalist and conflict theory/critical theory?

Case Study #1: Personal troubles vs public issues

Case Scenario: In a bustling urban area, many individuals are struggling with mental health issues, including anxiety and depression. They often feel isolated and overwhelmed by the challenges of city life.

Questions:

- How can the sociological imagination help us distinguish between the personal troubles faced by these urban residents and potential public issues that might be contributing to the prevalence of mental health issues in the city?
- What societal factors should be considered when addressing this issue?

Case study # 2: Structural Analysis

Case Scenario: A rural farming community experiences a severe drought, leading to crop failures and economic hardship for local farmers. As a result, many families are struggling to make ends meet.

Questions:

- How can a structural analysis help us understand the deeper causes of the drought's impact on the farming community beyond the immediate weather conditions?
- What larger environmental and economic factors, such as climate change or government agricultural policies, might be contributing to the vulnerability of this community to drought?

Case study # 3: Critical thinking

Case Scenario: A controversial law is proposed in a democratic country that would restrict certain civil liberties in the name of national security. Public opinion is divided, with some citizens supporting the law as a necessary measure and others opposing it as a threat to civil rights.

Questions:

- How can individuals apply critical thinking, guided by the sociological imagination, to evaluate the potential consequences and motivations behind the proposed law?
- What role does public discourse and media representation play in shaping public opinion about this law, and how can individuals engage in informed debate and decision-making?

Case study #4: Social Science and Social responsibility

Case Scenario: A group of sociologists and economists collaborates to study the impact of minimum wage policies in a particular region. Their research reveals that while some low-wage workers have seen improved economic conditions, others continue to struggle.

Questions:

- How can these researchers fulfill their social responsibility by sharing their research findings with policymakers and advocating for policy adjustments to address the disparities uncovered in their study?
- What strategies can they use to communicate their research effectively to diverse stakeholders and encourage evidence-based policy decisions?

Link for survey

<https://forms.gle/5yRLKLYurbjgwgCL7>

Thank you