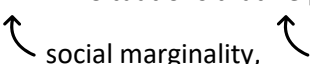



Week 1: The Society (Macionis)

Sociological Perspective: "Seeing the general in the particular"

- See general patterns in the behavior of particular people
- Personal decisions influenced/ shaped by society (marriage, no. of children, suicide)
 - more wealth -> more freedom -> weaker social ties -> more likely to commit suicide
- Seeing sociologically; Marginality & Crisis:
 - Marginality (living on the margins of society)
 - Crisis (living through a social crisis)
 - Situations that help people see clearly how society shapes individual lives
-  social marginality, better use of sociological perspective
- Dominant/majority race, think less often about race & the privileges it provides

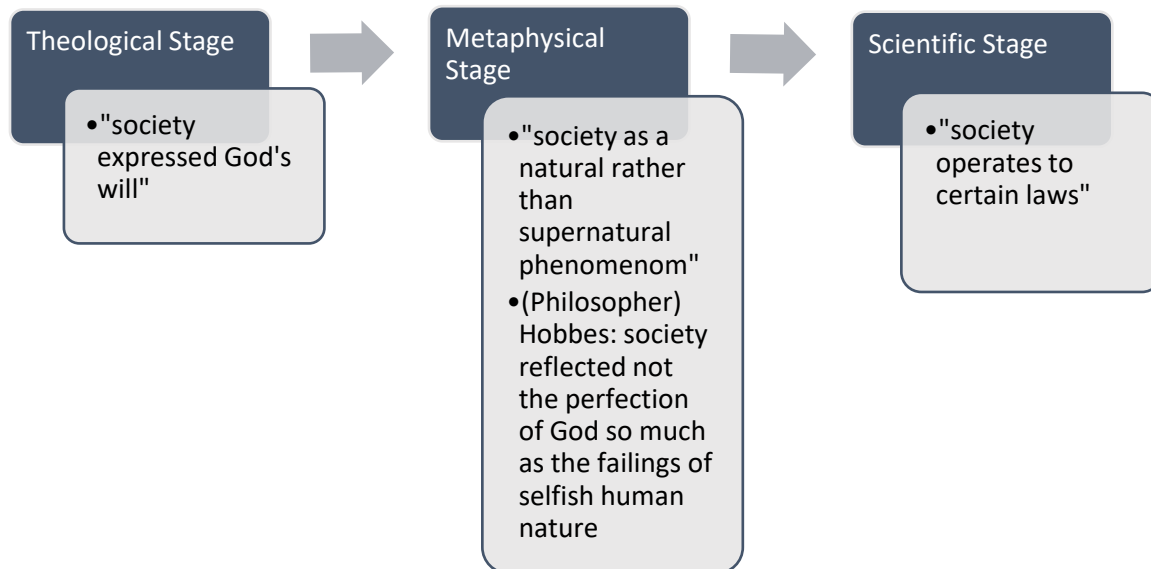
Q: What is the importance of a global perspective for sociology?

- Global awareness is a logical extension of the sociological perspective.
(Position of our society in the larger world affects everyone in the country.)
 - High/Middle/Low -income countries
 - Nations with highest overall/ average for the world as a whole/ low(poor) stds of living (SOL)
 - Society (not people's personal failings) that is the main cause of poverty & other social problems
1. Where we live shapes the lives we had
 2. Societies throughout the world are increasingly interconnected
(contributions/skills/talents of immigrants)
 -  racial & cultural diversity of the country
 - Trade across borders (int'l)
 3. Many social problems that we face in our country are far more serious elsewhere
 - Gender inequality, poverty
 4. Thinking globally helps us learn more about ourselves
 - Comparing life in diff. settings

Applying Sociological Perspective

- Guide many laws & policies that shape our lives
- Impt personal growth & expand awareness (individual)
- Excellent prep. For world of work
- Applications: criminal justice, clinical sociologist
 - Focus on difficulties (not in personalities) but in individual's web of social r/s
- Pays off in 4 ways:
 1. Helps us assess the truth of "common sense"
 - Common beliefs true? To the extent they are not & why they are so widely held?
 - E.g. "We are free individuals who are personally responsible for our own lives."
 - Decide our own fate => Successful people superior? Fewer achievements, personally deficient?
 2. Helps us see opportunities & constraints in our lives

- Learn more about the world & pursue our goals more efficiently
- 3. Empowers us to be active participants in our society
 - Understand how society operates, more effective citizen we become
 - (private problem => public issue)
 - See how society affects us, set out with others to change it
- 4. Helps us live in a diverse world
 - Prompts us to think critically about the strengths & weaknesses of all ways of life, including our own



NO. 1: STRUCTURAL-FUNCTIONAL APPROACH

- Society, a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity & stability
- Social structure: any relative stable pattern of social behavior
- Social functions: the consequences of a social pattern for the operation of society as a whole
- All social patterns (e.g. handshake, rituals) function to tie people together & keep society going (preserve society)
 - Manifest functions recognized & intended consequences of any social pattern
 - Latent functions unrecognized & unintended consequences of any social pattern
- E.g. Higher education:
 - (Obvious) give young people skills & info they need
 - (Latent function) "marriage broker"- unintended, limit unemployment
- Not all effects of social structure are good: "SOCIAL DYSFUNCTION"
 - Any social pattern that may disrupt the operation of society

NO. 2: SOCIAL-CONFLICT APPROACH

- Framework for building theory that sees society as an arena of inequality that generates conflict & change
- Factors:
 - Class, race, ethnicity, gender, age related to
 - Money, power, education, social prestige
- Social pattern benefits some while hurting others
- Conflict between dominant & disadvantaged categories of people: rich/poor, men/women
- Use this approach to understand society & reduce inequality
- E.g. stuck in vicious cycle for disadvantaged families (unequal footing right from the start): educational system

NO. 3: FEMINIST & GENDER-CONFLICT APPROACH

- Inequality & conflict between women & men
- Closely linked to feminism, support for equality for women & men
- Making aware of the many ways in which our society places men in positions of power over women
 - Home, workplace, mass media
- The importance of women to the development of sociology
 - Harriet Martineau (1802 – 1876)
 - Jane Adams (1860 – 1935)

NO. 4: RACE-CONFLICT APPROACH

- Focuses on inequality & conflict between people of different racial & ethnic categories
- Understanding of race
- (American sociologist) Du Bois: “scholars should not only simply learn about society’s problems but also try & solve them”

NO. 5: SYMBOLIC-INTERACTION APPROACH

- Framework, building theory that sees society as the product of everyday interactions of individuals
- Orientation:

Macro-level	Micro-level
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• E.g. NO. 1 and NO. 2• Broad focus on social structures that shape society as a whole	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Close-up focus on social interaction in specific situations

Additional: Society’s nothing more than the reality that people control for themselves as they interact with one another.

- As we define our surroundings, define what we think of others, & shape our own identities

Races without Racism?: everyday race relations in Singapore by Selvaraj Velayutham

Overview:

- Race has prominent place in national policies. Still remains the white elephant in the room. Need to call for a public acknowledgement of racism to combat it.

Use of Race:

- As a normative category and identity marker.
- Majority of Singaporeans are ascribed a racial identity, recorded in all official documentation.
- In school, tied to bilingual education.
- Chua(2009): "race is a conscious ideological construction and representation of the island-nation. This official or "state multiracialism" which organizes the citizenry into three "visible" racial groups has greatly facilitated public administration and governance."

Racism:

- Racism practices in everyday settings: Internet, social media, neighbourhoods, and workplaces.
- Taken-for-granted assumptions of racial traits and prejudices spill over into mundane practices, normalizing stereotypical racial attributes and behaviours and perpetuating racial inequalities.
- Racial stereotyping, abuse and discrimination, common-place in day-to-day encounters
- Accepted norms that victims would have to deal with privately
- Sociologist Philomena Essed (1991):
 - Racism is more than structure and ideology
 - Process that is routinely created and reinforced in everyday practices
 - 'process in which socialized racist notions are integrated into everyday practices and thereby actualize and reinforce underlying racial ethnic relations'
- Everyday racism operates in two ways:
 1. Phenotypic characteristics and other biological features singled out.
 2. Racist practices rely on cultural stereotypes -> perpetuation of racial inequities
- Household income lowest, most number of early-school leavers -> consistently form the basis for stereotyping the entire Malay community
- Perceived traits of ethnic group and stereotypes consistently form the basis of everyday discrimination experienced by minorities

Perpetrators

- Ethnic expletives and derogative language, hurling of such ethnic insults
- Contact avoidance, expression of displeasure and differential treatment
- Abuses in terms of relations of power
- Job application and workplace encounters
 - Minority races confronted with additional requirements
 - Exclusion from certain positions, overlooked for promotion
- Lee (2004): qualitative study of primary school setting
 - Same-race grouping more prevalent than mixed-race groups

- Children demonstrate clear conceptualization of language, race and religion as distinct qualifiers
 - Skin colour and facial features: most visible features in defining others
- Singling out, teasing, name-calling and making references to skin colour
 - Derogatory remarks – Tamils: “stupid”, “untrustworthy”, “deceptive”, “unreliable”

Victims

- Respondents often hurt and embarrassed
- Unable to challenge the perpetrators <- casual comments, subtle and concealed acts
- How minority races deal with unfair treatment:
- Normalisation of Chinese privilege
- Acceptance that Chinese are more likely to benefit or presented opportunities compared to other races
- Discrimination is deeply felt: dominant-minority relations inevitably produce an ‘us’ and ‘them’ divide
- Everyday racism involves cumulative practices, often covert and hard to pinpoint, but is felt and experienced persistently
- Sense of resignation and powerless about their social position
- Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) Survey on *Indicators of Racial and Religious Harmony*
 - Roughly 8 in every 10 Singaporeans hold preconceived ideas about a person from another race prior to interacting with them
 - Demonstrates stereotyping and prejudice cloud most cross-cultural interactions
 - Malays and Indians have to work harder to overcome negative attitudes about them
 - Lack of recognition while special privileges accorded to Chinese
 - Malay, security guard Haslam: “Chinese given priority first”
 - Racial discrimination most felt in the labour market and place of employment
 - Malay and Indians: inability to converse/speak in Mandarin -> difficulty in applying for job (job position criteria)
 - Chinese in the majority -> ethnic minorities expected to adhere to ‘Chinese work culture’ and practices
 - Non-Chinese workers have to meet ‘additional requirements’ and strict rules e.g. for a leave request to be granted while Chinese given it ‘without question’
 - Being part of dominant group, Chinese less aware that they are excluding other races when they converse in Chinese among themselves
 - Malay workers’ reaction to social exclusion: apathy
- Example:
 - Applicant turned away from advertised position because it was always intended for a Chinese
 - Employers’ unwillingness to hire a Chinese-Muslim -> have a preferred/presumed stereotype of a particular type of Chinese
 - Base on outward appearance -> systematically discriminated
 - Victims of racial discrimination -> hurt, resentment and disempowerment

Social Media and Racism:

- Privately held negative views and prejudices about ethnic minorities now circulate in the public domain
- Limited avenues for expressing personal opinions -> rise of online forms of communication
- Allowed Singaporeans to express their disaffection with govt and social issues more prolifically and loudly
- 1. Eve Tan on Malays and Smoking
 - Singaporean Chinese commented on HPB Facebook site
 - Calling Malays “mostly too low educated and/ or too lazy to work”
 - That they are “the top when it comes to young age smoking and smoking in general”
- 2. Amy Cheong on Malays and void-deck weddings
 - Annoyed by noise coming from a Malay wedding on the ground floor of her apartment block
 - Rant on Facebook
 - Called Malays unable to “afford a proper wedding” and “shouldn’t be getting married”.
- Evaluation:
 - Reaction from authorities: dismiss these incidents as one-off events
 - Fail to recognize a deeper dissatisfaction and racist feelings in the general population
 - Hence the little scholarship on racism in Singapore
 - Racist comments closely resemble views held by British administrators during period of colonial rule
 - Based on factual accounts and not intentionally racist
 - But stereotyping reproduces structured systems of power
 - Where Chinese and Indians have historically benefitted

Sensitivity towards Racism:

- Difficult to engage public: Official demarcation of issue relating to race and religion as “sensitive”, within “out of bounds” markers.
- Topic of racism mostly muted in public and academic debates.
- (Situation NOW) Authorities intervene and issue stern warnings, matter quickly put to rest. Never openly debated. Little opportunity to speak out. No publicity campaigns against racism and Singapore does not have a national anti-racism strategy.
- Media rarely reports on racism in Singapore
- Seems that discussing racism at home -> potentially undermine the credibility and achievement of Singapore’s successful multiracial policy and race relations.
- Chia(2003): ‘public voicing of grievance within a discourse of race is quickly suppressed and parties voicing grievances publicly chastised – if not criminalized – on the grounds of being “racial chauvinists” disrupting racial harmony’

Evaluation of State and Society on issue:

- Policy of multiracialism adopted has inculcated a sense of commitment in various race groups to the state and to the existence in racial harmony.

- Argued that Singapore is relatively free from interracial and religious tensions.
- Does not take into account the presence of discrimination or prejudicial attitudes towards the racial minorities.
- Racial inequality in system and systemic lack of opportunities available to attain social mobility
- Construction of state nationalism
 - Through education system, national service, civil service and Singapore Armed Forces
 - Demonstrate ethno-racial hierarchy permeates every aspect of Singapore society
 - Assumption: special place and superiority of the Chinese
 - These key institutions are “chimeras... main purpose to facilitate and legitimize rule by a self-appointed elite”
- ‘heavy handedness’ of state and public apathy against racism stymied critical debate and interventions
- (UN Special Rapporteur) Mr Githu Muigai (2010):
 - Highlighted poor socio-economic standing of Malays
 - Special Assistance Plan schools
 - Use of race in official documents
 Contribute to the marginalisation of minorities
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs: point-by-point rebuttal against Mr Muigai’s findings, felt some of his claims were misguided and taken out of context
- -> up to govt to determine between free expression and preservation of racial and religious harmony
- Race, language and religion will always be sensitive issues in Singapore
- State’s swift intervention into highly publicized racist incidents
 - Effect of shifting public focus
 - From acknowledging racism to singling out perpetrators as rogue individuals and a threat to public order
 - Reinforces perception that racist practices are isolated incidents
 - Other numerous everyday racial discrimination go unreported
- Academic and nominated member of parliament, Eugene Tan (2013):

“3/4 of population ethnic Chinese... crucial for Chinese-Singaporeans to appreciate... may, unwittingly, be less sensitive of the interests, concerns, and fears of the minorities”
- Such insights seldom heeded.
- Local authorities and media gloss over the issue of racism and speak positively about race relations on the basis that there is very little racial and religious tension in Singapore

“Chinese-ness”:

- Perception: Chinese culturally superior and the numerical majority (Indians less than 10% of total population) -> entrenched economic and social hierarchy with Chinese at the top
- This structured power differential between Chinese, Malays and Indians reinforces the hegemony of Chinese-ness in Singaporean society

Institutional Discrimination:

- Perceived institutional discrimination (not racism) suffered by Malay community.
 - Historical and cultural label of ‘lazy native’, ‘backwardness’ -> due to indigeneity

- Issue of Malay loyalty to Singapore nation in times of conflict, a constant worry. Commonly held view that Malays denied key military appointments -> those very religious and have family ties in Malaysia may shift allegiance.
- Singled out as 'lagging behind', 'socially and economically underachieving' as a racial group -> has generated critical response and resentment from neighbouring Malaysia and Indonesia.
- Education system: racial privileging and endorsement of Chinese elite
 - Michael Barr (2006): Medium of instruction is Mandarin and English -> Excludes Malays and Indians from top schools, endorsement of Chinese elite

Criticism of Meritocracy/ Lack of Measures:

- Does not take into account systemic or structural impediments
 - May prevent underprivileged or minority races from accessing particular opportunities or pathways to social mobility
- Interracial disparity continues to grow: Chinese consistently occupy commanding position
- Idea of meritocracy never enforceable in practice
 - Social advantage not equally distributed
 - No anti-discriminatory laws (in workplace etc.)

Historical Impact on Racism (Historical Basis):

- Racism now result of spilling over from colonial racism, through the bureaucratic and daily processes of racialization by the Singapore state and deeply embedded in everyday practices.
- Busch: "despite geographical proximity, each group lived within its own social borders... interacted with other peoples only for economic purposes... dealings in the marketplace".
- British colonial admin engineered creation of a plural society.
- Colonial Singapore was a highly segregated society divided along race, ethnicity, class, language, religion and so forth.
- Incidents of racial conflict in post-war period:
 1. Maria Hertogh Riots (1950)
 2. Prophet Muhammad Birthday Riots (1964):
 - Violent clashes between Chinese and Malays
- Highlight the fragility of interracial relationships and the disaffections that arise in the daily experience of living with cultural difference.
- Colonial racial stereotypes have continued to filter interethnic relations and how racial majority construct and engage with minorities in everyday encounters and situations.

Conclusion:

- Racism has its roots in European colonialism or in terms of a hierarchy of whiteness
- Solomos and Back (1994): racist discourses need to be rigorously contextualized
 - Contemporary racisms have evolved and adapted to new circumstances
- Singapore: non-Western multiracial settler society, postcolonial nation state and its people
- Inherited the legacy of colonial administration of race relations and everyday stereotypes of races
- Chinese are the majority, in a unique position, dominate political, economic and cultural spheres

- Political discourse propagate the concept of meritocracy as a governing principle: all Singaporeans accorded equal opportunity -> not a level playing field <- negative perceptions of Malays and Indians continue to disadvantage them
- State multiracialism ensures races are included but offers no guarantee that discrimination and exclusion does not occur in everyday life
- Blog by Sangeetha Thanapal and Adeline Koh: Chinese privilege -> question the benefits Chinese enjoy as being the dominant ethnic group in Singapore
- Construction of race as simply an identity category and effect of normalizing racial stereotypes never acknowledged in public discourse
- For member of minority: racism is accepted as inevitable and cannot speak against it -> no spaces to do so and will not be heard
- Racism in non-Western settler societies is inherited from the colonial project
- Eugene Tan (2013): 'the management of markers of race, language and religion in Singapore has been characterized by top-down, coercive control and pre-emptive strikes against the threats to harmony'
- Speaking out against racism exposes the fragility to racial harmony

Author's Call to Action/ Stance:

Urgent need to own up and confront different forms of racial prejudice and discriminatory practices.

1. Naming racism
2. Acknowledging it as structured systems of power
3. Addressing the social cost

Direct intervention to combat racism through education and anti-racism campaigns.