

Culture & Socialization

I. Nature vs Nurture

- Nature - The environment you are born in
- Nurture – What you take in?(nutrition)

II. "Sociological Imagination" (C. Wright Mills 1959)

-An awareness of the relationship between personal experience and the wider society
(Private troubles ↔ public issues e.g. poverty; unemployment; "unsuccessful" students)

-Do not take things for granted! (i.e. don't ever believe that what you see at present is the natural or the only way of behaving or organizing social relationships.)

Sociological Focuses:

- the recurring patterns in people's attitudes and action
- how such patterns are formed culturally, socially, economically and politically
- how such patterns vary across time, societies, & social groups (e.g. classes)
- how such patterns generate social inequalities (e.g. gender inequality) & social conflicts

III. Culture

"The culture of a society is the way of life of its members, the collection of ideas and habits which they learn, share & transmit from generation to generation." (Linton)

The particular content of culture varies from place to place, but all human cultures have the same basic elements: values, norms, symbols, language, and knowledge.

- *Value:* shared general ideas about what is good, right & desirable (e.g. equality).
- *Norm :* shared rules that prescribe the behavior appropriate in a given situation (explicit or implicit norms)

Cross-Cultural Understanding

How to deal with inter-cultural differences? Two different responses:

- *Ethnocentrism* - viewing everything through the eyes of our own culture and its values.
- *Relativism* - looking at things in terms of the meanings within their own cultures [Distinction between Approval and Understanding]

Intra-cultural Variations

- *Mainstream culture* (or dominant culture)
- *Subculture* - a group that shares in the overall culture of the society but also has its own distinctive values, norms & lifestyle;
- *Counter-culture* - a subculture whose values & norms are fundamentally at odds with the*dominant culture

IV. Socialization

Socialization - the process by which people learn the culture of their society and thereby acquire personality

Internalization - the unconscious process of making conformity to cultural norms a part of one's personality

Reinforcement

-sanction applied to encourage people to behave in certain ways and discourage them from behaving in some other ways

-positive or negative (e.g. reward or punishment)

-formal or informal (formal - backed up by institutional forces e.g. black record)

V. Society: Different Levels of Social Relationships

- Social Interaction (micro-level, situation-specific moments of social encounter among individuals, as governed by the specific norms and values defining the roles, the statuses, and the situation etc. Example: teacher & student; parent and children; official and citizen; customer and salesperson)
- Social institution - a stable cluster of values, norms, statuses, roles and groups that develops to serve specific functions (e.g. family, economy, education, political system & medical system etc.)
- Social structure - patterned relationships among the different institutions (e.g. the relationship among education, economy, & family).

Status

A status is a position in society (e.g. student, carpenter, son). It indicates where an individual "fits" in society and how he or she should relate to other people. [Status Inconsistency - a situation in which aspects of an individual's status or statuses appear contradictory.]

Role

A role is a set of expected behaviour patterns, obligations, and privileges attached to a particular social status. Status and role are 2 sides of the same coin: you occupy a status, but you play a role.

Role Conflict: Role Conflict: a situation in which two or more of a person's roles have contradictory requirements. (The fact that a person may have several different statuses, each with a number of roles attached, can often cause difficulty and confusion in social relationships.)

Institution

(a) Institutions tend to be resistant to change.

(b) Institutions tend to be interdependent, and change together.

Example: Family as a Social Institution

(a) norms and values defining roles (e.g. parenting - negligence by parents will constitute child abuse liable to legal punishment)

(b) norms and values organizing the family (e.g. blood ties, marriage, heterosexuality, age)

(c) the constraining power of the family institution (the rights and duties among legal family members vs. non-family members e.g. rights to inheritance, co-residence in public housing, custody, adoption of children)

(d) Inter-relationship between family and welfare, between family & economy