

Study Guide for Exam #1 Soc 101, Spring 2009

Terminology and Concepts

Agents of Socialization

The persons, groups or organizations from which people learn social expectations.

Achieved Role

A social role chosen by an individual through their actions, decisions and/or presentation of self to others.

Ascribed Role

A social role that an individual has because of the way they look or their circumstances of birth over which they have little control.

Bureaucracies

A rationalized basis for organizing people into usually large groups that relies upon compartmentalized and hierarchal roles that have specific standards that must be achieved in order to be given the role and those standards are usually written, documented thoroughly and highly controlled. Bureaucracies are a somewhat failed attempt to apply scientific principles to human organization.

Conflict Perspective

A sociological paradigm that views society as a system that functions through the resolution of conflicting forces emphasizing working for social justice as the main means to achieve a good society.

Constructionist Perspective or Symbolic Interactionism

A sociological paradigm that views society as the sum of all the micro-interactions that take place on a daily basis which we regard as systematic for our convenience but is in fact dynamic and ever-changing, always under the influence of each member of a group which each member of the group is always under the influence of the decisions of interactions of other members. Thus, things like "society" and "organization" are symbolic and help us share an understanding of our social world.

Counter-Culture

A group of individuals who have shared meanings based in part on a desire to not be a part of the larger mainstream culture.

Crime

Norms or expectations that have been legalized with specific formal sanctions imposed upon those who deviate from those expectations.

Cultural Diversity

An understanding that various cultures have something worthwhile that deserves respect and acceptance and a desire to ensure that a single culture does not dominate other cultures.

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Cultural Relativism

Taking other cultures on their own terms by not judging another culture by one's own cultural values, norms and moral codes. This is controversial because there are many people who believe that some moral codes supersede cultural values.

Culture

The shared meanings of objects and concepts that develop through history of a particular group of people. It is what we take for granted to be true in our social interactions.

Culture Within

The internalization of culture that allows us to know what to expect without having to remember where we learned something or why we expect it. This becomes so much a part of our sense of self that we have emotional and physical responses to unexpected events or our own decisions to do what is not expected.

Dyads

A group of two people. Considered by Georg Simmel to be the least stable group because each member has the power to destroy the group alone.

Ethnocentrism

The unexamined belief that one's own culture is the way all human beings should think and act. This can be as simple as not realizing that one is applying a cultural standard to a situation to as complex and violent as ethnic cleansing and genocide based upon the belief that one's culture is so superior to other cultures that practitioners of other cultures should die.

Functionalist Perspective

A sociological paradigm that sees society as an organic system with its own internal set of rules that like other ecosystems seeks equilibrium and corrects itself when out of balance.

Group Dynamics

Can be viewed from two perspectives. The group itself is a dynamic entity that is affected by size (how many members are in a group) and stability (how well the group identity can survive the actions and positions of its individual members). Georg Simmel suggested that the larger a group becomes, the more stable it is. The members of the group also have dynamic relationships that are affected by governance (how group decisions are made) and structure (how group members are organized into roles and statuses).

Groupthink

A phenomenon that occurs when individuals in a group take on the views and values of a group even if those views and values conflict with the individual's personal views and values.

Impression Management

The presentation of an image of one's self to others in everyday life. Erving Goffman theorized that we do this all the time even without thinking and we do so on the basis of what we believe is expected of us and how we believe others see us. Thus who we are varies from one social situation to the next. In addition, others either see us as presenting an authentic self or an inauthentic (fake) self and judge us accordingly.

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In/Out Group

A method of defining a group by understanding not only who is a member of the group, but who is not a member.

Language

Verbal, written and physical symbols that are developed by groups to facilitate human communication and interaction. Since human interaction is the basic unit of analysis for sociology, language is the what sociologists study to understand human interaction. According to Sapir/Whorf's hypothesis, language is what shapes our thinking.

Macro Sociology

Viewing human interaction on a large scale.

Mass Media

Written & visual communication that is disseminated to a large group of people in a direct way. Mass media has come under increased sociological study over the years as it is providing ever expanding ways in which human beings can interact.

Material Culture

Physical items and artifacts that have different meanings in different cultures.

Micro Sociology

Viewing human interaction on a small scale, sometimes as small as a single interaction event.

Nature versus Nurture

The debate about to what extent our genetic make-up versus our socialization determine our behavior and our sense of self. Most people understand that it is a combination of these factors, but sociologists tend to explore the nurture side of the question.

Micro Sociology

Viewing human interaction on a small scale, sometimes as small as a single interaction event.

Non-Material Culture

Abstract and symbolic concepts that have different meanings in different cultures.

Norms, Mores, Folkways

The formal and informal expectations people have of one another in their social groups.

Peer Pressure

The social pressure a member of a group feels from the collective values and views of the group. Asch's experiment demonstrated how peer pressure (everyone else in a group expressing a view) can overcome an individual's stated view of objective reality (the size of a line).

Power Elite

C. Wright Mills observation that there is a group of people in American society who hold power by virtue of who they are and who they know, not what they know. He notes the interchangeability of members of the military, government and big business. This elite exists because of their informal social networks, not because they are organized into a formal cartel.

Resocialization

Usually a formal process of ensuring that individuals who through circumstances may not fully understand social expectations can learn them. Often resocialization is a part of social programs designed to help individuals who are either just entering a social group (such as an immigrant or someone recently released from prison) or disadvantage individuals who through their own social circumstances have not had an opportunity to learn common social expectations (such as parenting classes for adult children of abusers).

Role

A sum total of specific social norms (expectations) that are bundled into a specific set which a person is expected to meet or face social sanctions.

Role Conflict

Since people generally have multiple roles, the expectations do not always coincide easily, so often individuals must negotiate multiple expectations, usually in such a way as to avoid severe sanctions. Role conflict can create a great deal of stress for individuals even if they are successful in avoiding sanctions as they resolve the conflicts.

Sanctions

The formal and informal punishments inflicted upon people who do not meet social expectations (norms). These punishments can be as harmless as a look of disapproval or social alienation to as violent as killing a person. Generally the more serious the expectation, the more serious the sanction; however, some social sanctions are given to persons on the basis of how they look or their group affiliations rather than how they act (see Stigma below).

Sick Cultures

The proposition that even when practicing cultural relativism, it has to be recognized that cultures are not perfect and some cultural practices deserve outside intervention from persons of other cultures due to the fact that the cultural practice is so harmful to individual members of the culture.

Social Control

The extent to which the expectation of others can be asserted upon the behavior of an individual. Since socialization and norms are internalized and can be quite powerful, the right set of social interactions can pressure individuals to go against their own better judgments. Stanley Milgram's shock experiments are an example of social control because the experimenter was seen as "making" the teacher shock the student, possibly to the point of killing the student even though the experimenter did not use physical force or the threat of physical force on the teacher.

Social Darwinism

The belief that when a person's social position is lower it is because they are not as fit a member of society as those persons who social positions are higher. "Survival of the fittest" is a term coined by Herbert Spencer who introduced the idea of Social Darwinism (though many think the phrase originated with Darwin).

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Social Deviance

Particular patterns of breaking social norms. These are essentially ascribed or achieved roles that persons play that are based upon the breaking of specific social norms.

Socialization

The way in which individual members of a society or group learn the expectations and values of that group. Generally this is not a formal process, but rather results from the natural process humans have of learning from their surroundings.

Sociological Development

The part of the history of sociology that has sought to make sociology an objective, scientific study of how societies and groups work. The intention is to further develop sociological theory and practice.

Sociological Expansion

The part of the history of sociology that as sought to make sociology a means to the end of social justice. The intention is to apply sociological principles to social problems to find solutions that will better the lives of individual members and/or groups within a society.

Sociological Imagination

A coined term by C. Wright Mills, connecting one's own personal story (biography) to the larger picture (history) in order to understand that our life chances as individuals are deeply and profoundly affected by our social contexts.

Sociological Paradigms

A paradigm is a way of viewing the world that is taken for granted. Understanding a paradigm helps to analyze the theories and practices of particular perspectives in sociology – functionalism, conflict theory and constructionism – so that the best information can be gleaned from these theories and practices.

Status

How well a role or individual is esteemed in comparison to others. It is always a social phenomenon because it is always about comparing worth.

Stigma/Stigmatization

The marking of specific individuals on the basis of how they look or with what group they are affiliated as being "less than human." Erving Goffman suggests that such persons have a "spoiled identity" because they cannot conduct impression management in such a way to avoid sanction. If a stigmatized individual acts according to expectations they find themselves in the position of confirming a stereotype. If they act against the stereotype, their presentation of self is considered inauthentic by others.

Sub-Culture

A group of individuals that while interacting with a greater mainstream culture, have developed their own shared meanings. Examples of subcultures are ethnic neighborhoods and online special interest groups.

Values

Those material and nonmaterial parts of culture that are esteemed by most of the members of the group. Values are assessed by what people state they esteem and by what people do within a group.

Sociologists of Note

Be sure to study the notes regarding the following individuals:

- Solomon Asch
- Jane Addams
- Chicago School
- August Comte
- Charles Cooley
- W.E.B. duBois
- Emile Durkheim
- Harold Garfinkel
- Antonio Gramsci
- Karl Marx
- Stanley Milgram
- C. Wright Mills
- Talcott Parsons
- Herbert Spencer
- Edward Sapir & Benjamin Whorf
- Georg Simmel
- Max Weber