

Sociological Theory

Ryan Cragun – Summer, 2005

'Theory' Expounded...

- Theory: A proposed relationship between two or more concepts.
- Data, alone, do not tell us much.
 - e.g., Suicide
- Grand Theory vs. Micro-Range Theory
 - How the world works
 - How this part of society works under these conditions
- Which one is right?

Structural-Functionalism

- Complex system that works together
- Equilibrium
- Social cohesion
- Social Solidarity
 - Mechanical
 - Organic
- Manifest vs. Latent
- Advocates: Parsons, Spencer, Durkheim

Structural-Functionalism (cont'd)

- Limitations:
 - Hard time explaining change
 - Supports the status quo
 - Can't explain how society developed, just how it is

Conflict Theory

- Competition over resources
- Structural inequality
- Change results from conflict
- Advocates: Karl Marx, Randall Collins, Lewis Coser
- Limitations
 - Overlooks general stability of society

Symbolic Interactionism

- Human interaction is the exchange of meaningful symbols (vs. gestures)
- Only possible through socialization
- Stimulus -> response
- Stimulus -> cognition -> response
- Advocates: Mead, Blumer, Goffman
- Limitations:
 - Micro orientation
 - Potentially macro through the incorporation of roles

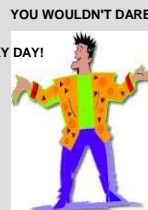
Stimulus -> Response

YELP!



stimulus -> cognition -> response

TODAY'S YOUR LUCKY DAY!



YOU WOULDN'T DARE!

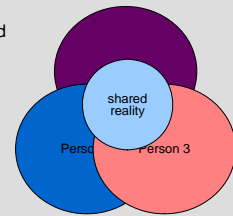


Role Theory

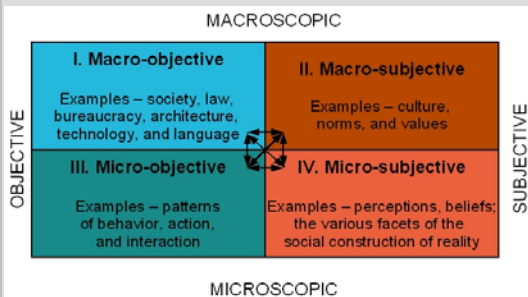
- Expectations associated with social positions
- Day-to-day behavior is carrying out roles
- Change behavior by changing roles
- How does it bridge micro and macro?
- Predictive
- Advocates: Goffman...
- Limitations:
 - Can't explain the development of roles
 - Can't explain role deviance
- How does this differ from Impression Management?

Social Constructionism

- People have their own 'realities'
- Behavior and reality are situationally determined and constantly re-produced
 - gender



Integration Theory



Remember...

- One isn't better than another...
- Complementarity is the key!