

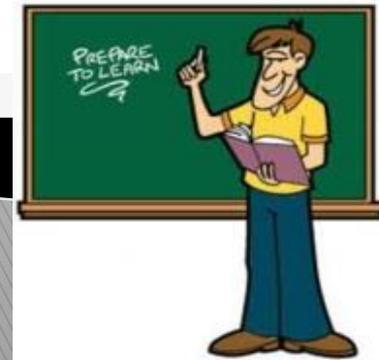
Teaching, Learning, Assignments, and Understanding



Multiple uses of class assignments



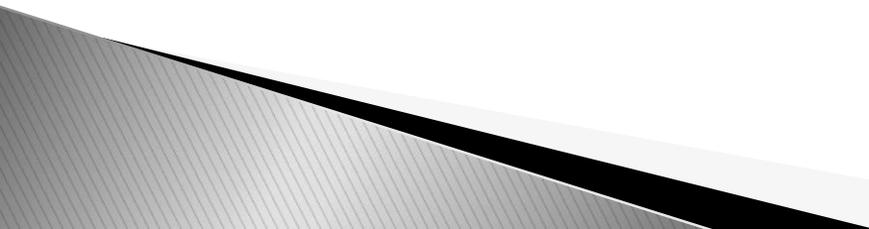
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assessment

In education, the term **assessment** refers to a wide variety of methods that educators use to evaluate, measure, and document the academic readiness, learning progress, and skill acquisition of students from preschool through college and adulthood.

Teachers assess constantly!

- ▶ All tests are a form of assessment.
 - ▶ Not all assessments are tests.
 - ▶ We test at the end of a lesson or unit.
 - ▶ We assess progress at the end of a school year, often through testing.
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Tests can tell us something about what students “know” at a particular moment in time.

- ▶ How useful are they at helping us understand how long students will “know” what they learned with us?

sociological imagination

- ▶ SOC 101– one basic concept introduced in the first unit in Introduction to Sociology. It is reinforced throughout the course.
- ▶ What is the best test format to assess student understanding of sociological imagination?

A favorite among students and faculty

- ▶ Which of the following elements did C. Wright Mills attribute as being the one that sociologists would use to explain individual behavior?
 - ▶ A) common sense
 - ▶ B) instinct
 - ▶ C) external influence
 - ▶ D) inherited ability
- ▶
- ▶ The concept that describes opening a window into unfamiliar worlds that allows us to understand human behavior by placing it within its broader social context is called
 - ▶ A) the sociological perspective or imagination
 - ▶ B) social location
 - ▶ C) social integration
 - ▶ D) the social imperative
- ▶
- ▶ When sociologists visit Starbucks, they witness a variety of behaviors and social relationships that are not necessarily immediately apparent to the coffee drinkers. The ability to interpret the many events taking place within the coffeehouse is referred to as:
 - ▶ A) overintellectualizing
 - ▶ B) caffeine confusion
 - ▶ C) sociological imagination
 - ▶ D) sociological romanticism
- ▶

Short answers– memorization?

Give a sociological definition of each of the following six terms and/or concepts. (5 points each)

verstehen

cultural relativism

rationalization

dominant ideology

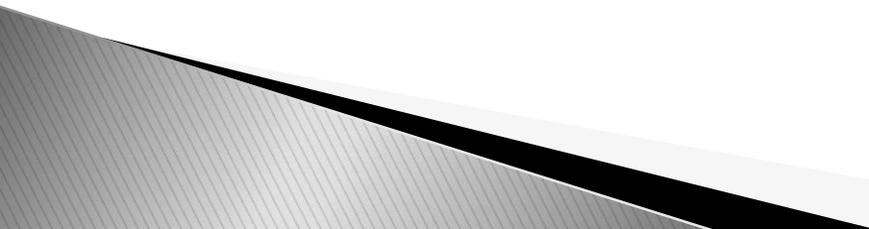
anomie

mechanical solidarity

Essay . . .traditional format?

What does it mean to possess a sociological imagination? Think of your favorite food. What historical events had to happen and what institutions have to function in order for this food to be available? What sort of meanings does it have?

Do our techniques still
work?



Sociology requires
critical thinking

Sociology and critical thinking

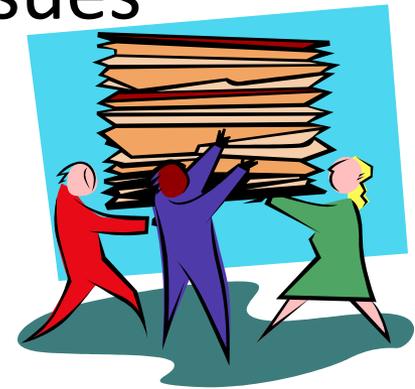
Sociological imagination – one of the first concepts introduced in SOC 101 and reinforced throughout the semester.

It is often difficult for students to grasp as it is an abstraction . . . a mind-set or perspective.

sociological imagination



- ▶ C. Wright Mills – an ability to see patterns that influence the individual as well as groups of individuals.
- ▶ Personal troubles versus public issues



- ▶ The task of sociology is to realize that individual circumstances are inextricably linked to the structure of society. (Mills, 1959)

- ▶ Sociology is thus . . .
 - A way of viewing the world around us.
 - It involves several related components

- ▶ Being able to do so is what Mills means by *sociological imagination*.

It is an ability to see societal patterns that influence individuals, families, groups, and organizations.

Applications

Exercises demonstrating application of sociological imagination to ordinary, daily activities.

#1: Impact of physical surroundings

Does *where* you live determine *how* you live your life? Describe some of the ways the daily lives of people differ in:

urban or suburban neighborhood

single family home or apartment complex

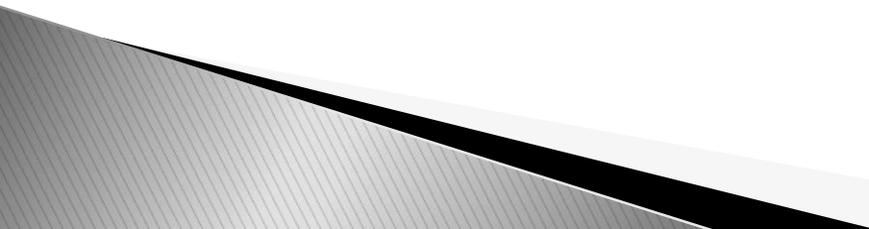
gated communities or inner city

#2: Intersection of history and biography

Identify two different technological innovations that you think are important to your life today. How do each of the innovations shape the way you live your daily life?

Now consider how these two innovations (or the lack of these innovations) may have shaped the daily lives of your grandparents when they were your age. How different or similar to your experiences were theirs?

Using Mills' concept of "the intersection of biography and history," how do you explain the similarities and differences?



#3: Social mobility

--related concepts

types of social mobility, structural mobility,
cultural capital

culture, subcultures, social norms, values

family traditions



Occupational Family Tree

- (1) Use the grid provided to create a data base of three generations of your family, both paternal and maternal sides. Make your grids as complete as possible.
- (2) Consider the social climates during which each generation spent their childhoods and early adulthood. Briefly describe some of the major sociocultural events, historical norms, beliefs, values, and so on, that might have shaped their social experiences.
- (3) In a brief essay, utilize your sociological imagination and discuss the extent to which one might argue that each generation can be understood to be a product of their own particular society.

rationale

Creating an “occupational family tree” help students map the way social change in the general society has impacted their own families. By reviewing the jobs/professions represented within their own multigenerational families, in light of the opportunity structure of the era (and country in which they were living), students consider the extent to which social mobility is the consequence of individual efforts and the extent to which it results from social forces external to them.

Key concepts considered include: social mobility (and the various forms), structural mobility, matrix of domination.

#4: interpreting statistics

Sociological imagination can be demonstrated through identification of patterns and or trends. This exercise is generally used towards the end of a semester as course content turns toward discussions of race and ethnicity.

Look up census statistics on the racial and ethnic composition of your community. Respond to each of the following questions.

1. What are the predominant racial and ethnic groups?
 2. How many other groups are represented?
 3. How many members of your community are immigrants, and where do they come from?
 4. Do the results of your research surprise you?
 5. What accounts for the pattern you discover?
- 

Group Based Assignments

The following are group assignments with individual segments which also assess understanding of sociological imagination. Each group is given the same scenario and limited time to problem solve. Each group's collective solution to the problem is discussed in class. Students are then required to complete individual essays which ask them to focus on specific concepts or focus on a particular action.

Group-based assignment #1: Culture

Society of People from Under Rocks

Believe it or not, a very small and peace loving society has been discovered: its name translates as *Living Under Rocks*. This society is a very proud one, with a very long history. The people pride themselves with full knowledge of their ancestry and tradition is extremely important. Much of the technology that we take for granted for them is novel and usually optional. But, they have some interesting plant life with an incredible application to waste disposal; the ultimate in recycling, these plants can make even old computers biodegradable. A number of American corporations would like to do business with companies in *Living Under Rocks* and the federal government thinks this would be a great thing, given our need to boost environmentally friendly businesses.

The people know very little about our U.S. society, just that it exists and is very big and busy. The leaders there are considering establishing a relationship with the U.S.; sharing is a fundamental part of the value system of people from *Living Under Rocks* and it is supported by their religion. Several of their citizens, including males and females of a variety of ages, have been selected to visit the U.S. for thirty days. During this time period they hope to learn about our society so that they can make recommendations to their leadership about establishing trade and possibly tourism agreements.

What would you tell the ambassadors from Living Under Rocks about life in the U.S. and the making of Americans?

Suggestions given:

Suburban shopping malls
Men's/women's magazines

television programs
music videos

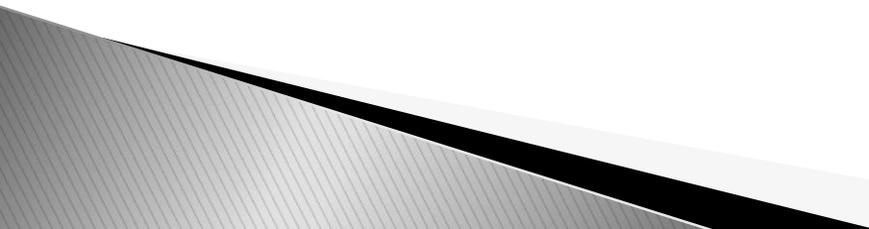
American sports
coffee cafes, sports bars & delis

Group-based assignment #2: Society

The Chosen People

Due to a freak set of circumstances, everyone outside of the classroom has suddenly perished. The only people left alive are the people now in the room. Fortunately there are no lasting effects of this freak occurrence and everything on the planet has been left undisturbed. There is no chance of the freak occurrence happening again. The class has been completely spared.

Work in groups -- questions

- ▶ What do we do next?
 - ▶ What are our immediate goals?
 - ▶ What are our long-term goals?
 - ▶ How do we meet them?
- 

clarification

Initial instructions are intentionally vague in order to both encourage problem solving and help students act as a group.

The Chosen People -- continued

After 10 – 15 minutes, the following is added:

You must decide how to reconstruct society from the ground up.

Is there a particular order that the society must be reconstructed? Will you need a leader? Will you need rules? Rules about what? What skills will be needed, promoted, developed and by whom? What norms, punishments, etc. do you envision? Will you create a “chosen people” mythology around why you survived and no one else did?

Discussion and follow-up written essay

Class discussion following the exercise has each group present their solutions to the scenario as well as react to comments made by classmates.

The object of this exercise is twofold:

- 1 – to illustrate the role and function of social institutions, how culture, values and norms generally arise;
- 2 – to illustrate one way groups form and leadership is established.

Group-based or individual

The following assignment has been offered as individual, group-based and both. Students are asked to collect data prior to class discussion and use it to contribute. Individual essays offer students' interpretation of the collected data.

Sociological imagination is demonstrated in student's ability to offer context for trends and patterns.

RESIDENTIAL TRENDS

Demographics and social change: Historically, poverty has been disproportionately concentrated in urban areas. But that pattern seems to be changing. According to the 201 U.S. Census, the majority of people in poverty in the U. S. now live in America's suburbs. Use you sociological imagination to develop an explanation for this trend. Offer support for your position using at least two different peer reviewed resources or one peer reviewed resource and one established sociological theory.

Suggested resources:

- ▶ *Contexts* – a journal of the American sociological society
- ▶ U.S. Census: *American Community Survey*
- ▶ U.S. Census: *American fact finder*
- ▶ *The New York Times*
- ▶ Pew Research
- ▶ The Brookings Institution