UNIT I: DEFINITIONS, THEORIES AND BACKGROUND ISSUES

SOC/SWK 4100
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"Culture"

material and non-material products of a society
(physical artifacts, foods, technology, customs, values...)

"Ethnicity"

a learned cultural heritage shared by people of the
same race or nationality

Ethnicity emerges as

- groups interact (social and political negotiation)
- symbols become shared (meanings given to group attributes)

An ethnic category

may take precedence over actual ethnic identity

"Social Identity"

part of self-concept that connects with membership in
social groups (value we place on membership)

There are two motives associated with social identity

1. Our desire to be included and to be a part of a group.
2. Our need for individualization and separateness (cultural motive)

Symbolic ethnicity

- self-identity that symbolizes one's roots (a connection to your ancestors)
- use of hyphenated ethnic identities

Notice that race is NOT a factor

race is a cultural concept, not a biological fact (there are not distinct genetic races of people)

"Races" have their differences in

learned behavior and learned beliefs about biological features - it is social construction of categories

The common conceptions of race are based on superficial features such as hair, skin color, eye shape, etc. NOT genetic uniqueness

Distinction in races is generally used to justify an unequal distribution of power, resources and rights in a society - this is known as RACISM

Race, even though a flawed concept:

can not be ignored!! People's responses to the race labels produces real social consequences (self-fulfilling)

"Minority" (subordinate)

a group that differs from the dominate group - often connected to power structure and distribution of resources rather than size of the group

Schaefer's characteristics of a "minority" group:

1. physical or cultural distinction
2. experience unequal treatment
3. ascribed membership
4. aware of subordinate status
5. practice endogamy

According to Schaefer - who is considered a minority?

any group that fits the majority of the characteristics (example - 4 out of 5)

"Double Jeopardy"

belonging to two separate subordinate groups increased risk of different treatment

"Ethnocentrism"

attitude that one's own group, race or society is superior to others

"Prejudice"

as defined by Allport - thinking ill of others without sufficient warrant (thoughts and emotions)

"Discrimination"

behavior that excludes individuals from rights (disenfranchized), opportunities or privileges (action)

can be personal and also institutional

Robert Merton proposed that there are four categories of people to explain the spectrum between prejudice and discrimination.

1. All weather liberal

2. Reluctant liberal

3. Timid bigot

4. Active bigot

Gunner Myrdal

- Dominant group enforces minority status
- Individual prejudices are reinforced by observation of inferior status
- Belief in inferiority reinforces unequal treatment

What is the cycle for prejudice and discrimination?

- prejudice and discrimination begin
- as a result a group is disadvantaged
- disadvantage is interpreted as inferiority
- leading to renewed prejudice and discrimination

How can the thoughts and actions of others influence us?

- truth is we are greatly influenced
- 1939 Clark Doll Experiment
- 1968 Jane Elliott's Experiment

How do stereotypes influence our thinking?

always have some basis in reality

+ make world more stable and predictable

- assume how others act and what they like

- perceive that others should behave in certain ways

- result in inaccurate perceptions of others' behavior

Microaggressions

- Everyday verbal and non-verbal slights, snubs or insults
- Hostile, derogatory or negative messages
- Can be conscious and intensional but usually are not

Selective perception

- tendency to see only what one expects to see (reinforcing beliefs)
- rejection of evidence that challenges beliefs
- use of overgeneralization

Cultural stereotypes

- ascribe an ethnic identity that they person may not have (confined socially)
- require the professional to understand how individual's identify themselves, and how they are impacted by others perceptions of who they are

Scapegoat hypothesis

- links prejudice to feelings of frustration and aggression
- people deal with anger or frustration by taking it out on a substitute target (scapegoat)
- the target often has less power than the actual cause of the problem (making them "safer" to attack)

Symbolic interaction

- interactions are based on shared meaning and use of symbols (how we interpret)
  - connection with labeling theory and self-fulfilling prophecy

Structural-functional

everything serves a function, when it ceases to serve a function it will be replaced

Social conflict

conflict and tension between systems (power structure) - look at who is benefitting and why

Influence of group competition

- prejudice results from group competition, mobilizing energy for conflict
- Robber's cave experiment
- sense of threat experienced by dominate group

Karl Marx

- two main social classes struggle over the means of production
  - bourgeoisie (capitalist class)
  - proletariate (working class)

Max Weber

- Economic inequality (wealth and income)
- Prestige (respect given by others)
- Power (ability to influence others to achieve goals)

Donald Noel

"Noel Hypothesis": If groups come together in a contact situation characterized by ethnocentrism, competition, and a differential in power, then some form of stratification will result. (Healey, 2014).

Robert Blauner

"Blauner Hypothesis": Minority groups created by colonization will experience more intense prejudice, racism, and discrimination than those created by immigration. The disadvantaged status of colonized groups will persist longer and be more difficult to overcome. (Healey & Stepnick, 2017)

**How groups come into contact makes a difference in outcomes for the interactions.

Gerhard Lenksi

- level of development for society
- use and access to technology (subsistence and postindustrial)

Patricia Hill Collins

- multiplicity of systems of inequality and privilege
- **Intersectionality** - different experiences for people with varying combination of statuses

Feminist theory

identify the attitudes, expectations, language, behaviors and arrangements that oppress and marginalize

The Unified Theory proposes that there are key forces behind ethnic relations

- acts of discrimination
- identifiability
- access to resources
- sense of threat
- prevalence of negative stereotypes
- values of broader society

No one is a bystander in society

we either benefit or suffer in our interactions

What impacts perceptions and involvement in society?

- social identity (which changes over time)
- conscious and unconscious aspects of identity
- influence of context
- conflict and oppression
- micro relations
- personality

Assimilation vs Pluralism

- **Assimilation**: the process by which separate groups come to share a common culture
- **Pluralism**: groups maintain individual identities while functioning within the same society

Robert Park - race relations cycle

- initial contact is often conflictual and competitive
- groups eventually move toward interpenetration and fusion in a society with democracy and justice

Milton Gordon - cultural and structural components

- culture - all aspects associated with way of life
- structural - families, networks, groups, organizations, communities, stratification
    - primary and secondary sectors

Human Capital theory

- status attainment is a direct result of educational attainment, personal values/skills and individual characteristics
    - greater capital in theory = higher probability of personal success
    - hard work, effort and character means success

Types of pluralism

- structural pluralism
- enclave minority
- middleman minority

Generational influences

First - least acculturated and integrated

Second - very acculturated and highly integrated

Third - fully acculturated and integrated at primary and secondary levels

Structural Mobility -
changes in the structure of the economy and labor market resulted in people "getting ahead" (attributed to effort)

Social Distance - the Bogardus Scale

How do the theories apply to group relations in the pre-industrial United States?

Black Africans?
Native Americans?
White Ethnicities?
Mexican Americans?
Women?

What changed for these groups in the industrial and post-industrial United States?

Fluid competitive systems

- greater geographic and social mobility
- fear of competition has increased
- intergroup contact has not increased

Connections to:

- policies and politics
- housing
- education
- work opportunities
- health and mental health