**UE 1**

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SOCL-401: Sociological Theory

Dr. Scott Grether

September 5, 2023

**Summary:**

For this Unit Essay I completed the comments that you asked to be done. When you asked me to make another paragraph, I completed that. Then when you asked me to expand on the statement made about “many things in science don’t last when they are theories. “I expanded on this and added some more thought to the statement. When you made the comment about Comtes idea, I deleted the statement. I also made some revisions to my APA format because I didn’t receive full credit for my APA format.

Auguste Comte was one of the early members to establish Sociology. Auguste Comte lived from 1798-1857, he is French and was raised by parents who were catholic and supporters of the French monarchy. His early mentor was Henri Saint-Simon they were very close till there was a bad falling out once Comte was published. Some of the context of Comte’s work was he worked during the time of The Enlightenment and the American Revolution. According to Coser “Comte’s aim was to create a naturalistic science of society, which would both explain the past development of mankind and predict its future course”. (Coser,2003, P.3)

Another sociology figure is Harriet Martineau who lived from 1802-1876 and was British. Martineau was an English dissenter and a protestant Christian from the church of England. The focus of her life is living by the principles set by God. According to Lengermann & Niebrugge there are “three biographical factors that are crucial to Marineau’s development as a sociologist” (Lengerman, Niebrugge, 2007 P.24) Martineau focused on the study of morals and manners. When wanting to study morals you must focus on “things” this is the common mind and the voice of the people. When wanting to study manners you must focus on how people interact and associate with each other. This can mean language use and verbal and non-verbal communication. There are three concepts Martineau uses herself these include Impartiality, critique, and sympathy these are all essential for methods in research. According to Sternheimer when looking into sociological theory you must investigate Emile Durkheim. Durkheim is one of the founders of sociology and according to Sternheimer “Not only did he theorize about the ways in which societies operated, but he detailed how sociology should operate.” (Sternheimer, 2018, P.1,2)

 Sociological theory is a conceptual scheme that provides many different things. It is tightly connected with data and is not predictive the way natural science is. When looking at Sociological theory you first must know what a theory is according to Sternheimer “A theory is a system of ideas that has been developed after multiple studies” (Sternheimer,2020, P.1) Sociological theory is a foundational aspect of sociology. Sociology theory provides us with an explanation of human behavior, depending on what standpoint you are looking at. There are many different features of sociological theory. These include micro-level, meso-level, and macro-level. Micro-level deals with things on a small, individual level, this could be as simple as interactions between people. Meso-level is a medium-sized component. This could be sports teams, frats, sororities, etc. This has to do with ties between people and groups Then there is macro-level, these are large groups. This could have to do with Longwood, when looking at macro-level you’re talking about society, for example social, economic, or political forces. Sociological theory answers many things as to why people do what they do. Sociological theory is very important because it enables sociologists to explain their data. It also provides a historical record of discipline and shows where the world has been throughout the years.

Sociological theory is unique compared to other natural sciences because it gives reasoning as to why things happen the way they do. Some theories can be popular depending on the point in time you are looking at however some theories have staying power meaning they stay around for longer times because of issues/concerns people encounter across time. This was very interesting to me because many things in science don’t last when they are theories. This can be looked at through the idea of the dynamic and evolving nature of societies. Sociological theory can also be unique when compared to other natural sciences because it can investigate things on a personal level, or it can investigate things within smaller things. There are many different levels to sociological theory. In my opinion, Sociological theory is unique because it gives meaning to why people do what they do. I also found it interesting and unique that theories evolve as society evolves. I feel that in many other sciences whatever they are talking about sticks and then never changes. Sociological theories are also not predictive the way natural science is. Sociological theory is meant to provide a paradigm to explain broad phenomena. This gives a way to understand social reality.

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UE 2

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SOCL 401: Sociological Theory

Dr. Grether

October 15, 2023

**Summary:**

In this paper I went through and reread it and fixed grammatical errors. I looked at the comments that you left on Unit Essay 2 and fixed all the problems that you pointed out. When fixing the citation for “Marx had an evolutionary view of society he believed:” I didn’t know how to sight it correctly because I received the information from class. Therefore, I just mentioned that I received the information from class. I think closed the space in between the paragraphs and I also indented the paragraphs. I then worked to fix the APA format and the citations because I noticed that I didn’t receive full credit for this.

Karl Marx is regarded as being one of the founding fathers of sociology. He had many different ideas and theories. According to Coser “Society, according to Marx, comprised a moving balance of antithetical forces that generate social change by their tension and struggle. Marx’s vision was based on an evolutionary point of departure.” (Coser, 2003) Marx’s major concern in sociology was historical materialism this is a theory that states means of production and mode of production, are the primary factors that shape human history and society. Marx was also concerned about class struggle specifically between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. According to the Three Schools of Thought: Conflict Theory, Structural Functionalism, and

Symbolic Interactionism podcast, Marx believed the world was divided into haves and have nots. However, he was hoping that the have nots would realize they were the have nots and finally step up in society (Breakdown, 2018.) Marx also had concerns with alienation and exploitation. Marx argued that people in the working class were exploited, and they were left with separation from their own labor. Workers were alienated from three different things products of their own labor, fellow workers, and species being. The last major concern that Marx had was with socialism and communism, Marx envisioned that we live in a classless society. Marx believed that socialism needed to happen as a transition between capitalism and communism, this would in turn lead to a stateless and classless society.

Karl Marx’s major theoretical contributions was with capitalism. Everything Karl Marx worked towards was basically to make sure that the proletariat would get the respect they deserved. He always believed that the proletariats were looked over and not given credit for their own labor just because the bourgeoisie which are the people that own the work of the proletariats’. According to the power points in class Marx had an evolutionary view of society he believed:

New stuff = New ideas

New ideas = New needs

Need needs = More stuff

More stuff = New ideas

Marx believed that capitalism created alienation. This is the relationship between labor & species, this is also adding to the belief of work for money and labor become a means to an end. This is also what draws back to what I said in the first paragraph about our labor is not our own, and we are cut-off from our labor. Marx had a strong feeling towards capitalism and believed that it shouldn’t be a thing because it led to socioeconomic inequality. Capitalism also made me focus of who had wealth and who had power and how there were very few of these people in the world. Marx felt that we needed in to live in a classless society. However, according to Louis Menand Marx did not provide and idea as to how society was supposed to operate with property, or class, or state (Menand, 2016). Marx theoretical contributions had shaped much of what we call today Marxist theory.

Karl Marx and Marxist theory are something that live on and are still in society today. Many of the things that Karl Marx was fighting for are still things that are happening today and will always be happening in society. The biggest thing that still is relevant today is Marx’s view on proletariat and bourgeoisie. Socioeconomic inequality is something still prevalent today the rich will always take credit for the work of others. The workers will never have the product of their own labor. A perfect example is workers working in a factory to create something but in the end the workers do not have the product to themselves this was Marx’s concept of alienation. The best example I like to talk about is when Peter Kaufman talks about “Are College Athletes the New Proletariat?” (Kaufman,2014). I feel that I connected the most with this just because I am a college athlete and I see it every day. Having to put so many hours into a sport and not be able to get anything out of it. In baseball it is a lot different but with a sport like football they are bringing in millions of dollars and year and not being able to see a single bit of it. This is where I think Marxist theory comes into play the most in today’s world.

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UE 3

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SOCL: Sociological Theory

Dr. Grether

November 27,2023

**Summary:**

This Unit Essay was one of the easier ones to revise in my opinion. I feel that the content was there I just had the wrong idea for one of Erving Goffmans ideas. When I talked about manipulation, I thought it was about the way people think of it today however, it needs to be about people trying to give other people ideas about them by dressing a certain way depending on where they are at. Once I finished this I needed to fix my in-text citations, so I did so. I still don’t know how to cite a presentation in class so therefore I just cited Dr. Grether because he was the one to present the presentation. Overall, I really enjoyed this Unit Essay, I enjoyed a lot of Erving Goffmans different ideas and theories in Sociology.

Erving Goffman was a Canadian sociologist who was known for many different things. According to the American Sociological Association Goffman was “one of the very few sociologists whose work was known beyond the field, and he influenced the world” (Daniels, 1983). According to Joshi Madhura, Goffman looked at social life through an interactionist approach which was based on self and society and that they are created and recreated during interactions. Some of the more well-known things that he is known for include symbolic interactionism and the study of face-to-face interaction. (Madhura, 2022) Goffman was very interested in dramaturgy. According to the video by Sociology live about Dramaturgy, in 1959, Goffman introduced the idea of dramaturgy. (Sociology With Bhatt, 2018) According to the Dr. Grether, Goffman’s approach to this was to view social life as a theoretical performance, this is where individuals are seen as actors on a stage. (Grether, 2023) Where we act a certain way depending on the context. According to Goffman, there are three different premises to dramaturgy the first premise is we only view a person’s self by what they show us, and it isn’t a material object. The second premise is impression management which is slanting your presentation of self to create distinctive appearances and satisfy audiences. The third premise is certain features of face-to-face encounters often create order and stability in social interactions. There are two different stages when looking into this. The front stage and the backstage, the front stage is costumes, settings, actors, scripts, etc. The backstage is preparation, research, practice, evaluation, etc. When looking into social interactions Karen Sternheimer states, “For Goffman, social interactions were largely “front stage” and in public spaces: working and being in school typically happens in places where we might carry ourselves differently than we would at home” (Sternheimer, 2020). With technology coming along front stage has started to take place where we were used to considering backstage. Goffman’s work was able to show us that social interactions are not unorganized chaos.

Erving Goffman had many different theoretical contributions. Goffman's most influential contribution was with the dramaturgical model. He explained this model as a theater for him to describe social interaction. With this model, he views people as actors on a stage, with social life being many different performances. Goffman was also very well known for front stage and backstage. Front stages are the way people interact with an audience, so I think of this as how people act when they’re at a party. Backstage is the way people act when they are at home so when things are more private. This is where people can be themselves and don’t need to put up a front for people to like them. Goffman had many different views on face-to-face interaction as well. He would investigate nonverbal communication and gestures, and how symbols are used in everyday encounters. When I think about this, I think about how people give head nods and wink, etc. Goffman also investigated impression management which is the way individuals’ control and manipulate the things they give to other people. When I think about this, I think about how people may dress a certain way to give off an idea about them depending on who they are around. Goffman also investigated total institutions which he believes to be where individuals are under a lot of social control, and they have their life tightly regulated. Some different ways that this could be seen are in prison, barracks, or somewhere where you must follow strict rules and if you don’t then there will be consequences.

When looking at how Goffman’s work has been used to understand society today, I start with social interaction and communication, with the roles of symbols in communication being very prevalent in the age of digital communication and social media. Goffman can help people get through complex online interactions where the way people present themselves can be different over the phone or in person. When looking at most of Goffman's most prevalent theoretical contributions in the social world I think they all connect to digital media because many of Goffman's ideas have to do with social interaction and they people act when they are at home or when they are out in public. As I mentioned earlier with front stage and backstage interactions the front stage interaction has started to become a very prevalent thing in the backstage interaction because people have so much online communication. I feel that ever since covid this has happened very often. People are now working from home, doing school at home, having meetings at home, etc. People are now feeling more comfortable showing themselves in their front-stage interactions backstage because so many people are starting to do this. When looking at total institutions from a digital age standpoint this is where people undergo strict social control. So, when schools are putting a block on the things that you can look at this is a total institution putting strict control on the things you can look at.

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