THE SOCIOLOGICAL PARADOX, CONT./OBDIENCES TO AUTHORITY

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SOCIAL MOVEMENTS & LOVE

- Sociologist: Joel Best
- Research question: How did stalking become seen as a social problem?
- Method: Analysis of media reports
- People following other people is not a new behavior. However, “stalking” didn’t become a crime until the 1990s
- Stalking became an issue due to media coverage of the 1989 murder of actress Rebecca Schaeffer by an obsessed fan
- The first definition of stalking focused on “star-stalking”; the California law against stalking was supported by the Screen Actors Guild
- However, anti-domestic violence groups took ownership of stalking, defined it as a form of domestic violence and claimed that it was common
- Conclusion: the creation of “stalking,” like other social problems, was the result of interaction between social movements (domestic violence opponents), media, experts, and the government

TWO INSIGHTS OF SOCIOLOGY

- The social construction of reality: process through which members of a society discover, make known, reaffirm, and alter a collective version of facts, knowledge and “truth” (chapter 3)
- The sociological imagination: the ability to see the impact of social forces on our private lives (p. 8)
"The facets of contemporary history are also the facets about the success and failure of individual men and women. When a society is industrialized, a peasant becomes a worker; a feudal lord is liquidated or becomes a businessman. When classes rise or fall, a man is employed or unemployed; when the rate of investment goes up or down, a man takes new heart or goes broke. When wars happen, an insurance salesman becomes a rocket launcher; a store clerk, a radar man; a wife lives alone; a child grows up without a father. Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both.

Yet people do not usually define the troubles they endure in terms of historical change and institutional contradiction. The well-being they enjoy, they do not usually impute to the big ups and downs of the societies in which they live. Seldom aware of the intricate patterns of their own lives and the course of world history, ordinary people do not usually know what this connection means for the kinds of people they are becoming and for the kinds of history-making in which they might take part. They do not possess the quality of mind essential to grasp the interplay of people and society, of biography and history, of self and world. They cannot cope with their personal troubles in such ways as to control the structural transformations that usually lie behind them…

“What they need… is a quality of mind that will help them to use information and develop reason in order to achieve lucid summations of what is going on in the world and of what may be happening within themselves. It is this quality… that may be called the sociological imagination.”

—C. Wright Mills, The Sociological Imagination

MILGRAM’S EXPERIMENT

- Experiment: research method designed to elicit some sort of behavior, typically conducted under closely controlled laboratory circumstances
- Disguised as a learning experiment with experimenter playing role of “scientist” and confederate playing role of “learner”
- Real subject is assigned role of “teacher” in rigged drawing
- Design: teacher ordered by scientist to deliver shocks to learner after mistakes

WORKING WITH A SCRIPT

- All grunts, screams and complaints of learner are scripted (or recorded)
- Three key moments:
  - 150: “Experimenter, get me out of here! I won’t be in the experiment any more! I refuse to go on!”
  - 300: Shouts in desperation that he will no longer provide answers
  - 350: He is not heard from again
- Scientist has script for replying to teacher’s concerns
  - E.g., “Although the shocks may be painful, there is no permanent tissue damage, so please go on.”

RESULTS: CLOSNESS SERIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voltage designation</th>
<th>Remote</th>
<th>Voice</th>
<th>Same room</th>
<th>Touch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Slight shock (15-60)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moderate shock (75-120)</td>
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<td>Strong shock (135-180)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Very strong shock (195-240)</td>
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<td>Intense shock (255-300)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extreme shock (315-360)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Danger: severe shock (375-420)</td>
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<tr>
<td>XXX (435-450)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mean shock level</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>17.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percent obedient</td>
<td>65.0%</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
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