Levels of Abstraction

- Ontology
  - What can be known (facts/values) & to what extent
- Epistemology
  - How we can know we know it; evaluating ideas
- Theory
  - What we think we know; summary knowledge
- Methodology
  - Strategies by which we come to know; how to observe
- Data
  - What has been observed

Lecture Outline

- Theory Review
  - Levels of Abstraction
  - Problems w/ Theory
  - Classical ideas (Status & Structure)
- Black’s Approach
  - Pure Sociology
  - Social Geometry
- Geometric Approach
  - Space & Dimensions
  - Explanations of Law

Ontological Choices

- Realism
  - “the truth is out there”, abstract it
- Positivism
  - assert certain truth about abstractions
  - Is the label (incorrectly) given to scientific sociologists
- Empiricism*
  - ascertain a tentative understanding
  - Correctly identifies that scientists (in any discipline) do
- Postmodernism
  - only understandings can be understood

Conventional vs. Blackian

- Legalistic -> Scientific
  - Lawyerly -> Sociological
- Critical -> Description
  - Gaps -> Variables

Epistemology of Pure Sociology

- No agenda
  - No moral or practical goals
- No teleology
- No psychology
- No people, as such
Theory Review

- **Definition**: Set of explanatory statements
  - Entails some conceptual framework (paradigm)
- **Variation**: Typical 3 – functionalism, interactionism, conflict
  - Comprehensive list – 11 (4 strands w/ 2+ flavors each)
- **Purpose**: Help make sense of observations/data
  - Help guide inquiry (to or from tests, etc.)
  - Help prevent nonsense
- **Evaluation**: 5 criteria (each variable, & themselves predictable)
  - Most “theories” not theoretical – not testable, etc.

Social Status

- **Positional (?) location, relative to others (?)**
  - Rank in re prestige or lifestyle
  - Typically emphasizes individuals
  - Groups, businesses, societies, nations, etc.
  - Rigid/firm – Implies consistent or constant
  - Emphasizes vertical hierarchy
  - Weber responding to Marx’s emphasis on economy
    - Class vs. status
    - But not fully explicated
    - Still sounds vertical, yet melds several disparate ideas…

Problems w/ Previous Theory

- **Overemphasis, one direction**
  - Structure
  - Individuals
- **Testability/predictive power**
  - No validity w/o falsifiability
- **Other criteria**
  - Not simple
  - Not original

Social Geometry (Structural II)

- **Multi-dimensional model**
  - Multidimensional conception of observable variations in social relationships
  - Explains social patterns w/ locations & directions in social space
  - **Social Structure of Right & Wrong – Black**
  - Moves beyond labeling theory
  - Explains who labels whom
    - Esp. downward
    - Richer label poorer as wrong, regardless of behavior
    - Poor more likely to be labeled wrong than rich, for the same behavior
    - Same for any status
      - Relational, corporate, cultural, **normative**

Social Structure

- **Patterned (?) relationships (?)**
- **Abstract**
  - Not easily describable/measurable
  - Not easily comparable/generalizable
- **Divorces micro from macro**
  - Status/roles from Societies
    - Not clearly linked, but not logically separable
- **Rigid/firm – Implies stasis**
  - No clear way of assessing structural change

Roots of Social Geometry

- **Vertical**: Marx
- **Cultural**: Sorokin & Parsons
- **Horizontal**: Durkheim & Simmel
- **Corporate**: Dahrendorf
- **Social Control**: Ross & Sumner
Geometry of Physical Space

- Size defined by three dimensions
  - Height
  - Width
  - Length
- Location defined those, as well
  - Positional
  - (Einstein adds 4th -> “space-time”)
- Distance = difference btwn locations
- Direction = movement w/ respect to any D

Geometry of Social Space

- Multi-Dimensional Social Space
  - Each is quantifiable
- Stratification (Vertical)
  - Vertical distribution of conditions of existence
- Morphology (Horizontal)
  - Distribution of people in relation to each other
    - incl. DOL, integration, intimacy
- Organization (Corporate)
  - Capacity for collective capacity
- Culture (Symbolic)
  - Religion, decoration, folklore
- Social Control (Normative)
  - defines and responds to deviant behavior

Dimensions of Social Space

- Each useful in various ways
  - By others / previously
    - Each as a strategy of explanation
  - Social status = function of relative location
    - Each dimension conveys a particular kind of status
  - Direction = movement from one to another
    - Relative status of origin toward target
    - e.g. Upward vs. Downward (vertical)
  - Distance = relative difference in status/location
- Jointly constitute multi-dimensional model
  - Combos & Aggregates provide additional theory
    - “Elementary Forms of Social Control”

Explain Law

- Law as a quantitative variable (ontological choice)
  - It varies, and its variation can be counted
  - It behaves (vs. lives)
- Systematic variation, not just deviation from “books”
  - Frequency (whether it occurs, how often)
  - Extent (legality as a spectrum, from report to execution)
  - Style (penal, compensatory, et al.)
- Explain legal variation w/ social variation
  - 5 dimensions - location & direction of law
    - Social structure of the case
    - All parties connected to a conflict or its “management”

Early Propositions

- Law varies curvilinearly w/ relational distance.
- Law varies inversely with other social control.
- Theory of law predicts illegal behavior.
- Legal and Criminal Behavior

Geometric Explanations of Law

- Frequency
  - Law varies inversely with other social control.
- Location
  - Law used more by higher status than lower
- Distance
  - Law varies curvilinearly w/ relational distance.
- Direction
  - Law moves downward – & upward law is less...
- Theory of law also predicts illegal behavior
  - Crime & non-criminal deviance
Stratification

- Conventional: Layers with unequal resources?
- Blackian: "Uneven distribution of the material conditions of existence"
- Vertical Location
  - How wealthy are you?
- Vertical Distance
  - What's the difference in wealth between 2?
- Vertical Direction
  - Upward = from poorer to richer
  - Downward = rich to poor

Morphology

- "distribution of people in relation to one another, including their division of labor, networks of interaction, intimacy, and integration"
- Radial Location
  - Integrated vs. Marginal
- Radial Direction
  - Centripetal (inward) vs Centrifugal (outward)

Cultural

- "Symbolic aspect of life"
- Distance, Type I – more/less
- Distance, Type II – conventional/un
- Direction (2 types)
  - Upward/downward
  - Inward/outward RE convention

Social Geometry – Examples

- Donald Black – law & crime
- Allan Horwitz – therapy
- M.P. Baumgartner – children & suburbs
- James Tucker – suicide (responses to)
- Mark Cooney – duels
- Bradley Campbell – genocide
- Godard – flame wars, reality shows, professor dress, sexual fetishes
Dimensions of Sciencticity

1. Falsifiability (!)
   - Is the idea testable?
2. Validity
   - Do the facts support it?
3. Generality
   - To how many situations does it apply?
4. Parsimony
   - Is it simple?
5. Originality
   - Is it creative?

- These are measurable aspects – they vary
- The more of each of them an idea is, the more scientific it is
- These are predictable – we can be scientific about scienticity (for example...)

Social Geometry – Evaluation

- General
- Simple
- Testable
- Valid
- Original