Notes for Tuesday, March 4th

-We are now moving from macro theorists to more micro theorists; our theorists are becoming more focused

-Mead’s Big Idea: How we get the ‘selves’ we get; the process

I. How is Mead a micro sociologist?
-Unit of Analysis: the individual
  -Compare to our previous macro theorists who had a collective unit of analysis
  -Concept of ‘self’ and its construction in social relations
    -Construction in the social keeps it in the study of sociology rather than psychology
  -Process of the development of the self

  **Durkheim is characteristically micro in that he is concerned with the individual; Marx in his concern with workers' consciousness; Weber in that ethics and morals influence action. However, although they have their “micro” moments, these three are ordinarily presented as “macro” theorists.

II. What is Mead arguing?
-Says humans have language, which is different than other animals, and is essential for the development of the self [p. 240]

-Symbolic interaction: the notion that what organizes us at the social level are our symbols-symbolic interaction
  -“Symbolic”: Humans communicate and act through symbols; we have both the capacity for and the need for symbols
    -The self in the social is distinct from the physical (Mead makes the distinction between the self and the body); gestures don’t mean anything in and of themselves, only in a particular context
    -“Interaction”: other/self interaction
      -Roles: developmentally, “play” comes first and is the process of taking on a role [p. 245]; people “play” at being someone/something else.
      -Communication: interaction calls forward different parts of the self (Mead discusses the link between language and social interaction, p. 244)
      -You can’t have a self that’s raised in isolation, you NEED that interaction; the self is social because it’s based on interaction
      -Mead defines the self as an entity AND an experience

-Reflexivity: the ability of the subject to be an object to herself; we can tell we have a self because a self is an object in itself (this makes us uniquely human)
  -Through language we are able to treat our self as an object
    -Mead makes the distinction between “I” and “Me” [p. 250]
      -“I”= the subject, the actor
      -“Me”= the object, the observed

III. Dr. Brush discussed a few FAQ
a. What is the difference between “consciousness” and “selfhood”?
  -“Consciousness”: awareness of the external environment or of internal states such as cognitions, emotions, kinesthetic/body sense, agency
  -“Selfhood”: as a human, awareness of yourself (cognitions, emotions, etc.); agency
  -The connection: if you are aware of yourself and treating yourself as an object, you are self-
conscious; you can be aware of things separate from yourself AND as yourself as an object (the “I” and “Me” distinction)

-“Me”= formulates a plan and is then acted UPON; the things that we perceive afterwards; the object of the forces of the external world; the object of expectations in communication and interaction
-“I”= DOES the action; is in the moment
  -The self is “Me” and being conscious of it is the “I”

b. How can the self be both reflexive AND unified?
  -The distinction between “Me” and “I” is comparable to the “split-subject” of psychoanalysis, which we will discuss when we have read Freud
  -Reflexivity is only possible through social conduct AND when we are interacting we are creating the social order
  -What Mead proposes is dialectical because the 2 things call one another into being
  -This is similar to Hegel and Marx in that 2 things are related in a dialectical relationship

c. More on the “role”
  -The “role” has 2 main applications in Social Science
    1. Dramaturgical= based on the metaphor of society as theater
       -Social organization comes about when people learn their boundaries
       -This limits people’s actions and the outcome of social processes
    2. Structural= based on the metaphor of society as architecture, complete with foundations and glass ceilings
       -Where you are relative to others; “are you on the top of the pyramid or the bottom?”
       -Structural location determines who you are and what you’re doing (very Marxist!); roles are the sets of behaviors and attitudes associated with different functional positions in society