Find and Cite Three-to-Five Sources: Applying the Sociological Imagination to Critical Information Literacy

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### Framework for Information Literacy Concepts

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### Sociological Literacy Framework Concepts

**Sociological Information Literacy** is an understanding of how information and scholarship are created, published, disseminated, and used by individuals and organizations that is informed by sociological thinking and scholarship.

#### Sociological Eye
**Sociology as a distinctive discipline**
- Social basis and construction of knowledge
- “Truth is political”
- Scientific knowledge vs. other ways of knowing
- “the medium is the message”
- Commodity: economic/financial structures support/constrain info production
- Means for education: varying access, promotion of “correct” information
- Means to influence: role and impact of propaganda
- Ask questions like a sociologist
- Social assumptions vs. scientific evidence
- Verification process

**Social Structure**
- The impact of social structures on human action
- Social roles may privilege some as authorities
- Social institutions extend influence over what is considered valid or factual
- Ownership of information systems impacts the processes of information creation and what information is made available
- Ownership of information systems is concentrated; even where information is produced by individuals, it may be owned by private corporations (e.g., on social media platforms, transfer of copyright agreements)
- Expert knowledge is shaped by established scientific systems and processes
- Social context of scholarly discourse; (a) who is an expert in a field, (b) where the boundaries of a field lie, and (c) what can be said within these boundaries
- Scholarly conversations are shaped by institutional structures: higher education, research firms, publishers, libraries, archives, and the WWW
- Search engines as gatekeepers to information
- Algorithms reflect the interests of their creators

**Socialization**
- The relationship between the self and society
- Ideologies impact accepted authorities
- “Fake news”
- Social media as transformative work
- Trusted formats and sources vary by culture
- Creation of information as expressions of self and social belonging is monetized and monitored (e.g., social media)
- Cultural contexts shape perceptions of legitimate knowledge and questions
- Participation in scholarly discourse relies on membership in communities of practice
- Citation practices, plagiarism
- Search engines as gatekeepers to information
- Algorithms reflect the interests of their creators

**Stratification**
- The patterns and effects of social inequality
- Institutions with authority to produce knowledge reanimate social inequalities
- Certain forms of knowledge production are valued over others: e.g., low income students lack cultural capital, richer students have institutional de-valuing of different cultures
- Socioeconomic status impacts ability to participate as a producer of information, or to access information
- “Profitable” research outputs receive more value and resources
- Corporate control and limits on information distribution and participation
- Commodification of personal information (i.e., surveillance capitalism) and privacy ramifications
- Historical exclusion of subordinated social groups from scholarship
- Unequal access to literacy education
- Development of expert search strategies is a skill that takes education and experience

**Social Change and Social Reproduction**
- How social phenomena replicate and change
- Scientific authority comes from approval by educational institutions; Academic success requires acceptance of certain “truths” about the social and natural world; Through young scholars, these “truths” persist
- Certain kinds of knowledge are reproduced; because scientists use existing theories for hypothesis building, methodological design, and interpretation, they will often fail to see what does not fit into these theories
- Social movements may be aided by social media, but the terms of use and algorithms that impact what information is seen are set by private ownership
- Every day, scientists encounter phenomena that cannot be explained by existing theories: often, these anomalies are ignored or avoided through a focus on certain methodologies over others
- Students are trained in certain disciplines; While these disciplines may address similar problems, they remain distinct and the conversations within them siloed
- The terms scholars use in search depend on the conventions of their discipline; It is more difficult to find and read scholarship outside the discipline in which one is trained