Notes from Prof. Baldwin’s lecture about George Herbert Mead

- Mead developed pragmatism and contributed to social psychology. He studied micro sociology, how people think, how people are influenced by society. Also recognized that people influence society and are influenced by society.

1) Mead helped us understand the mind and the self and that they are connected to society and also society feeds into how the mind and the self are developed.
- Mind/self influence society via voting or are active in organizations.
- Society gives individuals language, democracy, athletics, etc.

2) “I” and “me”. Self is the “I” and “me”
- I creates, is subjective, feeling about life, spontaneous actions
- Me is what we see after we act, is objective.
- Fore-P and hind-P: Fore-P is like the I going forward; hind-P is like the “Me” keeping track of what the foreP does.
- “I” is plunging forward and the “me” observes, notes.
- Self observation done by the “me” is “objective”
- There is a scale from 100% objective to 0% objective (delusional) and most people are somewhere in between (80%-90%)
- We can improve on our objectivity, make good self observations, others can help our objectivity.
- For Mead, “I” is actor and talker and “me” is what you see after acting.

3) We surprise ourselves when we act/speak, can’t see “I”
- I is positive, creative, creativity Or I can be negative – awkward, dumb comments, inconsiderate.
- Children are creative in their play, play, playwright, performance,
- We congratulate ourselves when we do something good. Self rewarding system. Self rewarding polishes our behavior.
- If we do dumb stuff we criticize ourselves, bad behavior, bad actions then we criticize.
- Nurture Positive constructive criticism.
- We reward and punish ourselves for what we see via the “Me”. Punishing and rewarding is a method of self control.

4) The “me” reflects social values.
- Other people’s values influence my reflections of myself as “me”
- For example, the people who I hang around with then influence my decision (the popular crowd vs. rebels makes me into a different person with different values or language).
- Social control – crowd influences the individual.

5) “I” and “me” function nicely together and are an organic whole.
- Blend the “I” creativity and “me” social responsibility
- Pro-social values can lead to wise actions and you can gain wisdom
6) In childhood we are fragmented selves and our observations of ourselves are discrete and fragmented. We get glimpses of who we are but it’s not well integrated into a whole self. Then we grow and as an adult we have a unified identity, things about our self are pieced together in a logic.

7) Pragmatism. Mead says that ideas can improve our lives (this is practical). With greater self-awareness, we can control our lives more precisely to make contributions to the larger society. We can increase the management of behavior. Our sense of self grows from a simple self to self + family; to self + family + town; to self + family + town + world. We become citizens of the earth.
   • “I” and “Me” work organically together toward a goal. We can be creative and rise above negative situations.

8) Language is the key to developing a sense of self.
   • With words we describe the “me”
   • Neither babies nor animals have a self.
   • As kids we learn language and can self talk. When you talk and criticize yourself (positively or negative).
   • Mead’s is a language driven theory.
   • Dogs have no symbols or words and this sets animals apart from humans.
   • Language opens possibilities – once babies acquire it.
   • We can question – who am I = what is my “me”?