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Chapter 1: What is Sociology?

What is Sociology?

- Developing A Sociological Perspective
- Development of Sociological Thinking
- Is Sociology A Science
- How Can Sociology Help Us in Our Lives

What Is Sociology?

- Sociology
 - The systematic study of human societies, with special emphasis on social groups in modern industrialized systems.

Chapter 1 What Is Sociology- Social Structure

- Patterns of social behavior
E.g., divorce, substance abuse, aging, immigration, unemployment, underemployment, overwork, lower pay etc. However, they are public issues at the societal level.
- Social structure is an active & constantly changing social force.
- It varies across space & time.

Structuration



Chapter 1 What Is Sociology

- Culture
 - Socialization
 - Social interaction
 - Social organizations & institutions
 - Social inequality
 - Environment
- Human behavior & thinking
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Scope of Sociology

The scope of sociology: studying all human relationships, groups, institutions, and societies. E.g., romantic love & marriage, gay family & marriage....(continued)

Scope of sociology?

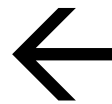
- Health & illness, racial & ethnic conflicts, poverty, education, immigration, sexuality, gender, class, and crime & punishment, environment & economic development all come under the scope of sociology.

The Development of Sociological Thinking

- Merton's Micro and Macro Approaches to the Study of Society
- Macro-sociology: large-scale phenomena
- Micro-sociology: individual characteristics & social interactions

Macrosociology

Micro-sociology



Sociological Imagination

- C. Wright Mills (1959)
 - “*think ourselves away*” from the familiar routines of our daily lives
 - look at them anew
 - from another’s perspective

Developing Sociological Perspective

- Social reproduction
 - the way societies keep going over time.
- Social transformation
 - processes of changes derived from conscious intentions to change
 - processes of unintended outcomes via social reproduction
- Sociology studies the resulting balance between these two processes.

Level of Analysis: Macro-Sociology & Micro-Sociology

- Microsociology - the study of everyday behavior in situations of face-to-face interaction.
- Macrosociology - the analysis of large-scale social systems.
- The two are closely connected.

The Development of Sociological Thinking

- Sociology encompasses a diversity of theoretical approaches.
- Theories - constructing abstract interpretations that can be used to explain a wide variety of empirical situations.

Early Sociologists

- Auguste Comte
 1. He invented the word “sociology.”
 2. Scientific evidence
 3. Seeing sociology as a means to predict & control human behavior, which in turn contributes to human welfare.

Early Sociologists

- Emile Durkheim
 1. Social changes & division of labor
 2. Sociology must study social facts
 3. Harmony among specialized institutions
 4. Society is an integrated whole (organic solidarity).

Durkheim

- Suicide- as a social problem
- Egoistic- unattached to society
- Altruistic- “overly” attached to societies goals
- Anomie- the absence of moral regulation
- Rock stars/ dot.com

Early Sociologists

- Karl Marx
 1. “All human history thus far is the history of class struggles.”
 2. Emphasizing economic inequality & its influences on social changes
 3. The ruling class exploited the working class and the working class struggled to overcome that exploitation.
 4. A classless system.

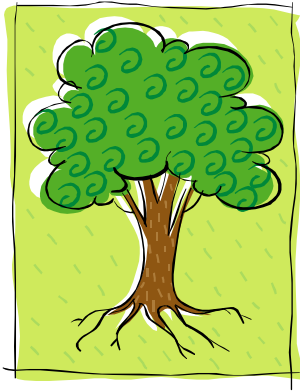
Early Sociologists

- Max Weber
 1. Emphasizing Durkheim's notions of social values and ideas.
 2. Values and ideas, such as those of religion and science, can shape a society.
 3. Rationalization of social and economic life
 4. Bureaucracy-efficiency and red tape
 5. Sociology of religion

Modern Theoretical Approaches

- Symbolic Interactionism
- Symbols
- The exchange of symbols between individuals in social interaction
- Small-scale interactions of individuals, not society as a whole.

Symbolic Interaction



Tree

Modern Theoretical Approaches

- Functionalism
 1. Seeing society as a whole
 2. Robert Merton has been particularly influential
 3. Manifest, latent functions and dysfunction
 4. Study of deviance

Modern Theoretical Approaches

- Marxism
 1. Power
 2. Ideology
 3. Class division-Proletariat & bourgeoisie
 4. Social conflict
 5. The power class uses ideology to retain their dominance

Auguste Comte

(1789-1857)



Modern Theoretical Approaches

■ Feminism

1. Linking sociological theory and political reform
2. women's lives and experiences
3. Gendered patterns and inequalities are socially constructed.

Modern Theoretical Approaches

- Postmodernism

1. Society is no longer governed by history or progress.
2. Postmodern society is highly pluralistic and diverse, with no "grand narrative" guiding its development.

Modern Theoretical Approaches

- Rational choice theory
 1. Self-interest
 2. Cost-benefit calculation
 3. Goal oriented
 4. Game Theory
 5. Economics

Is Sociology a Science?

- Science:
 1. Systematic methods of empirical investigation
 2. Data analysis
 3. Theoretical thinking
 4. Logical assessments of arguments
 5. A body of knowledge about a particular subject matter
 6. Value-free, objective & observable
 7. Empirical evidence & facts

How Can Sociology Help Us in Our Lives?

- Understanding social circumstances provides us a better chance of controlling them.
- Sociology provides the means of increasing our cultural sensitivities.
- We can investigate the consequences of adopting particular policy programs.
- Sociology provides self-enlightenment, offering groups & individuals an increased opportunity to alter the conditions of their own lives.