

SOCIOLOGY CHAP. 1

Sociology- The scientific study of social structure. As social sciences go, it is one of the newer ones. It began in 1830.

Perspective- A particular point of view. We all see what's happening around us through our own perspectives (people tend to find their spouses and kids more attractive than they really might be).

Sociological Perspective- Looks at the behavior of groups and not individuals. This is the opposite of psychology. Sociologists focus on the common behaviors of groups and not their differences. Sociologists look at categories of people. A sociologist would look at why certain categories of young people are more likely to join a gang. A

psychologist would look at why a specific individual joined a gang.

Social Structure- How people interact in social relationships. People tend to act differently in their various groups and their actions cannot always be predicted from their personal characteristics (kids act differently out of school, rioting after sports championships, etc...). When joining a new group, it is important to learn its social structure (teams, college dorms, new work places, etc...).

Conformity- Behavior that matches group expectations. All groups encourage conformity! People tend to conform because it is “comfortable.” Social groups, teams, work groups, etc... all encourage conformity.

Sociological Imagination- Developed by C. Wright Mills. It is the ability of individuals to see the relationship between events in their personal lives and events in their society. People tend to make decisions about their lives by what society defines as “normal.”

*Sociologists challenge conventional social wisdom and make up their own minds about things. They do not always conform.

*C. Wright Mills has been referred to as the founder of the student movement in the 1960's. He believed politicians, businessmen, and the military morally directed and ran society. Students in the 1960's started to challenge these institutions.

Origins of Sociology/ Key individuals

1. August Comte- The founder of sociology (1830). He believed social behavior needed to be studied scientifically. Key ideas put forth by Comte: A). Positivism- Knowledge is obtained from scientific observation. You learn by watching. B). Social Statics- The study of social stability and order. How things stay the same (city tournament, homecoming week, etc...). C). Social Dynamics- The study of social change (the industrial revolution would be an example).

*The distinction between social statics and social dynamics is still the center of modern sociology.

2. Harriet Martineau (1802-1886)- Early feminist. Wrote about the oppression of women and its link to slavery. She strongly supported the emancipation of slaves and women. She believed that when women lacked power and opportunity it made them dependent on men.

3. Herbert Spencer (1820-1903)- He had a theory on how societies should be structured. He was an advocate of Social Darwinism which is the survival of the fittest. In Social Darwinism, each person finds their social class ever without outside interference. Spencer believed the poor deserved to be poor and the rich deserved to be rich. As government interventions increased and the poor were given assistance, his ideas became unpopular and he died a failure.

4. Karl Marx (1818-1883)- Believed the key to the unfolding of history was class conflict. The “have nots” would rise up and overthrow the “haves” and out of this would grow a “classless society (communism).”

*Key Ideas of Karl Marx: 1. Bourgeoisie- The people that owned the means of production (the “haves”). In the days of Karl Marx, this would be the factory owners. 2. Proletariat- The people who comprised the working class (the “have nots”). In the times of Karl Marx, this would be the factory workers who worked for the bourgeoisie. 3. Class Conflict- The ongoing struggle between the “haves” and “have nots.” Marx believed just like slaves overthrew their owners, wage earners would rise up and overthrow the capitalists.

5. Emile Durkheim (1858-1917)- Society exists because of a broad consensus or agreement among its members.

*Key ideas of Emile Durkheim: 1. Mechanical Solidarity- Existed in pre-industrial times. Social dependency is based on a consensus of values and beliefs, enforced conformity, and dependence on family and tradition. 2. Organic Solidarity- Exists in industrial societies. Society is based on a web of highly specialized roles (doctors need barbers and barbers need doctors, etc...).

6. Max Weber (1864-1920)- Came up with the single most important influence on the development of sociological theory. He stated: "Human beings act on their own understanding of a situation."

*Key ideas of Max Weber: 1. Verstehen- Understanding social behavior by putting yourself in the place of others. It allows you to see things from their point of view. 2. Rationalization- Emphasizes knowledge, reasoning, and planning rather than tradition, emotion, or superstition (agriculture became grounded on science rather than luck).

7. Jane Addams (1860-1935)- American and Illinoisan. Graduated from Rockford University. She was concerned with the suffering of the lower class, women's suffrage, and the peace movement. Founded the Hull House in Chicago, which helped the poor, sick, aged, and immigrants in the Chicago slums. She won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931, and is the only sociologist to do so.

8. W.E.B. Dubois- Another American. He studied the social structure of African-American communities. He was the founder of the NAACP and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was very much influenced by Dubois.

Theoretical Perspective- A set of assumptions accepted as true by a group of supporters.

THE BIG THREE SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES: 1. Conflict Perspective- Emphasizes the role of conflict and competition within a society. There must be a distribution of power in this perspective (Women have gained increasing amounts of political power and this is often the result of them conflicting with men).

2. Functionalism- The opposite of Conflict Perspective. Emphasizes the contributions made by each part of society. All the parts of society function as an integrated whole and a change in one part of society leads to a change in another part. There must be a consensus of values (industrial revolution, protests in the 1960's).

*Key Ideas of the Functionalist

Perspective: A. Manifest Function-

Developed by Robert Merton. An intended and recognized result (you go to school to learn academic subjects, shopping on the world-wide-web saves time). B. Latent

Function- An unintended and

unrecognized result (you go to school to learn social skills, you marry your lab

partner, internet use leads to social isolation). C. Dysfunction- Negative

consequence of an aspect of society (bureaucracies are unfair and impersonal).

3. Symbolic Interactionism- Developed by Herbert Blumer. We are able to communicate with one another because we have a set of symbols that have similar meanings to all of us (school mascot=loyalty, flag=patriotism).

Key Ideas of Symbolic Interactionism: A. Symbol- Something that stands for something else and has an agreed upon meaning attached to it (waving goodbye).

B. Dramaturgy- Depicts human interaction as a theatrical performance. People present themselves through dress, tone of voice, and gestures. People tend to act in ways to get others to like them.

Group- Two or more people at the same place and time (people at a concert).

*Sociologists believe that one event does not predictably cause another event (If a college raises tuition and there is an enrollment drop the next year, the tuition increase may not have been the reason).