Chapter One: What is Sociology?

Learning Objectives:
Doing Sociology
Sociological Imagination
Sociological Perspective

Sociology as a Way of Seeing

- Beyond Either/Or: Seeing Sociologically
- Making Connections: Sociological Dynamics
- Sociological Understanding
Sociology As a Way of Seeing

– study of human behavior in society
– attempts to answer basic questions
  • nature of identity
  • relationship of individual to society
  • relationships between individuals
– sociological imagination (Mills)

Sociology As a Way of Seeing

■ Beyond Either/Or: Seeing Sociologically
  – Is society getting better or worse?
  – Is the glass half full or half empty?
  – sociologists see both sides at once
    • "both/and" as opposed to "either/or"
Sociology As a Way of Seeing

- Making Connections: Sociological Dynamics
  - integration and disintegration
  - social order and breakdown

- Sociological Understanding
  - societal changes over time
  - cross-country comparisons

Doing Sociology

- Sociology and Science
  - Methods
  - Broader Set of Issues

- Getting Beyond “Common Sense”
  - Common Sense Untrue
  - relationship between individuals and society
Doing Sociology

– theory and perspective
– Sociology of
  • Art
  • Crime
  • Culture
  • Delinquency
  • Drugs
  • Gender, etc.
– social complexity of problems
– “parts” make up the entire “picture”

Doing Sociology

■ Sociology and Science
  – empirical data vs. human spirit

  “When the object of study is intelligent and aware, you need different techniques and different propositions.”

■ Getting Beyond “Common Sense”
  – human behavior results from both nature and nurture
  – humans adapt to social contexts
Applying the Sociological Perspective

- Searching for Her Son’s Killer
- Read Article and answer questions
- Discuss Questions in Small Groups

Where Did Sociology Come From?

- Before “Sociology”
  - “The Age of Reason”; “Enlightenment”
    - “social contract”/individuality (Locke)
    - the “general will”/community (Rousseau)
  - Declaration of Independence (Jefferson)
Where Did Sociology Come From?

■ The Invention of Sociology
  – The nature of community
  – The nature of government
  – The nature of the economy
  – The meaning of individualism
  – The rise of secularism
  – The nature and direction of change

Where Did Sociology Come From?

■ Classic Sociological Thinkers
  – modernism
  – Auguste Comte
    • founder of sociology
    • social statics and dynamics
  – Alexis de Tocqueville
    • Democracies
  – Karl Marx
    • The Communist Manifesto
    • capitalism and worker rebellion
Where Did Sociology Come From?

– **Emile Durkheim**
  - *Suicide*
  - Integration and regulation
  - social *solidarity*
    - mechanical and organic

– **Max Weber** *(VAY-bur)*
  - Interpretive and value free
  - *class* most significant division
    - *status* and *party*

– **George Simmel** *(ZIM-mel)*
  - *forms* of social interaction
  - Individuality
    - Discovery and expression

- **American Sociological Thinkers**
  - **Thorstein Veblen**
    - The “productive” (workers)
    - The “pecuniary” (owners)
  - **Lester Ward**
    - Against *social Darwinism*
    - “Social telesis”
Where Did Sociology Come From?

- George Herbert Mead
  - the “I” and the “me”
  - generalized other

The “Other” Canon
- Mary Wollstonecraft
- Margaret Fuller
- Frederick Douglas
- W.E.B. DuBois
- Charlotte Perkins Gillman

Contemporary Sociology

- What could sociology contribute to the study of the self?
- What processes ensure social order?

Symbolic Interaction and the Sociology of the Self
- development of the self through interactions with others
  - *dramaturgical model* (Goffman)
    - backstage and frontstage
Contemporary Sociology

- Structural Functionalism and Social Order
  - stability, order and meaning (Parsons)
  - paradigm of how society works
  - manifest and latent functions (Merton)
  - . . . “if it exists it serves a purpose and shouldn’t be changed”

Contemporary Sociology

- Conflict Theories: An Alternative Paradigm
  - the dynamics of society resulted from conflict among different groups
  - conflict theory

The three dominant sociological theories addressed similar sorts of questions:

- What holds society together?
- How are individuals connected to larger social processes and institutions?
- What are the chief tensions that pull society apart?
- What causes social change?
Contemporary Sociology

Table 1.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theorist</th>
<th>Level of Analysis</th>
<th>Major Sociological Theories, 1965-2000</th>
<th>Interpersonal to Society</th>
<th>Change</th>
<th>Direction of Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Structural-Functionalism</td>
<td>Macro</td>
<td>Society is a stable system of interacting elements - shared values, institutions - and there is general agreement (consensus) about how society should work.</td>
<td>Individuals are integrated into society, socialization.</td>
<td>Incomplete socialization.</td>
<td>Change is progressive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict Theory</td>
<td>Macro</td>
<td>Society is a dynamic tension between unequal groups ruled by a distribution of goods and power.</td>
<td>Individuals belong to different groups that compete for scarce resources.</td>
<td>Groups mobilize to get scarce goods.</td>
<td>Short term: conflict. Long term: greater equality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic Interactionism</td>
<td>Macro</td>
<td>Society is a set of processes among individuals, involving symbolic actions (language, gestures, performances) to create identity and meaning.</td>
<td>Individuals connect to others symbolically.</td>
<td>Teasing between institutions and individual identity.</td>
<td>No direction specified.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Globalization and Multiculturalism: New Lenses, New Issues

- **globalization** (macro) - interconnections
- **multiculturalism** (micro) - understanding
- macrolevel analysis
- microlevel analysis
- Globalization and Multiculturalism: Interrelated Forces
  - forces that hold us together and that drive us apart
- Global Tensions
  - McDonaldization (Ritzer)
Contemporary Sociology

- Sociology and Modernism
  - modernism
    - religion to science
    - mechanical to organic
    - feudal to capitalist
  - postmodernism

- Sociology and the Future, Sociology and You

The Invention of Sociology

- Enlightenment Thinkers: John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Thomas Jefferson
- New Way of Thinking About the World, Community, Government and The Individual