

Soc201 Exam 1

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Sociology

- study of human society
- a way of thinking about the world
- link individual actions to social phenomena
- explain human behavior with reference to social groups
- ex - Why does one individual get accepted to UD over another? OR, why does an individual apply to UD compared to an individual who doesn't? Why do men cross their legs a particular way and women a different way?

Sociological Perspective

- C Wright Mills wrote about the sociological perspective in *The Sociological Imagination*
- understand the relationship between individuals and their society
- defined sociological imagination as the ability to see societal patterns that influence an individual as well as groups of individuals

Sociological Imagination

- the ability to connect the most basic intimate aspects of an individual's life to seemingly impersonal and remote historical forces
- 3 research questions
 - social structure - What is the structure of this particular society as whole?
 - sociohistorical Context - Where does this society stand in human history?
 - diversity - What varieties of men and women now prevail in this society and period?

Troubles vs Issues

- Troubles - private matter among individuals, individual values are threatened, limited to the immediate surroundings & awareness of the individual, personal relationship, individual unemployment
- Issues - public matter among society: social values are threatened, go beyond the individual to issues that affect larger society, natural disaster, gay marriage, 15 mil unemployed

Social Institutions

- a complex group of interdependent positions that together perform a social role and reproduce themselves over time
- put simply: any social institution that works to shape the behavior of the groups or people within it
- institutions are not monolithic, stable or uniform
- they are "socially constructed" and thus fluid and ever-changing
- ex: govt, family, education religion

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History (European Antecedents)

- Sociology is a product of rational sensibilities unleashed by Enlightenment
- Sociology as social physics
 - Auguste Comte, 1798-1857
 - The Positive Philosophy (1830)
- Sociology as Darwinism applied to social life
 - Herbert Spencer (1820-1908)
 - Progress: Its Law and Cause (1857)
- Sociology began to emerge during the nineteenth century as a way of making sense of democratization and industrialization.
 - Karl Marx (1818-1883) - Communist Manifesto (1848)
 - Max Weber (1864-1920) - Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (1904-5)
 - Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) - Division of Labor in Society (1893)

History of Sociology (American Exceptionalism)

- Sociology took root more slowly in the U.S. because of ideas about American Exceptionalism
- Ideology that the United States is somehow different than the rest of the world
- Free from the bonds of history; free of religious conflict and class strife
- Started to question when conflict arose in late 19th century

Development in US

- Chicago School
 - 1st school of sociology in the US, Founded in 1892, Used the city of Chicago as a social laboratory for case studies, Polish immigrants adjusting to normal life
- Middletown
 - 2 observational studies of social life, 1929 & 1937, First use of surveys, Social stratification, Indiana town run by 1 wealthy family and noted other problems
- Parsons
 - Postwar sociology, 1950s-1960s, Functionalism (like Durkheim), Society = "big machine"
- Contemporary Sociology
 - Diversity is key
 - No dominant paradigm
 - Focus on empirical research

Sociological Theories

- Functionalism Theory
 - Theory that various social institutions and processes exist to serve important functions to keep society running
 - Foundational theory for US sociology in the 20th century
 - Durkheim & Parsons
 - Crime and inequality exist for a reason, maintain status quo and no change
- Conflict Theory
 - What about challenging the social system?
 - Conflict, not consensus, drives social change
 - Marx
- Feminist Theory
 - Came out of women's movement in the 1960s and 1970s
 - Conglomeration of many theories
 - Unified by a focus on women's inequality
 - Sex (biological) vs Gender (social)
 - Power

Symbolic Interactionism

- Micro-level - symbols within interactions, how symbols create social world, stop signs, baby clothes
- Herbert Blumer
- Cycle of Meaning

Goffman

- organization of everyday behavior
- act differently around different people, "social actors" try to alter impression
- the "dramaturgical approach" to human interaction
- Front stage/Back stage
 - Front - in front of an audience, positive, desired impressions
 - Back - can be their true selves, drop identities
- social norms are the basis of society

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Sociology and Its Cousins

- Sociology focuses on making comparisons across cases to find patterns and create hypotheses about how societies work now or how they worked in the past
- Sociology looks at how individuals interact with one another as well as at how groups, small and large, interact with one another
- Distinctions are important, but a lot of overlap exists between the work done in different academic disciplines
 - History and anthropology – cultural anthropology in particular – tend to focus more on particular circumstances.
 - Psychology and biology examine things on a more micro level than sociology does, and economics is an entirely quantitative discipline