

The Sociological Point of View

CHAPTER 1 NOTES

- ◎ Our daily lives shape our view of the world
 - Values, beliefs, lifestyles, experiences make us unique individuals
 - Gives our society rich diversity
- ◎ Social sciences study human social behavior or institutions and functions of human society
 - Sociologists are mainly focused on social interaction
 - How people relate to one another and influence each others behavior

Sociological perspective

- ① We study sociology to gain a new perspective of yourself and the world around you
- ① By having a sociological perspective you can look beyond commonly held beliefs and find meaning behind human action
 - See all people as social beings
 - Behavior is influenced by social factors
 - Learned behavior from others
 - Can help you find a balance between personal desires and demands of your social environment
 - I.e. if you do what others do you may not grow as an individual
 - Give you insight on how your social environment shapes you

Sociological imagination

- C. Wright Mills
- See relations between remote and impersonal topics and intimate features of the human self

Anthropology

- ⦿ Comparing past and present cultures
- ⦿ Most similar to sociology
- ⦿ Traditionally concentrate on past cultures and present simple or less advanced societies
 - Sociology interested in group of advanced societies
- ⦿ Today anthropologists focus on complex societies
 - Ex study characteristics of neighborhoods in large modern cities

psychology

- ⦿ Focuses on the individual behavior rather than group behavior
 - Personality
 - Perception
 - Motivation
 - Learning
- ⦿ Social psychology- how social environment effects the individual

economics

- ① Study of choices people make in effort to satisfy their needs and wants
- ① Examine process of how goods and services are produced, distributed and consumed
- ① Examine effects of government policy
- ① Sociologists may study how economic factors effect various groups

Political science

- ⦿ Examination of the organization and operation of governments (i.e. government class)
- ⦿ Areas of mutual interest
 - Voting patterns
 - The concentration of political power
 - Formation of politically based groups

History

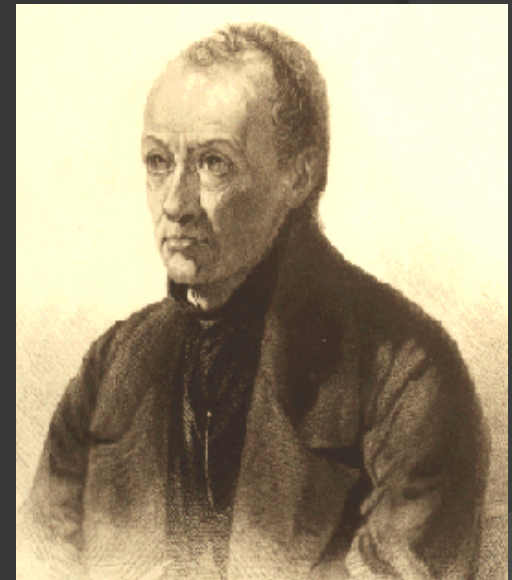
- ① Study of past events
- ① Sociologists study the past to understand current social trends
- ① The differences between the social sciences is less distinct and each borrows information from the other

Sociology Then and Now

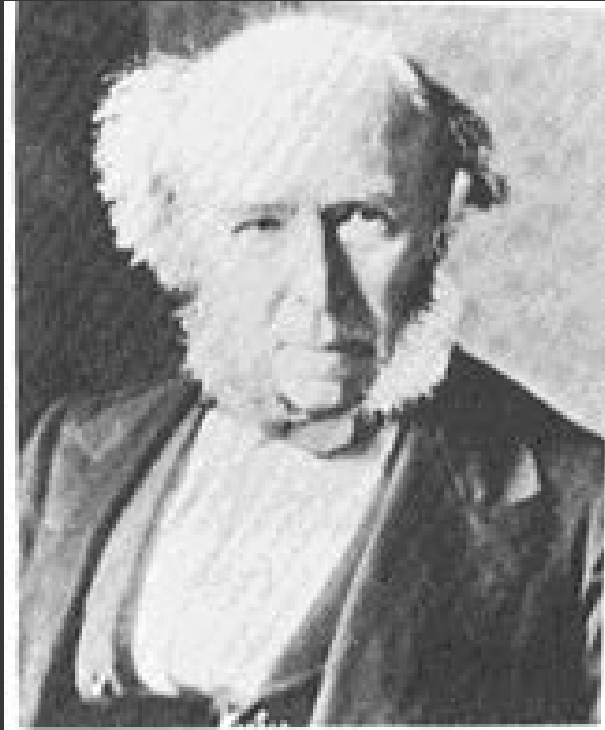
- ⦿ Sociology did not develop until the 1800's
- ⦿ Industrial Revolution
 - Advances in Agriculture allow for support of large population base
 - Large scale industry creates jobs in the cities
 - Improved transportation allows greater mobility
 - Rapid urbanization creates overcrowding
 - Living conditions worsened due to the added stress on city
 - Working conditions extremely poor ...long hours and terrible wages
 - Class tensions emerge

Auguste Comte (1798-1857)

- ⦿ Considered father of Sociology
 - Coined the term sociology as the study of society
- ⦿ Concerned with social upheaval of the French Revolution
- ⦿ Believed Scientific method could be used to uncover social processes
 - Argued that society changes through definite process called social dynamics



Herbert Spencer (1820-1903)



Herbert Spencer

- Society is a set of interdependent parts that work together to maintain the system over time
- Social Darwinism
 - “Survival of the Fittest”
- Influenced Darwin’s theory of evolution
- Social ills as a “weed-out” process

Karl Marx (1818-1883)

- ◎ German economic philosopher
 - Did not believe himself to be a sociologist but felt economy influenced social structure
- ◎ Society was divided into classes
 - Bourgeoisie (capitalists)
 - Own means of production
 - Proletariat (workers)
 - Own nothing
- ◎ Believed the class tensions created by capitalism and industry would lead to a workers revolution (Communism)

Emile Durkheim (1858-1917)

- ⦿ Father of Functionalism
- ⦿ Believed social system maintained through the carrying out of functions
 - Consequence that an element of society produces for the maintenance of its social system
 - Ex function of religion maintaining social order
- ⦿ First sociologist to apply methods of science to social studies
 - Studied suicide in 1897 among European countries
- ⦿ First to test theories with statistical analysis

Max Weber (1864-1920)

- ⦿ Father of Interactionism
- ⦿ Interested in groups within a society (micro-sociology) vs. society as a whole
 - Affects of society on the individual
- ⦿ Believed sociology should study thoughts and feelings
- ⦿ *Verstehen* – empathetic understanding other attach to their actions (put yourself in others shoes)
- ⦿ Ideal type- essential characteristics of a feature of society

Current Perspectives

- ◎ Theoretical perspectives is a general set of assumptions about the nature of things
 - Sociology- outlines the specific ideas about the nature of social life
 - Functionalist perspective
 - Conflict perspective
 - Integrationist perspective

Functionalist Perspective

- ⦿ Based off of Comte, Spencer and Durkheim
- ⦿ Society is a set of interrelated parts that work together to produce a stable social system
 - Most people agree as to what is best for society
 - Work together to ensure that the social system runs smoothly
- ⦿ Common topics- function of family and education on society
- ⦿ Various elements are called functions(positive consequence on society)
 - Dysfunctional- negative consequence on stability of social system
 - Crime
- ⦿ Manifest function- intended and recognized consequence of some element of society
- ⦿ Latent- unintended consequence of element of society
 - Ex automobile-
 - Manifest function- get from one location to another
 - Latent function- gain social standing through wealth

Conflict perspective

- ⦿ Karl Marx
- ⦿ Focus on forces that promote competition and change
- ⦿ Interested in how those who possess more power in society exercise control over those with less power
- ⦿ Look at violent and non-violent conflict
 - Men and women
 - People of different ages
 - Race or national backgrounds
 - Decision making family
 - Relations among racial groups
 - Disputes between workers and employees

Conflict Continued

- Competition for Scarce resources are the basis of social resources
- Power and money are in limited supply so people compete
- When a particular group gains power of resources they tend to make rules and procedures that hurt other groups
- Conflict leads to social change
- Conflict theorists believe social change is inevitable

Interactionist Perspective

- Max Weber
- Focus on how individuals interact with one another in society
- Interested on means individuals attach to their actions

Symbols

- ⦿ Anything that represents something else
 - What role do they play in our daily lives?
- ⦿ Members of society must agree on the meaning attached to it
 - Physical objects, gestures, words, events
 - American Flag, the bald eagle, Fourth of July celebrations, and Uncle Sam (used to represent United States)