Chapter 1

The Sociological Perspective
Chapter Outline

• Putting Social Life into Perspective
• The Importance of a Global Sociological Imagination
• The Origins of Sociological Thinking
• The Development of Modern Sociology
• Contemporary Theoretical Perspectives
Putting Social Life Into Perspective

• Definition of Sociology:

• Sociologists study societies and social interactions to develop theories of:

• Society is defined as:
• The sociological imagination is:

• personal troubles:

• social/public issues:
The Importance of a Global Sociological Imagination

• **High-income countries:** nations with highly industrialized economies (ex: United States, Canada, Japan, western Europe).

• **Middle-income countries:** nations with industrializing economies (ex: eastern Europe, Brazil, Mexico).

• **Low-income countries:** nations with little industrialization (ex: African and Asian countries).
The Origins of Sociological Thinking

• Sociology and the Age of Enlightenment
  • emphasis on individual’s possession of critical reasoning and experience
  • science versus religion
  • the philosophes: if people were free from the ignorance and superstition of the past, they could create new forms of political and economic organization, such as democracy and capitalism

• Sociology and the Age of Revolution, Industrialization, and Urbanization
  • revolutions: intellectual, political
  • industrialization: the process by which societies are transformed from dependence on agriculture to manufacturing; moving from family farms to the towns and cities for work.
  • urbanization: the process by which an increasing proportion of a population lives in cities rather than in rural areas; people began to live with people from different backgrounds; began social issues like crowding, poverty, and inadequate housing.
The Development of Modern Sociology

• Early Thinkers: A Concern with Social Order and Stability
  • Comte
  • Martineau
  • Spencer
  • Durkheim

• Differing Views on the Status Quo: Stability versus Change
  • Marx
  • Weber
  • Simmel
  • The Chicago School
  • Adams
  • Du Bois
August Comte (1798-1857)

• Considered to be the founder of Sociology
• coined the term “sociology”
Harriet Martineau (1802-1876)

• advocate of racial and gender equality
• Concerned with social change and the plight of women and children in English factories in the early part of industrialization
• First acknowledged female sociologist
Herbert Spencer (1820-1903)

- Structural Functionalist
- evolutionary perspective
- social Darwinism:
  - Advocated against social reform efforts to poor people because
Emile Durkheim (1858-1917)

- people are the product of their social environment
- anomie
- *Suicide*
- *Founded Sociology as an academic discipline*
- *Structural Functionalist*
Karl Marx (1818-1883)

- History is a continuous clash between conflicting ideas and forces
- Class conflict – bourgeoisie versus proletariat

- Founder of conflict perspective
- Believed that the economy was the central force for social change
Max Weber (1864-1920)

- *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*
- Felt sociologist could never capture the reality of society but should focus on ideal types that best capture the essential features of aspects of social reality
Georg Simmel (1858-1918)

- group size
- formal sociology
- Believed that society was a pattern of interactions among people
- Believed that social interaction is different between a dyad and a triad
Jane Addams (1860-1935)

• founded Hull House
• Nobel Prize
• One of the authors of a methodology text used for the next 40 years
W.E.B. Du Bois (1868-1963)

- *The Philadelphia Negro*
- One of the first to note the identity conflict of being both black and American.
- Pointed out that people in the US value democracy, freedom, and equality while they accept racism and group discrimination
Contemporary Theoretical Perspectives

• A theory is:

• Functionalist Perspective:

  • Talcott Parsons – division of labor; husbands perform instrumental tasks such as leadership and decision making especially regarding money; wives provide expressive tasks such as housework, care for children, meet emotional needs of the family

  • Robert K. Merton – manifest and latent functions
    • Manifest functions
    • Latent functions
    • Dysfunctions
Conflict perspective

• Define Conflict perspective:

  • Karl Marx – bourgeoisie versus proletariat

  • Max Weber - power

  • C. Wright Mills – power elite
Feminist Perspective

- The feminist approach stresses
  - Patriarchy
Symbolic Interactionist Perspective

• Definition of Symbolic interactionist perspectives

• Asks the questions, “How do individuals experience one another?” How do they interpret the meaning of these interactions?” “How do people construct a sense of self and the society as a whole?”

• Macro-level analysis:
• Micro-level analysis:

• interaction –

• symbols –

• subjective reality
Postmodern Perspectives

• Definition of Postmodern perspectives:

• When society has moved from modern to postmodern conditions it has a harmful effect on people.
• There is a significant decline in the influence that family, religion and education have on people’s lives.
• We are more focused on our wants than our needs.
• We have more jobs that are based on services or information not so much the production of goods.
• We are influenced to purchase goods we want-sinking more in debt so we have to continue to work to pay for these goods.