

The sociological imagination

C. Wright Mills's sociological imagination:
–Awareness of the relationship between an individual and the wider society
–Ability to view one's own society as an outsider would
–Allows us to go beyond personal experiences and observations

4. Theory

a set of statements that seeks to explain problems, actions, or behavior
–Effective theories may have both explanatory and predictive power

Example: Sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, who studies race relations in the US, suggests racism is still alive and well, but calls it "color blind racism."

•Theories are not final statements about behavior

Micro and macrosociology

•Macrosociology: concentrates on large-scale phenomena or entire civilizations
•Microsociology: stresses study of small groups, often through experimental means

feminist perspective

Feminist perspective: sees inequality in gender as central to all behavior and organization
•Ida Wells-Barnett (1862–1931)
–Often allied with the conflict perspective
–Proponents tend to focus on the macro level
–Contemporary feminist theorists often view women's subordination as inherent in capitalist societies
–Intersectionalities: interlocking matrix of domination in which privilege or lack thereof is determined by multiple social factors

What is a society?

people who interact in a defined territory and share a culture.

What is the scientific method?

a systematic, organized series of steps that ensures maximum objectivity and consistency in researching a problem

What is culture?

the totality of learned, socially transmitted customs, knowledge, material objects, and behavior
–Includes ideas, values, customs, and artifacts of groups of people

What is cultural relativism

viewing people's behaviors from the perspective of their own culture
–Different social contexts give rise to different norms and values
–Example: child marriage

Informal vs. formal norms

–Formal norms: generally written; specify strict punishments for violators
•Law: governmental social control (Donald Black)
–Informal norms: generally understood but not precisely recorded

Material and nonmaterial culture

–Material culture: the physical or technological aspects of daily lives
–Nonmaterial culture: ways of using material objects; and customs, beliefs, philosophies, governments, and patterns of communication

Nature vs. Nurture

Nature refers to innate qualities like human nature or genetics. Nurture refers to care given to children by parents or, more broadly, to environmental influences such as media and marketing.

Total institutions

regulates all aspects of a person's life under a single authority (Goffman)

Life course perspective

looking closely at social factors that influence people throughout their lives
–Terms youthhood, emerging adulthood, and not quite adult coined to describe the prolonged ambiguous status that young people in their 20s experience
–There is a schedule to life stages, and these may not always happen when expected

Agents of socialization

agents of socialization during that phase of our lives are the family, school, peers, and mass media.

Resocialization

discarding former behavior patterns and accepting new ones during transitions in one's life

What is sociology?

•Sociology: scientific study of social behavior and human groups
•Sociology focuses on:
–Social relationships
–How those relationships influence people's behavior
–How societies develop and change

Auguste Comte

Auguste Comte (1798–1857)
–Systematic investigation of behavior
–Coined the term sociology

Functionalist perspective

emphasizes the way parts of a society are structured to maintain its stability

- Talcott Parsons (1902–1979)
- Viewed society as a vast network of connected parts
- Each helps maintain the system as a whole
- Manifest and Latent Functions
- Manifest functions: open, stated, conscious functions; intended and recognized consequences of an aspect of society
- Latent functions: unconscious or unintended functions; may reflect hidden purposes
- Dysfunctions
- Dysfunction: element or process of a society that may disrupt a social system or reduce its stability

Symbolic Interactionism

generalizes about everyday forms of social interaction to explain society as a whole

- Also referred to as symbolic interactionism
- Humans viewed as living in a world of meaningful objects•Material things, actions, other people, relationships, symbols
- Nonverbal communication: includes gestures, facial expressions, and postures
- Manipulation of symbols seen in dress codes

The steps in the research process

1. Defining the problem
2. Reviewing the literature
3. Formulating a testable hypothesis
4. Selecting the research design and then collecting and analyzing data
5. Developing the conclusion

Quantitative and qualitative methods (examples)

- Quantitative research: collects and reports data primarily in the numerical form
- Qualitative research: relies on what is seen in field and naturalistic settings; often focuses on small groups and communities

Culture universals

certain common practices and beliefs that all societies have developed

- Many are adaptations to meet essential human needs
- Anthropologist George Murdock compiled a list of cultural universals, but they are expressed differently from culture to culture
- Example: Some form of family

What do sociobiologists study?

the systematic study of how biology affects human social behavior

- Founded on Darwin's theory of evolution
- Most social scientists would agree there is a biological basis for social behavior; however, it is behavior, not genetic structure, that defines social reality

What are culture wars?

the polarization of society over controversial cultural elements

- In the 1990s, referred to political debates over abortion, religious expression, gun control, and sexual orientation
- After the U.S. established a military presence in Iraq and Afghanistan, the foreign opinion of the U.S. became quite negative

Subcultures

a segment of society that shares a distinctive pattern of mores, folkways, and values that differs from larger society

- Existence of subcultures is characteristic of complex societies
- A subculture may develop an argot, a specialized language that distinguishes a subculture from the wider society

What is the self?

-a distinct identity that sets us apart from others

- Not a static phenomenon
- Sociologists and psychologists both interested in how individuals develop and modify their sense of self as a result of social interaction

Social: Who are they, and what do they study?

Science: body of knowledge obtained by methods based on systematic observation

- Natural science: study of physical features of nature and the ways they interact and change
- Social science: study of social features of humans and the ways they interact and change

Social science disciplines all focus on the social behavior of people, but each has a particular orientation

WEB Dubois

- Among the early Black sociologists struggling for a racially egalitarian society
- Considered knowledge essential in combating prejudice
- Conducted in-depth studies of urban life
- Focused on religion at the community level
- Double consciousness: division of individual's identity into two or more social realities



Conflict theory

- Conflict perspective: assumes social behavior is best understood in terms of conflict or tension between groups competing over resources
- The Marxist View
 - Conflict as part of everyday life in all societies
 - Conflict theorists are interested in how institutions may help maintain the privileges of some groups while keeping others subservient

What is a variable (types of variables)?

- measurable trait or characteristic subject to change under different conditions
- Independent variable: variable hypothesized to cause or influence another
 - Dependent variable: variable whose action depends on influence of the independent variable

What do sociologists study?

Sociologists study the influence society has on people's attitudes and behavior

Secondary data: common data sets used by sociology

- Secondary analysis: research techniques that make use of previously collected and publicly accessible information and data
- Considered nonreactive
 - not influencing people's behavior

What is ethnocentrism

- the tendency to assume that one's own culture and way of life represent the norm or are superior to others
- Other societies: underdeveloped, backward, primitive
 - Our view of the world is dramatically influenced by the society in which we were raised

What are: norms, values, folkways, mores?

- Norms: established standards of behavior maintained by a society
- To be significant, must be widely shared and understood
- Folkways: norms governing everyday behavior
- Mores: norms deemed highly necessary to the welfare of a society

What are sanctions? What is their purpose?

- Sanctions: penalties and rewards for conduct concerning a social norm
- Positive sanctions: pay raises, medals, words of gratitude, pats on the back
- Negative sanctions: fines, threats, imprisonment, stares of contempt

Countercultures

- subculture that conspicuously and deliberately opposes certain aspects of the larger culture
- Countercultures typically thrive among the young
 - Example: Counterterrorism experts in the U.S. are concerned about the growth of ultraconservative militia groups

What is socialization?

lifelong process in which people learn attitudes, values, and behaviors appropriate for members of a particular culture

Looking-glass self

- Charles Horton Cooley
- View of ourselves comes from contemplation of personal qualities and impressions of how others perceive us
- Looking-glass self: the self is a product of social interactions with other people
- We see ourselves through the way others view us

What are gender roles, and how do we learn them?

- expectations regarding proper behavior, attitudes, and activities of males and females
- They are learned through the agents of socialization

