

what is a social problem?

- existence of a social condition
- someone has to think its larger group= a problem (**BELIEF**) more attention
- awareness/ spreading thru out media

example- drug addiction, not a social problem unless part of society BELIEVES it diminishes quality of human life

methods of data collection

experiments, surveys, field research, secondary data research

Social Groups

- 2 or more people who have a common identity, interact, and form a social relationship

primary groups- characterized by intimate and informal interactions (friends and family, comfortability)

secondary groups- task oriented and characterized by impersonal and formal interaction (class mates, co workers)

Blumer's Stages of a Social Problem

1. **societal recognition** process by which a social problem is "born"
2. **social legitimation** social problems is recognized by the larger community
3. **mobilization for action** leads to development and implementation of a plan for dealing with the problem

roles

the set of rights, obligations, and expectations associated with a status

- guide our behavior and allow us to predicts others behaviors

roles (cont)

examples student: do work; prisoner: w/ guards and w/ inmates

- you learn what the roles are, then accept them to maintain that status

Structural- Functionalist Perspective

society is composed of parts that work together to maintain a state of balance

latent- consequences unintended and often hidden father got fired, how kids feel; gay rights (ur gay), how fam feels

manifest- intended and commonly recognized a problem that throws that ""norm" off

social pathology- social problems result from 'sickness' in society

social disorganization- rapid social change disrupts norms in society you adapt (like coming to college)

The Sociological Imagination

putting yourself "in" the situation to get a different perspective and better understanding

- im not homeless, but what would it be like if i was

methods of data collection

experiments, surveys, field research, secondary data research

SOCIAL PROBLEM DEFINITION

a social condition that a segment of society views as harmful to members of society and in need of remedy

GOOD EXAMPLES

SOCIAL PROBLEM DEFINITION (cont)

gun control- threat to civil rights OR its necessary for safety

abortion- pro life OR pro choice

Theoretical Perspectives

labeling theory: social condition or group is viewed as problematic if it is labeled as such

social constructionism: argues that reality is socially constructed by individuals who interpret the social world around them

symbolic interactionist perspective

basic premise is that a individual condition must be defined or level recognized as a social problem for it to be a social problem

3 types:

Blumer's Stages of a Social Problem

labeling theory

social constructionism

conflict perspective

two groups opposing each other rich vs poor, pro life vs pro choice

culture

the meanings and ways of life that characterize a society, including **beliefs, values, norms, sanctions, and symbols**

people think the same way as you do

... wouldn't be in the drug culture if you don't believe in drugs

culture (cont)

beliefs: definitions and explanations about what is assumed to be true

"is 2nd hand smoke dangerous?"

values: *social agreements ab what is considered good or bad, right and wrong**

racism, sexism, child abuse, violate the values of equality and fairness

norms: defined rules of behavior

1. folkways: customs, habits, and manners of society (not the law)

ways u act (sneeze= cover ur nose)

2. laws: formal norms backed by authority (LAW)

3. mores: norms w/ a *moral* basis

Statuses

a position that a person occupies within a social group

ex: mother, father, child, husband

ascribed statuses: status that society assigns to an individual on the basis of factors with NO CONTROL over (age, race etc)

achieved statuses: assigned on the basis of some characteristic or behavior over which there is some control (college graduate, spouse, parent, criminal) (+/-)

elements of social structure and culture

the **structure** of a society refers to the way it is organized

Organized into:

institutions

social groups

statuses

roles

symbols

something that represents something else

- language, gestures, and objects whose meaning is *commonly understood by the members of a society*

ex.) flipping someone off, gang sings (meaning to them not me)

sanctions

consequences for conforming to or violating norms

- can be positive or negative

(+)= being nice, receiving an award for a kind act

(-)= breaking the law

levels of analysis

macrosociology looks at 'big picture' of society suggests how social problems are affected at the institutional level

STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONALISM and CONFLICT THEORY

microsociology concerned with the psychological dynamics of individuals interacting in small groups

SYMBOLIC INTERACTIVISM

elements of social structure

an **institution** is an established and enduring pattern of social relationships

5 traditional institutions are:

family, religion, politics, economics, education

family- everyone comes from one (+/-)

religion- guides a lot of issues (gay rights, legalized prostitution)

politics- huge impact, set policies with a direct impact on you (happy if ur guy wins, sad if loses)

elements of social structure (cont)

economics- micro and macro, every thing is tied into it, SPENDING, globally interconnected, high unemployment = worst economy

education- HS drop outs: not great jobs, high crime

Research

Stages of conducting a research study

1. formulating a research question
2. reviewing the literature (whats already out there?)
3. defining variables (measurable event, characteristic, or property that is subject to change)
4. formulating a hypothesis (B4 research)

*methods of data collection

experiments: involves manipulating the independent variable to determine how it affects the dependent

survey: not v accurate; eliciting info from respondents thru questions (sample: portion of population)

interviews: survey research, people ask respondents questions and make written notes ab (advantage: clarifying questions)

questionnaires: less expensive and less time consuming but response rate is a downside

web based surveys: growing in popularity, thought to reduce problems associated with traditional survey research

field research: observing social behavior in settings in which it occurs naturally

^^ participant observation (researcher participates in whatever is studied); nonparticipant observation (researcher observes).... presence influences behavior

secondary data research: researching what has been researched