

## SOC1101 — Chapter 1: Sociological Perspectives

### Intro: Sociological Perspective and Its Core Knowledge Base

- becoming a sociologist involves learning that the taken-for granted perspective we use everyday to understand the world around us isn't natural nor common to everyone
- also entails adapting a core knowledge base that will equip us to think differently about the world and allow us to confront challenges better
- core knowledge base — a set of fundamental concept skills and topic available to all sociologists that enables them to think differently about the world

### Core Concepts:

- many sociological concepts draw heavily on the cultural context in which they appear and are used
- difference between sociological concepts and the ones that we use in everyday life are that the sociological ones are deliberately constructed tools to help sociologists reflect on the meaning and significance of the social world we live in
- sociological concepts act as shorthand descriptors for complex social phenomena or for complex ways of understanding human behaviour
- sociology — a term coined by Comte for the science by which the laws of the social universe could be discovered; study of all human social experience; interpretation or commentary on the social experiences that sociologists share with the members of the wider society
- core sociological concepts include the following:
  - social construction of reality
  - the sociological imagination
  - social institutions
  - society and social facts
  - social class
  - socialization
  - culture

### Core Skills:

- all sociologists rely on three interconnected skill sets:
  - complex and critical thinking skills
  - research skills
  - theorizing skills
- last of these includes the ability to develop and apply appropriate theories and explain the outcomes of research

## Core Topics:

-issues of difference and inequality are among top topics considered important to address

- race and ethnicity
- social class and stratification
- gender
- sexuality and sexual orientation
- popular culture and mass communications
- social media

## Social Construction of Reality:

-the way we understand and define “reality” is shaped by the society in which we live

-our experience of reality can be challenged and changed based on our society

-there is no such thing as a single reality across all species; reality is species specific

-preposition 1: society is a human product

-argued that society is a product of men and women working together

-social environment is NOT the immediate result of our biological constitutions

-we cannot exist without social contact or influences

-biological makeup requires us to be born into a society that is itself a product of human activity ex. a baby could not survive on its own

-humans do not have inherent mechanisms that allow us to produce out of our own biological resources a stable environment for individual existence

-preposition 2: all human activity is habitualized, and this habitualization is the groundwork for institutionalization

-humans form social groups and these groups learn to do activities in specific ways

-once a human activity is repeated over and over again it becomes a habit, well established, and regularized across a group

-patterns of behaviour or habits take on an objective status and become institutionalized

-social institutions always have a history; they are never created instantly

-social institutions control human behaviour by setting up predefined patterns of conduct; also through a variety of social control mechanisms

-ex. in classrooms, social behaviour is controlled by the institution of education which gives the professors the authority to invoke certain sanctions

-humans and their social worlds interact and co-produce each other

The Sociological Imagination:

-an orientation adopted by a sociologist to recognize and understand the connections between individual experience and larger social structures

-enables a person to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning among the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals

-developing sociological imagination challenges us to develop ethical, moral, and intellectual skills that we can use to critically understand the complexity of society and reflect on how society has influenced our "personal history"

-we use sociological imagination we do so in the context of constructing an understanding of or knowledge about human experience

-helps us to distinguish between bad circumstances that an individual might experience as a result of poor behaviour or poor choices, and bad circumstances that result from structural forces that are beyond the individual's control

-objective knowledge is the knowledge that is purported to be free of bias

-taken for granted view of science in North America that it is a means, perhaps the best and only true means, of getting objective knowledge

-as humans we ask questions that matter to us

-once we understand that most things that are researched or we ask questions about matter to us, we can understand that the same object can be looked at through a wide range of value systems

-value system — a set of beliefs about what is important in life and what kinds of conduct or behaviour are important

-when we understand that knowledge is relative rather than absolute, we can also see that knowledge is a set of claims that are socially constructed

-what gets presented as true knowledge ultimately depends on the researcher and on the social and cultural conditions in which the researcher operates

## Contributions From Philosophy:

- lifeworld — entire communal system of meaning that underlies everyday life
- individualism — a mortal stance that stresses the importance of individual self-reliance and independence

## CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY:

Becoming a sociologist entails acquiring a core knowledge base that consists of core concepts, skills, and topics that are different from the taken-for-granted perspective used in day-to-day living. Taken together, the elements of this core knowledge base constitute a unique sociological perspective that recognizes that human interaction is socially based and systematically organized. Core sociological concepts are deliberately constructed as tools to help sociologists select on the work around them. These concepts refer to complex social phenomena or to ways to approach understanding human social behaviour.

## CORE CONCEPTS SUMMARY:

- The social construction of reality — an orientation or way of thinking about the social world and about human behaviour that maintains that the reality experienced by members of any given society is shaped or constructed by human social experiences. Human experiences are social compliments.
- The sociological imagination — an orientation of way of thinking about the social world and human behaviour that focuses on the ever present link between individual experience and larger social structures.
- Society as a product of human social interaction — society is produced through the social interaction of individuals. Our personal knowledge is shaped by the beliefs and values that emerge out of the social groups to which we belong.