

Sociology Lectures: All the materials covered for midterm 1.

Lecture #2: Jan 10th (Chapter 1)

Understanding the sociological imagination.

1. Inner circle (family, close friends)
2. Local organization and community (clubs, YMCA, sport teams, political parties)
3. National organizations, institution, and ethnic subcultures
4. Society
5. Global Community

What is Sociology?

Comparing the social science

All study aspects of human behaviour and social life, but each has a different focus:

- Cultural Anthropology: The culture or way of life of a society
- Psychology: Individual behaviour and mental process
- Political science: Government systems and power
- Economic: Economic conditions and how people organize, produce, and distribute goods
- Sociology: Human interactions, groups, and social structure
- The systemic study of human groups and their interactions.

*Social studies started with sociology

Sociological Perspective

- The unique way in which sociologists see over world and can dissect the dynamic relationship, between individual and the large social network in which we all have

Charles Wright Mills

- **The sociological imagination**
- Developing an appreciation of how individual challenges are influenced by larger social forces
 - **Personal troubles** result from individual challenges
 - **Social Issues** are caused by larger social factors
- The “trick” is in understanding how these personal troubles may indeed be due to larger social issues.
 - Quality of mind refers to one’s ability to look beyond personal circumstances and into social context

Peter Berger

- Seeing the general in the particular is the ability to look at seemingly unique events (particular) and then recognizing the larger (general) features involved
- Think about what is familiar and see it as strange.

What makes you, you?

- **Agency** refers to the idea that each of us has, to some extent, the ability to alter our socially constructed lives.
- **Structure** Is the network of relatively stable opportunities and constraints influencing our individual behaviour.
- Can you see, in your own life thus far, that both agency and structure have played a role in who you are?
- What are the influences?

Engaging your sociological imagination

- Our perception of ourselves and others are the products of many factors, for example:
 1. Minority status
 2. Gender
 3. Socioeconomic status
 4. Family structure
 5. Urban-Rural differences

The origins of sociology

The scientific revolution: 1650-1800

Auguste Comte (father of sociology)

Positivism is a theoretical approach that considers a understanding to be based on science

1. There exists an objective knowable reality
2. Singular explanation
3. Value free

Anti-positivism is a theoretical approach that considers knowledge and understanding to be the result of human subjectivity

- Rejects each of the positive assumptions

Sociology in Canada

1. Geography and regionalism
 - Ability to survive overtime
 - Role of regionalism

Lecture 3: Jan 14th (Finishing chapter 1 and starting chapter 2)

Sociology in global perspective

- Looking beyond our own boundaries to consider the dynamic forces of globalization.
- Globalization is a worldwide process involving the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services.
- Capitalism as a defining feature of the global economy

Level of analysis

- Levels of analysis: size of the social groups being considered, from the smallest to the largest

- Understanding sociology requires understanding multiple levels of analysis
- Picture levels of analysis in our social environment as an interconnected series of small groups, organizations, institutions, and societies.
- Important question: how do the levels connect our conflict with one another?

(Chapter 2):

Questions

Sociological research

Research design

Basic concepts and issues

Although there are a number of methods and perspectives employed to study people, several important concepts are used in almost all research projects including things like:

- Theories
- Hypotheses
- Variables

Basic concepts: Theories

Social theories refer to organized sets of propositions about how various elements of social life are related to one another.

Theories have three components:

- General statements about social relationship
- Statements about the cause of those relationships
- General predictions, based on these reasons, about how people will react to certain events or experiences or conditions.

Basic concepts: Hypotheses

Research projects generally do not test theories but hypotheses, specific statements about how variables will relate to one another in a research study

Positive findings regarding a hypothesis simply provides support for a theory; it does not prove a theory to be correct

Sociological knowledge is based on science, a logical organized method of obtaining information through direct, systematic observation. Scientific knowledge is based on empirical evidence, information that is directly verifiable.

A research method is a strategy for systematically conducting research.

Concepts, variables, and measurement.

- Concepts are mental constructs that represent some part of the world, inevitably in a simplified form.

- Variables are concepts whose value changes from cases to case.
- Operationalizing a variable is the process of developing the measure to be used in gauging a variable.

The structure of scientific theory:

Conceptual plane →→→→→→→ operational plane

Measurement and relationships

Measurement requires reliability the quality of consistent measurement and validity the quality of measuring precisely what one intends to measure.

Relationships among variables.

- Cause and effect is a relationship in which change in one variable causes change in another.
- Correlation exists when two (or more) variables are related in some way.]

Relationship between variables

Cause →→→→→ Effect

Independent →→→→→ Dependent Variable
Variable

Sampling

- Social scientists rely on small groups of people, a sample, to reflect the thoughts, feelings, and behaviour of a larger group of humans, the population.
- Samples can be more or less representative of a larger population.
- Probability sample (e.g., random samples) are designed to represent the larger population.
- Non-probability samples
- include convenience and snowball samples.

Lecture 4: Jan 17th

Limitations of scientific research

- Human behaviour is too complex to allow sociology to predict any individual's actions precisely.
- Because humans respond to their surroundings, the mere presence of a research may affect the behaviour being studied.

- Social patterns change constantly; what is true in one time or place may not hold in another.
- Because sociologists are part of the social world they study, objectivity in social research is especially difficult.
- Subjective interpretation is always an important element of sociological analysis.

Type of research

Qualitative Research

- The nonnumerical examination and interpretation of observations for the purpose of discovering underlying meanings and patterns of relationships (Babbie, 1999).

Quantitative Research

- The numerical representation and manipulation of observation for the purpose of describing and explaining the phenomena that those observations represent (Babbie, 1999).

Survey Research

- Uses interviews and questionnaires.
- Is cross sectional: Compares different groups at one point in time

→ Measures attitudes, opinions, beliefs, values and behaviour.

Limitations of survey research

How do you find a representative sample?

Will people respond to your survey?

Will people tell the truth about their behaviour and opinions?

Longitudinal Research

Studies the same groups (cohort over a period of time).

- E.g. Work at a factory
- May use diaries, interviews, health and employment records.

Time consuming

- People may drop out of the research.

Aggregate data research

Government statistics, social indicators.

- E.g. social trends by statistics Canada
Used to detect relationship and trends
- E.g. Unemployment rates and property crimes
- Can you depend on agencies taking the count? Are they biased?

Experimental research

- Requires willing subjects (Human guinea pigs).
- Needs an experimental and control group for comparison.
- Subjects must be randomly assigned to groups.
- Seeks out cause and effect under highly controlled conditions. Typically experiments are explanatory, that is, used to test hypotheses, unverified statements of a relationship between variables.

Difficulties with experimental research

- Is it ethical?
- Is it realistic?
- Can you generalize from such a small group?
- Can you really control all the relevant factors?

Quasi-experimental research

Uses a real situation for experimental purposes.

- E.g. compare the recidivism rates of young offenders sent to boot camp or given community service.

***Hard to control assignment to groups.**

Participation Observation

- Involves active participation in the daily life activities of those he or she is observing.
- Qualitative in nature
- **Covert**; Those in the field are not informed of the research status
- **Semi-covert**; only some people involved are aware.
- **Open**; everyone is aware of the researchers statuses.

Difficulties with observational research

- It may be dangerous.
- Is it ethical?
- How will you affect the behaviour of the group?
- Is it very time-consuming.

Interviews

- **Structured**; each respondent asked the same question- quantitative in nature.
- **Semi-structured**; use a set of questions however allow respondents to guide the interview in areas they think are important
- **Unstructured**; no predetermined questions, interview proceeds conversationally.

Secondary analysis

- Archival/historical; Using existing sources is a research method in which a researcher utilizes data collected by others.
- Meta-analysis: A statistical analysis that review a large body of extent literature.

Alternative sources of information

- Case study: in depth investigation of one or few phenomenon
- Cyber Research: New information technology and the Internet provides researchers up-to-date resources.
- Commissions of Inquiry: Both federal and provincial.

Lecture 5: Jan 21th

Ethics

How may the research affect other people's lives?

Who will be studied?

What pressure is placed on research by funding agencies and vested interests?

Do you have informed consent?

- Are people free to not consent?
- Do they know what they are getting into?

Research has gone wrong:

Humphries – The Tearoom trade experiment

Zimbardo – The Sandford prison experiment

Milgram – Obedience

Inequality

Social class in Canada:

- Many people think of Canada as a “middleclass society” but the society is highly stratified.
- Poor Canadian families struggle from day to day simply to make end meet.
- Wealthy families control most of the money, benefit from more schooling, and enjoy better health.

Dimensions of social inequality:

- Social class in Canada has several dimensions
- People often talk of inequality as if it was determined solely by money
- Socio-economics statues is a composite measure of social positions that considers also

Income in Canada:

Income is occupational wages or salaries, earning form investments, and government transfer payment

- In 2011 the average family income was 75900.
- Two parent (two earners) families have significantly higher income.
- Top 20% gets 44.3% of all income (2011).
- Bottom 20% gets 4.8% (2011).

- Income disparity in families with single and tow parents (two parents have more money)

Wealth:

- Income is only one component of wealth: the total amount of money and other assets, minus outstanding debts.
- Stocks, bonds, real estate, and other privately-owned property
- In the US, the richest 20% of families control 89% of all wealth (2011)

Average family income:

- **NWT have the highest income because of benefit for living there and mining**
- **Then the rest of Canada**

Dr.

Power & Occupational Prestige

- Wealth is an important source of power
- Occupation is a major determinant of income, wealth, and power.
- Physicians, lawyers, and engineers are ranked near the top on prestige while cashiers and janitors are ranked near the bottom.
- While collar work that involves mental activity often confers greater prestige than blue collar work.

Schooling

- Education often determines labour force participation, occupation, and income, so it is highly valued.
- Educational differences between men and women in similar jobs are minimal.
- However, women have completed more years of schooling than men overall.
- There is a strong link between education and income.

Canadian Stratification: Merit and Caste

- **Ancestry:** determines our point of entry into the system of social inequality.
- Certain families have wealth and power that have become well established over generations.
- Being born to privilege or poverty sets the stage for future schooling, occupation, and income.
- **Race and ethnicity:** remain important determinants of social position.
- Higher average incomes for Japanese, British and French vs Chinese, Black, and Aboriginal.
- Quebecois and first nations have the lowest income among the selected categories.
- **Gender:** Women earn less income, accumulate less wealth, and have lower occupational prestige than men.
- Among single-parent families, those headed by women are more than twice as likely to be poor than those headed by men.
 - * Japanese and English make the most money.

Social Classes in Canada

- Sociology acknowledges social inequality, but do not agree on how to define this hierarchy.
- Defining classes in Canada is difficult owing to the relatively low level of status consistency.

Social classes in Canada:

Upper class:

- These families possess enormous wealth, primarily inherited rather than earned.
 - High society or "blue bloods". With "old money"
 - Less than 1% of the Canadian population

Lower uppers: "working rich" (nouveaux riches) but excluded from high society.

2 to 4% of the population, often with high levels of education.

Success stories that often fascinate us because it has long stood as an accepted cultural goal of modern society.

A dual earner family in which both wife and husband are professionals can make it into the lower – upper stratum society

The middle class

- 40-50% of the Canadian population.
- Tremendous influence on our culture (TV and media portray mainly middleclass people.)
- Encompasses far greater ethnic and racial diversity than the upper class

Upper-Middles: professionals that accumulate considerably property and virtually all people in the upper-middle class receive university education.

Average middle: managers, tellers, clerks, or highly skilled blue-collar jobs, accumulates some wealth and children go to local universities.

Are you richer than you think?

The working class

- About 1/3 of the population, sometimes called the lower-middle class.
- Blue-collar jobs, sometimes with little opportunity for imagination and often a high level of supervision.
- Little or no accumulation of wealth, may own their house in lower cost neighbourhoods.
- Their children have little chance of going to university.

The lower class

- 20% of the Canadian population with the lowest family incomes makes up the lower class.
- About 15% of the Canadian population classified as poor.
- **Working poor:** those whose incomes from fulltime jobs or multiple part-time jobs fall short of what is required to cover the necessities of food, shelter, and clothing.

The difference class makes: health

- Children born into poor families are 3x more likely to die from disease, neglect, accidents, or violence than children born into wealth.
- Richer people live, on average, seven years longer because of that

The difference class makes: Values and attitudes

- Some cultural values vary from class to class,
- The rich favour understated tastes; while the nouveau riche favour conspicuous consumption.
- Richer people are more tolerant of controversial behaviour.
- Working class. People tend to be less tolerant.

The difference classes makes: Family and gender

- Social class also shapes family life.

- The more money a family has, the more parents can develop their children's talents and abilities.
- Lower class families tend to be larger.
- Middle class marriages have more egalitarian relationships, sharing more activities and greater intimacy
- Working class friendships serve as sources of material assistance.

Social mobility

- **Upward:** With college degree or higher paying job.
- **Downward:** Drop out of school, losing a job, business failure, or divorce.
- **Intergenerational mobility:** Upward or downward social mobility of children in relation to their parents.
- Long term trend has been upward.
- Occupational inheritance occurs for men whose fathers are professional, white collared, and farmers.
- Class background still affects education level
- Those at the very top

The components of culture

Values are culturally defined standards by which people judge desirability, goodness and beauty and which

- Norms are rules and expectations by which a society guides the behaviour of its members. They may be either preceptive or prospective.

There are two special types of norms that were identified by William Graham Sumner: Mores and Folkways:

Folkways: informal norms that suggest customary ways of behaving

Mores: norms that carry a strong sense of social importance

- As we internalize norms, we respond critically to our own behaviour through shame or guilt.
- Social control. Formal (By law, police, institutions): Informal (family, spouse)

Culturally diversity

High culture refers to cultural patterns that distinguish a society's elite; in contrast, popular culture designates cultural patterns that are widespread among a society's population. High culture is not inherently superior to popular culture.

Subculture are cultural patterns within a population whose values, norms, folkways or mores set them apart from the mainstream culture.

Multiculturalism is an educational program recognizing the cultural diversity of the country and promoting the equality of all cultural traditions.

Multiculturalism stands in opposition to Eurocentrism, the dominance of European (particularly English) cultural patterns.

Countercultures are cultural patterns that strongly oppose accepted culture within a society.

Cultural change

- As culture changes, they strive to maintain **cultural integration**, the close relationship among various elements of a cultural system.
- William Ogburn's concept of **cultural lag** refers to the fact that cultural elements change at different rates, which may disrupt the cultural system
- **Ethnocentrism** is the practice of judging another culture by the standards of one's own culture.
- **Sociologists** tend to discourage this practice; instead, they advocate **cultural relativism**, the practice of judging a culture by its own standards.
- Being aware of ethnocentrism and cultural relativism helps you become a more informed and critical thinker.

Canadian Culture

Is there a unique Canadian Culture?

Canadian Values

- Belief in equality and fairness in a democratic society
- Belief in consultation and dialogue
- Importance of accommodation and tolerance
- Support for diversity
- Compassion and generosity
- Attachment to Canada's natural beauty
- Commitment to freedom, peace and non-violent change

Theoretical analysis of culture

- The symbolic interactionist paradigm suggests a society's culture is comprised of a variety of symbolic meaning systems that are shaped and reshaped through on-going social interaction.
- Symbolic interactionists do not accept that one dominant culture forces a uniform system of values on society, but rather they identify many types of cultures be it countercultures, subculture, or multiculturalism.

Symbolic interactionism

- How culture is created and recreated through social interaction
- Culture is modified according to the negotiation of reality
- Minority status is a social category created by interacting individuals.
- Culture is the set of symbols to which
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Theoretical analysis of culture

- The structural functional paradigm depicts culture as a complex and relatively stable strategy for meeting human needs.
- Cultural universals are traits that are found in every known culture.

- The social conflict paradigm suggests that many cultural traits function to the advantage of some and the disadvantage of others.