

Sociology Notes

Thinking Sociologically

Elements of Sociology: Social structures, agency, short, medium and long term, social interaction, reflexivity, sensitive to marginalised

Defining sociology: Critical sensitivity and awareness of society/people in relation to other people/societies

The Sociological Imagination: Exists, can be seen, and often requires imaginative thinking. Mills called it a quality to understand reason and develop skills

Origins of sociology: Comte studying how societies endure, Durkheim discovering suicide was social basis, coming from breakdown of norms

Benefits: Challenge the familiar, see opportunities and constraints, be active and tolerant, links disciplines together

Functionalist: Stable structures shape lives (change?)

Conflict: Premise of struggle/growth by inequality, struggle (stability?)

Interaction: Individual focus on actions/meanings (large structures?)

Feminist: Analysis of society based on gender (non-genders?)

Post-modern: All views/narratives right, social constructs (no rules?)

Social Structure

Examples of Structure: Gov, law, economy, tech, norms

Definitions of Social Structure: Patterns of behaviour from social forces/facts that control us (Durk)

Pre-Industrial/Agricultural Society: Church rule, seasonal work, low life expectancy, needs economy

Early IR/ Society: Urbanisation, factories, mass production, wages, child labour

Karl Marx – class conflict, alienation, owners and workers, revolution

Max Weber – interaction, culture, protestant ethic, rationality, bureaucracy

Emile Durkheim – function, social structures, social facts, suicide, mechanical and organic solidarity

Late IR: Labour/ social movements, urbanisation, war and economic turmoil, changing systems of production (Taylorism)

Social Agency

Post-industrial society and work Structure

Central argument: Does society determine or reproduce itself and us (structure), or can we determine/change ourselves and society (agency)?

Short term: Individual (micro-sociology), improvisation, social construction, socialisation - Freud, Mead. Deviant acts - Goffman, Becker. Ethnomethodology (Emotion-driven action) – Hochschild. I, me, self – Mead. Dramaturgy/acting/rules/stigma – Goffman.

Medium term: Individual/society interface (meso-sociology), rational decision making/reflexivity – Giddens. Roles, habitus - Mead, Goffman, Bourdieu. Mobility, individual capital accumulation – Bourdieu.

Long term: Society (macro-sociology), Revolution – Marx. Cultural change - Weber, Bourdieu. Structural change - Durkheim, Bourdieu

Post Industrial Work/Society: Deregulated economies, globalized division of labour, decline in factories, flexible production, part-time, decentred work, informal economy and gender

Groups, Networks and New Media

Groups and Organisations: Bureaucracy (informal side Total Quality Management/New Public Management), Humanising organisations (inclusive, shared responsibilities, opportunities, same and different people, NGO)

Networks: Dynamics, diversity, primary and secondary groups, social capital friendships, mass media

Theories of mass media: Functionalist, symbolic interactionism (moral panics), conflict, post-modern

New Media: Digital age, computers, phones, perpetual contact

Theories of mass media: Functionalist (informative, status conferral, transmit culture), symbolic interactionism (moral panics, conflict, big media, culture industry)

Globalisation and the City

Urban Alienation: Overcrowding, Metropolis and mental life, blasé mentality – Engels, Toennies, Durkheim, Ferdinand Toennies “rational wills preventing veiled hostility”

Modern cities: Le Corbusier, alienation vs embracing mad cities and traffic/sprawl

The Chicago School: Cities living things, grow through social conflict/coop, erosion of difference, concentric zones of development

Natural Areas: Sectors, multicentres, heritage areas, ethnic villages

Post-modern cities: Exopolis, no centre, sprawl, edge cities, lacking structure

Social Cities: How social are we, gentrification and the creative class, inner city renewal/use of space, new road types/places to meet/less commuting/public meeting space

The Urban Impact of Globalisation: Flow of people, ideas and capital, public housing, geographic disadvantage, gated communities

The Chicago School 1. Robert Park – Human ecology 2. Louis Wirth - numbers, density and heterogeneity 3. Ernest Burgess – concentric zones of development – LATER - Sectors (Hoyt), multicentres (Harris and Ullman)

Power, control, crime

Who has power? Traditional (church), legal (gov), charismatic

Dispersed among the elite, democracy, authoritarianism, or pluralism (interest groups)

How do social movements come about? Conflict, breakdown, global/digital movements

Stages of social movements

1) Charismatic emergence –public campaigns, meetings, rallies

2) Coalescence and organisation

3) Bureaucratisation(departments, boards, mission statements etc)

4) Co-opting leaders

5) Steady state or decline (repressed, co-opted in mainstream, organisational failure)

-What is crime? The violation of norms that a society formally enacts into criminal law

-What is deviance? The recognised violation of cultural norms – Stanford prison

Theories of deviance: Classical (for gain), positivist (genetic), functionalist (norms), labelling (calling deviant makes deviant), strain (opportunities determine deviance)