The Sociological Perspective

1.1 Explain why both history and biography are essential for the sociological perspective.

What is the sociological perspective? The sociological perspective stresses that people’s social experiences—the groups to which they belong and their experiences within these groups—underlie their behavior. C. Wright Mills referred to this as the intersection of biography (the individual) and history (broad factors that influence the individual). Pp. 2–3. Origins of Sociology

1.2 Trace the origins of sociology, from tradition to Max Weber.

When did sociology first appear as a separate discipline? Sociology emerged in the mid-1800s in western Europe, during the onset of the Industrial Revolution. Industrialization affected all aspects of human existence—where people lived, the nature of their work, their relationships, and how they viewed life. Early sociologists who focused on these social changes include Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Harriet Martineau, and W. E. B. Du Bois. Pp. 4–8. Sociology in North America

1.3 Trace the development of sociology in North America and explain the tension between objective analysis and social reform.

What was the position of women and minorities in early sociology? The few women who received the education required to become sociologists tended to focus on social reform. The debate between social reform and social analysis was won by male university professors who ignored the contributions of the women. W. E. B. Du Bois faced deep racism in his sociological career. Pp. 8–11.

Why are the positions of Parsons and Mills important? C. Wright Mills criticized Parsons’ abstract analysis of the components of society, saying that it does nothing for social reform, which should be the goal of sociologists. The significance of this position is that the debate about the purpose and use of sociology continues today. P. 11. What tension runs through sociology? The fundamental tension is between the goals of reforming society (or changing negative conditions) and doing basic research on society. For an overview of basic, public, and applied sociology, see Figure 1.4 on page 12. Pp. 11–13.

Theoretical Perspectives in Sociology

1.4 Explain the basic ideas of symbolic interactionism, functional analysis, and conflict theory.

What is a theory? A theory is a statement about how facts are related to one another. A theory provides a conceptual framework for interpreting facts. P. 17.

What are sociology’s major theoretical perspectives? Sociologists use three primary theoretical frameworks to interpret social life. Symbolic interactionists examine how people use symbols (meanings) to develop and share their views of the world. Symbolic interactionists usually focus on the micro level—on small-scale, face-to-face interaction. Functional analysts, in contrast, focus on the macro level— on large-scale patterns of society. Functional theorists stress that a social system is made up of interrelated parts. When working properly, each part contributes to the stability of the whole, fulfilling a function that contributes to the system’s equilibrium. Conflict theorists also focus on large-scale patterns of society. They stress that society is composed of competing groups that struggle for scarce resources. Pp. 13–18. With each perspective focusing on select features of social life, and each providing a unique interpretation, no single perspective is adequate. The combined insights of all three yield a more comprehensive picture of social life. Pp. 18–19.

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What is the relationship between theory and research? Theory and research depend on one another. Sociologists use theory to interpret the data they gather. Theory also generates questions that need to be answered by research, while research, in turn, helps to generate theory. Theory without research is not likely to represent real life, while research without theory is merely a collection of empty facts. P. 20.

Doing Sociological Research

1.5 Explain why common sense can’t replace sociological research.

Why do we need sociological research when we have common sense? Common sense is unreliable. Research shows that commonsense ideas are often limited or false. P. 20. What are the eight basic steps in sociological research? (1) Selecting a topic, (2) Defining the problem, (3) Reviewing the literature, (4) Formulating a hypothesis, (5) Choosing a research method, (6) Collecting the data, (7) Analyzing the results, and (8) Sharing the results. These steps are explained on Pp. 20–22. AResearch Model

1.6 Know the 8 steps of the research model.

What are the eight basic steps of sociological research? (1) Selecting a topic, (2) Defining the problem, (3) Reviewing the literature, (4) Formulating a hypothesis, (5) Choosing a research method, (6) Collecting the data, (7) Analyzing the results, and (8) Sharing the results. These steps are explained in detail on pages 20–22.

Research Methods (Design)

1.7 Know the main elements of the 7 research methods: surveys, participant observation, case studies, secondary analysis, analysis of documents, experiments, and unobtrusive measures.

How do sociologists gather data? To gather data, sociologists use seven research methods (or research designs): surveys, participant observation, case studies, secondary analysis, analysis of documents, experiments, and unobtrusive measures. Pp. 22–30.

Gender in Sociological Research

1.8 Explain how gender is significant in sociological research.

How can gender affect research? Gender can lead to interviewer bias, with participants shaping their responses based on the gender of the researcher. Pp. 30–32.

Ethics in Sociological Research

1.9 Explain why it is vital for sociologists to protect the people they study; discuss the two cases that are presented.

How important are ethics in sociological research? Ethics are of fundamental concern to sociologists, who are committed to openness, honesty, truth, and protecting their subjects from harm. The Brajuha research on restaurant workers and the Humphreys research on “tearooms” illustrate ethical issues of concern to sociologists. Pp. 32–34.

Trends Shaping the Future of Sociology

1.10 Explain how research versus reform and globalization are likely to influence sociology.

What trends are likely to have an impact on sociology? Sociology has gone through three phases: In the first, the emphasis was on reforming society; in the second, the focus was on basic sociology; the third, today’s phase, with its applied sociology and public sociology, is taking us closer to our roots of applying sociology to social change. Today’s globalization is likely to broaden sociological horizons, refocusing research and theory away from its concentration on U.S. society. P. 34.

What Is Culture?

2.1 Explain what culture is, how culture provides orientations to life, and what practicing cultural relativism means.

How do sociologists understand culture? All human groups possess culture—language, beliefs, values, norms, and material objects that they pass from one generation to the next. Material culture consists of objects such as art, buildings, clothing, weapons, and tools. Nonmaterial (or symbolic) culture is a group’s ways of thinking and its patterns of behavior. Ideal culture is a group’s ideal values, norms, and goals. Real culture is people’s actual behavior, which often falls short of their cultural ideals. Pp. 38–39. What are cultural relativism and ethnocentrism? People are ethnocentric; that is, they use their own culture as a yardstick for judging the ways of others. In contrast, those who embrace cultural relativism try to understand other cultures on those cultures’ own terms. Pp. 39–45. Components of Symbolic Culture

2.2 Know the components of symbolic culture: gestures, language, values, norms, sanctions, folkways, mores, and taboos; also explain the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis.

What are the components of nonmaterial culture? The central component of nonmaterial culture is symbols, anything to which people attach meaning and that they use

to communicate with others. Universally, the symbols of nonmaterial culture are gestures, language, values, norms, sanctions, folkways, and mores. Pp. 45–46. Why is language so significant to culture? Language allows human experience to be goal-directed, cooperative, and cumulative. It also lets humans move beyond the present and share a past, a future, and other common perspectives. According to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, language even shapes our thoughts and perceptions. Pp. 46–49. How do values, norms, sanctions, folkways, and mores reflect culture? All groups have values, standards by which they define what is desirable or undesirable, and norms, rules or expectations about behavior. Groups use positive sanctions to show approval of those who follow their norms and negative sanctions to show disapproval of those who violate them. Norms that are not strictly enforced are called folkways, while mores are norms to which groups demand conformity because they reflect core values. Pp. 49–51. Many Cultural Worlds

2.3 Distinguish between subcultures and countercultures.

How do subcultures and countercultures differ? A subculture is a group whose values and related behaviors distinguish its members from the general culture. A counterculture holds some values that stand in opposition to those of the dominant culture. Pp. 51–55.

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2.4 Discuss the major U.S. values and explain value clusters, value contradictions, value clashes, how values are lenses of perception, and ideal versus real culture.

What are some core U.S. values? Although the United States is a pluralistic society, made up of many groups, each with its own set of values, certain values dominate. These are called its core values. Core values do not change without opposition. Some values cluster together to form a larger whole called value clusters. Value contradictions (such as equality versus sexism and racism) indicate areas of tension, which are likely points of social change. Leisure, self-fulfillment, physical fitness, youthfulness, and concern for the environment form an emerging value cluster. Pp. 55–58. Cultural Universals

2.5 Take a position on the issue of the existence of cultural universals and contrast sociobiology with sociology.

Do cultural universals exist? Cultural universal refers to a value, norm, or other cultural trait that is found in all cultures. Although all human groups

have customs concerning cooking, childbirth, funerals, and so on, because these customs differ from one culture to another, there are no cultural universals. Pp. 58–60. Technology in the Global Village

2.6 Explain how technology changes culture and what cultural lag and cultural leveling are.

How is technology changing culture? William Ogburn coined the term cultural lag to describe how a group’s nonmaterial culture lags behind its changing technology. With today’s technological advances in trade, travel, and communications, cultural diffusion is occurring rapidly. This leads to cultural leveling, groups becoming similar as they adopt items from other cultures. Much of the richness of the world’s diverse cultures is being lost in the process. Pp. 60–63.