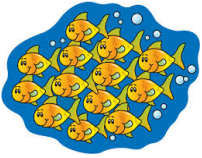


Schools of Thought in Sociology



Sociologists have debated among themselves about the real nature of society.

Schools of Thought in Sociology

- 1) Structural-Functionalism
- 2) Neo-Marxism
- 3) Symbolic Interactionism
- 4) Feminist Theory
- 5) Inclusionism
- 6) Conflict Theory

1) Structural-Functionalism

- Each society should provide its members with the fundamental requirements for functioning
- A system must have a way of fulfilling material needs, a system for socializing and educating the young, a way of regulating human reproduction (usually marriage)
- Believe their role is to try to explain the role of society's systems in enabling human society to function
- Do not concern themselves with change but instead with how society works to meet their needs
- Emile Durkheim - Functional Differentiation- society diversifies to deal with a complex environment, but is still connected to one another. Society defines itself based on social interactions.
- Taicott Parsons - People have a strong desire to interact and cooperate with others based on common goals

2) Neo-Marxism

- Based on ideas originally proposed by Karl Marx (1818-1883)
- Marx believed that economic power led to political power. This is the key to understanding societies.
- The struggle for economic power means that society is not static but ever changing
- Social change is the result of a change made to the economic system
- Therefore, if we want to understand society we must understand the economic system in place
- Believe the economic system creates a rich class of owners and a poor class of workers
- Believe that social institutions (churches, schools, prisons, etc.) have been created to perpetuate the division between the powerful and the powerless

3) Symbolic Interactionism

- Believe that humans have complex brains and little instinctive behavior
- Focus their research on the human mind rather than on structures in society
- E.g. one person might pursue fame and fortune while someone else might dedicate his or her life to charitable work -- very different symbols of success
- Charles Cooley/George Mead - The looking Glass Seld - Explains how individuals see themselves through the eyes of others. The self is mirrored and reflected in interactions with others e.g. creating an online profile to reflect how we would like to be seen by others

4) Feminist Theory

- Focuses on sex and gender issues, believing that women have traditionally been discriminated against by men
- Believe that men have made the decisions in society and that these decisions in society and that those decisions tend to favor men
- Dorothy Smith - Canadian sociologist - Sociology does not represent all members, only the patriarchy in society

5) Inclusionism

- Recognize that conflict can take place in a society between ethnic, racial and religious groups as well as between economic classes
- Before WWII, most sociologists took an assimilationist view of race believing the cultural majority would eventually absorb the minority (melting pot)
- In the late 1960s however, changing immigration policies changed all this as large numbers of immigrants moved to places like Canada to live

6) Conflict Theory

- Focuses on how structures maintain equilibrium
- Studies competition between groups for power
- Accounts for inequalities in economy and can track social change based on economical research
- Karl Marx - Witnessed how factory owners exploited their workers through little pay and poor living/working conditions

Socialization Throughout the Life Cycle**Socialization**

- Process of learning what is acceptable or not, norms and values
- The continuing process where an individual learns the appropriate behavioural patters, skills, and values in his/her social world

Psychology vs. SociologyPsychology

- Emphasizes studying the personal identity in an attempt to understand attitudes and behaviour

Sociology

- Emphasizes studying the development of a social identity, the part of self that is build up over time through participation in social life

Perspectives on Socialization

- Nature vs Nurture
- Sociologists recognize nature but focus on nurture
- Sociologists acknowledge that people are endowed with genetic potential but argue that social factors determine how much of that potential is realized

Social Influence

- Effects of others on a persons thoughts/
actions
- Family, gender, culture, media

Categories of Socialization

- Primary Socialization: Process of learning basic skills needed to survive
- Secondary Socialization: Process of learning to behave appropriately in group situations
- Anticipatory Socialization: Process of learning how to plan the way to behave in new situations (types of clothing, demeanor)
- Resocialization: Negative behaviour is transformed into acceptable behaviour

Agents of Socialization

- People or institutions that shape a person's social development

Primary: The family

- Considered the most important agent of socialization
- Strongest influence during primary years
- First place we learn values and attitudes
- Family socialization assists in directing a child's life chances

Secondary: School, peers, workplace, media, religion

Education

- Considered the 2nd most important agent of socialization
- Teaches knowledge, skills, and social roles
- Furthers assimilation of children from different cultural and social backgrounds

Peers

- People generally of the same age that share similar interests and social background
- An important agent of socialization during adolescence
- Peers expectations often conflict with parents expectations

Media

- An increasingly important agent of socialization