Chapter 2; the Sociological Imagination

**Sociological Imagination:** is the willingness and ability to look at the connection between who we are as individuals and the larger social and historical forces that shape our lives. ( American C. Wright Mills)

**History**: our position in the larger social structure. Ex: we are living in the 21st century we are not bound in the same way as were our ancestor, which radically changes our conceptions of what is possible. It is also true that those who inhabit the same time and place but who are without access to similar resources, in other words, those who are in different structural positions also lack access to similar choices

**Biography:** involves our individual experience. It’s about each of us as individuals, our actions, and thoughts, and choices we make.

**Life Chances:**

People in similar positions make similar choices, have access to similar resources, face similar obstacles and opportunities.

* Material (economic) Resources: what you own; like money, property, and land.
* Social Resources: Who you know (social connections, prestige)
* Cultural Resource: Values and norms that are present (ideas beliefs, what you know ex: Newton’s laws)

Life chances are the likelihood of individual outcomes based on social position and access to resources. Our outcomes are not strictly dictated but are more or less likely based on where we are in relation to others. ‘’Your mileage may vary”. On the one hand, individual paths vary in part because of the choices we’re able to make, but on the other hand, individuals face opportunities and obstacles determined by their social position.

**Social problems:**

**Private troubles:** obstacles that individuals face as individuals.

**Public issues:** obstacles that individuals in similar positions face.

If people in a similar position are facing the same troubles, we may be dealing with a “public issue”. Example: Unemployment had a toll on all individuals in a society; discovering the lager patterns related to unemployment-in other words, treating it as a public issue- helps us to predict its impact on individuals and thus helps both individuals and society to address it. Example of 1 or 20 students failing the course. Trying to solve private troubles without tacking account of the underlying social problems is like treating symptoms without addressing the disease that causes them. Public issues cannot be “cured” using individual remedies alone. Societal solutions must arise.

**Sociology:** the systematic study of the relationship between the individual and society and of the consequences of difference.

1. **Systematic Study:**

Empirical information: information based on experience or observation rather than belief or on the authority of others. The systematic study of sociology involves two central issues: method and stance.

Method: what should count data and how data should be collected?

* Quantitative: counting things and analyzing them systematically and mathematically. Data is collected through surveys
* Qualitative: focuses on observing people and listening to them

🡪Both methods are used by sociologists.

Stance: the sociologist’s relationship to his/her issue.

* Scientific stance encourages researchers to conduct themselves as objective, “disinterested” observers who stand outside their subject. The act of observing is assumed to be passive in that it has no effect on what is seen.
* Reform stance: assumes that sociologists must be active, involved and interested; seeking to tell the stories of the other, the excluded, and the powerless.

1. **The Individual:**

Sociology is concerned at the most basic level with the analysis of the individual; primarily on our social and cultural characteristics. It is through culture and language that we articulate our desires and come to understand right and wrong or good and bad. A term that sociologists sometimes use to describe the significance of the individual is agency, meaning freedom individuals have the right to choose and act. We act not as totally independent agents, because our choices are constrained by our position. We usually follow the “paths of least resistance” meaning the accepted and expected actions and beliefs, but the choices of whether or not to continue to follow them is ours.

1. **Society:**
2. Structure: people think that sociology has something to do with groups but it goes beyond the impact of groups to include the relationship between groups and the organization of resources. Sociologists have referred to major components as institutions: economy, family, education, government, subgroups, and statuses.
3. Culture: involves our humanly constructed relationship to the world outside ourselves.
   1. Material culture deals with the stuff in the world around us
   2. Cognitive culture includes language, thoughts, beliefs, knowledge and ideas
   3. Normative culture includes the norms and rules for behavior. They consist of the should and should nots
4. Interaction involves our exchange of cultural resources within our structural position. The structures where we found ourselves provide network of relationships between individuals and groups but these relationships must be activated through interaction. Structure and agency are brought together through interaction.

The Consequences of Difference: The simple fact is that those who have access to and control over valued material, social, and cultural resources have different options available to them than do those without access to those resources. One of the main tasks of sociology is to reveal and report the degree of such inequality.

**Micro Approach and Macro Approach**: One way to think about the history of sociology is that it begins by looking at society from the outside in and the later turn to look from the inside out. Early sociologists seemed to favor the view that they could stand outside society and explains how it functioned and how society determined individual action.--> Macro approach./ Whereas the micro approach focused more on the process of making meaning of the things and events in people’s lives than on the universal laws that determine individual actions.

**Revolution:** from a sociological perspective we rarely find a sociologist who uses a revolution he uses Arab movements, to use the term revolution means something has occurred in society and it is going to change the economic social political system and structure in the country. Ex 14 March Revolution: they didn’t change anything they weren’t a revolution they didn’t change any norms, but the communist revolution was actually a revolution because it introduced new economic system… It is not a revolution if u r not drastically changing the society and putting new values and ideologies; unless this happens we can’t call it a revolution.

What has led to most of the sciences are the revolutions that have occurred. Sociology owes its presence to three kinds of revolutions: intellectual, industrial, political.

**Intellectual:**

We became more interested in science than religion. A whole movement was taking place from the 18th century to the 19th century, the general intellectual discourse taking all over Europe was that people started questioning religion, and for a long period of time,( if we consider human race existed for a 30 cm on a ruler,, for the while 29.5 cm we explained unscientifically) from the mid-19th century till present we explained things scientifically, they used to explain things through the church, mythology(religion), divine force intervention, thunder happened🡪 wrath of God, as we entered the scientific age we started explaining the idea that we can understand reality ex: the changes in the climate can be explained we gave up the religious interpretation. Newton, Galileo they challenged all the norms and rules back then… we started working a lot on railroads and during that we discovered many archeological artifacts about previous religion, the church was previously teaching people that we were good species and we were created by god and then we did something bad and were banished to earth, and all we tried to do was go back to the earlier stage where we were more progressive and we regressed by living on earth, the archeological generation discovered that we weren’t more modern, we discovered tools that defined that the human race was progressing…This led to the scientific era that we were assuming reality, the idea that we as a human race can explain reality was quite important, cause back then church and God explained reality, we replaced our idea of God with science… we can explain things with science…we can offer explanation to how the physical word and social world operates🡪 sociology: explains why do we live in families why hasn’t the family died

Intellectual revolution allowed for political revolutions to emerge:

Most famous political one is the French revolution: it called for a republic, it called for: liberty equality and fraternity. All men are created equal, all human beings are free, and all people have rights. These allowed for the rational explanation. If all men were equal and all men were free then all men could think and could possess the ability to decide their own future and understand and challenge authority 🡪 sociology: I am a free person, I can understand like the pope can, this allows for the emergence of the intellectual scope…we need an environment and the ability to exchange ideas

**Industrial revolution:**

Everything changed, it allowed for the capitalist system to emerge, how did it allow for the development of sociology, because it changed the way of people’s lives from limited production to mass production, agriculture to industry, from a family owned production to a factory system this changed society, it shifted the family from extended to the nuclear family( mom dad sis bro), it created cities and urban areas, up until the industrial revolution, there were cities as Athens but it was only a political city not an economic and social, today everything is localized here economical financial center.. this revolution allowed the cities to emerge and with them emerged poverty, and the rich becoming richer and the poor becoming poorer, when we have this equality this led to theorists to try to understand why this happened they tried to explain why something happened, the reason why the three theorists wrote is because they wanted to explain what was going on around us WHY were families changing why were people committing more suicide why was religion becoming less and less important and this led to the emergence of sociology. Sociologists tried to come to the rescue and help people cope with their new circumstances.

These all led to the development of all scientists.

**Comte and Martineau:**

Sociologists that did research, comte is the father of sociology he established the school of sociology, he was the first scholar to propose the scientific study of society, he proposed that we can study the society as chemicals study chemical stuff, we can understand human society by using the scientific approach, we can understand society by forming laws, among the laws that guide the human society, the human race is compelled to interact and the way we interact follows certain laws, we had to follow the positivists empirical method we trust findings research we don’t trust our senses, we do research we gather data we collect information and then we understand society, comte was interested in finding the laws that governed society,’ French sociologist

Martineau she is one of the earliest sociologists, she wasn’t acknowledge back then because she was a female. an American sociologist, she translated a lot of work, her stance is a reform stance , she wasn’t interested in explaining what society is or why it is the way it is she was interested in changing it to become something better, she lived in a time where man and women weren’t treated equally, she was interested in the discrepancy between the morals that the Americans preached, the US was supposed to be the land of the free and the land of equal opportunity, freedom wasn’t granted for Mexicans and Italians and black, equality wasn’t there and women weren’t free. She viewed what was actually being practiced and how it was supposed to be, she asked people to put the principles they preached in practice and applied these principles. Morals= what we think is appropriate wasn’t in compliance with manners= what we actually do. “Existence of slavery in a nation founded on human rights”