What Is Sociology?: Crash Course Sociology #1

Crash Course: Sociology
https://youtube.com/watch?v=YnCJU6PaCio
https://nerdfighteria.info/v/YnCJU6PaCio

Hello, I'm Nicole Sweeney and I have a question for you: Have you ever wondered how the world works? I'm not talking about atoms and molecules or wave functions and chemical reactions; I mean the world of people. For example, have you ever wondered who goes to college and why? What makes people march in the streets? How do you know to raise your hand in math class but not at the dinner table? Why do some people like Broadway musicals and some people like hip-hop and some people like both? Well we're going to find out about all that stuff and so, so much more especially you, you're gonna learn about you and your place in the world, because this is Crashcourse Sociology.

(Theme music)

Sociology got its start thanks to a French philosopher named Auguste Comte in the 1800's he wanted there to be a systematic science for studying society, a way to investigate and solve its basic problems. And while sociology today is very different from what Comte imagined that's still kinda of what it is.

Sociology is the scientific study of society and human behaviour. But isn't society this great big thing, I mean society is whole cities, it's the economy, it's politics, and what does all that have to do with raising your hand at the dinner table? A lot as it turns out.

A society is just a group of people who share a culture and a territory. And culture is in everything, from the biggest questions in politics to the smallest interactions between people. So yes society is big, but it's also very small. Wanna see how? Let's go to the thought bubble.

Imagine you're sitting alone in you room singing along to your favourite Broadway show at the top of your lungs, not another person in sight, society isn't anywhere to be found. Except that it is, even if you ignore the house that you're in and the parents, siblings, or roommates you're probably bothering while you're singing so horribly, there's still the song that you're singing and the music that goes with it, those things along with literally every object in the room that you didn't make yourself are all products of society. And you might be all alone while you're belting out Hamilton, but you weren't alone when a friend first introduced you to the musical and its songs. And for that matter your taste in music isn't purely yours either, what kind of music you like can be influenced by anything, from what you were exposed to as a kid, to what your friends like now, to what neighbourhood you grew up in, to what schools you went to. Society is tricky, it gets into places you might not expect. Thanks thought bubble.

So, when we say that Sociology is the study of society and human behaviour, that means that sociology is incredibly broad. In fact, it may be the broadest of what we call the Social Sciences.

The social sciences include disciplines like economics and psychology, and while they all have different focuses and perspectives, they're all trying to understand the social world objectively through controlled and repeated observation.

So, what makes sociology different from any of these other social sciences? Well, like the others, sociology is looking for patterns, recurring characteristics and events. But it looks for all kinds of patterns, in all kinds of places. Sociology looks at all aspects of society and at all scales, from two people talking to differences between nations. It's this scope that really sets sociology apart, especially in what's known as the Sociaological Perspective. And the Sociological perspective, means two things. One, it means seeing the general in the particular. And two it means seeing the strange in the familiar.

Seeing the general in the particular is a way of saying that sociology tries to understand social behaviour by placing it in its wider social context. To go back to you belting out Broadway tunes in your room, the sociologist who overhears you from the sidewalk might notice not just your choice of what to sing, but how that individual choice may have been influenced by your class, neighborhood, race, gender, or age. To take another example, a sociologist might not care whether or not you in particular decide to get married but she might be interested in learning more about a declining marriage rate in your society and say what's causing it and whether it's having any societal impacts. Or maybe she's more interested in the fact that in the US people tend to marry partners of the same class, and race as them. In both ot these cases, what people sing or whom they marry, the sociologist is interested in a general pattern, a pattern composed of a massive number of particular individual choices. Each individual forms a part of a pattern, and in looking at their individual choices, a sociologist can see elements of the whole pattern, like seeing how a single stone fits into a mosaic.

Seeing the strange in the familiar is the second part of the sociological perspective and it's maybe more difficult to do. To see the strange in the familiar is to approach the everyday world as though you were seeing it for the first time and as if you were from another world. This is hard, but it's also incredibly important and kinda cool. When we asked at the very beginning why you raise your hand to ask a question in your math class but not at your dinner table, that's a very small example of trying to see the strange in the familiar. And this is so hard to do because your own society tends to look normal to you, you take it for granted. As you're socialized into it you're taught a common sense understanding of society, and that's not a bad thing. After all you need a common sense understanding of society in order to live in it, right? You need to know that you shake hands when you meet someone new, and that red means stop, and that you should try to show up on time to things. But if sociology is going to study society, it needs to be able to look at these things as strange and unfamiliar, in order to really understand how they work and to uncover patterns of behaviour in a culture.

Common sense has to just get us through the world, but sociology has to know wht's true. And this is important because a society's common sense doesn't consist only of harmless conventions like shaking hands. Just two hundred years ago in the US it was common sense that only white men were capable of participating in society. It was common sense that slavery was right and that women shouldn't be allowed to vote. These things were common sense in the same way that their opposites are taken for granted now. And the sociological perspective, seeing the general in the particular and the strange in the familiar helps us to understand problems like this because it helps us see some of the key concepts in the study of society.

Among these concepts; social location, marginalization, and power and inequality. If you imagine a map of society, laying gout all the different social groups and their relationships to each other, then your social location is your spot on that map. Your social location is a way of classifying yourself by race, social class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, et cetera. Understanding social location is important because, just like the sociologist looks for the general in the particular, a persons life and choices will be influenced by their social location.

This is true in a bunch of ways, most obvious is that your social location can limit your choices. Some groups have legal rights and privileges that others don't. For instance, until a few years ago, gays and lesbians couldn't legally marry ing the US, so their social location limited their choices. But social location also impacts what you learn and what you're taught about society. Whether or not you go to college, for instance, can be heavily influenced by whether the

social class you grew up in tends to see college as a real or valuable possibility. And social location also affects what others have learned and are taught about you. Take for instance the consistent finding that resumes with names that sound African American, tend to get called for interviews much less often than those with white sounding names. even though the resumes are otherwise identical.

In all these ways social location can contribute to the marginalization of a social group. If a social group is marginalized it means that is occupies a position outside the centers of power. Marginalized groups are often racial, ethnic, sexual, or religious minorities and marginalized groups tend to have a clearer view of how power operates. Heterosexual people, for example, often don't recognize what a social power it is to have the relationship socially sanctioned, and to be able to display affection in public in ways that LGBT people often can't. If marginalization is a matter of being outside the centers of power, that draws our attention to another fact. The fact that there are many different kinds of power and may different kinds of inequality.

There are of course the obvious kinds, like economic power and income inequality, or political power and politically enforced inequalities like segregation or slavery. But then there are the less obvious kinds like social or cultural power and inequality. For instance people who speak with non standard accents or dialects are often judged harshly for them and can be seen as less intelligent or less mature. Sociology can help us identify and understand all of these things and maybe even try and fix them. And that's the point, sociology is all about understanding society and society is where we all live so we'd like it to work as well as possible.

Good sociology can help us to create good public policy, and if we think back to Comte his desire was to do just this. To understand and maybe fix his society's problems. The late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were a time of massive economic, social and political upheaval in Europe. This was when industrialization really took off, with factories sprouting up like weeds connected by larger and larger rail networks. At the same time the population of Europe exploded, growing faster than any time in previous history. This was especially true in cities where industrial production was centralized. And all of these massive economic and social changes came with political shocks too.

This period saw the advent of mass democracy, the fall of kings, and the rise of the nation-state. This, combined with the rise of science as a discipline, was the context in which sociology arose. The first sociologists looked around at their quickly changing societies and were driven to try and scientifically understand them.

We said earlier that society wasn't just big things, like revolutions, industrialization, demographics. But it is also these things, it's both the big and the small because they're related. Sociology is about understanding the whole thing, at every level, and how those levels interact. It's about understanding why you don't have to raise your hand at the dinner table and why so called common sense can lead to massive policy mistakes.

Welcome to the science of sociology. Today we talked about what sociology is and what it does. We discussed what it means to be the study of society and why that's broader than you might think. We introduced the sociological perspective and discussed how sociology differentiates itself from the other social sciences. And finally we discussed what sociology can do, and how that concern with social problems was at the center of sociology's beginnings.

Next time we'll introduce different theories of society, the basic paradigms of sociology.

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