CHAPTER 1 Sociology: An Introduction

Lecture Outline

I. The Sociological Imagination
   A. The *sociological imagination* helps one see the relationships between social conditions and one's own situation in life.
   B. Sociologists are concerned with how *social conditions* influence our lives as individuals.

II. Sociology, the Human Science
   A. *Sociology* is the scientific study of human societies and human behavior in the many groups that make up a society.
   B. A core idea of sociology is that individual choice is always determined to some extent by a person's environment.
   C. The terms *micro*, *macro*, and *middle* refer to different levels of complexity in the subjects of social research.
      1. The micro level of observation studies the implications of individual behaviors.
      2. The macro level is concerned with whole societies and the ways in which they are changing.
      3. The middle level studies the effects of communities and organizations on individual lives or behaviors.

III. From Social Thought to Social Science
   A. Like all the sciences, sociology developed out of the human desire to understand and predict.
   B. Eighteenth-century philosophers emphasized the idea of progress guided by human reason, rather than viewing the human condition as preordained and unchangeable.
   C. The American, French, and English revolutions were social movements fueled by the concepts of egalitarianism, democracy, and self-government.
D. The science of sociology emerged from the social ferment of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

E. The early sociologists tended to think in macrosociological terms; their writing dealt with whole societies.
   1. Karl Marx believed that conflicts between workers and owners of capital would cause major upheavals.
   2. Émile Durkheim sought to explain social change as resulting from population growth and changes in the organization of work and community life.
   3. Max Weber was the first to understand the importance of bureaucratic forms of social organization.

F. The Rise of Modern Sociology
   2. In the early years of the twentieth century social surveys were undertaken to gain empirical data about social conditions.
   3. The “Chicago school” of sociology focused on the relationship between the individual and society. The term human ecology describes the relationships among social order, social disorganization, and population distribution.

IV. Major Sociological Perspectives
A. Interactionism is a sociological perspective that views social order and social change as resulting from repeated interactions among individuals and groups.
   1. Rational-choice or exchange models of behavior study what people seem to be getting out of their interactions and what they contribute in return.
   2. Symbolic interactionism is the study of how social life is “constructed” through acts of social communication.

B. The functionalist perspective is based on the idea that various social structures exist to fulfill vital functions for society.

C. The conflict perspective explores the role of conflict and power in social change.

D. The ecological, interactionist, functionalist, and conflict perspectives can be used in combination to provide a multidimensional view of society and the world.