

Smoky Mountain Bible Institute

Social Science 102 Sociology

Welcome back to class. Sociology is the study of society which of course is a broad topic with many different aspects. This will simply be a layman's overview. Sorry this field study has a lot of \$5 words. Social sciences use various methods of empirical investigation and critical analysis to develop a body of knowledge about social order, acceptance, and change or societal structures. The different traditional focuses of sociology include social stratification, social class, social mobility, religion, secularization, law, sexuality, gender, and deviance. As well as health, medical, economy, military and penal institutions, the Internet, education, social capital, and the role of social activity in the development of scientific knowledge.

Social scientific methods draw upon a variety of qualitative and quantitative techniques. Social research informs leaders and decision makers in most organizations, Private, Public, and Religious. There is often a great deal of crossover between social research, market research, and other statistical fields.

While sociological thought and applications pre-date the academic discipline itself here are some of its early players. 19th Century philosophers August Comte, Karl Marx, Herbert Spencer, and Emile Durkheim. The first department of Sociology in the world was at the University of Chicago in 1892.

The field of study has expanded greatly over the years and has many theoretical traditions. Classical theory, Functionalism, Conflict theory, symbolic interactionism, Utilitarianism, 20th-century social theory, Pax Wisconsin, Structuralism and Post-structuralism.

This field of study also acknowledges that there are things that affect how this science is applied. Basically, there are three central theoretical problems that one who enters this field or uses it research must be aware of. 1) Subjectivity and Objectivity, 2) Structure and agency, 3) Synchrony and diachrony. Translation, this field of study produces statistical data and many other types of feedback to a researcher, however it is difficult for them to remove themselves from the process, so our own personal paradigms will affect the conclusions we draw from any social data. For example, the topics of sexuality, gender & deviance come with a lot of different preconceived notions. So, two sociologist from to very different prospective can look at the same data and come up with very different conclusions.

Is this field of study helpful to the church? Well understanding the community we have been called to love and serve can be of great benefit in helping us to love and serve them as best we can with God's help. Probability and statistical data that can help us study and understand the networks of a culture and how it functions and communicates can help us to live our faith and communicate the gospel in a way that helps it to be better or easier understood. Of course, faith is the work of the Holy Spirit but if you want to share the gospel you must speak the language of those you seek to share with.

Some of the tools or context used for understanding in this field are, culture, art, music, literature, law, punishment, methods of communication, economy, work, employment, industry, education, environment, family, health, wellness, death & dying, leisure, peace, war, conflict, population, demography, public, private, race, religion, networks, class or stratification (where people fall on the economic scale) Urban, rural. Each of these has a bearing on how the data collected is arranged and for what purpose.

When you get a book, you check to see who the publisher is, because who published it will affect any assertions or conclusions that are in the book. In the same way if you consider the results of any sociological study it is important to understand who funded the study and for what purpose, because it drives how the data is collected, arranged, presented, and what conclusions are drawn. While the field of sociology is a science we must realize that agendas run deep in the mind and character of researchers of all stripes. So that even if they attempt to be completely objective, in much of this field conclusions are fueled by preconceived notions and data is collected and presented in order to advocate for such notions.

In Christ
Pastor Portier