

[MUSIC PLAYING]

Hello and welcome to sociological studies. As always, thank you for taking the time out of your busy day to study society. The topic of today's lesson is sociology and the sociological and global perspective defined.

We're going to introduce the discipline of sociology, define it, as well as discuss the perspective that sociologists take to their work, called the "sociological perspective." And with that, there's also a second perspective, called the "global perspective," that will be discussed as well.

So to begin with, let's just define sociology. Sociology is the scientific study of society and the social behavior of people in groups. So to make that clear, let's break the definition down a little bit.

Well, firstly, sociologists study groups and the behavior of people within them. So a social movement theorist might look at what causes normally law-abiding citizens to not be so law-abiding and start to riot. I mean, we can think back in the Arab Spring. We had all kinds of different people come into the streets to riot that might normally not. So a sociologist might look at and go, OK, what were the factors that led to this group of people deciding to riot.

Another angle of interest to a sociologist then is how are these riots organized, where are people communicating. So if somebody says to be in the square at this time, how is that information communicated. Are they using Facebook and Twitter or more old-fashioned mechanisms. So a sociologist would be interested in the role of technology in movement organization.

They might also look at where are these people meeting. Where are they congregating. Where is the actual physical space that is facilitating discussion and then in a sense revolution. So those are two angles.

And then also a sociologist might be interested in the power structure of the society. Who's in power? How do they get there? How do they use that power? How unequal is the society? And factors like that that contribute to a revolutionary ethos. So just as we can see just within the one sphere of social movement, there's many different angles that a sociologist would look at it.

Now for the second part of the definition, the systematic study, sociologists aren't just going out drinking coffee and generalizing. No, it doesn't work like that. They use rigorous scientific methods, often in the form of surveys, questionnaires, interviews, even participant observation, which is the method I use. I like that best. As well, they can use statistical analysis and a number of regression techniques.

So what kind of perspective do sociologists bring to their work? Well, the sociological perspective is defined as seeing the general in the particular. Sociologists are looking for broad, transcendent, general patterns in the

behavior of individual particular people.

So to give you an example, let's look at deindustrialization and the loss of manufacturing jobs in America. So this started to happen around 1970 or so. The economy started to open up with globalization. And it was cheaper for companies to take the manufacturing jobs, send them anywhere to the lowest bidder. So these jobs used to be done in America. And they were primarily done by poorer, blue collar workers.

So now the capitalists we're only trying to be more competitive by outsourcing these jobs. They didn't set out to decimate the inner-city working class, but it just worked out that way. As the jobs left, poverty, crime became more rampant. And then fast forward to today, these trends only got worse. So now the urban, old manufacturing core that used to give all these people jobs just is gone. And so sociologists have studied this.

So fast forward to today. Suppose there's a 10-year-old boy born in a poor neighborhood of South Chicago, that used to be a manufacturing neighborhood that had somewhat stable jobs. So how are we supposed to make sense of this boy's life and his future job prospects and life success without referencing these trends that occurred in the past. I mean, you can't really.

So that's what sociologists do. That's what sociology is all about, is being able to recognize these broad, general trends, and see how they work out in the lives of individual people. One of the most famous sociologist of all time, C. Wright Mills, called thinking this way using your sociological imagination. So when you use your sociological imagination, you're able to see the general in the particular.

Again, big general social forces in the lives of particular people, and this is a skill we want to develop in this course. That's like the goal of sociological thinking. So if you remember one thing from this course, remember seeing the general in the particular.

So what are the benefits of thinking this way? There are four general benefits of the sociological perspective. The first of which is that it enables us to see and assess the truth of our general background assumptions about people and about society. For instance, you hear a lot about how if so and so would just work hard and pull themselves by their bootstraps, they'd be able to get ahead. But they must be lazy or something like that.

Well, a sociologist would come along and say, wait a second, not everybody's life chances start out the same. So it's not as easy for somebody to pull themselves up by the bootstraps if they're in a disadvantaged position from the start.

And along with this then, we have the second benefit of the sociological perspective. And that's that it enables us to recognize the constraints that affect people's lives. Thirdly, the sociological perspective allows us to be more informed citizens. It enables us to connect our private, personal problems with larger social forces. Again, that

we've been talking about, the general in the particular. When we can do that, we can be better informed citizens, because we can understand how certain social policy, economic policy, might affect us.

Finally, the sociological perspective helps us to understand and appreciate diversity.

And along with the final benefit of the sociological perspective is what we call the global perspective. And that is a look at an individual society with respect to the larger global system. We look at how an individual society is operating within and respect to the larger global system. This is increasingly the norm for sociologists, especially in reference to what I said before about globalization causing jobs to leave America. How can we understand how American jobs and the American economy is affected without referencing broader global trends? So this is an important part of sociological analysis, the global perspective.

So now to wrap up with the takeaway message, sociology generally is the study human society, the systemic study of human society, and the behavior of people in groups. And the sociological perspective is the ability to see the general in the particular. The global perspective is the study of the world and society's place within it.

And finally the four benefits of thinking this way are that it enables us to take on perceived generalizations and stereotypes that we all walk around with. And two, it recognizes the constraints that individuals face. Three, it enables us to become more active, empowered citizens in society. And finally it enables us to empathize with others and appreciate and understand diversity.

Thank you for taking the time out of your busy day to learn a little bit about society in this tutorial. I hope you'll be seeing me again soon. Thank you.