

what is a social problem?

- existence of a social condition
- someone has to think its larger group= a problem (**BELIEF**) more attention
- awareness/ spreading thru out media

example- drug addiction, not a social problem unless part of society BELIEVES it diminishes quality of human life

methods of data collection

experiments, surveys, field research, secondary data research

Social Groups

- 2 or more people who have a common identity, interact, and form a social relationship

primary groups- characterized by intimate and informal interactions (friends and family, comfortability)

secondary groups- task oriented and characterized by impersonal and formal interaction (class mates, co workers)

Blumer's Stages of a Social Problem

1. **societal recognition** process by which a social problem is "born"
2. **social legitimation** social problems is recognized by the larger community
3. **mobilization for action** leads to development and implementation of a plan for dealing with the problem

roles

the set of rights, obligations, and expectations associated with a status

- guide our behavior and allow us to predicts others behaviors

roles (cont)

- examples** student: do work; prisoner: w/ guards and w/ inmates
- you learn what the roles are, then accept them to maintain that status

Structural- Functionalist Perspective

society is composed of parts that work together to maintain a state of balance

latent- consequences unintended and often hidden father got fired, how kids feel; gay rights (ur gay), how fam feels

manifest- intended and commonly recognized a problem that throws that "norm" off

social pathology- social problems result from 'sickness' in society

social disorganization- rapid social change disrupts norms in society you adapt (like coming to college)

The Sociological Imagination

- putting yourself "in" the situation to get a different perspective and better understanding
- im not homeless, but what would it be like if i was

methods of data collection

experiments, surveys, field research, secondary data research

SOCIAL PROBLEM DEFINITION

a social condition that a segment of society views as harmful to members of society and in need of remedy

GOOD EXAMPLES

SOCIAL PROBLEM DEFINITION (cont)

- gun control- threat to civil rights OR its necessary for safety
- abortion- pro life OR pro choice

Theoretical Perspectives

labeling theory: social condition or group is viewed as problematic if it is labeled as such

social constructionism: argues that reality is socially constructed by individuals who interpret the social world around them

symbolic interactionist perspective

basic premise is that a individual condition must be defined or level recognized as a social problem for it to be a social problem

3 types:

Blumer's Stages of a Social Problem

labeling theory

social constructionism

conflict perspective

two groups opposing each other rich vs poor, pro life vs pro choice

culture

the meanings and ways of life that characterize a society, including **beliefs, values, norms, sanctions, and symbols**

people think the same way as you do

... wouldn't be in the drug culture if you don't believe in drugs



culture (cont)

beliefs: definitions and explanations about what is assumed to be true "is 2nd hand smoke dangerous?"

values: *social agreements ab what is considered good or bad, right and wrong** racism, sexism, child abuse, violate the values of equality and fairness

norms: defined rules of behavior

1. folkways: customs, habits, and manners of society (not the law) ways u act (sneeze= cover ur nose)

2. laws: formal norms backed by authority (LAW)

3. mores: norms w/ a *moral* basis

Statuses

a position that a person occupies within a social group

ex: mother, father, child, husband

ascribed statuses: status that society assigns to an individual on the basis of factors with NO CONTROL over (age, race etc)

achieved statuses: assigned on the basis of some characteristic or behavior over which there is some control (college graduate, spouse, parent, criminal) (+/-)

elements of social structure and culture

the **structure** of a society refers to the way it is organized

Organized into:

institutions

social groups

statuses

roles

symbols

something that represents something else

- language, gestures, and objects whose meaning is *commonly understood by the members of a society*

ex.) flipping someone off, gang sings (meaning to them not me)

sanctions

consequences for conforming to or violating norms

- can be positive or negative

(+)= being nice, receiving an award for a kind act

(-)= breaking the law

levels of analysis

macrosociology looks at 'big picture' of society suggests how social problems are affected at the institutional level **STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONALISM and CONFLICT THEORY**

microsociology concerned with the psychological dynamics of individuals interacting in small groups **SYMBOLIC INTERACTIVISM**

elements of social structure

an **institution** is an established and enduring pattern of social relationships

5 traditional institutions are: **family, religion, politics, economics, education**

family- everyone comes from one (+/-)

religion- guides a lot of issues (gay rights, legalized prostitution)

politics- huge impact, set policies with a direct impact on you (happy if ur guy wins, sad if loses)

elements of social structure (cont)

economics- micro and macro, every thing is tied into it, SPENDING, globally interconnected, high unemployment = worst economy

education- HS drop outs: not great jobs, high crime

Research

Stages of conducting a research study

1. formulating a research question
2. reviewing the literature (whats already out there?)
3. defining variables (measurable event, characteristic, or property that is subject to change)
4. formulating a hypothesis (B4 research)

*methods of data collection

experiments: involves manipulating the independent variable to determine how it affects the dependent

survey: not v accurate; eliciting info from respondents thru questions (sample: portion of population)

interviews: survey research, people ask respondents questions and make written notes ab (advantage: clarifying questions)

questionnaires: less expensive and less time consuming but response rate is a downside

web based surveys: growing in popularity, thought to reduce problems associated with traditional survey research

field research: observing social behavior in settings in which it occurs naturally

^^ participant observation (researcher participates in whatever is studied); nonparticipant observation (researcher observes).... presence influences behavior

secondary data research: researching what has been researched

