The Sociological Perspective and Research Process:

1. (4) **Sociology** is the study of man and society that seeks to determine their general characteristics, especially as found in contemporary civilizations.

- A ~~society~~ is a large social group that shares the same geographical territory and is subject to the same political authority and dominant cultural expectations.

2. (3-5) Sociologist C. Wright Mills described sociological reasoning as **The Sociological Imagination** - The ability to see the relationship between individual experiences and the larger society. It helps us distinguish between personal troubles and social (or Public) issues.

C.Wright Mills

- Power elite - elite who command the resources of vast bureaucratic organizations that have come to dominate industrial societies. These are the key people in the major institutions of modern society:
  1. Government
  2. Military
  3. Corporations
- Thus power is rooted in authority, an attribute of social organizations, not of individuals.
- These bureaucracies have become enlarged and centralized and are a means of power never before equaled in human history.
- Bureaucracies are the key to understanding modern society.

3. (5-8) **The Importance of a Global Sociological Imagination**. The World's **high-income countries** are nations with highly industrialized economies; technologically advanced industrial, administrative and service occupations; and relatively high levels of national and personal income.

    Middle income countries are nations with industrializing economies, particularly in urban areas, and moderate levels of national and personal income.

    Low income countries are primarily agrarian nations with little industrialization and low levels of national and personal income.

4. (8-9) **The Development of Sociological Thinking** did not take hold until the 19th century and the social upheaval brought about by industrialization and urbanization.

    Industrialization is the process by which societies are transformed form dependence on agriculture and handmade products to an emphasis on manufacturing and related industries.

    Urbanization is the process by which people move from rural open farms to convoluted cities.

9. (9-14) Early Thinkers: A concern with Social Order and Stability

William Thomas (Not in Text Book)

- 4 basic human wishes
  - The desire for new experiences
  - The desire for recognition
  - The desire for mastery
  - The desire for security.
- Objected to seeing people as playthings of forces over which they had no control. (opposite of Marxist theory)
- Social Change is interplay between attitudes and values. "The cause of a social or individual phenomenon is never another social or individual phenomenon alone, but always a combination of a social and an individual phenomenon.
- **The Typology of Human Actors**
  - Philistine "always a conformist, usually accepting social tradition in its most stable elements
  - Bohemian "whose possibilities of evolution are not closed, simply because his character remains unformed?" (Rebel)
  - Creative man does not simply act within the grooves of tradition, nor is he indiscriminately rebellious when it comes to societal requirements; rather, with a judicious blend of innovation and tradition he clears a new path through the forest of the customary and can hence be a creative guide in efforts to bring about social change.

Thomas Theorem - If the situation is defined as real, it is real in its consequences.

Auguste Comte coined the term sociology, though he never conducted sociological research. Heavily influenced by the French Revolution.
- Theorized that societies contain social statics (forces for social order and stability) and social dynamics (forces for conflict and change).
- The scientific method should be applied to the objective study of society.
- **Positivism** - a belief that the world can best be understood through scientific inquiry. Two dimensions of positivism…
    - Methodological - the application of scientific knowledge to both physical and social phenomena.
    - Social and political - The use of such knowledge to predict the likely results of different policies so that the best one can be chosen.
- *Cours de Philosophie Positive*

Harriet Martineau translated Comte's and condensed Comte's works in English, and was also an active sociologist.
- Advocated racial and gender equality.
- Create a science of society that would be grounded in empirical observations and widely accessible to people.
- *Society in America*
- social reform

Herbert Spencer's major contribution to sociology was an evolutionary perspective on social order and social change.
- Theory of General Evolution, society, like a biological organism, has various interdependent parts (such as the family, the economy, and the government) that work to ensure the stability and survival of the entire society.
    - Societies develop a process of "Struggle" (for existence) and "fitness" (for survival)
    - **Social Darwinsim** - the belief that those best adapted to their environment survive and prosper, whereas those poorly adapted die out. Based on who has the best tools.

Emile Durkheim stressed that people are the product of their social environment and that behavior cannot be understood fully in terms of individual biological and psychological traits. The father of sociology. (Structural Functionalist)
- Believed that the limits of human potential are social, not biologically based.
- Concerned with functional interrelations between systems of beliefs and thought and the underlying social structure.
- We use the word "function," in preference to "end" or "purpose" precisely because social phenomena do not generally exist for the useful results they produce.
- **Social facts** are patterned ways of thinking and feeling, which exist outside the individual, but exert social control over everyone. Societies are built on social facts.
- **Anomie** - a condition where social control becomes ineffective as a result of the loss of shared values and the sense of purpose in society. Caused by rapid social change. It is not a state of mind, but a property of the social structure. (i.e. industrial revolution)
    - Egoistic Suicide happens to people who are isolated from a society
    - Altruistic Suicide happens to people who are deeply integrated into society (i.e. military leaders who kill themselves after a battle defeat)
    - Anomic suicide results from a lack of social control
    - Fatalistic suicide results form excessive regulation and oppressive (i.e. slaves)
- *The Division of Labor in Society*
- *Elementary forms of Religious Life*

Karl Marx said that history is a continuous clash between conflicting ideas and forces.
- Believed that conflict - especially class conflict - is needed to produce social change and a better society. Uses history as his empirical evidence.
- People make their own history, but not exactly how they please.
    - Class conflict is the struggle between the capitalist class (bourgeoisie who own or control the means of production) and the working class (proletariat who must sell their labor because they have no other means to earn a livelihood).
    - There is no social mobility - whatever class you are born into, is the class you remain in. o The ideas of the ruling class are the ruling ideas.
- Economics is the underlying force in social change.
- Alienation is a feeling of powerlessness and estrangement form other people and from oneself. Man at work is alienated for the object he produces, for the process of production, from himself, and from the community of his fellows. Money is the alienated essence of man's work and existence, the essence dominates him and he worships it.

- Sociology should not just be studied but also changed, because the status quo (that existing state of society) involved the oppression of most of the population by a small group of wealthy people.
- *Communist Manifesto* (with Engles)
- *Das Kapital*

Max Weber believed that economic systems were heavily influenced by other factors in a society.
- Says that the research process should be **value free** so research should exclude the researcher's personal values and economic interests.
- **Verstehen** (German for "understanding' or insight) Sociologists should use it to see the world as others see it. (Empathic Understanding)
- Concerned that **bureaucracies** (large organizations) were becoming increasingly oriented toward routine administration and specialized division of labor, which he be believed were destructive to human vitality and freedom. (anomie)
     o This, not class struggle, is the most significant factor in determining the social relations between people in industrial societies.
- Types of Authority
     o Rational-legal authority - authority may be based on rational grounds and anchored in impersonal rules that have been legally enacted or contractually established.
     o Traditional Authority - is based on belief in the sanctity of traditions, or "the eternal yesterday." It is not codified in impersonal rules but inheres in particular persons who may either inherit it or be invested with it by a higher authority.
     o Charismatic authority - rests on the appeal of leaders who claim allegiance because of their extraordinary virtuosity, whether ethical, heroic, or religious.
- Power - The chance of a man, or a number of men "to realize their own will in communal action, even against the resistance of others."
- prestige
- *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*
- *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*
- *Wirtschaft and Gesellschaft*

Georg Simmel theorized society as a web of patterned interactions among people. The main purpose of sociology is to examine the social interaction within groups. (Symbolic Interactionist)
- Social interactions vary depending on the size of the group. Said that dinner groups over six became dysfunctional.
     o Dyad a social group consisting of two
     o Triad a social group of three
- Formal Sociology focuses attention on the recurring social forms that underlie the varying content of social interaction. Paradigms
     o Distinguished between social interaction (such as cooperation or conflict) and the content of social interaction in different contexts (for example, between leaders and followers).

Jane Addams
- Hull House - founder of the most famous settlement houses, in an impoverished area of Chicago.
- Social reformer

W.E.B. Du Bois said that a dual heritage creates conflict for people of color.
- Double Consciousness is the identity conflict of being a black (ethnic) and an American.
- NAACP
- *The Souls of Black Folks*
- *The Philadelphia Negro*
- he published a book a year between 1894-1914 on the relationship between African Americans and whites

Talcott Parsons Most influential advocate of Structural Functionalism
- Instrumental tasks involve leadership and decision making responsibilities for the group.
- Expressive tasks provide emotional support to the society

Robert Merton
- **Manifest functions** are intended and/or overtly recognized by the participants in a social unit. You go to school to learn.
- **Latent Functions** are unintended functions that are hidden and remain unacknowledged by participants. In school you also socially network

Charles Herbert Mead

- Symbolic Interactionism - The behavior of an individual can be understood in terms of the behavior of the whole social group of which he is a member, since his individual acts are involved in larger, social acts which go beyond him and implicate the other members of that group.
- Role taking - Human communication becomes possible only when "the symbol arouses in one's self what it arouses in the other individual."
     1. A child play's at being a doctor, teacher, mother, etc. in order to cultivate I himself the ability to put him in the place of others who are significant to him.
     2. Conception of roles by assuming them in the imagination.
- **Significant others** are those persons whose care, affection, and approval are especially desired and who are most important in the development of the self.
- **Generalized other** refers to the child's awareness of the demands and expectations of the society as a whole or of the Childs subculture.

Charles Horton Cooley

- Looking Glass Self

Each to each a looking-glass - Reflects the other that doth pass. "As we see our face, figure, and dress in the glass, and are interested in them because they are ours, and pleased or otherwise with them according as they do or do not answer to what we should like them to be, so in imagination we perceive in another's mind some thought of our appearance, manners, aims, deeds, character, friends, and so on, and are variously affected by it."
     1. The imagination of our appearance to the other person, the imagination of his judgment of that appearance, and some sort of self-feeling, such as pride or mortification."
- Primary Group - People are drawn away from their individualistic propensity to maximize their own advantage and are permanently linked to their fellows by ties of sympathy and affection. (I.e. Family, the play group of children, and the neighborhood.)
- Secondary group - people are related to one another because each derives a private benefit from that interchange or interaction.

Contemporary Theoretical Perspectives

A **Theory** is a set of logical statements that attempts to describe, explain, and (occasionally) predict social events. A perspective is an overall approach or viewpoint on a subject (i.e. Functionalist, conflict, and symbolic interactionist).

Paradigm - A way of looking at the world
- Structural Functionalism [Macro] Studies large bodies - assumes social consensus.
- Conflict - Who has the power [Macro]
- Symbolic Interactionism - How people communicate and their symbolic meanings.   [Micro]
- Feminist - Evaluates the relationship between males and females, who has the power
- Post modern - Challenges all the above and seeks to a deconstruction of all paradigms.

11. (15-16) **Structural Functionalism** is a **macro level** analysis examines whole societies, large scale social structures, and social systems**),** S.F. is based on the assumption that society is a stable, orderly system.
1. Characterized by societal consensus, where the majority share a common set of values, beliefs, and behavioral expectations.
2. Instrumental tasks - Talcott Parsons - Leadership / Decision Making
3. Expressive tasks   - Talcott Parsons - Emotional Support for group
4. **Manifest functions** - Robert Merton - Intended (School is for learning)
5. **Latent Functions** - Robert Merton - Unintended (School also teaches social networking)
6. Dysfunctions are the undesirable consequences of any element of a society.
     o Language unifies members of a society.

11. (16-18) **Conflict (macro level)** perspectives are groups in society that engaged in a continuous power struggle.
- Max Weber recognized the importance of economic conditions in producing inequality and conflict in society. He added Power and Prestige to inequality.
     o Power is the ability of a person within a social relationship to carry out his or her own will despite resistance from others
     o Prestige is a positive or negative social estimation of honor.
- Branches of Conflict Theory
     o Neo Marxist - views struggle between the classes as inevitable and as a prime source of social change.
     o Racial / Ethnic groups - Inequalities and the continued exploitation of members of some racial/ethnic groups

o Feminist perspective which focuses on gender issues and has a whole category of its own.
• Limited in its focus on societal discord and the divisiveness of culture.

12. (17-18) **Feminist** approach directs attention to women's experiences and the importance of gender as an element of social structure.   (An offspring of the conflict theory)
• Based on the belief that woman and men are equal.
•   We live in a patriarchy a system in which men dominate women and things that are male or masculine are valued higher than those female or feminine.
• Assumes that gender is socially created, rather than determined by one's biological inheritance.

13. (18-20) **Symbolic Interactionist** is a **micro level** analysis, which focuses on small groups rather than large-scale social structures. Society is the sum of the interactions of individuals and groups.
  • George Herbert Mead and Herbert Blumer are credited with coining the term.
  • Interaction - defined as immediate interaction between two or more people using symbolic interaction.
  • A shortcoming is its overemphasis on harmony and cooperation.
  •   Symbolic interaction occurs when people communicate with symbols (i.e. facial gestures, posture, and tone of voice, handshake or a clenched fist). A Symbol is anything that meaningfully represents something else.
  •   Doesn't provide insight into how shared meanings are developed, and account for the many situations in which there is disagreement on meanings.

14. (20 - 21) **Postmodernist Perspectives, (macro and micro level)** Postmodernists reject all paradigms, as well as how those thinkers created the theories.
•   Oppose grand narratives that characterize modern thinking and believe that boundaries should not be placed on academic fields, like philosophy, literature, art, and social sciences.
• Theories emerge after WWII
•   Postmodern societies are characterized by an information explosion and an economy in which large numbers of people either provide or apply information, or they are employed in service jobs.
• Global Village, in which people around the world communicate with one another by electronic technologies.
•   3 criticisms
      o Lack of a clear conceptualization of ideas.
      o Tendency to critique other perspectives as being grand narratives, whereas postmodernists offer their own varieties of such narratives.
      o Postmodern analyses of culture lead to profound pessimism about the future.

13. (21-22) **The Sociological Research Process**
• Research is the process of systematically collecting information for testing an existing theory or generating a new one.
•   **Quantitative Research,** the goal is scientific objectivity, and the focus is on data that can be measured numerically
      o Uses mathematical statistics.
•   **Qualitative research**, interpretive descriptions (words) rather than statistics (numbers) are used to analyze underlying meanings and patterns of social relationships. How it feels / experience.
      o **Empirical Work** - Seen through the senses - Knowable (Evidence Gathering) o
      Anecdotal - second hand knowledge - found from another person
      o   A qualitative research is a study in which the researchers systematically analyzed the contents of suicide notes to determine recurring themes (such as feelings of despair or failure)

14. (22-27) **The "Conventional" Research Model**
   1. Select topic
      • **Operational Definition is** a precise definition of a term in a hypothesis.
   2. Define the research problem
   3. Review previous research
      • Analyze what others have done before
      • Determine where gaps exist and note mistakes to avoid.
   4. Formulate hypothesis (if applicable)
      • Hypothesis is a statement of the expected relationship between two or more variables. **Variable** is any concept with measurable traits or characteristics that can change or vary from one person, time, situation, or society to another.
            o An independent variable is presumed to be the cause of the relationship

- o The <u>dependent variable is</u> assumed to be caused by the independent variable.
4. <u>Choose Research Method</u> -
   - Qualitative or Quantitative
   - Survey, participant observation, experiment, unobtrusive measures
5. <u>Collect data</u>
   - You must decide what population will be observed or questioned and then carefully select a sample. <u>A sample</u> is the people who are selected form the population to be studied.
   - A <u>representative sample</u> is a selection from a larger population that has the characteristics of the whole population.
   - Validity and reliability may be problems in research data.
      - o **Validity** is how well a studies research instrument accurately measures what it is supposed to measure.
      - o **Reliability** is how well the instrument gives consistent results when used with different people at one time or to the same people over time.
6. <u>Analyze the data</u>
   - <u>Analysis</u> is the process through which data are organized so that comparisons can be made and conclusions drawn.
   - SPSS (Computer program to compute statistics) Quantitive
   - N VIVO (Computer program that looks at themes) Qualatative
7. <u>Draw conclusions</u>
   - First step in drawing conclusions is to return to your hypothesis or research objective to clarify how the data relate both to the hypothesis and to the large issues being addressed.
      - o Note the limitations of the study (i.e. sample problems, influence over variables, variables that were unable to be measured.
8. <u>Report Findings</u>
      - o The report includes a review of each step in the research process in order to make the study available for <u>replication.</u>
      - o Replication is the ability for an outside source to investigate the study in the same way it was originally conducted.
      - o Durkheim concluded that the suicide rate of a group is a social fact that cannot be explained in terms of the personality traits of individuals.

15. (27-28) **A Qualitative Research Model** is more likely to be used when the research question does not easily lend itself to numbers and statistical methods. As compared to a quantitive model, a qualitative approach often involves a different type of research question and a smaller number of cases.

16. (28-30) **Research Methods** are techniques for systematically conducting research.
- A **Survey (Research)** is a poll in which the researcher gathers facts or attempts to determine the relationships among facts.
   - o The most widely used research method.
   - o Researchers select a representative sample (small group of respondents) from a larger population.
     <u>Respondents</u> are people who provide data for analysis through interviews or questionnaires.
   - o The data is collected by using <u>Questionnaires,</u> which are printed research instrument containing a series of items to which subjects respond.
      - ③ Most common technique is the <u>self administered questionnaire</u> which is mailed to a respondent's home
   - o An **interview** is when an interviewer asks the respondent questions and records the answers.
      - ③ A <u>structured interview is</u> one where the interviewer asks questions form a standardized questionnaire. ③ **Multivariate analysis** has more than two independent variables. (i.e. age, sex, income level, and other variables)
   - o **Inaccurate Recall** people don't remember the information required correctly
   - o **Social Desirability** will say the socially correct thing, rather then what they really believe is real.
   - o **Response set "biased " -** happens when people become tired of taking long surveys and just bubble in answers
- In **secondary analysis**, researchers use existing material and analyze data that were originally collected by others.
   - o Secondary analysis includes **content analysis** - the systematic examination of cultural artifacts. (books, diaries, poems, graffiti, movies, TV shows, advertisements etc. are all cultural artifacts)

- **Field Research** is the study of social life in its natural setting: observing and interviewing people where they live, work and play.
    - o Creates Qualitative data which is best described verbally rather than numerically.
    - o The Sociologist observing social interaction as it occurs may use **participant observation** - collecting systematic observations while being part of the group that the researcher is studying. Researcher may "go native" - be absorbed by the group.
        - ③ **Unobtrusive Measures -** People are observed with the researcher unseen to avoid the **Hawthorne Effect** where people perform better because they know they are being watched.
    - o Another approach to field research is the **ethnography** - a study of the life of a group of people by researchers who may live them over a period of years.
- An **Experiment** is a designed situation in which the researcher studies the impact of certain variables on subject's attitudes or behaviors.
    - o Create real-life situations in a controlled environment. The subjects are divided into two groups. The experimental group contains the subjects who are exposed to an independent variable (the experimental condition) to study its effect on them. The control group contains the subjects who are not exposed to the independent variable.
    - o **Placebo**
    - o **Causation** means that a change in one variable is due to another variable. Three conditions are necessary to establish causation
    1. **Correlation** (the variables are related, that is they exist or occur together)
    2. Temporal priority (time order, if variable "A" is said to cause variable "B", then "A" must come before "B" in order to be the presumed cause).
    3. Non-spuriousness (there can be no other explanation for the correlation)

The independent variable is the "presumed cause". The dependent variable is the "presumed effect".

17. (32-33) **Ethical Issues in Sociological Research.** The American Sociological Association Code of Ethics sets forth basic standards that sociologists must follow in conducting research.
    1. Researchers must maintain objectivity and integrity in their research by disclosing their research findings and including all possible interpretations of the data (even when these do not support their own viewpoints)
    2. Researchers must safeguard the participants' right to privacy while protecting them from harm
    3. Researchers must protect confidential information provided by participants, even when this information is not considered to be "privileged" (legally protected, as in the case between doctor and patient and between attorney and client) and legal pressure is applied to reveal this information.
    4. Researchers must acknowledge research collaboration and disclose all sources of financial support.

Due to the growing complexity of our society C. Wright Mills has argued, the answers of common sense seem ever less adequate to deal with ever more complex problems.