

Thinking Sociologically

Sept 6, 2012

What is Sociology?

The scientific study of the social world.

But...what does this really mean?

Goal: To understand society in a disciplined way.

What do sociologists do?

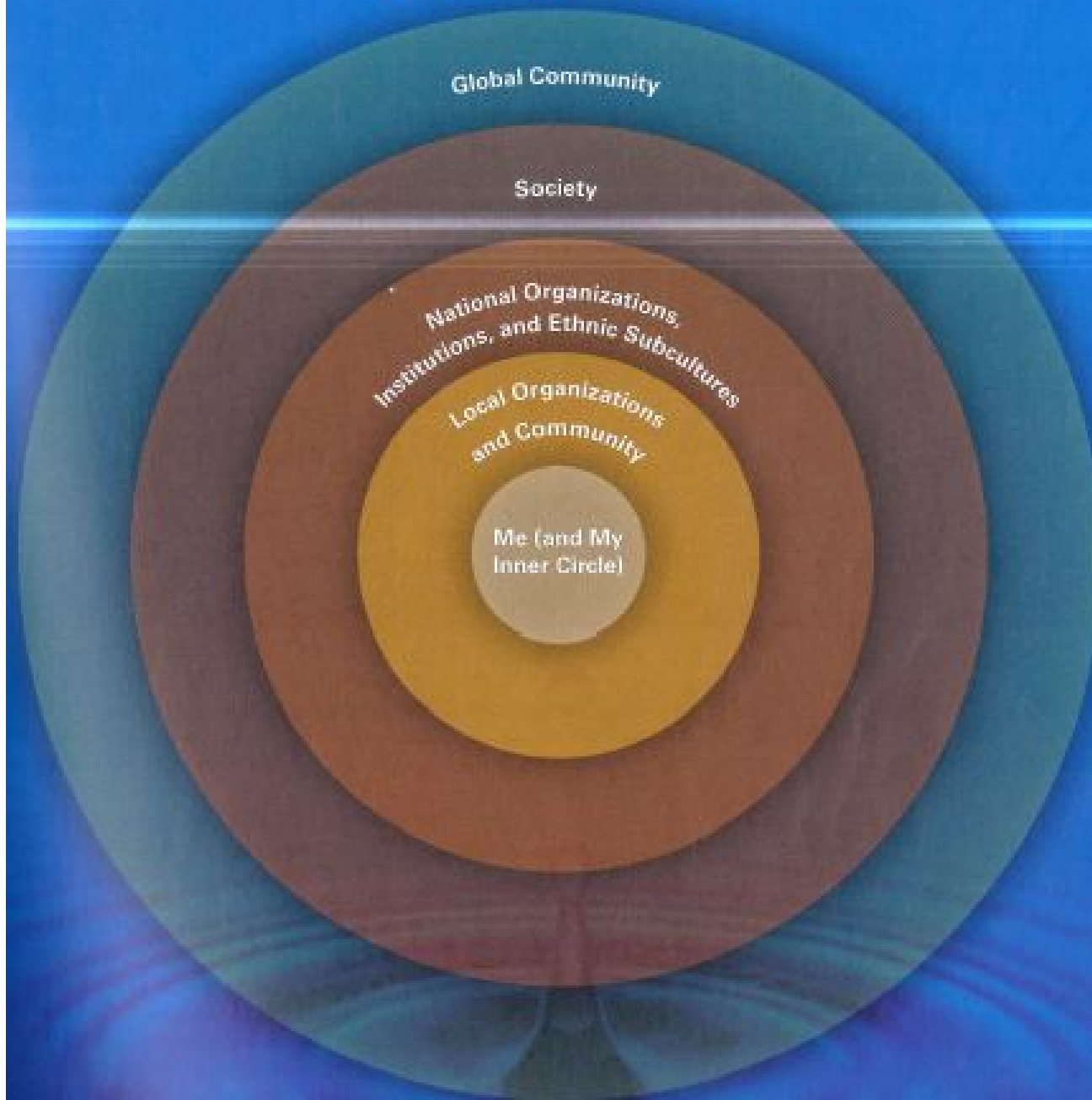
Sociologists use scientific methods to ask questions such as:

- Why and how do people and groups interact with one another?
- How are different groups or societies organized?
- How do they deal with conflict and change?
- How do changes in one society affect other societies?

What kind of questions do Sociologists Ask?

- Questions that can be measured objectively and scientifically.
- Sociologists do not make judgments or conclude that beliefs/practices are right or wrong.
- Applied sociologists conduct research to help organizations solve problems that impact social policy.

Our Social World Model



Questions for You: T/F

- Most people on welfare don't want to work and are just looking for a handout
- Most Roman Catholics oppose birth control
- Compared with men, women touch each other more while they are conversing.
- Because of the rapid rise in the divorce rate in the US, children are much more likely to live in single parent households now than they were a century ago.

Questions for You: T/F

- The American Dream does not exist. It's nearly impossible to climb much higher on the ladder of social status than your parents did.
- Because life seems more stressful in more densely populated states, it makes sense that suicide rates are higher in those states.
- There is very little sexism in the US anymore. This is not an issue that our generation needs to worry about.

Why Study Sociology?

- Better understand social situations from diverse perspectives
- Ability to collect data and evaluate problems
- Understand the intended and unintended consequences of social policies
- Reveal the complexities of social life
- Learn about ourselves and our biases
- Develop useful job skills (writing, critical thinking, group interaction, analytics, etc.)

Sociological Imagination: A Tool to Unlock the Matrix



Key Points

- Individuals and the social world mutually influence one another
- Sociologists rely on *scientific evidence*, not commonsense assumptions.
- Conflict and change are inevitable
- Sociological Imagination is a way of thinking about the world connecting individual troubles to public issues.
- All is interconnected.

Key Concepts

- **Social processes**—the actions taken by people in social units
- **Process of socialization**—how we learn the social expectations for members of society
- **Social structure**—people and groups that bring order to our lives and hold social units together
- **Social institutions**—provide the rules, roles, and relationships to direct and control human behavior

For Tuesday...

- Focus on suicide next week.
- Focus on Portner Reading. Skim Stack.
- Discussion 2 due
- QUESTIONS?