

SOCI 221

Basic Concepts in Sociology

Session 3 – Sociology and Other Related Social
Science Disciplines

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Session Overview

- **Overview**
- Sociology is not the only subject, which studies society and social interaction. Subjects like Economics, Psychology, Political Science, Social Anthropology and others also study aspects of social interaction and human behavior in society though not necessarily in the same way that sociology does. This section introduces students to the similarities and differences between sociology and other social sciences in their study of society and social interactions.
- **Objective of Session:** At the end of the session, the student will be able to
- Understand the similarities between sociology and other social sciences
- Identify and explain the specific differences between sociology and Psychology, Anthropology, History and Economics.
- Appreciate how the subject matter and approach of study of sociology differs from other social sciences

Session Outline

The key topics to be covered in the session are as follows:

- Topic One : Sociology and other Social Sciences
- Topic Two : Sociology and Psychology, Anthropology, History and Economics
- Topic Three: Sociology as a Synoptic Subject

Topic 1: Sociology and other Social Sciences

- Sociology is not the only subject, which studies society and social interaction.
- Other subjects such as Economics, Psychology, History and Anthropology among others also study aspects of social interaction and society.
- Sociology therefore shares some similarities with the other social sciences as they all study human behavior in society.
- However, sociology's approach and interest in the study of behavior is not in the same way as the other social sciences.

Sociology and other Social Sciences Cont.

- While other social sciences study society just as Sociology, their interest are limited to only aspects of social interaction, not the totality of it.
- Sociology, however, is interested in all aspects of social interaction. In this sense, what is the specialized fields of other related subjects is also the concern of sociology.
- Sociologists are of the view that, in order to get a full understanding of society, it must be studied in totality and not only aspects of it as in the case of the other disciplines.

Sociology and other Social Sciences Cont.

- Therefore, political organization which is the field of political science is also of interest to sociology and it forms an important part of sociological studies.
- Again economic organization and behavior which are specialized fields of economics are also relevant to sociological analysis. This because economic interaction is social behavior.
- Its therefore not surprising that within sociology, important branches like Political Sociology, Economic Sociology, Sociology of Religion among others.

Topic 2: Sociology, Psychology, History, Economics and Anthropology

- Sociology is similar to Psychology because they both study human behavior in society.
- The difference is that, Psychology's interest lies in processes and behavior relating to the individual, while sociology looks at the collectivity (group).
- The close resemblance between Sociology and Anthropology is because they both study human society.
- However, sociology focuses on complex societies while Anthropology deals with simple, small-scale societies.

Sociology, Psychology, History, Economics and Anthropology

- Sociology and History are similar because, they both study society and human behavior. Historical study is necessary for sociological research.
- History delves into past events of societies while Sociology explores contemporary societies.
- Sociology is similar to Economics since they both study economic behavior of people in society.
- Economics however deals with economic indicators such as demand and supply, price, savings and interest, while sociology focuses on how these factors bring about stability and change in society

Topic 3: Sociology as a Synoptic Subject

- Sociology is a Synoptic Subject because it concerns itself with all aspects of social life even to the extent of dabbling in the specialized areas of other recognized disciplines.
- This however, does not make sociology a jack of all trades, and master of none. Because of its ambitious interest, it has developed its own methodology, theoretical perspective and orientation.
- Sociology looks at problems similar to other disciplines from a perspective which will make for a better understanding of how society as a whole works.

Sociology as a Synoptic Subject Cont.

- For instance, religious beliefs and practices associated with the supernatural or God which is a domain of those in the Department of Religion.
- An important question for those in the Department of Religion may be whether or not God or the supernatural exists. However, this is not interest to the sociologist.
- Sociologists are interested in the supernatural only because whether it exists or not some people believe in it and this belief affects their behavior.

Sociology as a Synoptic Subject Cont.

- Sociologists are also interested in the functions that beliefs and practices associated with the supernatural perform for society.
- This belief may either bring the people together or introduce conflict or division among them.



Sample Question

- Sociology is a synoptic subject because it concerns itself with all aspects of social life and even dabbles in the specialized areas of other recognized disciplines. Does that make it a jack of all trades, and master of none?



Reading List/References

- Refer to students to relevant text/chapter or reading materials you will make available on Sakai
- Robertson, Ian (1987). *Sociology*. New York: Worth Publications
- Schaefer, Richard T. (2004). *Sociology: A Brief Introduction*. (5TH Edition) Boston: McGraw Hill Companies, Inc.
- Vander Zanden, J.W,(1990). *Sociology: The Core*. New York: McGraw-Hill.