

# I. The World of Sociology

## Objectives

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- Learn about the sociological approach
- Understand the development of sociology
- Understand sociology today

## Vocabulary

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conflict perspective	functionalist perspective	interactionist perspective	social sciences
dependent variable	hypothesis	latent function	sociological
dysfunction	ideal type	manifest function	sociology
Enlightenment	imagination	scientific method	symbol
ethics	independent variable	Social Darwinism	variable
function	Industrial Revolution	social fact	

## Background

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Students are members of many groups—family groups, school groups, social groups, special interest groups, and work groups. In studying sociology, students gain insight into the dynamics of human interactions in groups like these. Sociology is relevant to them because sociologists study patterns in human behavior—their behavior. Sociologists' findings in areas such as beliefs, rules, political systems, religions, families, and economic systems show students the universal aspects of their own experience and can give them new perspectives on their own beliefs, social interactions, and group dynamics. Informed by sociology, students may begin to see events such as visiting a museum or attending a football game or a graduation in a new light. In addition, they learn about other fields of social science that also study society and interactions among people.

In studying this chapter, students learn what sociologists do (teach, advise, research, and counsel). They study the scientific method and how sociologists apply it. This gives students a model for studying human behavior and for reaching sound

conclusions. Students discover the history of sociology from roots in the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution in England. They get an overview of the work of key figures in sociology such as Comte, Spencer, Marx, Durkheim, and Weber. They get a sense of how sociology developed in the U.S. and learn about the three major theoretical perspectives used to approach the study of society today: the functionalist perspective, the conflict perspective, and the interactionist perspective.

### Further Resources

- Coser, Lewis A. *Masters of Sociological Thought: Ideas in Historical and Social Context*. New York: HBJ, 1977.
- Smelser, Neil J., ed. *Handbook of Sociology*. New York: St. Martin, 1988.

## For Discussion

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### Review

1. What three basic areas do people with sociological imagination ask questions about?
2. What seven areas are included in the social sciences?
3. What are the five basic steps in the scientific method?
4. What are the five general principles of the ASA's Code of Ethics?

### Critical Thinking

1. Of the six social facts listed, which do you think would be the most interesting to study? Why?
2. Which of the four areas of sociologists' activity do you consider the most important? Why?
3. What are ethical concerns in sociology and why are they important in the study of people?
4. Of the five early influential sociologists, who do you think has the most accurate view of society? Why?
5. What is the main difference between the functionalist, conflict, and interactionist perspectives?

## Activities

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### 1. Choose a Group, Any Group

Ask students to look at the list of things a sociologist might study on page 2 in the chapter. Ask them to think of specific scenarios in each area in which they could gain information about group behavior and to describe specifically what they think they could learn from each.

### 2. Go Back in Time

Divide students into groups of four. Ask each group to choose a type of human interactions (professional, personal, social, etc.) and a period in history. Have each group research a different area and put on a skit that shows social interactions of that time. Have the class compare it to behavior today.

### 3. Internet: Research in Sociology

Direct students to use the Internet to research an area of sociology such as economic conditions, the educational system, crime, marriage, divorce, etc. Ask them to write brief papers presenting their findings.

### 4. Special Sources: Early Sociologists

Ask students to choose one of the key figures in sociology listed in this chapter and write a report summarizing their subject's life, main teachings, and contribution to sociology today.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

# I. The World of Sociology

As you read Chapter I, write an answer to each question below.

1. What is the difference between social facts and sociological imagination?

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2. Explain the purpose of the scientific method and briefly explain the five steps.

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3. Explain the three main ways that sociological research can be applied today.

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4. What was significant about the Enlightenment Era and the Industrial Revolution?

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5. Name the five most influential early sociologists and briefly explain their contributions.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

## I. The World of Sociology

Find the best answer for each item. Then circle the correct answer.

1. What is the definition of sociology?
  - a. specific analysis of individuals in a society
  - b. measurement of interactions among any living creatures in a society
  - c. study of society
  - d. examination of a limited group of people in a society
2. What is a way of looking at the world that sees the connections among the seemingly private concerns of individuals and important social issues?
  - a. professional competence
  - b. enlightenment
  - c. sociological imagination
  - d. social responsibility
3. What is one standard scientists follow to ensure that their research accurately describes an aspect of society?
  - a. social fact
  - b. scientific method
  - c. McDonaldization of society
  - d. functionalist perspective
4. If something inhibits or disrupts the working of the system as a whole, what is it called?
  - a. ideal type
  - b. dysfunction
  - c. dependent variable
  - d. latent function
5. What is the "conflict perspective"?
  - a. concentrates on aspects of society that encourage competition and change
  - b. measurement of outcomes based on quantity rather than quality
  - c. studies the way individuals respond to each other
  - d. social activity that can be observed or measured
6. What are the principles of conduct concerning what is good, moral, or right?
  - a. ethics
  - b. dysfunction
  - c. sociology
  - d. economics
7. What is defined as a model that can be used to measure reality?
  - a. enlightenment
  - b. scientific method
  - c. individualization
  - d. ideal type
8. What is the term for a prediction about the relationship between two or more variables?
  - a. testing
  - b. dysfunction
  - c. hypothesis
  - d. observation
9. What is something that stands for or represents something else?
  - a. correlative
  - b. symbol
  - c. latent function
  - d. sociological event
10. What is a measurable trait that is subject to change under different conditions?
  - a. variable
  - b. hypothesis
  - c. latent function
  - d. social fact

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## I. The World of Sociology

Read each description, and write the letter of the correct term on the line.

1. Sociologists systematically study social behavior in human groups and \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. look for patterns
  - b. use a cross-generational approach
  - c. treat the information as definitive
  - d. look for conflicts
2. To a sociologist, the personal event of test failure might be part of a larger \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. problem
  - b. pattern
  - c. function
  - d. system
3. Attendance at sporting events, crime patterns, and marriage rates are all examples of \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Social Darwinism
  - b. latent functions
  - c. interactionist perspective
  - d. social facts
4. The social sciences are a group of related disciplines that study various aspects of \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. society and human relations
  - b. interactions and dependencies
  - c. individual behavior
  - d. relationships between all living things
5. The principles of conduct concerning what is good or moral or right are called \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. ideal type
  - b. manifest functions
  - c. social responsibility
  - d. ethics
6. The early sociologist who promoted active involvement in solutions to social issues, differing from other sociologists, was \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Auguste Comte
  - b. Harriet Martineau
  - c. Karl Marx
  - d. Emile Durkheim
7. Among other things, functionalists compare \_\_\_\_\_ which are apparent and conscious, to \_\_\_\_\_ that are often unconscious, unintended, or hidden.
  - a. independent variable/dependent variable
  - b. symbols/variables
  - c. behaviors/feelings
  - d. manifest functions/latent functions
8. According to conflict theorists, social conflict arises from competition over limited \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. resources
  - b. social exposure
  - c. awareness
  - d. ideas
9. Interactionists observe and record the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ conveyed by individual actions.
  - a. aggression/anger
  - b. substance/creativity
  - c. intentions/meaning
  - d. conflict/competition
10. Comparing the theoretical perspectives, the one that DOES NOT analyze the entire society is \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. interactionist
  - b. conflict
  - c. functionalist
  - d. behaviorist

### Essay Question

From your own observations, how has your sociological perspective changed based on what see around you? What does your society see as important?