

## CHAPTER 1

### SOCIOLOGY: STUDYING SOCIAL PROBLEMS

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#### CHAPTER UPDATE

In this seventh edition of *Social Problems*, <LINK>Chapter 1</LINK> is thoroughly updated with the most recent statistical information available on economic inequality, the public's assessment of the most serious social problems, and many other issues. There is new discussion of current controversies including the increasing concern over concussion in football, recent terrorism, increasing fear of immigration and other dimensions of the 2016 presidential campaign. There is expanded coverage of gun violence and also the increasing importance of social media in the process of defining social problems. As you expect, the revised chapter also contains the latest data on topics including global inequality and the distribution of public attitudes on the political spectrum. More than 20 new research citations appear in the revised chapter.

This new edition is also available in the new Revel learning program. This new digital content allows for ever-increasing animation, greater interactivity, a large amount of supplementary learning material in the margins, as well as carefully chosen readings and video material. As always, John Macionis has personally written, developed, and updated all this content. Revel will raise the intellectual performance of your students and provide all the learning content at roughly half the price of a conventional bound book.

### **AUTHOR'S NOTE**

In some respects, this first chapter is the most important chapter in the text. For one thing, this chapter introduces the sociological perspective, which guides sociological thinking about the society and world around us. Students who “get it” early in the course are those who have the best chance to do well throughout the course. How can you help them develop a sociological imagination? Giving clear definitions is important. But it is vital that you illustrate the sociological perspective with lots of examples. Here are several strong examples of sociological thinking found in this chapter:

- ☐ The chapter-opening story of Marcos Jorman illustrates how unemployment has more to do with the operation of society than the choices made by individual people.
- ☐ The feature focusing on C. Wright Mills explains why what many people view as “personal problems” are more correctly understood as “social issues”.

### **CHAPTER OUTLINE**

#### **I. Seeing Patterns: The Sociological Imagination**

##### **1.1 Explain the benefits of learning about sociology and using the sociological imagination.**

- Sociological Imagination
  - Point of view that highlights how society affects the experiences we have and the choices we make
- Sociology
  - Systematic study of human societies
- Society

- People who live within some territory and share many patterns of behavior
- Culture
  - A way of life including widespread values (about what is good and bad), beliefs (about what is true), and behavior (what people do every day)
    - A cultural pattern in the United States is individualism
- Many of the personal troubles people face are really social issues with their roots in the operation of the larger society.
- **Social Policy:** C. Wright Mills: Turning Personal Problems into Social Issues

## II. Social Problems: The Basics

### 1.2 Define the concept “social problem” and explain how societies come to define some issues—and not others—as social problems.

- Social Problem
  - A condition that undermines the well-being of some or all members of society and is usually a matter of public controversy.
  - Because any issue affects various segments of our population differently, a particular social problem is rarely harmful to everyone.
- Social Problems over Time
  - What problems U.S. adults consider to be most serious have changed over time.
  - Table 1-1 Serious Social Problems, 1935 and 2013
- The Social-Constructionist Approach
  - The assertion that social problems arise as people define conditions as undesirable and in need of change.
  - Social problems have a subjective foundation, therefore it is important to consider objective facts and the subjective perceptions.
    - See Figure 1-1 The Objective and Subjective Assessment of Social Issues
- Claims Making
  - The process of convincing the public and important public officials that a particular issue or situation should be defined as a social problem.
  - Claims are often made by ordinary people via activism and with support of mass media.
  - Most controversial issues involve claims making from at least two different positions; people on both sides of any issue use language to “spin” claims in one way or another.
  - Successful claims making is often marked by the passing of a law.
- Problems and Social Movements
  - Social movement
    - An organized effort at claims making that tries to shape the way people think about an issue in order to encourage or discourage social change.
  - Stages in Social Movements (see Figure 1-2 Four Stages in the Life Course of a Social Movement)
    - Emergence

- When people share concern about the status quo
- Coalescence
  - Organizations begin holding rallies and demonstrations
- Formalization
  - Established players on the political scene emerge
- Decline
  - Run out of money, claims fail to catch on with the public, or strong opposition
- Social Problems: Eight Assertions
  - Social problems result from the ways in which society operates.
  - Social problems are not caused by bad people.
  - Problems are socially constructed as people define a condition as harmful and in need of change.
  - People see problems differently.
  - Definitions of problems change over time.
  - Problems involve subjective values as well as objective facts.
  - Many—but not all—social problems can be solved.
  - Various social problems are related.
- Social Problems: A Global Perspective
  - Global perspective shows us that some social problems cross national boundaries.
  - Many dimensions of life—and many of life’s challenges—may be quite different elsewhere.
- **Social Problems in Global Perspective:** The Global Village: Problems around the World

### III. Analyzing Social Problems: Sociological Theory

#### 1.3 Apply sociological theory to the study of social problems.

- Theory
  - A statement of how and why specific facts are related
- Theoretical approach
  - A basic image of society that guides theory and research
  - Using a particular sociological approach leads sociologists to ask certain questions
- The Structural-Functional Approach
  - Sees society as a system of many interrelated parts
  - Social institutions
    - Major spheres of social life, or societal subsystems, organized to meet a basic human need
  - Early Functional Theory: Problems as Social Pathology
    - A model that treats social problems as a disruptions in society’s normal operation
    - Social pathology theory

- A model that treats social problems as a disruptions in society's normal operation, like a disease
  - Herbert Spencer
    - Poverty is a result of some people lacking the ability and personal discipline to work
- The Chicago School: Problems as Disorganization
  - Social disorganization theory
    - Problems arise when society breaks down due to social change that occurs too rapidly.
- More Recent Functionalism: Problems as Dysfunctions
  - Manifest functions are intended and widely recognized while latent functions are unintended and less well known
  - Problems are understood as social patterns that disrupt the normal operation of society
  - These sociologists also pointed out that just as “good” things such as sports can have some bad consequences, “bad” things such as terrorism can sometimes do some good.
- The Social-Conflict Approach
  - A theoretical framework that sees society as divided by inequality and conflict
  - Marxist Theory: Problems and Class Conflict
    - Class conflict theory.
    - To Marx, social problems are the inevitable result of the normal operation of a capitalist economy.
  - Multiculturalism: Problems of Racial and Ethnic Inequality
    - Multicultural theory explains social problems in terms of racial and ethnic inequality.
- The Feminist Approach
  - Feminism is a political movement that seeks the social equality of women and men.
- The Symbolic-Interaction Approach
  - The goal of describing society more in terms of how people experience the world underlies the symbolic-interaction approach, a theoretical framework that sees society as the product of individuals interacting with one another.
  - Learning Theory: Problems and the Social Environment
    - Learning theory claims that people learn troublesome attitudes and behaviors from others around them.
  - Labeling Theory: Problems and Social Definitions
    - Labeling theory states that the reality of any particular situation depends on how people define it.

#### **IV. Finding the Facts: Sociological Research**

##### **1.4 Discuss the methods sociologists use to study social problems.**

- Research Methods

- Survey Research: Asking Questions
  - The most widely used research procedure is the survey, a research method in which subjects respond to items on a questionnaire or in an interview.
  - A questionnaire is a series of items a researcher presents to subjects for their response.
  - The interview is a more personal survey technique in which a researcher meets face to face with respondents to discuss some issue.
  - Questionnaires offer the chance for greater breadth of opinion, and interviews can provide greater depth of understanding.
  - Sometimes, researchers pursue a case study, in which they focus on a single case. The advantage of this approach is that focusing on a single case allows greater detail and depth of understanding.
- Field Research: Joining In
  - Also called “participant observation,” a research method for observing people while joining them in their everyday activities.
  - Field researchers have to balance the demands of being a participant, who is personally involved in the setting, with those of an observer, who adopts a more detached role in order to assess a setting or situation more objectively.
- Experimental Research: Looking for Causes
  - Experiment, a research method for investigating cause-and-effect relationships under tightly controlled conditions.
  - Most experiments are carried out in a specially designed laboratory where researchers change one variable while keeping the others the same.
- Secondary Analysis: Using Available Data
  - A research method that makes use of data originally collected by others.
  - Reliable sources are the Census Bureau and FBI.
- Truth, Science, and Politics
  - Science can help us learn, say, how many U.S. families are poor and it may even yield some insights as to why they are poor. But science cannot tell us what we should do about poverty.
  - Sociologists disagree about the extent to which politics should guide their research.
- Truth and Statistics
  - The numerical results that researchers often include when they report their findings. Statistics are easy ways to characterize a large number of subjects.
  - Tips to be a more critical reader
    - Check how researchers define their terms.
    - Remember that research is never perfect.
    - Researchers may “spin” their statistics.

## **V. Responding to Social Problems: Social Policy**

### **1.5 Identify factors that shape how societies devise policy to respond to social problems.**

- Policy Evaluation
  - To evaluate any policy and whether it works we must answer three questions
    - How do we measure “success”?
    - What are the costs of the policy or program?
    - Who should get the help?
- Policy and Culture
  - Social policy is shaped by cultural values; societies respond to a social problem in a particular way not necessarily because that approach is cheapest or works best, but because a particular response seems, according to the society’s culture, to be “the right thing to do.”
- Policy and Politics
  - The kinds of policies people favor depends on their political outlook.
    - Conservative people try to limit the scope of societal change. Because the existing society is viewed as good, then problems arise mostly because of the actions and choices of bad individuals. This is why conservatives favor policies that treat problems as shortcomings of particular individuals rather than as shortcomings of society.
    - People with more liberal views see problems in the organization of society itself and favor greater efforts by government toward social change.

## **VI. Politics: Constructing Problems and Defining Solutions**

### **1.6 Analyze how political attitudes shape how people define social problems and solutions.**

- The Political Spectrum
  - The political spectrum, a continuum representing a range of political attitudes, from “left” to “right.”
  - Table 1-2 shows that 27% of people consider themselves liberal to some degree, 36.1% say they are moderates, and 31.8% say they are conservative to some degree.
- Conservatives, Liberals, and Radicals
  - “Conservatives” look to the past for guidance on how to live.
  - A “good” society, from a liberal point of view, is one in which people are able to make choices for themselves and all categories of people have about the same life chances.
  - Radicals point to some basic flaw in society that is responsible for any number of social problems involving social inequality.
- Social Issues
  - Social issues are political debates involving moral judgments about how people should live.
  - Leaning Left
    - In general, social liberals think that people should be free to shape their lifestyles for themselves.

- Leaning Right
  - Social conservatives are respectful of traditional values and want to conserve them.
- Economic Issues
  - Economic issues are political debates about how a society should produce and distribute material resources.
  - Leaning Left
    - In general, economic liberals (leaning to the left on economic issues) favor government regulation of the economy in order to reduce inequality.
  - Leaning Right
    - Economic conservatives (who lean to the right on economic issues) call for a smaller role for government in the economy.
- Who Thinks What?
  - Social standing is a good predictor, but it turns out that most people are actually liberal on one kind of issue and conservative on another.
  - A Word about Gender
    - Political analysts have documented a modest “gender gap” in voting patterns that paints women as slightly more liberal than men.
- Going On from Here
  - Social problems are socially constructed. Political attitudes guide what we define as a problem and what policies we are likely to support as solutions.
- **Constructing Social Problems: A Defining Moment: A Call to Action: The Message of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**
- **Defining Solutions: Whose Problem Is It?**

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1.1 Explain the benefits of learning about sociology and using the sociological imagination.
- 1.2 Define the concept “social problem” and explain how societies come to define some issues—and not others—as social problems.
- 1.3 Apply sociological theory to the study of social problems.
- 1.4 Discuss the methods sociologists use to study social problems.
- 1.5 Identify factors that shape how societies devise policy to respond to social problems.
- 1.6 Analyze how political attitudes shape how people define social problems and solutions.

## DETAILED TEACHING OBJECTIVES

After reading <LINK>Chapter 1</LINK>, students should be able to:

1. Discuss the sociological imagination and explain how it helps us to recognize that our personal troubles are rooted in the operation of society.
2. Describe how many of the troubles individual people experience have their roots in the organization of the larger society.
3. Describe how people's ideas about what constitutes serious social problems change over time.
4. Discuss the social constructionist approach and explain how subjective perceptions and objective facts play a part in the social construction of social problems.
5. Explain the process of claims making and how it relates to the construction of social problems.
6. Identify and describe the four stages in the life course of a social movement.
7. Identify the eight basic assertions that sociologists make in their approach to social problems.
8. Discuss the importance of the global perspective in studying social problems.
9. Discuss the structural functional approach, the social conflict approach, and the symbolic interaction approach as they are employed when analyzing social problems.
10. Compare and contrast the social pathology theory, social disorganization theory, and more recent forms of structural functionalism theory.
11. Compare and contrast Marxist conflict theory with multicultural theory and feminism/gender conflict theory.
12. Compare and contrast learning theory with labeling theory.
13. Identify both contributions and criticisms of the structural functional, social conflict, and symbolic interaction approaches to understanding social problems.

14. Explain how surveys, field research, experimental research, and secondary analysis are used as sociological research methods, and recognize their strengths and weaknesses.
15. Explain the limitations of science and the importance of political values in the creation of solutions for social problems.
16. Explain how statistics presented by researchers contribute to the construction of social problems and define solutions.
17. Explain how policy evaluation, cultural values, and political outlook guide the process of defining solutions to social problems.
18. Explain how one's position on the political spectrum guides the construction of social problems and defines solutions.

### **JOHN'S CHAPTER CLOSE-UP: THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONIST APPROACH**

What sets this learning product text apart from all the others is our foundation in the social constructionist approach. The heart of this approach is presented on pages <PG>7</PG>–<PG>8</PG>.

By learning that social problems are socially constructed, students gain several major insights:

- ☐ Students understand how different problems emerge in a society at different times.
- ☐ Students understand why the most harmful social patterns may or may not be defined as social problems (see <LINK>Fig. 1-1</LINK> on <PG>pp. 6</PG>).
- ☐ Students understand how and why different categories of people define situations differently. In some cases, in fact, one person's "problem" may be another's "solution."
- ☐ Students are ready to understand the process of claims making, by which problems come into being.
- ☐ Perhaps most importantly, students will learn to engage in the social construction of problems guided by positions on the political spectrum. Only by embracing the social construction of

problems can we engage in the ongoing debate among various categories of the population about what is or is not a social problem.

### **JOHN'S PERSONAL VIDEO SELECTION**

What makes us embrace something as beautiful or turn a blind eye? The social construction of problems is one very important illustration of the broader process we call the social construction of reality. To show students how what we see—and what we fail to notice—is guided by our social surroundings, share this short video with the class. Go to YouTube and search for Joshua Bell's subway experiment. In that video you will see Joshua Bell, who ranks among the top violinists in the world, playing in public. If what you see were to take place at the Kennedy Center or the Carnegie Hall, people would be paying big bucks to enjoy this artist's talents. But Bell is playing in a subway station in Washington, D.C., as if he were a down-and-out guy (a busker) playing for coins. The man is the same, the music is the same, but the setting is different. How much of a difference does the social setting make? Watch how almost no one notices the extraordinary opportunity right in front of their eyes.

### **RESEARCH FOR A CUTTING-EDGE CLASSROOM**

For each chapter of the text, I am happy to share a short, PowerPoint-based presentation informed by very recent research. These presentations deal with highly current and typically controversial issues that are in the news and are part of the country's political dialogue. Each presentation provides a clear statement of the issue, several slides that present recent research findings from organizations including Pew, Gallup, or other organizations, notes that help instructors develop the importance of the data, and questions for class discussion.

For Chapter 1, there are two PowerPoint presentations. The first is “Social Media and Social Movements: #BlackLivesMatter,” which explains how social media helped launch this widespread social movement. Second, to accompany discussion of social research, is a presentation titled “Sociological Investigation: The General Social Survey,” which highlights our discipline’s major survey program. These PowerPoints can be downloaded from my personal website, [www.TheSociologyPage.com](http://www.TheSociologyPage.com). Look at the bottom left of the main page for the doorway to “PowerPoint Presentations.” You can also visit this text’s Resources site at Pearson's online catalog, or find the PowerPoints at the Instructor's Resources folder in your Pearson REVEL account.

## TEACHING SUGGESTIONS, EXERCISE, AND PROJECTS

1. A good illustration of what we call the social construction of problems is found in <BIB>Estelle Friedman (2012)</BIB> accounts of varying views of the concept “rape.” Gender, specifically patriarchy, is at work in this process. In the 1800s, a dominant legal principle called *coverture* means that men had legal ownership of the property and body of their wives. For this reason, the crime of rape was defined as the carnal knowledge of a female by a male *other than her husband*. In short, women had no right to withhold sex from a husband. Race, too, figured in to the definition of rape. Women of color who were slaves could not deny sex to a master; nor could they testify against him in a court of law. Therefore, just as rape did not exist in marriage, so it did not exist in master–slave relations. More generally, given the importance of racial caste in the United States, black men were easily charged with rape of white women, but the converse was almost never

the case. By the time of the Civil War, as part of the emergence of the feminist movement, these constructions came under criticism. Worth discussion is the extent to which our understanding of the crime of rape is still guided by gender and race. As recently as 2012, for example, a man running for a Senate seat representing Missouri spoke against abortion, claiming there were cases of “legitimate rape.” Only recently has the federal definition of rape changed to include both female and male perpetrators—likely an acknowledgment that women and men have more equal social standing.

2. Brett Johnson believes that there are four main classroom contributors to students’ pessimistic appraisals of their ability to improve social problems: authoritarian teaching methods, a culture of “doom and gloom,” little attention to solutions to social problems, and no linkage of social problems to individual behavior. In his article, “Overcoming ‘Doom and Gloom’: Empowering Students in Courses on Social Problems, Injustice, and Inequality” (*Teaching Sociology*, Vol. 33, January 2005: pp. 44–58), Johnson proposes a five-step process to effectively teach about social problems while empowering students to help solve these problems:

- a. Identify the process through which social problems are constructed.
- b. Identify the existence of the social problem.
- c. Identify core causes of the social problem.
- d. Identify structural solutions to the social problem.
- e. Identify individual actions that contribute to social solutions.

3. Scott A. Desmond has developed an exercise to address personal disagreements about how various social problems affect our world. Desmond believes that his approach

helps students to think about their own attitudes and opinions in perspective, and in comparison with attitudes different than their own. His article, “Prioritizing Social Problems: An Exercise for Exploring Students’ Attitudes about Social Problems,” appears in the January 2005 issue of *Teaching Sociology* (Vol. 33,: pp. 59–65).

Instructors are sometimes reluctant to orchestrate discussions of contentious issues for fear that such activities will disrupt their classrooms and create difficulty. Desmond’s article offers numerous suggestions for avoiding these pitfalls, while still addressing students’ personal disagreements directly and with positive results.

4. Susan M. Ross and Janet McNeil Hurlbert have devised a technique for incorporating problem-based learning with social problems courses. They describe a class exercise that involves the recent Vermont Supreme Court decision to legalize civil unions. Their article, “Problem-Based Learning: An Exercise on Vermont’s Legalization of Civil Unions,” appears in the January 2004 issue of *Teaching Sociology* (Vol. 32: pp. 79–93).

5. Many students who enroll in the social problems course will have difficulty seeing the interconnectedness of the problematic issues under study—they will tend to view each problem as a separate issue to be solved independently from the others. The discussion of political perspectives is important here. Help students to see that conservatives view the “good society” as traditional, with the institutions that pass on symbolic culture (family and religion) having the greatest importance. Therefore, any trend that weakens traditional family structure or weakens traditional religious beliefs is likely to be viewed as a problem. Similarly, liberals take a different view of a “good

society” as socially equal. They focus all dimensions of social inequality as problems and see increasing economic inequality as a particularly important issue. In addition, any disparity involving gender and race is also likely to be defined as a problem. Radical-left analysis also highlights various problems involving social inequality, but the cause of inequality is rooted in the system (for Marxists, the capitalist economy).

6. The text mentions C. Wright Mills’s approach to the sociological perspective. Chad Hanson has formulated an interesting approach to illustrating Mills’s sociological imagination through the use of depression-era photographs (*Teaching Sociology*, Vol. 30, April 2002: pp. 235–242). You may benefit from reading Hanson’s article. Every instructor has encountered the phrase, “Pictures are worth a thousand words.” Visual sociology is a sub-field that has attracted a great deal of attention in recent decades and is becoming increasingly popular as a classroom technique. Hanson’s approach is an illustration of the application of these techniques.

7. “Active learning” techniques are becoming more and more popular in college classrooms today. Here are two articles that incorporate the active learning approach with the teaching of sociological theory: Allen Scarborough’s “Bringing Theory Closer to Home Through Active Learning and Online Discussion,” *Teaching Sociology*, Vol. 32, April 2004: pp. 222–231; and Melissa Holtzman’s “Teaching Sociological Theory Through Active Learning: The Irrigation Exercise,” *Teaching Sociology*, Vol. 33, April 2005: pp. 206–212.

8. In many ways, the problems involved with teaching sociological theory are similar to those encountered by instructors who teach methodology. Students frequently

comment that theory and methods are “boring” and “not very useful.” Susan Gotsch-Thompson has written an article titled “The Integration of Gender into the Teaching of Classical Social Theory: Help from *The Handmaid’s Tale*,” *Teaching Sociology*, Vol. 18, January 1990: pp. 69–73, which may be helpful as you approach social theory in your social problems class.

9. In conjunction with the interactionist perspective, the concepts of *ethnocentrism* and *cultural relativity* are essential for understanding social problems. Kim Schopmeyer and Bradley Fisher present some interesting instructional techniques for exploring ethnocentrism and cultural relativity in their article, “Insiders and Outsiders: Exploring Ethnocentrism and Cultural Relativity in Sociology Courses,” *Teaching Sociology*, Vol. 21, April 1993: pp. 148–153.

10. In his article “Unconventional First Days: Encouraging Students to Wonder About Social Life and Learning,” *Teaching Sociology*, Vol. 27, July 1999: pp. 258–263, Paul Higgins points out that the first day of a college course is very important and can set the tone for the balance of the semester. You may find Higgins’s article helpful as you construct your personal approach to the social problems course.

11. Theodore D. Fuller offers considerable insight about the use of computers in the social problems course (“Using Computer Assignments to Promote Active Learning in the Undergraduate Social Problems Course,” *Teaching Sociology*, Vol. 26, July 1998: pp. 215–221). If you plan to utilize computer support in your own class, Fuller’s article may be helpful.

12. In many ways, the problems involved with teaching sociological theory are similar to those encountered by instructors who teach methodology. Students frequently comment that theory and methods are “boring” and “not very useful,” and undergraduate students are frequently intimidated by these discussions because they are largely unfamiliar with theory and methods. Kathleen S. Lowney offers an exercise that should help your students in her article, “Reducing Theory Anxiety Through Puzzles,” *Teaching Sociology*, Vol. 26, January 1998: pp. 69–73.
13. Orchestrate a discussion concerning the types of research investigations on social problems. Have students evaluate the pros and cons of each of the methods discussed in the text: demographic studies, survey research, field observation, and social experiments. Encourage students to consider the ethical issues that are involved with the use of human subjects in conducting social research. The text’s discussion of these issues in [Chapter 1](#) should be extremely helpful to your students in this process.
14. Have each student bring a newspaper or magazine article that discusses a social problem and a solution for it. The students can then discuss how they would go about assessing the effectiveness of the solution, considering the issues of sampling, validity, etc., discussed in the text. Other methodological considerations can be introduced in lecture. The point of this exercise is to instill in the students the idea that there are logical and methodological criteria that need to be considered when evaluating solutions to problems.
15. Have students bring a newspaper or magazine article that presents statistics on a social problem. Ask students to use their newly acquired expertise to evaluate how the

statistics could be interpreted in more than one way and to discuss the “spin” used by the author. Discuss how statistics are tools that help to construct a social reality for the audience.

16. Ask each student to use the political spectrum to assess where he or she stands politically. Divide students into groups of 4–5 with peers who are a political match. Each group should try to find common points of interest that have impacted their political values (religious beliefs, social class, parental views, type of school, etc.). Once each group has discussed social factors that have influenced their lives, ask each group to appoint a spokesperson to present their group’s commonalities to the class. After the presentations, discuss how different experiences contribute to the social construction of political views.

17. Show news coverage of the same story from various competing sources to the class. Discuss the media’s role in the social construction of social problems.

## **WEB LINKS**

Cambridge Online Journals: *Politics and Gender*

<http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayJournal?jid=PAG>

Gallery of Sociologists

<http://www.thesociologypage.com/>

An Introduction to Social Policy

<http://www2.rgu.ac.uk/publicpolicy/introduction/index.htm>

A “Map” of Sociological Theory

<http://web.archive.org/web/20071221055031/http://www.hewett.norfolk.sch.uk/curric/soc/Theory.htm>

Mothers Against Drunk Driving

<http://www.madd.org>

Social Construction Theory

<http://www.andosciasociology.net/resources/Social+Construction+Theory.pdf>

The Political Compass

<http://www.politicalcompass.org/index>

The Society for the Study of Social Problems

<http://www.sssp1.org/>

Take Back the Night

<http://www.takebackthenight.org>

U.S. Census Bureau

<http://www.census.gov>

## **ESSAY QUESTIONS**

1. Discuss the distinction made by C. Wright Mills between “personal troubles” and “social issues.” How does this distinction call out certain types of solutions?
2. Explain the social constructionist approach to social problems.
3. Explain how claims making is related to the construction of social problems.
4. Explain how a social movement’s success can lead to its decline.
5. Explain how improving one social problem sometimes makes another one worse.
6. Compare early functionalism to more recent functionalist theory.
7. Identify and discuss the four major research methods that sociologists use when investigating social problems.

8. Distinguish social issues and economic issues. Explain how one's political values shape a person's attitudes on both types of issues.
9. Describe the conservative, liberal, and radical-left viewpoint.
10. Do you think men and women typically have different perspectives of men and women on major political issues? Why or why not?

## **FILM LIST**

### **NEVER ENOUGH**

**A Documentary by Kelly Anderson**

**(2014, 35 m, Contact: [kanderso@hunter.cuny.edu](mailto:kanderso@hunter.cuny.edu))**

This recent video explores the relationship between people and their possessions. Do “things” serve us (and become part of the solution) or do things take over our lives (becoming part of the problem).

### **BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES**

**(1995, 23 m, Films for the Humanities and Sciences)**

This video explores the “nature–nurture debate,” assessing how social behavior is a combination of genetics and social learning. The presentation may lean a bit more toward the “nature” side of the debate than some sociologists will prefer, but this assessment can still be useful for your social problems class.

### **INTRODUCING SOCIOLOGY**

**(2004, 15 m, Insight Media)**

In this program, students and professors explain what sociology is and what sociologists do. The program discusses the sociological approach, looks at areas addressed through sociological study, and considers social constructions. It also shows how sociological thinking provides a unique perspective on such items as mobile phones and security cameras.

### **MASS APPEAL: SOCIAL MOVEMENTS**

**(2005, 30 m, Insight Media)**

Emphasizing that social movements are not a new phenomenon, this program looks at the idea of collective identity that is at the heart of social movements. It features sociologists who explain how such critical factors as politics, values, emotions, and tactics determine whether a movement succeeds or fails. Students will gain an understanding of the role of social movements in the construction of social problems.

## **PRAY THE DEVIL BACK TO HELL**

**(2009, 72 m, Fork Films)**

This documentary explores how thousands of ordinary women worked together to end a bloody civil war in Liberia. Armed with nothing but white t-shirts, they staged a silent protest outside the presidential palace. This film will help students understand: (a) the objective and subjective foundations of the social problem, (b) the process of claims making, and (c) the four stages in a social movement.

## **RIGHT AMERICA: FEELING WRONGED—SOME VOICES FROM THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL**

**(2008, 44 m, Films for the Humanities and Sciences)**

This film reveals a country deeply polarized over its identity. Emotionally charged issues—such as gun control, abortion, gay rights, and a perceived media bias against the McCain-Palin ticket—propel this fascinating narrative, which documents the months leading up to President Obama's election. Students will gain an understanding of the political spectrum and how one's location on the spectrum impacts the social construction of social problems.

## **SOCIAL CHANGE**

**(2002, 30 m, Insight Media)**

Examining the roles of technology, war, and modernization in initiating social change, this program defines social change and offers historical examples from the United States and around the world. It uses the three levels of sociological analysis to explore the positive and negative dynamics of social change. Students will gain an understanding of how solutions for social problems are implemented and how the three theoretical perspectives can be applied.

## **SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONIST IDEAS ABOUT RESEARCH**

**(2000, 30 m, Insight Media)**

This program examines the social construction of research. It considers the study of ADHD to show how choices of interview and observation subjects affect the definition of the disorder.

## **SOCIAL INTERACTION, CONFLICT, AND CHANGE**

**(1991, 30 m, Insight Media)**

This presentation examines how people and communities are affected by social conflict and social change. Role conflict and role strain are mirrored in a variety of illustrations. The video also makes clear how social stratification, prejudice, discrimination, power, and collective behavior affect the processes of social change.

## **SOCIAL ISSUES OF GLOBAL IMPORTANCE**

**(1995, 28 m, Films for the Humanities and Sciences)**

This documentary is based on a United Nations conference that was designed to assess social problems in different nations of the world. If you wish to incorporate an international perspective in your class, this video will be most useful.

## **SOCIETIES**

**(1991, 30 m, Insight Media)**

This program demonstrates how small, moderate, and complex societies each satisfy basic human needs. Looking at different societies within the United States, the presentation illustrates how societies change over time with respect to size, technology, and social structure. The evolution of social relationships as societies become larger and more complex is examined. The video also provides a glimpse of how international social changes have affected both nations and societies.

## **SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION**

**(1991, 30 m, Insight Media)**

This is a series of more than 20 videos, each 30 minutes in length, which have been constructed specifically for use in college-level introductory sociology courses. Specific installments in this series will be listed elsewhere in this manual.

## **SOCIOLOGICAL INQUIRY**

**(2002, 30 m, Insight Media)**

This program examines the processes by which sociologists study group behaviors and considers the ways in which sociological inquiry differs from everyday observations and conclusions.

Students will gain an understanding of the importance of empirical research, the processes involved in quantitative research, and the mixed methodology approach to sociological inquiry.

## **SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES**

**(2002, 30 m, Insight Media)**

Explaining the central ideas behind three major sociological perspectives (conflict, functionalism, and interactionism), this program shows how each helps sociologists interpret events and also considers the tools and methods of sociology. Students will gain an understanding of how the perspective that one uses in interpreting a social problem will impact the types of solutions offered.

## **THE STRUGGLE FOR HISTORY**

**(1994, 60 m, People's Video)**

Michael Parenti explains how the power elite socially constructs historical documents. Parenti helps viewers see that the perspective of those who write history impacts the perspectives and interpretations of those in contemporary society.

## **TRUTH AND CONSEQUENCES: IS AMERICA GOING DOWNHILL?**

**(2000, 2 parts, 30 m each, Films for the Humanities and Sciences)**

This series poses the question of what has become of the classic American virtues of good manners and honesty and argues that changes in the American character have promoted a pervasive attitude of “me first” and “anything goes.” Some obvious links to social problems are highlighted.

## **VISIONS OF AMERICA**

**(1998, 58 m, Films for the Humanities and Sciences)**

In this film, seven well-known Americans (Hank Aaron, Dave Barry, Jimmy Carter, Barbara Mandrell, John McLaughlin, Gloria Steinem, and Amy Tan) have a lot to say about America. What they say reveals an America fraught with both opportunities and serious problems, full of struggle and prejudice, and simultaneously characterized by patriotism and irreverence. Their “visions” are original essays by these distinguished citizens, which have been translated into video portraits of American life and values.

## Chapter 1 Test Bank, Sociology: Studying Social Problems

In this revision of the test bank, I have updated all of the questions to reflect changes in *Social Problems*, 7<sup>th</sup> edition. For each chapter of the text, this test bank provides fifty multiple-choice questions and five essay questions. The multiple-choice questions are coded for level of difficulty (easy, moderate, or difficult). The multiple-choice questions are also coded for the level of reasoning involved. The four levels of reasoning are: Factual (recall of factual material), Understand (understanding key concepts), Apply (application of sociological knowledge to a situation), and Analyze (identifying the interrelationship among variables).

### Types of Questions

#### Easy to Difficult Level of Difficulty

|                     |  | Mult Choice |  | Essay    | Total Qs |
|---------------------|--|-------------|--|----------|----------|
| Factual material    |  | 16 (32%)    |  | 0        | 16       |
| Understand concepts |  | 18 (36%)    |  | 0        | 18       |
| Apply what you know |  | 11 (22%)    |  | 2 (40%)  | 13       |
| Analyze the issue   |  | 5 (10%)     |  | 3 (60%)  | 8        |
|                     |  | 50 (100%)   |  | 5 (100%) | 55       |

### Multiple-Choice Questions

TB\_Q1.1.1  
Source ID: n/a

Which of the following terms refers to a point of view that shows us how society affects the experiences and choices of individuals?

- a. social patterns
- b. sociological imagination

- c. comparative perspective
- d. social problems approach

(Answer: b)

Consider This: Understanding that issues affect not only us but other people like us helps to put sociological problems into a broader perspective. L.O.1.1 Explain the benefits of learning about sociology and using the sociological imagination.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.1 Explain the benefits of learning about sociology and using the sociological imagination.

Topic/Concept: Seeing Patterns: The Sociological Imagination

Difficulty Level: Easy

Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

Page: 5

TB\_Q1.1.2

Source ID: n/a

We tend to assume people are responsible for their own troubles because our way of life in the United States emphasizes

- a. collective goals.
- b. individualism.
- c. tradition.
- d. relying on luck.

(Answer: b)

Consider This: Cultural patterns in the United States are diverse, but one widely shared value is the idea that for better or worse, people are responsible for their own lives. L.O.1.1 Explain the benefits of learning about sociology and using the sociological imagination.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.2 Define the concept “social problem” and explain how societies come to define some issues—and not others—as social problems.

Topic/Concept: Social Problems: The Basics

Difficulty Level: Moderate

Skill Level: Analyze

Page: 11

TB\_Q1.1.3

Source ID: n/a

Thinking sociologically about a problem such as unemployment, we understand that this issue is

- a. the result of bad choices by individuals.
- b. inevitable.
- c. a personal problem.
- d. a social issue involving the operation of society.

(Answer: d)

Consider This: The first of the Eight Assertions of sociology is that social problems result from the ways

in which society operates. L.O.1.1 Explain the benefits of learning about sociology and using the sociological imagination.

Learning Objective: 1.2 Define the concept “social problem” and explain how societies come to define some issues—and not others—as social problems.

Topic/Concept: Social Problems: The Basics

Difficulty Level: Moderate

Skill Level: Apply What You Know

Page: 11

TB\_Q1.2.4

Source ID: n/a

A social problem is defined as a condition that

- a. harms everyone in a society.
- b. harms only the poorest people in a society.
- c. harms only the most powerful people in a society.
- d. harms some or all members of a society and is usually controversial.

(Answer: d)

Consider This: Social problems undermine people’s well-being but not everyone agrees about why or what should be done. Because any issue affects various segments of our population differently, a particular social problem is rarely harmful to everyone. L.O.1.2 Define the concept “social problem” and explain how societies come to define some issues—and not others—as social problems.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.2 Define the concept “social problem” and explain how societies come to define some issues—and not others—as social problems.

Topic/Concept: Social Problems: The Basics

Difficulty Level: Easy

Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

Page: 6

TB\_Q1.2.5

Source ID: n/a

In 2016, a survey asked people what they considered to be serious social problems. All but one of the following were on the list of serious problems. Which one was not on the list?

- a. the economy
- b. unemployment
- c. the gap between the rich and the poor
- d. global warming

(Answer: d)

Consider This: After years of gridlock in Washington, D.C., dissatisfaction with government topped the list in 2016, but several of the issues cited as serious social problems also reflected our country’s weak economy. L.O.1.2 Define the concept “social problem” and explain how societies come to define some issues—and not others—as social problems.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.2 Define the concept “social problem” and explain how societies come to define some issues—and not others—as social problems.

Topic/Concept: Social Problems: The Basics

Difficulty Level: Easy

Skill Level: Remember the Facts

Page: 6

TB\_Q1.2.6

Source ID: n/a

- C. Wright Mills explained that by using the sociological perspective, people transform “personal troubles” into
- a. social issues.
  - b. psychological concerns.
  - c. economic issues.
  - d. political concerns.

(Answer: a)

Consider This: When people see their problems as personal, all they can do is try to deal with their troubles as one individual, preventing them from seeing the bigger picture of how society operates. Mills taught that a more accurate and more effective approach is to understand that it is society that shapes our lives. L.O.1.2 Define the concept “social problem” and explain how societies come to define some issues—and not others—as social problems.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.2 Define the concept “social problem” and explain how societies come to define some issues—and not others—as social problems.

Topic/Concept: Social Problems: The Basics

Difficulty Level: Easy

Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

Page: 6

TB\_Q1.2.7

Source ID: n/a

The social-constructionist approach asserts that

- a. society keeps facing the same problems year after year.
- b. social problems are those that are the most harmful to any population.
- c. problems arise as people define conditions as undesirable and in need of change.
- d. the government decides what the serious problems are.

(Answer: c)

Consider This: Social problems have a subjective foundation, reflecting people’s judgments about their world. People at different times define different issues as social problems. L.O.1.2 Define the concept

“social problem” and explain how societies come to define some issues—and not others—as social problems.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.2 Define the concept “social problem” and explain how societies come to define some issues—and not others—as social problems.

Topic/Concept: Social Problems: The Basics

Difficulty Level: Easy

Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

Page: 7

TB\_Q1.2.8

Source ID: n/a

An example of a pattern that is very harmful but not generally defined as a social problem is

- a. terrorism, which includes events that resulted in thousands of deaths.
- b. school shootings that have resulted in several dozen deaths.
- c. the use of automobiles that results in some 32,000 deaths each year.
- d. homicide, which involves more than 14,000 deaths each year.

(Answer: c)

Consider This: When we think of something as necessary to our way of life, it can be easier to overlook the problems associated with it. L.O.1.2 Define the concept “social problem” and explain how societies come to define some issues—and not others—as social problems.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.2 Define the concept “social problem” and explain how societies come to define some issues—and not others—as social problems.

Topic/Concept: Social Problems: The Basics

Difficulty Level: Easy

Skill Level: Remember the Facts

Page: 7

TB\_Q1.2.9

Source ID: n/a

Although there is less gender inequality today than there was a century ago, people today are more likely to view gender inequality as a social problem than people were back then. This pattern reflects the fact that

- a. what we subjectively perceive always reflects what is objectively true.
- b. we now expect men and women to be socially unequal.
- c. we now expect men and women to be socially equal.
- d. people simply don’t agree on what important social problems are.

(Answer: c)

Consider This: Recognizing that the subjective and objective importance of social issues may be quite different opens the door for a deeper understanding of social change. When our cultural standards change,

we perceive even small instances of inequality as a problem. L.O.1.2 Define the concept “social problem” and explain how societies come to define some issues—and not others—as social problems.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.2 Define the concept “social problem” and explain how societies come to define some issues—and not others—as social problems.

Topic/Concept: Social Problems: The Basics

Difficulty Level: Moderate

Skill Level: Analyze It

Page: 8

TB\_Q1.2.10

Source ID: n/a

The process of convincing the public and important public officials that a particular issue should be defined as a social problem is a process that sociologists call

- a. subjective assessment.
- b. claims making.
- c. objective assessment.
- d. factual analysis.

(Answer: b)

Consider This: When people reject the status quo, the first step is to create controversy, beginning the process of change by convincing others that the existing situation is not acceptable. People explain exactly what changes are needed and why they are needed. L.O.1.2 Define the concept “social problem” and explain how societies come to define some issues—and not others—as social problems.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.2 Define the concept “social problem” and explain how societies come to define some issues—and not others—as social problems.

Topic/Concept: Social Problems: The Basics

Difficulty Level: Easy

Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

Page: 9

TB\_Q1.2.11

Source ID: n/a

Claims and counterclaims about what should and should not be defined as a social problem is a good way of describing

- a. politics.
- b. societal consensus.
- c. coalescence.
- d. philosophy.

(Answer: a)

Consider This: Success in claims making is often marked by the passing of a law. This act is a clear statement that some behavior is wrong, and it also enlists the power of government to oppose it. L.O.1.2 Define the concept “social problem” and explain how societies come to define some issues—and not others—as social problems.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.2 Define the concept “social problem” and explain how societies come to define some issues—and not others—as social problems.

Topic/Concept: Social Problems: The Basics

Difficulty Level: Easy

Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

Page: 10

TB\_Q1.2.12

Source ID: n/a

An organized effort to encourage or discourage social change is called a

- a. social movement.
- b. sociological theory.
- c. social-constructionist approach.
- d. subculture.

(Answer: a)

Consider This: The process of claims making almost always involves the deliberate efforts of many people working together in an organized effort that tries to shape the way people think about an issue in order to encourage or discourage social change. L.O.1.2 Define the concept “social problem” and explain how societies come to define some issues—and not others—as social problems.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.2 Define the concept “social problem” and explain how societies come to define some issues—and not others—as social problems.

Topic/Concept: Social Problems: The Basics

Difficulty Level: Easy

Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

Page: 10

TB\_Q1.2.13

Source ID: n/a

In which stage of a social movement do the people involved come together to share their concerns and make claims about the need for change?

- a. coalescence
- b. formalization
- c. decline
- d. emergence

(Answer: d)

Consider This: Movements begin when a few people come together to share their concern about the status quo and begin to make claims about the need for change. L.O.1.2 Define the concept “social problem” and explain how societies come to define some issues—and not others—as social problems.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.2 Define the concept “social problem” and explain how societies come to define some issues—and not others—as social problems.

Topic/Concept: Social Problems: The Basics

Difficulty Level: Easy

Skill Level: Remember the Facts

Page: 10

TB\_Q1.1.14

Source ID: n/a

Because social problems result from the ways in which society operates,

- a. these problems cannot ever be solved.
- b. people must solve their issues on their own.
- c. solving social problems requires change to society itself.
- d. all social problems can easily be solved.

(Answer: c)

Consider This: A sociological perspective shows us that social problems are caused less by personal failings than by the operation of society itself. L.O.1.1 Explain the benefits of learning about sociology and using the sociological imagination.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.1 Explain the benefits of learning about sociology and using the sociological imagination.

Topic/Concept: Seeing Patterns: The Sociological Imagination

Difficulty Level: Easy

Skill Level: Apply What You Know

Page: 11

TB\_Q1.2.15

Source ID: n/a

Because many social problems are related,

- a. no social problem can be solved.
- b. every social problem can be solved.
- c. solving one social problem may create a new problem.
- d. solving one social problem will solve all social problems.

(Answer: c)

Consider This: Because social problems are rooted in the operation of society, many social problems are related to one another, so addressing one problem can affect others. L.O.1.2 Define the concept “social problem” and explain how societies come to define some issues—and not others—as social problems. Learning Objective: L.O.1.2 Define the concept “social problem” and explain how societies come to define some issues—and not others—as social problems.

Topic/Concept: Social Problems: The Basics

Difficulty Level: Easy

Skill Level: Remember the Facts

Page: 13

TB\_Q1.2.16

Source ID: n/a

Which of the following has been the cause of more than 1 million accidents in the United States in recent years?

- a. school shootings
- b. poverty
- c. cell phone use while driving
- d. flu virus

(Answer: c)

Consider This: The number of annual deaths caused by this practice continues to rise. L.O.1.2 Define the concept “social problem” and explain how societies come to define some issues—and not others—as social problems.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.2 Define the concept “social problem” and explain how societies come to define some issues—and not others—as social problems.

Topic/Concept: Social Problems: The Basics

Difficulty Level: Easy

Skill Level: Remember the Facts

Page: 7

TB\_Q1.2.17

Source ID: n/a

Adopting a global perspective shows us which of the following patterns?

- a. Women in poor nations typically have fewer children than women in the United States.
- b. People in poor nations have as much schooling as people in the United States.

- c. The problems we face in the United States are exactly the same in other countries.
- d. Poverty is more serious in much of the world than it is in the United States.

(Answer: d)

Consider This: A global perspective shows that many dimensions of life—and many of life’s challenges—may be quite different elsewhere. Many troubling issues such as health, illiteracy, and poverty are much worse elsewhere in the world than in a rich nation such as the United States. L.O.1.2 Define the concept “social problem” and explain how societies come to define some issues—and not others—as social problems.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.2 Define the concept “social problem” and explain how societies come to define some issues—and not others—as social problems.

Topic/Concept: Social Problems: The Basics

Difficulty Level: Easy

Skill Level: Remember the Facts

Page: 13

TB\_Q1.3.18

Source ID: n/a

Sociologists use which of the following concepts to refer to a statement of how and why specific facts are related?

- a. model
- b. correlation
- c. theory
- d. societal subsystem

(Answer: c)

Consider This: Sociologists weave various facts into meaning using a statement of how and why specific facts are related. L.O.1.3. Apply sociological theory to the study of social problems.

Topic/Concept: Analyzing Social Problems: Sociological Theory

Learning Objective: L.O.1.3. Apply sociological theory to the study of social problems.

Topic/Concept: Analyzing Social Problems: Sociological Theory

Difficulty Level: Easy

Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

Page: 14

TB\_Q1.3.19

Source ID: n/a

Which of the following concepts refers to a basic image of society that guides theory and research?

- a. hypothesis
- b. theoretical approach
- c. correlation
- d. societal subsystem

(Answer: b)

Consider This: Building a theory depends on a basic image of society that guides research. Using a particular way of looking at the theory leads sociologists to ask certain questions. L.O.1.3. Apply sociological theory to the study of social problems.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.3. Apply sociological theory to the study of social problems.

Topic/Concept: Analyzing Social Problems: Sociological Theory

Difficulty Level: Easy

Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

Page: 14

TB\_Q1.3.20

Source ID: n/a

Which theoretical approach sees society as a system of many interrelated parts that operate together?

- a. structural-functional approach
- b. feminist approach
- c. social-conflict approach
- d. symbolic-interaction approach

(Answer: a)

Consider This: This approach might explore how the family is a system to ensure the care and raising of children, how schools provide young people with the skills they need for adult life, how the economy produces and distributes material goods, how the political system sets national goals and priorities, and how religion gives our lives purpose and meaning. L.O.1.3. Apply sociological theory to the study of social problems.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.3. Apply sociological theory to the study of social problems.

Topic/Concept: Analyzing Social Problems: Sociological Theory

Difficulty Level: Easy

Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

Page: 13

TB\_Q1.3.21

Source ID: n/a

Major spheres of social life, or societal subsystems, are organized to meet a basic human need.

Sociologists call these subsystems

- a. theoretical paradigms.
- b. functional prerequisites.
- c. social institutions.
- d. subcultures.

(Answer: c)

Consider This: Examples include family and religion from the conservative perspective, and the economy and politics from the liberal perspective. L.O.1.3. Apply sociological theory to the study of social problems.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.3. Apply sociological theory to the study of social problems.  
Topic/Concept: Analyzing Social Problems: Sociological Theory  
Difficulty Level: Easy  
Skill Level: Understand the Concepts  
Page: 13

TB\_Q1.3.22  
Source ID: n/a

Which early English sociologist made the statement that poverty and related problems were created by people who lacked ability and personal discipline?

- a. Herbert Spencer
- b. Emile Durkheim
- c. Max Weber
- d. Karl Marx

(Answer: a)

Consider This: He used the term “social Darwinism” because he believed his ideas were based on Darwin’s theory of evolution. L.O.1.3. Apply sociological theory to the study of social problems.  
Learning Objective: L.O.1.3. Apply sociological theory to the study of social problems.  
Topic/Concept: Analyzing Social Problems: Sociological Theory  
Difficulty Level: Easy  
Skill Level: Remember the Facts  
Page: 15

TB\_Q1.3.23  
Source ID: n/a

Which theory would you be using if you studied how social problems arise when rapid change overwhelms society’s institutions?

- a. social conflict theory
- b. social disorganization theory
- c. symbolic interaction theory
- d. social Darwinist theory

(Answer: b)

Consider This: The Chicago School linked problems in society to upheaval and change rather than to deficient people. L.O.1.3. Apply sociological theory to the study of social problems.  
Learning Objective: L.O.1.3. Apply sociological theory to the study of social problems.  
Topic/Concept: Analyzing Social Problems: Sociological Theory  
Difficulty Level: Moderate  
Skill Level: Apply What You Know  
Page: 13

TB\_Q1.3.24  
Source ID: n/a

Which of the following concepts refers to the consequences of a social pattern that are intended and widely recognized?

- a. manifest functions
- b. latent functions
- c. dysfunctions
- d. eufunctions

(Answer: a)

Consider This: These consequences are easy to observe. Sports, for instance, can be seen to improve physical fitness. L.O.1.3. Apply sociological theory to the study of social problems.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.3. Apply sociological theory to the study of social problems.

Topic/Concept: Analyzing Social Problems: Sociological Theory

Difficulty Level: Easy

Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

Page: 15

TB\_Q1.3.25  
Source ID: n/a

Which of the following concepts refers to the negative consequences of social patterns?

- a. manifest functions
- b. latent functions
- c. dysfunctions
- d. eufunctions

(Answer: c)

Consider This: These consequences are a sign that something is not working in the way that was intended. For instance, college athletes often have little time to study. L.O.1.3. Apply sociological theory to the study of social problems.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.3. Apply sociological theory to the study of social problems.

Topic/Concept: Analyzing Social Problems: Sociological Theory

Difficulty Level: Easy

Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

Page: 15

TB\_Q1.3.26  
Source ID: n/a

If you were studying how society is divided by gender inequality, which theoretical approach would you be using?

- a. the structural functional approach
- b. the feminist approach
- c. the symbolic interaction approach
- d. the social Darwinist approach

(Answer: b)

Consider This: Also called the gender-conflict approach, it explains social problems in terms of men's dominance over women. L.O.1.3. Apply sociological theory to the study of social problems.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.3. Apply sociological theory to the study of social problems.

Topic/Concept: Analyzing Social Problems: Sociological Theory

Difficulty Level: Moderate

Skill Level: Apply What You Know

Page: 17

TB\_Q1.3.27

Source ID: n/a

Class-conflict theory is an explanation of social problems guided by the thinking of

- a. Herbert Spencer.
- b. the Chicago School.
- c. Emile Durkheim.
- d. Karl Marx.

(Answer: d)

Consider This: This German-born thinker criticized society for concentrating most of the new wealth from industrial factories in the hands of a few. L.O.1.3. Apply sociological theory to the study of social problems.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.3. Apply sociological theory to the study of social problems.

Topic/Concept: Analyzing Social Problems: Sociological Theory

Difficulty Level: Easy

Skill Level: Remember the Facts

Page: 15

TB\_Q1.3.28

Source ID: n/a

According to Marxist theory, social problems such as poverty result from

- a. an evil human nature.
- b. advanced technology.
- c. the operation of a capitalist economy.

- d. the high rate of immigration.

(Answer: c)

Consider This: Marx criticized this system because while modern society has the productive capacity to end human suffering, this bounty is only distributed to a few. L.O.1.3. Apply sociological theory to the study of social problems.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.3. Apply sociological theory to the study of social problems.

Topic/Concept: Analyzing Social Problems: Sociological Theory

Difficulty Level: Moderate

Skill Level: Analyze It

Page: 16

TB\_Q1.3.29

Source ID: n/a

Marx predicted that, over time, capitalism would

- a. steadily raise living standards for everyone.
- b. bring about its own destruction.
- c. become less and less productive.
- d. meet all human needs.

(Answer: b)

Consider This: In the long term, Marx was certain that workers, holding little hope for the future, would join together, rise up, and end this oppressive system. L.O.1.3. Apply sociological theory to the study of social problems.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.3. Apply sociological theory to the study of social problems.

Topic/Concept: Analyzing Social Problems: Sociological Theory

Difficulty Level: Moderate

Skill Level: Analyze It

Page: 16

TB\_Q1.3.30

Source ID: n/a

Karl Marx referred to industrial workers as

- a. the bourgeoisie.
- b. proletarians.
- c. the cause of most problems.
- d. middle class.

(Answer: b)

Consider This: This category is also sometimes called “blue collar” or “working class.” L.O.1.3. Apply sociological theory to the study of social problems.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.3. Apply sociological theory to the study of social problems.

Topic/Concept: Analyzing Social Problems: Sociological Theory  
Difficulty Level: Easy  
Skill Level: Remember the Facts  
Page: 16

TB\_Q1.3.31  
Source ID: n/a

If you focus on social problems involving racial and ethnic inequality, you are probably using which of the following theories?

- a. social disorganization theory
- b. class conflict theory
- c. multicultural theory
- d. feminist theory

(Answer: c)

Consider This: Sociologists see conflict based not only on class but also on color and culture. Societies attach importance to skin color and cultural background, which leads to ranking people in a hierarchy based on race and ethnicity. L.O.1.3. Apply sociological theory to the study of social problems.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.3. Apply sociological theory to the study of social problems.

Topic/Concept: Analyzing Social Problems: Sociological Theory

Difficulty Level: Moderate

Skill Level: Apply What You Know

Page: 16

TB\_Q1.3.32  
Source ID: n/a

People who actively seek social equality for women and men would closely identify with which of the following?

- a. feminism
- b. multiculturalism
- c. social pathology theory
- d. social disorganization theory

(Answer: a)

Consider This: This approach has been criticized for actively seeking social change rather than simply analyzing social problems. L.O.1.3. Apply sociological theory to the study of social problems.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.3. Apply sociological theory to the study of social problems.

Topic/Concept: Analyzing Social Problems: Sociological Theory

Difficulty Level: Moderate

Skill Level: Apply What You Know

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TB\_Q1.3.33  
Source ID: n/a

The difference between a “social drinker” and a “problem drinker” would probably be of greatest interest to someone using which theoretical approach?

- a. symbolic-interaction approach
- b. structural-functional approach
- c. social-conflict approach
- d. social-disorganization approach

(Answer: a)

Consider This: This theoretical framework sees society as the product of individuals interacting with one another and highlights how people socially define a given situation. L.O.1.3. Apply sociological theory to the study of social problems.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.3. Apply sociological theory to the study of social problems.

Topic/Concept: Analyzing Social Problems: Sociological Theory

Difficulty Level: Moderate

Skill Level: Analyze It

Page: 17

TB\_Q1.4.34  
Source ID: n/a

Sociologist Lois Benjamin engaged with 100 successful African Americans in a study of racial prejudice using which research method?

- a. interview
- b. field research
- c. secondary analysis
- d. experiment

(Answer: a)

Consider This: Benjamin talked to some of the most successful African American men and women in the United States and concluded that success provides no escape from racial prejudice. L.O.1.4. Discuss the methods sociologists use to study social problems.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.4. Discuss the methods sociologists use to study social problems.

Topic/Concept: Finding the Facts: Sociological Research

Difficulty Level: Easy

Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

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TB\_Q1.4.35  
Source ID: n/a

If a researcher wishes to present a series of written items to subjects for their response, which of the

following methods would the researcher select?

- a. experiment
- b. interview
- c. questionnaire
- d. secondary analysis

(Answer: c)

Consider This: Problems with this method involve locating or gaining access to the people who could give the most relevant responses. L.O.1.4. Discuss the methods sociologists use to study social problems.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.4. Discuss the methods sociologists use to study social problems.

Topic/Concept: Finding the Facts: Sociological Research

Difficulty Level: Moderate

Skill Level: Apply What You Know

Page: 19

TB\_Q1.4.36

Source ID: n/a

Compared to questionnaires, interviews offer a researcher the chance to gain greater

- a. depth of understanding.
- b. breadth of opinion.
- c. representativeness.
- d. impersonality.

(Answer: a)

Consider This: This method can take longer but allows the investigator to probe people's opinions with follow-up questions. L.O.1.4. Discuss the methods sociologists use to study social problems.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.4. Discuss the methods sociologists use to study social problems.

Topic/Concept: Finding the Facts: Sociological Research

Difficulty Level: Moderate

Skill Level: Remember the Facts

Page: 19

TB\_Q1.4.37

Source ID: n/a

Using which of the following methods does a researcher observe people while joining in their everyday activities?

- a. survey
- b. experiment
- c. participant observation
- d. secondary analysis

(Answer: c)

Consider This: Also called field research, researchers using this method must balance the demands of active engagement in the setting with the more detached role required for objectivity. L.O.1.4. Discuss the methods sociologists use to study social problems.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.4. Discuss the methods sociologists use to study social problems.

Topic/Concept: Finding the Facts: Sociological Research

Difficulty Level: Easy

Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

Page: 19

TB\_Q1.4.38

Source ID: n/a

What research method did Elijah Anderson use to study families and life on the streets in some of Philadelphia's poor African American neighborhoods?

- a. the experiment
- b. the survey
- c. field research
- d. secondary analysis

(Answer: c)

Consider This: By conducting his research directly in the neighborhoods, Anderson discovered that although most people there had "decent" values, some had come to accept what Anderson calls the "code of the streets." L.O.1.4. Discuss the methods sociologists use to study social problems.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.4. Discuss the methods sociologists use to study social problems.

Topic/Concept: Finding the Facts: Sociological Research

Difficulty Level: Moderate

Skill Level: Remember the Facts

Page: 19

TB\_Q1.4.39

Source ID: n/a

Which method has researchers investigate cause-and-effect relationships under highly controlled conditions?

- a. the experiment
- b. the survey

- c. participant observation
- d. secondary analysis

(Answer: a)

Consider This: This type of research is usually carried out in a specially designed laboratory where researchers change one variable while keeping others the same. L.O.1.4. Discuss the methods sociologists use to study social problems.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.4. Discuss the methods sociologists use to study social problems.

Topic/Concept: Finding the Facts: Sociological Research

Difficulty Level: Easy

Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

Page: 19

TB\_Q1.4.40

Source ID: n/a

A research project that uses data from the U.S. Census Bureau is an example of which of the following research methods?

- a. survey analysis
- b. field research
- c. secondary analysis
- d. experimental research

(Answer: c)

Consider This: This is a research method that makes use of existing data originally collected by others. But just because data are easy to find does not mean they are accurate or well suited to your research project. L.O.1.4. Discuss the methods sociologists use to study social problems.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.4. Discuss the methods sociologists use to study social problems.

Topic/Concept: Finding the Facts: Sociological Research

Difficulty Level: Moderate

Skill Level: Apply What You Know

Page: 20

TB\_Q1.4.41

Source ID: n/a

For German sociologist Max Weber, the main goal of sociology was to

- a. discover truth.
- b. engage in political debate.
- c. promote social change.
- d. avoid the illusion of objectivity.

(Answer: a)

Consider This: Weber urged his colleagues to focus on the facts in an effort to make research value-free. Social scientists should keep a professional objectivity in their work, meaning that as much as

possible, researchers should hold their personal politics in check to avoid distorting the results. L.O.1.4. Discuss the methods sociologists use to study social problems.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.4. Discuss the methods sociologists use to study social problems.

Topic/Concept: Finding the Facts: Sociological Research

Difficulty Level: Easy

Skill Level: Remember the Facts

Page: 20

TB\_Q1.5.42

Source ID: n/a

In evaluating any social policy, it is important to remember that

- a. there is no way to define a policy's level of "success."
- b. there is more than one way to measure a policy's level of "success."
- c. policies have little or nothing to do with people's politics.
- d. the public generally does not care if programs work or not.

(Answer: b)

Consider This: In the example of a rehabilitation program for young people who abuse drugs, what result would constitute success and how is that determined? L.O.1.5. Identify factors that shape how societies devise policy to respond to social problems.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.5. Identify factors that shape how societies devise policy to respond to social problems.

Topic/Concept: Responding to Social Problems: Social Policy

Difficulty Level: Easy

Skill Level: Remember the Facts

Page: 22

TB\_Q1.5.43

Source ID: n/a

The continuum representing a range of political attitudes is called

- a. a global perspective.
- b. a research agenda.
- c. the political spectrum.
- d. the social constructionist approach.

(Answer: c)

Consider This: Some people hold views that are very conservative, others very liberal, with the majority of people somewhere in between. L.O.1.5. Identify factors that shape how societies devise policy to respond to social problems.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.5. Identify factors that shape how societies devise policy to respond to social problems.

Topic/Concept: Responding to Social Problems: Social Policy

Difficulty Level: Easy

Skill Level: Understand the Concepts  
Page: 23

TB\_Q1.6.44  
Source ID: n/a

*Liberal* is derived from the Latin word for

- a. “library.”
- b. “literate.”
- c. “radical.”
- d. “free.”

(Answer: d)

Consider This: A “good” society, from a liberal point of view, is one in which people are able to make choices for themselves. L.O.1.6 Analyze how political attitudes shape how people define social problems and solutions.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.6 Analyze how political attitudes shape how people define social problems and solutions.

Topic/Concept: Constructing Problems and Defining Solutions

Difficulty Level: Easy

Skill Level: Remember the Facts

Page: 24

TB\_Q1.6.45  
Source ID: n/a

If you were a conservative, you would look for guidance about how to live by keeping in mind the lessons of

- a. science.
- b. the past.
- c. the latest thinking on the issue.
- d. sociology.

(Answer: b)

Consider This: A “good” society, from the conservative point of view, is respectful of traditions and tries to conserve what earlier generations have learned. L.O.1.6 Analyze how political attitudes shape how people define social problems and solutions.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.6 Analyze how political attitudes shape how people define social problems and solutions.

Topic/Concept: Constructing Problems and Defining Solutions

Difficulty Level: Moderate

Skill Level: Apply

Page: 24

TB\_Q1.6.46  
Source ID: n/a

The term “radical” is derived from the Latin, meaning

- a. “change.”
- b. “breaking down.”
- c. “of the root.”
- d. “follower.”

(Answer: c)

Consider This: Radicals point to some basic flaw in society that is responsible for any number of social problems. L.O.1.6 Analyze how political attitudes shape how people define social problems and solutions.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.6 Analyze how political attitudes shape how people define social problems and solutions.

Topic/Concept: Constructing Problems and Defining Solutions

Difficulty Level: Easy

Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

Page: 24

TB\_Q1.5.47  
Source ID: n/a

According to national surveys carried out in 2014, about what percentage of people consider themselves to be slightly liberal, liberal, or extremely liberal?

- a. 5 percent
- b. 25 percent
- c. 45 percent
- d. 65 percent

(Answer: b)

Consider This: Most respondents identified themselves as “middle of the road.” L.O.1.5. Identify factors that shape how societies devise policy to respond to social problems.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.5. Identify factors that shape how societies devise policy to respond to social problems.

Topic/Concept: Responding to Social Problems: Social Policy

Difficulty Level: Easy

Skill Level: Remember the Facts

Page: 23

TB\_Q1.6.48  
Source ID: n/a

Which of the following positions would have the support of social liberals?

- a. the “pro-life” side of the abortion controversy
- b. closing our country’s borders to immigrants
- c. the use of the death penalty
- d. expanding rights for transgender people

(Answer: d)

Consider This: A “good” society, from a liberal point of view, is one in which people are able to make choices for themselves. This requires that the society be both tolerant and respectful of individual rights.

L.O.1.6 Analyze how political attitudes shape how people define social problems and solutions.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.6 Analyze how political attitudes shape how people define social problems and solutions.

Topic/Concept: Constructing Problems and Defining Solutions

Difficulty Level: Moderate

Skill Level: Apply What You Know

Page: 24

TB\_Q1.6.49

Source ID: n/a

Which of the following would have the support of social conservatives?

- a. the “pro-choice” side of the abortion controversy
- b. use of the death penalty to punish the most serious crimes
- c. various “alternative lifestyles”
- d. encouraging immigration across our borders

(Answer: b)

Consider This: Conservatives criticize what they see as too much tolerance in today’s society, which amounts to moral decline. L.O.1.6 Analyze how political attitudes shape how people define social problems and solutions.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.6 Analyze how political attitudes shape how people define social problems and solutions.

Topic/Concept: Constructing Problems and Defining Solutions

Difficulty Level: Moderate

Skill Level: Apply What You Know

Page: 25

TB\_Q1.6.50

Source ID: n/a

In general, economic liberals favor

- a. government having a small role in the economy.
- b. a lower minimum wage.
- c. keeping taxes low.
- d. government policies that will reduce economic inequality.

(Answer: d)

Consider This: Liberals believe that a free-market system too often works to the advantage of a select few and harms everyone else. L.O.1.6 Analyze how political attitudes shape how people define social problems and solutions.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.6 Analyze how political attitudes shape how people define social problems and solutions.

Topic/Concept: Constructing Problems and Defining Solutions

Difficulty Level: Moderate

Skill Level: Remember the Facts

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## Essay Questions

TB\_Q1.1.51

Source ID: n/a

What is a social problem? What does it mean to say that social problems are constructed? How do politics guide the process of constructing problems and defining solutions?

- Social problems come into being as people define an issue as harmful and in need of change.
- Most of today's problems differ from those that concerned the public several generations ago.
- Politics is usually a matter of claims and counterclaims about what should and should not be defined as social problems and how to address the problem.

Consider This: People define a condition as harmful and in need of change. Whatever the objective facts of any situation, people must come to see the condition as a serious social problem. Claims making is the process of defining a condition as a social problem. 1.2 Define the concept "social problem" and explain how societies come to define some issues—and not others—as social problems.

Learning Objective: 1.2 Define the concept "social problem" and explain how societies come to define some issues—and not others—as social problems.

Topic/Concept: Social Problems: The Basics

Difficulty Level: Moderate

Skill Level: Analyze It

Page: 6–10

TB\_Q1.1.52

Source ID: n/a

What is the sociological imagination? Explain the statement by C. Wright Mills that the sociological imagination transforms personal troubles into social issues.

- The sociological imagination is a point of view that highlights how society affects the experiences we have and the choices we make.
- Sociology's key insight is that many of the personal troubles people face are really social issues with their roots in the operation of the larger society.
- U.S. sociologist C. Wright Mills explained that using the sociological imagination helps see how society shapes our personal lives; by helping us to see the world in a new way, the sociological imagination gives us power to bring about change.

Consider This: Sociologist C. Wright Mills coined the expression “the sociological imagination” to encourage people to view their own personal problems as connected to the workings of society. L.O.1.1 Explain the benefits of learning about sociology and using the sociological imagination.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.1 Explain the benefits of learning about sociology and using the sociological imagination.

Topic/Concept: Seeing Patterns: The Sociological Imagination

Difficulty Level: Moderate

Skill Level: Apply What You Know

Page: 5

TB\_Q1.3.53

Source ID: n/a

What are sociology's three major theoretical approaches? Describe each one. Apply each to a problem of your choice and show the type of insights each approach provides.

- The structural-functional approach is a theoretical framework that sees society as a system of many interrelated parts known as social institutions.
- The social-conflict and feminist approaches use a theoretical framework that sees society as divided by inequality and conflict based on class and gender.
- The symbolic-interaction approach is a theoretical framework that sees society as the product of individuals interacting with one another and focuses on how individuals experience their world.

Consider This: Sociologists use theoretical approaches to guide their research and theory building. The major theoretical approaches all provide insights into various social problems.L.O.1.3. Apply sociological theory to the study of social problems.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.3. Apply sociological theory to the study of social problems.

Topic/Concept: Analyzing Social Problems: Sociological Theory

Difficulty Level: Moderate

Skill Level: Apply What You Know

Page: 14–18

TB\_Q1.4.54  
Source ID: n/a

Review the major research methods employed by sociologists in studying social problems. Explain why a researcher would choose one method over another.

- Sociologists use four major research methods in their investigation of social problems: surveys, field research, experimental research, and secondary analysis.
- Questionnaires and interviews are forms of surveying that allow for breadth or depth of understanding, while field research allows observation of people in their everyday activities.
- Experimental research uses controlled conditions to investigate cause-and-effect relationships.
- Secondary analysis draws on data originally collected by others and may not be accurate.

Consider This: The different research methods address the topics in question in different ways that are appropriate in different situations. Each way has both pros and cons. L.O.1.4. Discuss the methods sociologists use to study social problems.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.4. Discuss the methods sociologists use to study social problems.

Topic/Concept: Finding the Facts: Sociological Research

Difficulty Level: Moderate

Skill Level: Analyze It

Page: 19–21

TB\_Q1.6.55  
Source ID: n/a

What is the political spectrum? Describe how public attitudes fall on the political spectrum. What defines conservative, liberal, and left-radical positions? How do social issues differ from economic issues? Finally, what types of people tend to be on the left and right of each type of issue?

- Attitudes on the political spectrum range from the far left at one extreme through “middle of the road” views at the center to the far right at the other extreme.
- Social issues are political debates involving moral judgments about how people should live, while economic issues are political debates about how a society should produce and distribute material resources.
- In general, economic liberals favor government regulation of the economy in order to reduce inequality, while economic conservatives call for a smaller role for government in the economy.
- In general, social liberals think that people should be free to shape their lifestyles for themselves, while social conservatives are respectful of traditional values and want to conserve them, criticizing what they see as too much tolerance in today’s society.

Consider This: Over time, political attitudes may shift to the left or the right, but at any time, there is always wide variation in people’s political thinking. L.O.1.6 Analyze how political attitudes shape how people define social problems and solutions.

Learning Objective: L.O.1.6 Analyze how political attitudes shape how people define social problems and solutions.

Topic/Concept: Constructing Problems and Defining Solutions

Difficulty Level: Moderate

Skill Level: Analyze It

Page: 23–24