

**CHAPTER 1--HOW DO SOCIOLOGISTS STUDY SOCIETY?
Researching the Social World**

BRIEF CHAPTER OUTLINE

- I. Concepts, Themes and Key Individuals
- II. Introduction
- III. Sociology
- IV. Six Thinkers
- V. The Importance of Rational Proof
- VI. Proof, Science, and Sociology
 - A. *Critical Thinking*
 - B. *Empirical Proof*
 - C. *Observation in Sociology*
 - D. *Objectivity in Science*
- VII. Two Assumptions of Science
 - A. *Natural Law in Science and Sociology*
 - B. *Natural Cause in Science and Sociology*
- VIII. Summary and Conclusion

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After careful study of this chapter, students should be able to do the following:

1. Explain the contributions of the Greeks to Western thought, especially the academic world.
2. Explain the importance of logical proof, and the difference between rational proof and empirical proof.
3. Briefly describe the major contributions of the classical work of Karl Marx, Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, and Auguste Comte.
4. Discuss what science is, and what makes sociology a science. Include the specific obligations of sociologists and other scientists.
5. List and describe the variety of methods that sociologists use for observing human behavior and thought. Give examples of specific studies.
6. Describe the assumptions of the natural world—natural law and natural cause. How do these impact sociological research?
7. Explain the challenges for sociologists in the study of human behavior, including observing human thought and determining cause and effect.
8. Define objectivity and its role in science; explain the possibility of complete objectivity.

ASA RECOMMENDATIONS

4. Departments should **infuse the empirical base of sociology** throughout the curriculum, giving students exposure to research opportunities across several methodological traditions, providing repeated experiences in posing sociological questions, developing theoretical explanations, and bringing data to bear on them.
5. Departments should structure the curriculum of required major courses and substantive elective courses to have at least four levels with appropriate prerequisites. At each succeeding level, courses should increase in both depth and integration in the major while providing multiple **opportunities for students to develop higher order thinking skills and to improve their written and oral communication skills.**
6. Within this four-level model, departments should also structure the curriculum to include one (or more) content area of substantive sequences which cut across two or more levels of the curriculum. Departments should design sequences to **develop students' skills in empirical and theoretical analysis** along with their knowledge about one or more specialty areas within sociology.

7. Departments should structure the curriculum to **develop students' sociological literacy** by ensuring that they take substantive courses at the heart of the discipline as well as across the breadth of the field.

DETAILED CHAPTER OUTLINE

I. Concepts, Themes and Key Individuals

II. Introduction

ASA Recommendations 5

The author describes the process by which his ideas about the appropriate roles for men and women have changed over time. He questioned his own beliefs, and was also challenged by professors and friends to reexamine them. Today he recognizes that it is difficult to understand human behavior. When others offer "the truth" about human behavior, Charon has learned that he must critically question the sources of that knowledge by examining the evidence and arguments being used, and whether or not the experts have any biases. Being open-minded, critical of his own beliefs, and critically aware of those influencing him is essential to Charon's understanding of human behavior.

III. Sociology

ASA Recommendations 5-6

Charon introduces this book as an introduction to how sociologists think and the types of question that are essential for most thinking people as they investigate their own experiences. These questions form the basis of a serious education. While others attribute human behavior to individual psychology, personality and choice, sociologists continually ask "what about society?" What are the social conditions that cause different behaviors? In what type of society are various social problems likely to occur?

IV. Six Thinkers

ASA Recommendations 6-7

Charon introduces the social thinkers who have had the greatest impact on his own thinking, and on sociology. Karl Marx used his dissatisfaction with how society functions to develop a theory based on examining social class, social power, and social conflict. For Marx understanding inequality is the key to understanding society. Perhaps the greatest influence on sociological perspective is the work of Max Weber. Weber argued that culture, a shared belief system, is the primary influence on human action. To understand human behavior social scientists must understand culture; this also explains Weber's emphasis on religion. While Marx and Weber both emphasized power and conflict, Emile Durkheim was interested in how society maintained social order. Durkheim's work examines social institutions as the basis for unity within society. His last book emphasized the role of religion, ideas of the sacred, and ritual for social solidarity.

Marx, Weber, and Durkheim theorized about the nature of society. An important contribution of George Herbert Mead was a theory that explores the connection between the individual and society. Mead was interested in questions about human nature, and the role of symbolic communication in characterizing the human species. For Mead, symbols and the idea of the self are socially created, and enable the individual to change society, and not be just passively shaped by it. Like Mead, Peter Berger is also an American sociologist. Berger described the importance of sociology as a liberating way of thinking that exposes the realities beneath taken for granted ways of thinking. Berger argues that society conditions the individual to accept ways of doing and thinking. Sociology frees the individual through understanding how society works, so that individuals may have more control over their lives. C. Wright Mills, in his books *The Power Elite* and *The Sociological Imagination*, showed not only the power of a few institutions at the top of society over our lives, but also the power of society itself. These six thinkers have highly influenced Charon's own ideas in this book.

V. The Importance of Rational Proof

ASA Recommendations 5-6

We are indebted to the Greeks for their critical, questioning approach that has become the basis for much of Western thought. The Greeks established the study of philosophy, central to which is the need for evidence, rather than feeling or authority, as the means for determining truth. “The rational proof” or logic is a neutral measuring stick to determine the truth or falsehood of an idea. The rational, logical proof of the Greeks is the basis for much of the academic world.

Sound proof is only possible using an honest process of careful reasoning. An examination of any idea must be careful and organized. It should include analysis of the assumptions it is based on, a comparison against what is already known, an examination of its contradictions. If an idea holds up under this type of scrutiny it is fairly certain that it approximates the truth; if it does not, it should not be accepted under any circumstances.

Between 300 and 1400 CE rational proof was replaced by knowledge that flowed from the all-powerful church; faith was accepted as the basis of truth. Critical rational analysis of commonly held ideas was punished as heresy. In the 15th century, critical philosophy and science again became powerful forces in Western thought. The founding of sociology and other social sciences in the 19th century is part of this critical tradition.

VI. Proof, Science, and Sociology

ASA Recommendations 4-6

- A. **Critical Thinking** – Human behavior is complex. Understanding it is made more difficult by the fact that people believe they understand how society works based on their own experiences. A careful analysis of beliefs is the basis of *rational proof*. The Greek philosopher, Socrates, recognized that truth could only be achieved through the application of questions. The Socratic method poses systematic questions in order to reveal assumptions, faulty evidence, and illogical conclusions. Thus, untruth is revealed rather than truth being discovered.
- B. **Empirical Proof** – Auguste Comte, who coined the term sociology, argued that the critical methods must be applied to the study of society. Furthermore, he believed that the study of society should be scientific; a *scientific approach* is based on careful and systematic observation in addition to sound logic. Comte believed that sociology, the study of society, would carefully examine society as it is, not as people believed or wanted it to be.

Modern science is based on *empirical proof*—based on careful observation. Ideas are empirically tested by comparing them to what is observed in the microscope, the laboratory, the society, or the universe. Empirical proof may be traced to the Greek scientist Archimedes who realized that the volume of any irregular object (he was measuring the King's crown) could be measured by the volume of water it displaces. Empirical proof is observed, and it may be shared with others who may repeat the observation under the same or different conditions in order to confirm the original observation. This has become the basis for all of the sciences.

Rational proof is emphasized among philosophers and mathematicians; scientists rely on empirical proof. Rational proof is based on careful thinking, while empirical proof is based on observation. Charon's example is evaluating the possibility of winning at roulette. The application of probability theory is a form of rational proof; observing how often odd numbers come up is empirical proof. Both forms of proof indicate one cannot win at roulette over the long run.

Empirical proof is the basis of sociology. Within sociology acceptable evidence is that which is observed, and then shared so that it is replicated, tested, criticized, built upon, proved or disproved. Observation may take place in a laboratory or the natural environment. Almost anything may be observed: prominent people, religious groups or gangs, items on a questionnaire, articles in a magazine, an army or gang. It is relatively easy to observe the answer to a question on a survey, or how many people commit suicide in a given year. It is more difficult to observe complex behaviors such as finding work, or exerting power in government. Sociologists must be creative and careful in devising strategies for observing these types of

behavior. Regardless of the research question, sociology demands empirical proof—careful observation that may be checked by others.

A classic example of empirical study in sociology is Durkheim's study of suicide. He found that France had a fairly consistent rate of suicide that was higher than that of other societies. The rate of suicide was observed by noting the number of suicides per 100,000 persons in the society. Durkheim theorized that the rate of suicide was influenced by the amount of social solidarity in a society. Social solidarity is not directly observable, so Durkheim applied logical thought and explained his reasoning. He argued that Catholics had greater solidarity than Protestants because Catholics are very embedded in a religious community, while Protestants express a personal relationship with God. Similarly, Durkheim argued that Jews had greater social solidarity than Catholics or Protestants because the Jewish religion permeated all aspects of their lives, and their communities were more separated from the larger community. Observing rates of suicide, Durkheim found what he theorized: Protestants had the highest rates of suicide and Jews, the lowest. He compared other communities, such as rural vs. urban and college-educated were lower than the more individualistic communities had higher rates of suicide. Whether or not one agrees with Durkheim, his thought and observation processes are made very clear making it possible for one to check his research, or work to interpret the data in another manner.

Charon's second example of empirical research is a 1977 study by Rosabeth Kanter on the impact of a large organization system on inequality between men and women. Kanter understood there were many ways to study an organization, but she chose to do an in-depth study of a single corporation. She surveyed a sample of sales workers and sales managers, and she conducted interviews with many employees about their work and their positions. Kanter reviewed 100 written appraisals of secretaries' performance, attended meetings and trainings, and visited informally with employees wherever she could. To be successful, other sociologists had to be sure that Kanter's observations were careful, thorough and objective. The strength of her study is the depth of the observation and the different types of observation she accomplished. The weakness of her study is that it was of a single corporation. Her results, though, can be compared with other studies, with other investigations of corporations, with governmental data on all corporations.

Charon notes the diversity of research topics and methods, all of which are empirical in nature. He briefly describes a wide variety of studies, such as a 1918 study of Polish peasants in the U.S. by W. I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, based on their observations of the diaries and letters of immigrants. Robert and Helen Lind studied class and power in Muncie, Indiana, using door-to-door interviews in the community. In 1944, Gunnar Myrdal studied race in America by observing documents, museums, social interactions and social events. C. Wright Mills studied power in the U.S. in the 1950s by observing people's names on a variety of lists, and in newspapers. In the 1980s, William Julius Wilson observed population and employment figures for cities to study the lack of opportunity in the inner city. Jonathon Kozol observed schools in the U.S. and interviewed principals and teachers in order to explain "savage inequalities" in the American education system. Candace Clark used a variety of methods to examine "sympathy in everyday life." She observed greeting cards, and descriptions of the *New York Times* neediest cases. She also used "intensive eavesdropping", "focused discussions", and "freewriting" by her students, as well as numerous interviews and a questionnaire given to 1000 adults and 60 children. These are but a few examples of the numerous ways in which observation is used in research by sociologists.

- C. Observation in Sociology** – Observation of society, groups, of concepts like power and inequality, is more difficult than observing rocks or trees. In order to observe feelings, thoughts, values, and beliefs, social scientists must observe how people present themselves to others—what they say, do, and write—and then infer an abstract social reality. The qualities of groups are observed when people get together. Durkheim used rituals, expressions of moral outrage, and the objects of worship in order to study society.

Sociologists recognize that the techniques of science must be varied, and that certainty is impossible. Weber argued that those who study human beings, in particular, must be ready to see their ideas overturned. He also recognized that there are exceptions to all conclusions, and

that these do not negate the conclusions; exceptions make conclusions more tentative and complex. Sociology is characterized by constant debate through published research and responses. Because they study people, sociologists cannot rely on laboratory research; control over the research environment is impossible. Systematic observation of people requires creative techniques suited to the complexity of human beings. People are motivated by attitudes, values, ideas and concerns that can only be observed through questionnaires, interviews, and analysis of speech and writing. Charon states that “(e)very single act of the human being is something for sociologists to study because it can help us make sense out of a larger picture that is not easily seen” (15). From observations sociologists keep data in which they have confidence, and discard that which is not supported by other evidence.

- D. Objectivity in Science** – Science requires careful, controlled observation so that one sees what is there, and not just what one wants to see. Weber describes science as “value-free”– it must be objective and with a commitment to scientific investigation and a willingness to have conclusions tested by others. Being “objective” is seeing the world as an object separate from one’s own subjective perception. This is difficult to achieve, and the reason for the rules that scientists agree to follow: posing a problem, developing and testing a hypothesis, coming to a conclusion and relating the conclusion to the original problem. Scientific rules guide how to create good theory, how to sample, how to observe accurately, how to control a study, how to interpret data, and how to refine theory on the basis of evidence. Researchers are obligated to accurately report how an idea was formed, how it was tested, what was observed and how it was interpreted. All of these rules and obligations exist to help ensure objectivity.

Complete objectivity, particularly in the study of people, is impossible. Every researcher has their own biases, conscious or not. A focus on the social rather than biological world is itself a bias. Research questions, methods, and conclusions may all reflect biases. While not possible, objectivity should still be the goal.

VII. Two Assumptions of Science

ASA Recommendations 4-6

Like religion, science is based on certain assumptions. The assumptions of science are the existence of laws and that natural events are caused by other natural events.

- A. Natural Law in Science and Sociology** – The assumption of laws means that nature is regular and predictable. By studying the past scientists may make predictions about the future. Events may be generalized, along with things such as illness and gravity, because they are all thought to be understandable and predictable. The purpose of science is to discover these natural laws. Sociology is a science and since humans are part of nature, human behavior and society also have regularities that may be understood, isolated, and predicted. Some examples are that when people interact they come to share a view of reality (culture), inequality is likely to develop, and expectations for behavior (roles) emerge. As societies industrialize there is a strong tendency toward individualism and away from tradition. When individuals are less embedded in social groups, suicide is more likely. Other predictable behavior is that when the expectations of an oppressed group rise beyond what is permitted by the dominant group, widespread rebellion, even revolution, is likely. Compared with prior supernatural understandings, sociology has significantly changed how poverty, inequality, mental illness, alcoholism, and social class are understood. These are but a few examples.
- B. Natural Cause in Science and Sociology** – The most important aspect of natural law is that natural events are caused by other natural events. This is part of what is called *nature*, and it assumes an order governed by natural cause. For example, microbes cause disease, and poverty increases crime. Scientific experiments link independent variables (influences, causes) with dependent variables (results, effects). Causes are difficult to determine; all other possible influences must be ruled out. The example is finding that smoking causes cancer. Smokers have to be found at higher risk than non-smokers, and other factors such as foods and environment need to be ruled out. In addition, it must be determined that it is smoking alone, not in combination with variables such as personality or residence that causes cancer. Sociology applies the principle of cause to human behavior which is so complex that finding clear, isolated causes is rare. In social science, cause is better understood as influence or contributing factor,

and effects are tendencies or probabilities. One who is born into poverty, for example, is unlikely to become rich.

Since the 19th century, sociology has been successful at convincing the general public that there is a social basis for behavior. Today there is recognition that even individual choices about divorce or whether to have children are influenced by social conditions.

VIII. Summary and Conclusion

ASA Recommendations 4-6

Sociology is a critical perspective that questions what many people take for granted. The purpose of sociologists is to apply the Socratic method of continual questioning and probing in order to the understand society and human behavior. To Socrates, education was a continual search for understanding by questioning rather than accepting others' explanations. Sociologists have questioned the assumptions of capitalism, the problems of crime and effective prevention or deterrents, and religion as a social force, not just a source of moral guidance. The chapter has emphasized three points for how sociologists understand society: 1) ideas must be supported empirically, and research must be careful, creative and diverse; 2) sociology must be objective and must critically investigate people's taken for granted ideas, which makes it a difficult science; and 3) humans are a part of nature and are subject to a set of patterns or natural laws. Human events have identifiable, natural, social causes.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Where have our ideas about human beings and the nature of society come from? Where have your ideas come from? How can you determine if they are true?
2. Why do you think that Charon has written this book as a set of questions instead of as a more standard textbook? What are the pros and cons of his approach, do you think?
3. The basic purpose of sociology, according to the author, is to look beyond what people have been taught about society to what actually exists. Is this a noble or a foolish purpose? Can it be achieved?
4. Two ways humans evaluate the beliefs that they hold are the rational proof and the empirical proof. However, most of us are less disciplined and rely on other techniques. How do most of us assess the truth or falsehood of the beliefs we hold? Evaluate these--are they trustworthy?
5. Why is sociology such a difficult science? That is, why is it so difficult to apply science to understanding society and the human being?
6. What difference does it make if the universe is governed by natural law or supernatural forces? Ask yourself: If one believes that the universe is governed by supernatural forces, then one will probably believe. . . . If one believes it is governed by natural law then one will probably believe. . . . Is it possible to believe both?
7. Humans are very complex, and each person has their own life experiences. Furthermore, it is not possible to experiment with humans in the same ways one might experiment with chemicals, for example. Given these facts, do you think sociology can be considered a science in the same way that chemistry or biology are sciences? Why or why not?
8. What is your own evaluation of the methods used by Kanter in her study of gender inequality in the corporation? Defend your position with rational proof--careful and logical reasoning.
9. What exactly is objectivity? How is objectivity different from subjectivity? Is it important to be objective? Do you consciously attempt to be objective most or much of the time in your daily life? Why or why not?

10. Objectivity assumes that reality exists apart from our perception of it. Some people believe reality does not exist at all, but that there is only truth from a particular perspective. What do you think? What difference does this make?
11. Briefly discuss the theories of Marx, Durkheim, Weber, Mills, and Mead. How are they similar and how are they different?
12. Why is rational proof or logical proof so important? How does this idea differ from “common sense,” and which is more defensible?

CLASS ACTIVITIES

1. Divide the class into small groups and ask each group to discuss these questions, and share a summary of their discussion with the class: Think of a time when you have changed your thinking or your opinion in a significant way. Where did your prior ideas and opinions come from? What caused them to change? How easy or difficult was this for you?
2. Bring to class several examples of controversial news articles, taken from a newspaper or magazine. Alternately, pose a number of questions that involve value conflicts to the class (e.g. should a minor who has killed a person be tried as an adult? Should someone with mental retardation?) Have students discuss the questions in small groups and identify the specific values and beliefs that are the foundation of each student's opinions.
3. Critical thinking involves being able to identify the assumptions implicit in any number of arguments or perspectives. Create a list of statements and have students work in class to identify the underlying assumptions of each. This may be done alone or working in groups. For statement ideas visit one of the web sites devoted to critical thinking, such as the Foundation for Critical Thinking:
www.criticalthinking.org
4. To further explore empiricism in the field of sociology, bring to class a number of research articles (thorough abstracts might work for this). Ask students to identify what specific human behavior or type of thinking is being observed in each study, and how the researcher is going about making his or her observations.
5. Stage an observational experiment. This may be done in a number of ways. For example, a group of students may be asked to perform a short skit of their own creation or an elaborate array of objects may be organized on a desk or table top. Collage or a short video with a lot of action could also work. Ask the entire class to observe at the same time, for a short amount of time if using collage or objects. Then ask students to make a list of everything they observe. Compare lists. Why do different students notice some things more than others?
6. People's political beliefs can often lead them away from facts and lead them to blame political leaders they do not like as the cause of social ills. On the internet, have students research the Glass-Steagall Act and the Gramm–Leach–Bliley Act of 1999 and learn a bit about each. Then, without leading anyone, have students split into groups of three and ask what, in their opinion, caused the economic recession we are struggling through. Categorize the answers into how many answers blame a political party or politician, versus how many try to explain it using facts. Discuss their findings with the class.

VIDEO SUGGESTIONS

Television

30 Days (approx. 50 minutes per episode)

Another FX reality TV show, this series is hosted by Morgan Spurlock of *Supersize Me* and takes his model of trying something for 30 days to other topics. In the premiere episode, Spurlock and his wife try to live on a minimum wage salary for 30 days. In another first season episode, an evangelical Christian man lives as a Muslim for 30 days. In 2008, the show entered its third season. Many of the episodes may be helpful in introductory classes. <http://www.fxnetworks.com/shows/originals/30days/>.

Lost Children of Rockdale County (Theoretical Perspectives, Culture, Family, Deviance and Social Control) (90 minutes)

This Peabody Award winning documentary by Frontline begins with an investigation into a rare syphilis outbreak among a set of affluent teenagers from 1996. It expands from there into a discussion of the changing expectations of teenagers and their loneliness, reasons for engaging in risky behavior and the structures of their families. More information can be found at:

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/georgia/>.

Documentaries

Roger and Me (Theoretical Perspectives, Social Stratification, Economy) (91 min.)

Michael Moore's early documentary is about the impact of General Motors layoffs on the town of Flint, Michigan and its residents. The film provides a nice opportunity for students to think about the sociological imagination or to identify different ways that theorists (structural functionalists, conflict theorists and symbolic interactionists) might interpret one event.

Killing Us Softly IV (Gender) (45 min)

This compelling video documents hundreds of advertisements that present women as objects, as sexualized, as children, as emaciated and in other damaging and demeaning ways. This video series remains powerful, despite its age. This film demonstrate how cultural values may be observed in the images of popular culture.

Many Ways to See the World: A Thirty-Minute Tour of World Map Images (Theoretical Perspectives, Culture, Socialization, Social Structure and Interaction) (30 minutes)

This short film looks at the political, social and scientific issues that influence how mapmakers depict the earth, its political and geographic features and the size and relationship of countries to one another. I think this film would be useful at the beginning of an introductory sociology course to encourage students to think critically about the information they perceive and to reconsider the ways we have traditionally thought about the world. Available at <http://mediaed.org>.

The Minds of Men, (Films for the Humanities and Sciences, 1997), 52 minutes. Part 4 of *The Greeks*. Classical Greek philosophy is introduced in an effort to get at the nature of humanity and our relationship to the natural world. The philosophical teachings of Socrates and Plato are discussed and homage is paid to the first two Greek historians: Thucydides and Herodotus.

Internet Clips

Start Seeing Cycles ("Awareness Test") (Social Structure and Interaction, Research Methods) (2 min.)

This fun short public service announcement points out how easy it is to overlook information when a problem has been framed for us. The clip could be used as a precursor to a discussion about framing social issues, priming effects of social cognition, the unreliability of eyewitness reports or qualitative research methods. Can be found at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oSQJP40PcGI>

LECTURE SUGGESTIONS

1. Have students come prepared to class after doing the following: Research a specific country and find out all that you can about suicide (rates, attitudes, and so on). Have the students divide into groups and discuss their findings and compare and contrast their results. After, discuss Durkheim's suicide study and explain his theory of integration.
2. Read the article by Pfeiffer and Syed in *Teaching Sociology*. (Pfeiffer, Kathryn M. and Ail Syed. 2008. "How Sociology Leaders Teach: Some Key Principles." *Teaching Sociology* 36:108-124. Pick one of the nine methods that leaders used when discussing sociology and teach two concepts from Chapter 1 using the method you have chosen.

MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. In what way does sociology differs from other social sciences?
 - a. sociology relies on rational proof
 - b. sociology focuses on society, and human social behavior
 - c. sociology is more focused on the nature of society
 - d. all of these are differences

ANS: d PG: 3 TYPE: Conceptual LO: 4

2. For _____ the key to understanding society was social inequality.
 - a. Karl Marx
 - b. Max Weber
 - c. Emile Durkheim
 - d. George Herbert Mead

ANS: a PG: 4 TYPE: Conceptual LO: 3

3. The social thinker who was interested in how culture influences people's behavior was _____.
 - a. Karl Marx
 - b. Max Weber
 - c. Emile Durkheim
 - d. George Herbert Mead

ANS: b PG: 4 TYPE: Conceptual LO: 3

4. *Suicide* (1897) was the most famous work of _____.
 - a. Karl Marx
 - b. Max Weber
 - c. Emile Durkheim
 - d. George Herbert Mead

ANS: c PG: 5 TYPE: Factual LO: 3

5. According to the author, the major contribution of the ancient Greeks to Western thought and the academic world is
 - a. the body of scientific knowledge about human beings that they discovered and handed down.
 - b. the logical proof.
 - c. the trust they had for personal experience.
 - d. their distrust of the human being.

ANS: b PG: 7 TYPE: Conceptual LO: 1

Chapter 1

6. The rational proof was something developed to determine
- whether or not someone is honest and intelligent enough to be trusted.
 - whether or not science is a useful way of understanding reality.
 - the quality of the thinking and evidence that is used to support an idea.
 - which is better: empirical evidence or logic?

ANS: c PG: 8 TYPE: Conceptual LO: 2

7. The Socratic method of investigation consists of
- carefully constructed surveys and a random sample.
 - a controlled laboratory environment.
 - posing a continuous set of questions.
 - using a measuring stick or ruler.

ANS: c PG: 8 TYPE: Conceptual LO: 1

8. The term *sociology* was coined by _____.
- Socrates
 - Auguste Comte
 - Karl Marx
 - Archimedes

ANS: b PG: 8 TYPE: Factual LO: 3

9. What is the meaning of the term *empirical*?
- based on rational logic and careful observation
 - based on faith and supernatural understanding
 - based on critical thinking alone
 - empirical and sociological mean the same thing

ANS: a PG: 9 TYPE: Conceptual LO: 4, 5

10. The purpose of sociology since Comte has been to try to understand society by
- accepting culture.
 - studying philosophy.
 - studying other societies rather than one's own.
 - applying a scientific approach.

ANS: d PG: 9 TYPE: Conceptual LO: 4

11. _____ proof relies on careful thinking; _____ proof requires careful observation.
- Empirical / rational
 - Sociological / mathematical
 - Rational / empirical
 - Emotional / logical

ANS: c PG: 10 TYPE: Conceptual LO: 2

12. Sociology is based on empirical proof, so that acceptable evidence may be
- observed
 - shared
 - checked
 - all of the above

ANS: d PG: 10 TYPE: Conceptual LO: 5

13. Sociology as a discipline bases its ideas on
- empirical proof.
 - the rational proof.
 - acceptance of the ideas of classical thinkers.
 - commonsense understandings of society.

ANS: a PG: 10 TYPE: Factual LO: 2, 5

14. Durkheim studied the cause of suicide rates through
- interviewing the families of suicide victims.
 - analyzing suicide notes.
 - sending out questionnaires to religious leaders.
 - analyzing data from various communities.

ANS: d PG: 11 TYPE: Factual LO: 5

15. Durkheim tied the rate of suicide in a community to its
- type of political structure.
 - level of economic inequality.
 - level of social solidarity.
 - all of the above

ANS: c PG: 11 TYPE: Factual LO: 5

16. According to Durkheim's rational proof, which group experienced the *least* social solidarity?
- Protestants
 - Jews
 - Catholics
 - Episcopalians

ANS: a PG: 11 TYPE: Factual LO: 2, 3, 5

17. In her study of the corporation, Rosabeth Kanter
- compared about twenty-five businesses.
 - relied on questionnaires filled out by a random sample of chief executives.
 - studied many aspects of a single corporation for about a year.
 - set up a laboratory experiment in one section of one corporation.

ANS: c PG: 12 TYPE: Factual LO: 5

18. The many studies briefly described in this chapter makes it clear that
- laboratory experiments dominate how sociologists have traditionally studied human beings.
 - all sociologists use survey research.
 - there is a wide variety of empirical evidence used in sociology.
 - empirical investigation is not important within the discipline of sociology.

ANS: c PG: 12 TYPE: Conceptual LO: 5

19. Which of the following may *not* be used as empirical evidence in a sociological study?
- interviews with people
 - written diaries and journals
 - newspaper and magazine articles
 - none of these; all may be used as empirical evidence

ANS: d PG: 12 TYPE: Conceptual LO: 5

Chapter 1

20. In order to observe people's morals, values, and beliefs, sociologists must
- spend time in religious locations such as churches and temples.
 - watch how human beings present themselves to others.
 - rely exclusively on questionnaires about attitudes and beliefs.
 - none of these; sociologists do not observe values and beliefs

ANS: b PG: 14 TYPE: Conceptual LO: 5, 7

21. Sociological knowledge
- is usually very certain.
 - is always subject to review and to change.
 - is not scientific.
 - always has exceptions that disprove the conclusions.

ANS: b PG: 14 TYPE: Conceptual LO: 7

22. Because human beings are complex, sociological methods
- must be creative and varied.
 - cannot be applied to abstract motivations like attitudes.
 - are extremely limited.
 - are not considered scientific.

ANS: a PG: 15 TYPE: Conceptual LO: 5, 7

23. Weber argued that sociology must be "value-free," this means that
- researchers must observe the world as it is.
 - researchers must be committed to scientific investigation.
 - research findings must always be open to further investigation.
 - all of the above

ANS: d PG: 15 TYPE: Conceptual LO: 8

24. To be objective means that one tries to
- make a better world.
 - see the world as it really is.
 - use our own opinions and beliefs to guide our conclusions.
 - combine what we see in the world with what we believe is just.

ANS: b PG: 15 TYPE: Conceptual LO: 8

25. The most important purpose for establishing and following rules in science is to assure
- objectivity.
 - subjectivity.
 - that the investigator's values are followed.
 - that the theory is well thought-out.

ANS: a PG: 15 TYPE: Conceptual LO: 8

26. Complete objectivity is
- easier to achieve in sociology than in biological sciences.
 - only possible when one studies an unfamiliar issue.
 - impossible to achieve.
 - all of the above

ANS: c PG: 16 TYPE: Conceptual LO: 8

27. According to the author, one of the basic differences between religion and science is that
- science makes assumptions; religion does not.
 - religion makes assumptions; science does not.
 - science uncovers truth; religion does not.
 - each begins with a different set of assumptions.

ANS: d PG: 16 TYPE: Conceptual LO: 4, 6

28. In general, scientists believe that nature is characterized by
- predictability.
 - supernatural intervention.
 - a lack of structure.
 - human control.

ANS: a PG: 16 TYPE: Conceptual LO: 6

29. The belief that natural law exists means that scientists
- believe each natural event has a unique cause and effect.
 - believe that things occur in nature for reasons we will never really understand.
 - do not expect occurrences to be predictable.
 - believe that there are regularities in nature that can be understood.

ANS: d PG: 17 TYPE: Conceptual LO: 6

30. According to the author, the fact that sociology studies human beings
- makes it easier to establish cause in sociology than in other sciences.
 - makes it impossible to understand cause in sociology.
 - makes it impossible to be a science.
 - makes it more difficult to establish exact cause than in other sciences.

ANS: a PG: 18 TYPE: Conceptual LO: 7

31. Which theorist below, identified in chapter one, views society as being socially constructed?
- Karl Marx
 - Emile Durkheim
 - Peter Berger
 - C. Wright Mills

ANS: c PG: 6 TYPE: Factual LO: 5

32. *Suicide* is the most famous work by:
- Emile Durkheim
 - George Herbert Mead
 - Max Weber
 - Karl Marx

ANS: a PG: 5 TYPE: Factual LO: 5

33. Who wrote "The Communist Manifesto"?
- Emile Durkheim
 - George Herbert Mead
 - Max Weber
 - Karl Marx

ANS: d PG: 4 TYPE: Factual LO: 5

Chapter 1

34. To Mead, the _____ was essential for communication and therefore, society.
- a. class conflict
 - b. symbol
 - c. anomie
 - d. nature of human nature

ANS: b PG: 6 TYPE: Factual LO: 5

35. To ancient Greek philosophers, authority alone could not be the basis for truth. Instead, they believed in following the rules of _____.
- a. what feels good
 - b. common sense
 - c. logic
 - d. what ancestors stated as fact

ANS: c PG: 7 TYPE: Factual LO: 5

ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. Briefly describe the contribution the ancient Greeks made to discovering truth; include a description of the Socratic method.
LO: 1
2. Define what is meant by rational proof and empirical proof; discuss the difference between the two, and which sciences they most pertain to.
LO: 2
3. Describe how observation in sociology. How do sociologists observe attitudes, beliefs, values, and morals? What methods does Charon describe that have been used to observe these types of things?
LO: 5
4. What variable did Durkheim believe caused groups to have different rates of suicide? Explain how Durkheim employed both rational and empirical proofs to his study of suicide.
LO: 5
5. Explain the strengths and weaknesses of Kanter's study of the impact of organization structure on gender inequality.
LO: 5
6. Define objectivity and discuss its role in sociological research. Is it possible for researchers to be objective? Why or why not?
LO: 8
7. Discuss the role of natural law and natural cause in science, and in sociology.
LO: 2, 7
8. In this chapter the author describes science. What are the significant features of science? What are the central ideas or assumptions of science presented in this first chapter?
LO: 4
9. Explain what makes sociology a science? What are the specific obligations of sociologists conducting scientific research?
LO: 4
10. It is clear that the author believes that sociology is a very difficult science to do. What are some of the reasons for this?
LO: 7
11. Explain how sociologists view science and research. Incorporate Max Weber's view of the scientific method into your answer.
12. Discuss the two assumptions of science. What are the natural alternatives to each of these assumptions? Which do you think better explains reality and why?