

CHAPTER 02: STUDYING SOCIAL LIFE: SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH METHODS

MULTIPLE CHOICE

1. After formulating a general research question, what will a good researcher always do?
 - a. review the literature in order to become familiar with earlier research that relates to his topic
 - b. clearly define his variables
 - c. look for correlations between two or more different phenomena
 - d. form a hypothesis

ANS: A

DIF: Easy

REF: Page 41

OBJ: An Overview of Research Methods

MSC: Remembering

2. If the federal government conducts research on the value of checking batteries in home smoke detectors, what method will produce data that is easiest to transmit to many people?
 - a. ethnography
 - b. quantitative
 - c. qualitative
 - d. interviews

ANS: B

DIF: Moderate

REF: Page 41

OBJ: An Overview of Research Methods

MSC: Applying

3. Survey research tends to produce quantitative data. One key advantage of this kind of data is that it:
 - a. is easy to transmit to the public.
 - b. includes observations and informal interviews.
 - c. allows the researcher to review the literature.
 - d. affords easy access to the norms, values, and meanings held by members of a group.

ANS: A

DIF: Easy

REF: Page 41

OBJ: An Overview of Research Methods

MSC: Remembering

4. A famous social scientist tells you that the most important task in her research was to move from “total bewilderment” to “finding her feet” with the people she was studying. What can you say about this researcher?
 - a. She worries about ethical issues in her research.
 - b. She is a qualitative researcher.
 - c. She cannot use interviews as a methodology.
 - d. She exclusively uses quantitative methods.

ANS: B

DIF: Difficult

REF: Page 41

OBJ: An Overview of Research Methods

MSC: Understanding

5. You want to conduct some sociological research on whether people on social networking sites are less likely to meet in person as a result of their online community participation. What is the next step in the scientific method?
 - a. conduct a literature review
 - b. form a hypothesis; give operational definitions to variables
 - c. choose a research design or method
 - d. collect data

ANS: A

DIF: Easy

REF: Page 41

OBJ: An Overview of Research Methods

MSC: Understanding

6. Jai is conducting a sociological research study on differences in interactions between similar and dissimilar co-workers. After reviewing the literature, he developed a hypothesis and has operationalized the variables he will study. What is the next step Jai should take in the scientific method?
- identify a problem or ask a question
 - analyze data
 - choose a research design or method
 - collect data

ANS: C

DIF: Easy

REF: Page 42

OBJ: An Overview of Research Methods

MSC: Applying

7. Lili is conducting a sociological research study on the underground music scene. She has just finished collecting data for the study. What is the next step Lili should take in the scientific method?
- disseminate findings
 - analyze data
 - form a hypothesis; give operational definitions to variables
 - choose a research design or method

ANS: B

DIF: Easy

REF: Page 42

OBJ: An Overview of Research Methods

MSC: Applying

8. What is the scientific method?
- the use of statistics to analyze numerical data
 - the study of scientific processes
 - the standard procedure for acquiring and verifying empirical knowledge
 - the study of nature

ANS: C

DIF: Easy

REF: Page 41

OBJ: An Overview of Research Methods

MSC: Remembering

9. According to the scientific method, what are the steps in research, and in what order should they be completed?
- form a hypothesis, define variables, choose research method, collect data
 - form a hypothesis, choose research design, define variables, analyze data
 - form a hypothesis, choose research design, review the literature
 - analyze data, form a hypothesis, choose research design, define variables

ANS: A

DIF: Easy

REF: Page 41

OBJ: An Overview of Research Methods

MSC: Remembering

10. You are doing a research project on the effects of contemporary media. If your hypothesis is that “watching violence on television causes an increase in violent behavior,” then what are your variables?
- violence on television and violent behavior
 - watching television, violence on television, and violent behavior
 - violent behavior
 - violence in the media

ANS: A

DIF: Moderate

REF: Page 42

OBJ: An Overview of Research Methods

MSC: Applying

11. You are conducting research on violence in the media. If you are trying to decide whether “violence” includes words as well as actions, in what part of the research process are you engaged?
- forming a hypothesis
 - analyzing the data
 - defining the variables
 - reviewing the literature

ANS: C DIF: Easy REF: Page 42
OBJ: An Overview of Research Methods MSC: Applying

12. What do you call broad theoretical models of the social or natural world?
- a. paradigms
 - b. hypotheses
 - c. interviews
 - d. grounded theory

ANS: A DIF: Easy REF: Page 43
OBJ: An Overview of Research Methods MSC: Remembering

13. A paradigm shift is a major break in the assumptions that are used to understand the world. For social scientists, what causes a paradigm shift?
- a. the study of history
 - b. new data forcing a new way of looking at the world
 - c. religion and theology
 - d. increased awareness of the current paradigm

ANS: B DIF: Easy REF: Page 43
OBJ: An Overview of Research Methods MSC: Understanding

14. A graduate student is almost done with his dissertation when he is informed that twenty years ago someone did a very similar project and already demonstrated what he had hoped to be the first to discover. What basic step of the scientific method could have saved him from this problem?
- a. developing an operational definition
 - b. selecting a research method
 - c. analyzing data
 - d. reviewing the literature

ANS: D DIF: Easy REF: Page 41
OBJ: An Overview of Research Methods MSC: Applying

15. In the 1980s, many politicians argued that listening to heavy metal music led teenagers to commit suicide. Though you might find this belief silly, it is a(n):
- a. variable.
 - b. paradigm shift.
 - c. hypothesis.
 - d. operational definition.

ANS: C DIF: Easy REF: Page 42
OBJ: An Overview of Research Methods MSC: Applying

16. A social research methods class wants to study smoking. First the professor asks how many people in the class are smokers. Two people say yes. Then she asks how many people have smoked a cigarette in the past week, and ten people say yes. From this the class decides that, for the purposes of its survey, a smoker will be anyone who has had a cigarette in the past week and currently owns a pack of cigarettes. This is a(n):
- a. operational definition.
 - b. hypothesis.
 - c. spurious correlation.
 - d. ethical challenge.

ANS: A DIF: Difficult REF: Page 42
OBJ: An Overview of Research Methods MSC: Applying

17. A sociologist wants to study popular attitudes and perceptions about astrology among college students in California. She believes that people who have astrological signs identified with fire will have a greater knowledge of astrology because fire signs tend to have more interesting and attractive symbolism. What are the variables in this study?
- a. astrological signs and knowledge of astrology
 - b. college students and symbolism
 - c. popular attitudes and perceptions

d. California and college students

ANS: A DIF: Difficult REF: Page 42

OBJ: An Overview of Research Methods

MSC: Applying

18. In recent years, sociologists who study deviance have learned that they can measure the quantities of narcotics consumed by a community by testing its sewage before treatment. What part of the research process would the sociologists be carrying out when they visit the sewage treatment plant to test its sewage?

- a. analyzing data
- b. forming a hypothesis
- c. collecting data
- d. developing an operational definition

ANS: C DIF: Easy REF: Page 42

OBJ: An Overview of Research Methods

MSC: Applying

19. One study found a strong correlation between parental bonding and adolescent drug use. Children with stronger bonds to their parents were far less likely to try drugs or alcohol. However, when the researchers examined their data more closely, they discovered that parental bonding was really a predictor for teen religiosity and that high levels of religiosity prevent drug use rather than parental bonding. This means that religiosity was:

- a. a spurious variable.
- b. an issue of reflexivity.
- c. a paradigm shift.
- d. the intervening variable.

ANS: D DIF: Moderate REF: Page 42

OBJ: An Overview of Research Methods

MSC: Applying

20. A study showed a strong correlation between not smoking and having a high college grade point average. Although some people used this study as evidence that smoking is bad, if you accept that smoking does NOT cause someone to lose brain cells or study less, you would probably conclude that the study:

- a. used basic research.
- b. was valid.
- c. misused a control group.
- d. employed a spurious correlation.

ANS: D DIF: Moderate REF: Page 42

OBJ: An Overview of Research Methods

MSC: Applying

21. Karl Marx argued that in some fundamental ways Hegel's theories were mistaken about how the world worked. Marx said he needed to "stand Hegel on his head" because Marx believed that "it is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness." For many who came afterward, Marx's argument represented a:

- a. classic demonstration of reactivity.
- b. participant observation.
- c. paradigm shift.
- d. justification of qualitative research.

ANS: C DIF: Difficult REF: Page 43

OBJ: An Overview of Research Methods

MSC: Applying

22. Charles Darwin suggested that rather than being superior to the rest of the animal kingdom, human beings are simply one part of a larger system governed by natural laws. To the extent that this radically changed how people thought about almost everything, we would call it a(n):

- a. paradigm shift.
- b. ethical issue.
- c. example of reactivity.
- d. research proposal.

ANS: A DIF: Moderate REF: Page 43

OBJ: An Overview of Research Methods

MSC: Applying

23. Which methodology most closely resembles the scientific method?

- a. ethnography
- b. survey research
- c. experimental research
- d. interviews

ANS: C

DIF: Easy

REF: Page 55

OBJ: An Overview of Research Methods

MSC: Understanding

24. If you observe a group in order to determine its norms, values, rules, and meanings, then what kind of research are you doing?

- a. normative
- b. quantitative
- c. qualitative
- d. natural science

ANS: C

DIF: Easy

REF: Page 41

OBJ: Ethnography/Participant Observation

MSC:

Remembering

25. What are the goals of ethnography?

- a. to develop quantitative data sets that allow researchers to discover correlations
- b. to conduct interviews with people who have very different ways of life
- c. to describe activities sociologists observe and to understand what those activities mean to the people involved
- d. to develop ethics and standards for sociological research

ANS: C

DIF: Moderate

REF: Page 45

OBJ: Ethnography/Participant Observation

MSC:

Understanding

26. Which method of social research might involve shifting between participating in a social situation and being an observer?

- a. interviews
- b. surveys
- c. comparative-historical research
- d. ethnography

ANS: D

DIF: Easy

REF: Page 44

OBJ: Ethnography/Participant Observation

MSC:

Understanding

27. What does it mean if ethnographers are overt about their roles?

- a. They maintain narrow and limited definitions of appropriate research methodologies.
- b. They spend a great deal of time reflecting on their roles in the research process.
- c. They observe and record data without letting anyone know they are doing research.
- d. They openly admit that they are doing sociological research.

ANS: D

DIF: Easy

REF: Page 46

OBJ: Ethnography/Participant Observation

MSC:

Understanding

28. When engaging in participant observation, researchers can study others as well as themselves. Research that focuses on one's own thoughts, feelings, and experiences is known as:

- a. life history.
- b. autoethnography.
- c. internal investigation.
- d. content analysis.

ANS: B

DIF: Easy

REF: Page 45

OBJ: Ethnography/Participant Observation

MSC:

Remembering

29. Frances is assigned a research project where she is to attend a celebratory family meal and analyze her experiences as she participates in the meal. She is asked to make a detailed account of the meal that includes her thoughts and feelings about the event. What type of research is Frances assigned?

- a. comparative-historical
- b. survey
- c. autoethnography
- d. experiment

ANS: C

DIF: Moderate

REF: Page 45

OBJ: Ethnography/Participant Observation MSC: Applying

30. Ethnographers using participant observation must always be aware of reflexivity, which occurs because:
- participants may not consider their own motivations and act out of reflex.
 - ethnographers' conclusions may not be applicable to any larger group.
 - the presence of ethnographers may alter the behavior of the people they are observing.
 - ethnographers intervene in the lives of the people they are studying.

ANS: C DIF: Easy REF: Page 46
OBJ: Ethnography/Participant Observation MSC: Understanding

31. Which of the following is an advantage of using ethnography to study social life?
- Ethnography is a quick and easy form of social science research.
 - Ethnography requires the researcher to spend little time gaining familiarity with the research subjects.
 - Ethnography allows the researcher to gather abundant data on a small population.
 - Ethnography requires no training since it is something we all do as human beings.

ANS: C DIF: Moderate REF: Page 46
OBJ: Ethnography/Participant Observation MSC: Understanding

32. Which of the following is a DISADVANTAGE of using ethnography as a method of social research?
- Participants are self-selected.
 - Participants are usually not completely candid when asked to describe their attitudes and behaviors.
 - It is difficult for another researcher to repeat or replicate any particular ethnography.
 - Ethnographies tend to have ethical problems that are of central concern to most sociologists.

ANS: C DIF: Moderate REF: Page 47
OBJ: Ethnography/Participant Observation MSC: Understanding

33. If a piece of sociological research is representative, it means that the:
- researcher has avoided any overt bias.
 - research has been conducted systematically with the scientific method.
 - smaller group of people studied can tell us something about a larger group.
 - researcher avoided using any double-barreled questions.

ANS: C DIF: Easy REF: Page 50
OBJ: Ethnography/Participant Observation MSC: Remembering

34. Which of the following research techniques focuses on gaining an insider's perspective of the everyday lives of subjects under investigation, often dispelling stereotypes about the group being investigated?
- participant observation
 - surveys
 - analysis of existing data
 - experiments

ANS: A DIF: Easy REF: Page 44
OBJ: Ethnography/Participant Observation MSC: Understanding

35. The sociologist Mitch Duneier wrote his ethnography *Sidewalk* about street vendors in New York City's Greenwich Village. While writing the book, Duneier was particularly concerned that the people he was studying would alter their behavior when he was present, especially since his background was very different from theirs, causing him to think critically about his action and role as a researcher. What do sociologists call this?

a. response rate
b. reflexivity
c. validity
d. thick description

ANS: C DIF: Moderate REF: Page 46
OBJ: Ethnography/Participant Observation MSC: Applying

36. In their ethnography, *Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood before Marriage*, Kathryn Edin and Maria Kefalas studied the realities of single motherhood for poor, urban women in Camden, New Jersey. Before beginning their research they immersed themselves in the community. Edin moved her family to the city, and they both volunteered in community programs. Embedding themselves in the community is an example of:

a. gaining access.
b. fieldnotes.
c. thick description.
d. sampling.

ANS: A DIF: Moderate REF: Page 45
OBJ: Ethnography/Participant Observation MSC: Applying

37. In her ethnography *Wheeling & Dealing*, Patricia Adler investigates the social and professional worlds of midlevel cocaine and marijuana smugglers. Her research started unexpectedly when she discovered that her next-door neighbor and friend was a drug smuggler; this was a huge advantage for her because it meant that she already had _____ with one of her informants.

a. informed consent
b. rapport
c. sampling
d. causation

ANS: B DIF: Easy REF: Page 45
OBJ: Ethnography/Participant Observation MSC: Applying

38. Julie Bettie wrote her ethnography *Women without Class: Girls, Race, and Identity* to examine the role of race and class in the lives of girls in California's Central Valley. She did most of her work at a high school, hanging out with and talking to students, but she felt very self-conscious about writing down her observations where the girls could see her, so she often ducked into a bathroom stall to write. What do ethnographers call her written observations?

a. interviews
b. representativeness
c. nonverbal communication
d. fieldnotes

ANS: D DIF: Easy REF: Page 45
OBJ: Ethnography/Participant Observation MSC: Applying

39. In his research, the ethnographer Richard Mitchell kept his identity a secret while studying militant survivalist groups. Sometimes he even presented himself as a believer in the survivalists' paranoid, racist ideologies. By engaging in such covert research, with what was Mitchell concerned?

a. validity
b. thick description
c. rapport
d. replicability

ANS: C DIF: Moderate REF: Page 46
OBJ: Ethnography/Participant Observation MSC: Applying

40. Sociologists who conduct interviews can only gather data from a limited number of people because:
- a. it is impossible to find enough people through a random sample.
b. researchers are only allowed to talk to people who are eighteen and older.

- c. it is extremely difficult to guarantee confidentiality to large groups.
- d. interviews are too time-consuming.

ANS: D DIF: Moderate REF: Page 48 OBJ: Interviews
MSC: Understanding

41. Any time a social researcher is going to use sampling, he or she must first identify his or her target population. What is this target population?
- a. the group of people whose behavior he or she wishes to change
 - b. the group of people from whom he or she will gather data
 - c. the group of people least often studied in the past
 - d. the larger group of people about whom he or she wishes to generalize

ANS: D DIF: Easy REF: Page 48 OBJ: Interviews
MSC: Remembering

42. If a researcher has obtained informed consent from all his participants, it means that:
- a. they have all agreed to participate in the study for monetary compensation.
 - b. they all understand the nature of the study and what will be asked of them.
 - c. their confidentiality has been guaranteed.
 - d. they have all read the prior literature on the subject area.

ANS: B DIF: Easy REF: Page 48 OBJ: Interviews
MSC: Understanding

43. Maria is worried about the representativeness of her study. She is conducting interviews, but each one seems to last at least five hours. Given that she only has one month to collect her data, what strategy might she use to increase her sample size?
- a. cut off interviews at two hours regardless if all questions were answered
 - b. conduct a focus group
 - c. ask only open-ended questions
 - d. make respondents write out answers during interviews instead of answering verbally

ANS: B DIF: Moderate REF: Page 48 OBJ: Interviews
MSC: Evaluating

44. A closed-ended question is one that:
- a. allows for a wide variety of responses.
 - b. encourages respondents to answer creatively.
 - c. limits the possible responses.
 - d. can only be answered orally.

ANS: C DIF: Easy REF: Page 48 OBJ: Interviews
MSC: Remembering

45. Researchers should try to avoid double-barreled questions, or questions that:
- a. ask about multiple issues.
 - b. use emotional language that may bias the respondent.
 - c. are vague or ambiguous.
 - d. have a hidden agenda.

ANS: A DIF: Easy REF: Page 49 OBJ: Interviews
MSC: Remembering

46. What kind of question usually produces a wide variety of responses by allowing respondents to answer in whatever way seems appropriate to them?

- a. closed-ended
- b. open-ended
- c. double-barreled
- d. leading

ANS: B DIF: Easy REF: Page 49 OBJ: Interviews
MSC: Remembering

47. A professor has been commissioned by a college to do research on its new academic system. The college has moved from a semester system to block scheduling. He asks, "How have teachers and students responded to the new intensive block scheduling system?" This is an example of:
- a. a leading question.
 - b. a double-barreled question.
 - c. a closed-ended question.
 - d. reflexivity.

ANS: B DIF: Moderate REF: Page 49 OBJ: Interviews
MSC: Applying

48. What is it that interviewers seek when asking a respondent for his or her life history?
- a. a chronological account of the respondent's life
 - b. biographical information on the maternal side
 - c. detailed accounts of early childhood memories
 - d. a genealogical map of family ancestry

ANS: A DIF: Easy REF: Page 49 OBJ: Interviews
MSC: Remembering

49. After researchers conduct a series of interviews, they usually transcribe the responses. The transcription process is fairly time-consuming, but it is valuable in part because it allows researchers to:
- a. look for patterns in their data.
 - b. check for bias in how they asked questions.
 - c. think up new questions they did not ask.
 - d. determine the average age of their interviewees.

ANS: A DIF: Easy REF: Page 49 OBJ: Interviews
MSC: Remembering

50. Which of the following is an advantage of using interviews as a research method?
- a. They allow the researcher to maintain strict control of the data-collection process.
 - b. They reveal attitudes and beliefs not accessible by any other means.
 - c. They can affirm preconceptions and stereotypes.
 - d. They allow researchers to analyze data statistically and draw correlations.

ANS: B DIF: Easy REF: Page 49 OBJ: Interviews
MSC: Understanding

51. In her research for *The Second Shift*, Arlie Hochschild interviewed married couples to find out how they dealt with changing family roles as more women entered the workforce. What advantages came from her decision to use interviews as a research method?
- a. It allowed for a large group of people to be included in the study.
 - b. It ensured that the respondents were always honest and forthcoming about their family lives and marital roles.
 - c. It allowed her to gather direct quotations and construct an intimate portrait of married couples.
 - d. It created both a control group and an experimental group and allowed Hochschild to compare them.

ANS: C DIF: Moderate REF: Page 49 OBJ: Interviews

MSC: Applying

52. Researchers are often worried that interviewees have not been completely honest or forthcoming, especially when asked about sensitive subjects. How did Arlie Hochschild attempt to deal with this problem?
- She asked each question in a different way to try to trap respondents in contradictions.
 - She interviewed each spouse separately to see if their stories matched.
 - She observed some respondents as they went about their daily routines to see if their actions matched their answers.
 - She confronted respondents when they gave answers that seemed dubious.

ANS: C DIF: Easy REF: Page 49 OBJ: Interviews
MSC: Remembering

53. Why do social scientists who use interviews rarely speak with large numbers of people for a project?
- It is hard to find people willing to be interviewed.
 - There are usually very few people who are interesting enough to be interviewed.
 - Face-to-face interviewing is a very time-consuming process.
 - The data is so rich that few interviews are typically needed.

ANS: C DIF: Easy REF: Page 49 OBJ: Interviews
MSC: Remembering

54. Arlie Hochschild was concerned that her sample of interviewees was too small to guarantee representativeness. How did Hochschild attempt to overcome this problem?
- by deciding that she did not need to generalize to any larger population
 - by asking only open-ended questions
 - by doing follow-up interviews with each interviewee
 - by comparing information about her interviewees with a national survey

ANS: D DIF: Moderate REF: Pages 53–54 OBJ: Interviews
MSC: Remembering

55. A research team is curious about the relationship between exercise habits and academic performance among American college students. In order to get their data, the researchers randomly select seventeen colleges by pulling names out of a hat and traveling to campuses, where they stand in prominent public places and ask for volunteers until they have ten people from each campus willing to be interviewed. What is the researchers' target population?
- students at the seventeen colleges they visited
 - the 170 students who were interviewed
 - young people
 - American college students

ANS: A DIF: Moderate REF: Page 48 OBJ: Interviews
MSC: Applying

56. Some researchers suggest that interviews give “voice” to people who may never have been heard before and offer privileged access to authentic experience, private worlds, and true selves. How do interviews do this?
- Interviews may contribute to unfair stereotypes.
 - Interviews are relatively quick and economical and can provide a vast amount of data.
 - Interviews allow respondents to speak in their own words; they can reveal their thoughts, feelings, and beliefs—internal states that would not necessarily be accessible by any other means.
 - Respondents are not always forthcoming or truthful. Sometimes they are difficult to talk

to, and at other times they may try too hard to be helpful.

ANS: C DIF: Moderate REF: Page 49 OBJ: Interviews
MSC: Applying

57. The anthropologist Ruth Behar traveled to San Luis Potosí to learn more about the everyday lives of Mexican women. Instead, she ended up conducting one very long, intensive interview with a woman named Esperanza and took more than a year to collect her interview data. Which DISADVANTAGE of the interview methodology does her research highlight?
- a. Face-to-face interviewing is time-consuming.
 - b. Respondents are not always forthcoming or truthful.
 - c. Interviews generally lack qualitative data that might better capture social reality.
 - d. Interviews sometimes distance the researcher from the messy realities of the social world.

ANS: A DIF: Easy REF: Page 49 OBJ: Interviews
MSC: Applying

58. Every four years when it is time to elect a new president, we pay much attention to surveys, which we usually call “polls.” Even though there are more than 300 million people in the United States, most political pollsters ask about a thousand people who it is they plan to vote for and use that information to predict how the election will turn out. Who is the sample for a presidential poll?
- a. every person who is planning on voting
 - b. every American
 - c. people who have strong political opinions
 - d. the 1,000 people who are asked whom they will vote for

ANS: D DIF: Moderate REF: Pages 51–52 OBJ: Surveys
MSC: Applying

59. Imagine that you are trying to rewrite a survey. You find a multiple-choice question that asks, “What is your favorite recreational activity?” and gives three response options: watching television, shopping, or sports. You add a fourth response option, “other,” and invite respondents to write an activity of their choice. What kind of question have you just made?
- a. open-ended
 - b. quantitative
 - c. reductionist
 - d. closed-ended

ANS: A DIF: Easy REF: Pages 49–50 OBJ: Surveys
MSC: Applying

60. When survey researchers write closed-ended questions, they often use Likert scales to construct the possible answers. How do Likert scales allow respondents to answer?
- a. They allow respondents to answer along a continuum, from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.”
 - b. They allow respondents to answer with their own opinions.
 - c. They allow respondents to answer in simple dichotomies, like true/false or yes/no.
 - d. They encourage respondents to include detailed responses.

ANS: A DIF: Easy REF: Page 50 OBJ: Surveys
MSC: Remembering

61. While it is always important to ask clear and unambiguous questions regardless of the method you use, it is especially important to avoid confusion when conducting surveys. Why?
- a. Survey research methods commonly use statistics.
 - b. Survey researchers are usually not present to clarify any misunderstandings.
 - c. Survey researchers talk to many people.

d. Survey research tends to look at large-scale social patterns.

ANS: B DIF: Moderate REF: Page 50 OBJ: Surveys
MSC: Remembering

62. When writing a survey, researchers must avoid negative questions, which are defined as questions that:
- ask about two different topics.
 - let the respondent know how the researcher hopes he or she will answer.
 - belittle or insult a group or individual.
 - ask a respondent about what he or she does not think rather than what he or she does think.

ANS: D DIF: Easy REF: Page 51 OBJ: Surveys
MSC: Remembering

63. Why would mentioning a sensitive issue, such as divorce or infidelity, in a survey question influence how respondents answer later questions?
- Questions about sensitive issues are double-barreled.
 - The respondents may think about the sensitive issue when answering later questions.
 - Sensitive questions make the questionnaire confusing and difficult to fill out.
 - Sensitive questions spoil the representativeness of the researcher's sample.

ANS: C DIF: Easy REF: Page 51 OBJ: Surveys
MSC: Remembering

64. What is a pilot study?
- a smaller study used to investigate the feasibility of a larger one
 - a study designed to improve the target population of a larger study
 - a study that concerns itself with media use and popular culture
 - a study that definitively answers a question that has been bothering sociologists

ANS: A DIF: Easy REF: Page 51 OBJ: Surveys
MSC: Remembering

65. Why are respondents often more comfortable addressing sensitive subjects on surveys than in other research contexts?
- They know that many other people will also answer the same questions.
 - They know that their answers will only be analyzed statistically.
 - They can answer in private and are usually assured of anonymity.
 - Surveys guarantee that their answers will be confidential, while other methods do not.

ANS: C DIF: Easy REF: Page 52 OBJ: Surveys
MSC: Remembering

66. A sociologist uses a survey to study the attitudes of adults in the United States concerning premarital sex among teenagers. In this study, the target population consists of all _____ and the group that is asked the survey questions is called the _____.
- teenagers in the United States; reference group
 - teenagers in the United States who have engaged in premarital sex; experimental group
 - adults in the United States; sample
 - adults in the United States who have teenage children; units of analysis

ANS: C DIF: Moderate REF: Page 48 |Page 51
OBJ: Surveys MSC: Applying

67. When high schools want to ask students about sensitive subjects like drug use or sexual health, they often use surveys rather than a more direct form of communication like interviews. Why?

- ANS: C DIF: Moderate REF: Page 52 OBJ: Surveys
MSC: Applying

- Surveys suffer from a lack of replicability, meaning that it is hard for another researcher to repeat or replicate the study.
- Survey research generally lacks qualitative data that might better capture the social reality the researcher wishes to examine.
- Not all respondents provide honest self-reports, so survey research has comparatively less validity.
- In this case, as in many surveys, the respondents are self-selected, which makes it difficult to generalize from these results.

- with only one variable.
- in which other demographic variables are taken into account.
- in which one variable is weighted more than another.
- in which every member of the population has a chance of being included.

- The weighted sample does not target any specific group within the population.
- The weighted sample more closely resembles the larger population.
- A weighted sample excludes some members of the population.
- A weighted sample draws from a larger target population rather than a random one.

ANS: B DIF: Moderate REF: Page 52 OBJ: Surveys
MSC: Understanding

71. One of the key methods used to do political polling is random-digit dialing, in which every phone number in an area code has an equal chance of being selected to take part in a survey. However, researchers have noticed that young people are more likely to only use a cell phone, and people with cell phones are less likely to answer a call from an unknown number. As a result, polling organizations often count responses from young people as being worth “more” than those from older people so that age in the sample is more accurately representative of the larger population. What is this technique called?

a. weighting
b. bias
c. probability sampling
d. Likert scales

ANS: A DIF: Moderate REF: Page 52 OBJ: Surveys
MSC: Applying

72. Which of the following is a DISADVANTAGE of using existing sources of data for research?
- a. Researchers often seek answers to questions the data does not directly address.
b. Researchers have to spend a great deal of time and money to get the data.
c. Researchers do not have access to existing sources.
d. Existing sources of data are never relevant to the contemporary world because they emerged from a different time and place.

ANS: A DIF: Easy REF: Page 55 OBJ: Existing Sources
MSC: Remembering

73. Cecilia is conducting research using public health records to examine flu outbreaks among public school students. Since her research does NOT require her to disturb people in the social context that she is studying, it is considered to be a(n):

a. comparative-historical research.
b. representative sample.
c. focus group.
d. unobtrusive measure.

ANS: D DIF: Easy REF: Page 54 OBJ: Existing Sources
MSC: Applying

74. When researchers use a social networking site like Facebook to obtain data, they are:

a. ethically questionable.
b. doing qualitative research.
c. using interview data.
d. using existing sources.

ANS: D DIF: Easy REF: Page 57 OBJ: Existing Sources
MSC: Understanding

75. Why are social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter so exciting to sociologists who study social networks?

a. For the first time, social networking sites offer sociologists a data set rich enough to test ideas that until now have only been theorized.
b. For the first time, sociologists do not have to spend the time and money to go talk to people and can do all their work from a computer.
c. For the first time, sociologists can find out what young people’s social networks look like.
d. For the first time, sociologists can track the spread of urban legends.

ANS: A DIF: Difficult REF: Page 57 OBJ: Existing Sources
MSC: Remembering

76. The analysis of documents—such as medical records, photographs, diaries, letters, newspapers, and song lyrics—uses which of the following types of data?

a. ethnographic fieldnotes
b. interview transcripts
c. existing sources
d. experimental data

ANS: C DIF: Easy REF: Page 53 OBJ: Existing Sources
MSC: Applying

77. What is the primary goal of comparative and historical research methods?
- to enhance the validity of experiments
 - to understand relationships between parts of society in various regions and time periods
 - to uncover issues that have been neglected by mainstream social research
 - to select participants who are very similar so that the independent variable can be isolated

ANS: B DIF: Easy REF: Page 54 OBJ: Existing Sources
MSC: Remembering

78. The Yale sociologist Kai Erikson wrote a book called *Wayward Puritans* in which he drew on court records from colonial Massachusetts to understand deviance in the past. He learned that the rate of out-of-wedlock births was much higher than it is now and that the amount of alcohol consumed per capita was higher as well. What research methodology was Erikson using?
- ethnography
 - comparative-historical
 - interviews
 - surveys

ANS: B DIF: Moderate REF: Page 54 OBJ: Existing Sources
MSC: Applying

79. If a sociologist watches a lot of television and counts the number of times women play roles with lower status than those played by men, what research method is he using?
- experimental research
 - content analysis
 - ethnography
 - interview

ANS: B DIF: Easy REF: Page 54 OBJ: Existing Sources
MSC: Applying

80. If you were to conduct a research project investigating the relationship between the brands and shapes of gummy candy available in American convenience stores, what methodology would you use?
- quantitative
 - content analysis
 - comparative or historical research
 - interviews

ANS: B DIF: Difficult REF: Page 54 OBJ: Existing Sources
MSC: Applying

81. When doing experimental research, why is it important to control for everything except the independent variable?
- so the experiment can be kept very simple
 - so the researcher does not have to gather too much information about the subjects
 - so the experiment can be made more affordable
 - so a clear conclusion can be drawn about what influences the dependent variable

ANS: D DIF: Moderate REF: Page 55 OBJ: Experimental Methods
MSC: Remembering

82. When conducting experiments, how is the experimental group different from the control group?
- The experimental group contains people who are different in many ways from the control group.
 - The experimental group receives the dependent variable, and the control group does not.
 - The experimental group receives the independent variable, and the control group does not.
 - The control group receives the independent variable, and the experimental group does not.

ANS: C DIF: Easy REF: Page 55 OBJ: Experimental Methods

MSC: Remembering

83. A sociologist performs an experiment designed to investigate the effect of marriage counseling on divorce. She divides research participants into two similar groups of troubled couples, provides one group with counseling, and observes whether, over time, the two groups eventually divorce at different rates. What is the independent variable in this experiment?
- a. divorce
 - b. troubled couples
 - c. the overall divorce rate
 - d. marriage counseling

ANS: D

DIF: Easy

REF: Page 55

OBJ: Experimental Methods

MSC: Applying

84. What does it mean for a sociologist to control for a variable?
- a. Research subjects are divided into two groups.
 - b. Change over time is measured in a dependent variable.
 - c. One group is allowed to understand the nature of the experiment, while the other group is kept in the dark.
 - d. All factors except for the independent variable are taken into account.

ANS: D

DIF: Moderate

REF: Page 55

OBJ: Experimental Methods

MSC: Remembering

85. Which of the following is an advantage of replicability in experiments?
- a. Experiments can be performed again and again over time in order to measure change.
 - b. Experiments allow research subjects to speak in their own voices.
 - c. Experiments are extremely cheap.
 - d. Each experiment is unique and illustrates something new.

ANS: A

DIF: Easy

REF: Page 56

OBJ: Experimental Methods

MSC: Remembering

86. A recent sociological experiment sought to determine the exact role social support plays in the health of expectant mothers. To conduct the experiment, the researchers asked midwives to flip a coin each time they received a new client, and if it came up heads to try as hard as possible to put the client in contact with others who could provide social support. If the coin came up tails, the midwives would NOT discourage the woman from receiving social support but would NOT facilitate it either. What is the dependent variable in this experiment?
- a. coin flips
 - b. health
 - c. social support
 - d. midwives

ANS: B

DIF: Moderate

REF: Page 55

OBJ: Experimental Methods

MSC: Applying

87. A recent sociological experiment sought to determine the exact role social support plays in the health of expectant mothers. To conduct the experiment, the researchers asked midwives to flip a coin each time they received a new client, and if it came up heads to try as hard as possible to put the client in contact with others who could provide social support. If the coin came up tails, the midwives would NOT discourage the woman from receiving social support but would NOT facilitate it either. Who is the control group in this experiment?
- a. expectant mothers
 - b. expectant mothers whose coin comes up tails
 - c. expectant mothers whose coin comes up heads
 - d. midwives

ANS: B

DIF: Moderate

REF: Page 55

OBJ: Experimental Methods

MSC: Applying

88. Many kitchen tools today are made with easy-to-grip silicone handles, a vast improvement over old wire tools, which were often painful to use. Although the advantages of silicone over wire might seem obvious, kitchenware makers were unaware of the problems with wire tools until they hired ethnographers to visit people at home, see how they worked in the kitchen, and determine what sorts of things could be sold to them. This ethnography is an example of:
- a nonacademic use of research methods.
 - reflexivity.
 - a way to ensure validity and reliability.
 - reactivity.

ANS: A DIF: Moderate REF: Page 58
OBJ: Issues in Sociological Research MSC: Applying

89. If a researcher allows his own values and opinions to affect his analysis, he is guilty of:
- theoretical incoherence.
 - bias.
 - sampling bias.
 - failing to obtain informed consent.

ANS: B DIF: Easy REF: Page 47
OBJ: Issues in Sociological Research MSC: Remembering

90. What is the difference between basic and applied research?
- Applied research is the search for knowledge for its own sake.
 - Applied research is gathering knowledge that can be used for social change.
 - Basic research is almost always done by Marxists.
 - Applied research is usually quantitative.

ANS: B DIF: Easy REF: Pages 58–59
OBJ: Issues in Sociological Research MSC: Remembering

91. What is reactivity?
- the way the experimental group reacts to the independent variable
 - when researchers react to data by overreporting the results
 - the tendency of research subjects to change their behavior in response to being studied
 - the goal of applied research, to create a reaction

ANS: C DIF: Easy REF: Page 61
OBJ: Issues in Sociological Research MSC: Remembering

92. When Elton Mayo did his now-classic experiment on worker productivity, he found that he could increase productivity by changing variables in a work environment, but also that changing back variables increased productivity. What did he conclude was the true cause of the increase in productivity?

- a decrease in sick days
- his own bias
- the effect of being studied
- increased lighting and longer breaks

ANS: C DIF: Easy REF: Page 61
OBJ: Issues in Sociological Research MSC: Understanding

93. For many years, researchers struggled to find a biological explanation for sexual orientation. However, the vast majority of studies have focused on gay men and excluded lesbians, which might lead sociologists to question the _____ of such research.

- commercial uses
- objectivity
- reflexivity
- reliability

ANS: B DIF: Difficult REF: Page 60
OBJ: Issues in Sociological Research MSC: Applying

94. While action research is gaining popularity among students, why is this methodological approach controversial among more traditional social scientists?
- It strictly adheres to ideal-type models.
 - It is aligned with values, challenging objectivity.
 - Research goals come before practical goals.
 - IRB approval is not required.

ANS: B DIF: Moderate REF: Page 51
OBJ: Issues in Sociological Research MSC: Analyzing

95. When Laud Humphreys was a sociology graduate student at Washington University in St. Louis, he wrote his dissertation on the “tearoom trade,” anonymous homosexual encounters in the men’s rooms of public parks. To gather data, he acted as a lookout for his subjects, but he also surreptitiously noted license-plate numbers as the men left, so he could get their names and addresses. The next year, he picked about fifty men from the “tearooms” and interviewed them in their homes, claiming to be performing a health survey. His descriptions of the interviews made it possible for many of the men (and their families) to recognize themselves when the dissertation was published. Why do many sociologists consider this research method to be unethical?
- It used terminology that was confusing to the interview subjects.
 - It put Humphreys at risk for arrest or retaliation.
 - It harmed the reputation of the city of St. Louis.
 - It failed to protect the biographical anonymity of his subjects.

ANS: D DIF: Difficult REF: Page 61
OBJ: Issues in Sociological Research MSC: Applying

96. What can an institutional review board do if it has reservations about the safety or ethics of a research project?
- It may appoint new researchers to complete the project.
 - It may stop the project from going forward, at least until changes have been made.
 - It may issue recommendations for future research.
 - It may provide assistance to any research subjects whose rights have been violated.

ANS: B DIF: Easy REF: Page 63
OBJ: Issues in Sociological Research MSC: Remembering

TRUE/FALSE

1. Sociologists try to follow the steps of the scientific method or approach to gather new empirical data that can change and deepen our understanding of human social life.

ANS: T DIF: Easy REF: Pages 41–42
OBJ: An Overview of Research Methods MSC: Remembering

2. Even if you pick your method carefully, you will still have to sacrifice some types of information in order to acquire others.

ANS: T DIF: Moderate REF: Page 44
OBJ: An Overview of Research Methods MSC: Remembering

3. No harm can come to subjects as a result of completing a questionnaire.

ANS: F DIF: Easy REF: Page 61| Page 63
OBJ: Issues in Sociological Research MSC: Remembering

4. Some “facts” sociologists once believed to be unambiguously true are now treated as opinions, biases, or speculation.

ANS: T DIF: Easy REF: Page 60
OBJ: Issues in Sociological Research MSC: Remembering

SHORT ANSWER

1. How does quantitative research differ from qualitative research?

ANS:

Quantitative works with numerical data using statistical analysis, and qualitative works with nonnumerical data to describe cases of study in detail.

DIF: Easy REF: Page 41 OBJ: An Overview of Research Methods
MSC: Remembering

2. Even if variables are correlated, explain how a change in one variable might not be caused by a change in another variable.

ANS:

Answers will vary but should include the following: a spurious correlation results when there is an appearance of a causation produced by an intervening variable—a third variable that explains the relationship between two other variables. This is evidenced by the relationship between ice cream sales and violent crime. As one increases, so does the other. However, the increase in both ice cream sales and violent crime is caused by a third variable—the weather.

DIF: Moderate REF: Page 42 OBJ: An Overview of Research Methods
MSC: Understanding

3. What does philosopher Thomas Kuhn argue about the truth?

ANS:

The truth is relative and dependent upon the paradigm with which one sees the world. Data can generate paradigm shifts, forcing new ways of looking at the world.

DIF: Easy REF: Pages 42–43 OBJ: An Overview of Research Methods
MSC: Understanding

4. In what way does a focus group differ from one-on-one interviews?

ANS:

In a focus group, a number of participants (five to ten) will be interviewed at the same time, allowing for group members to interact with one another.

DIF: Easy REF: Page 48 OBJ: Interviews MSC: Remembering

5. What are the advantages and disadvantages of asking open-ended and closed-ended questions?

ANS:

Open-ended questions allow for a wide variety of responses, whereas closed-ended questions limit possible responses. Open-ended questions provide qualitative data for an in-depth look into society but are time-consuming to answer and analyze. Closed-ended questions provide quantitative data that is able to be analyzed quickly using statistical analysis but lack the qualitative understanding found in open-ended questions.

DIF: Difficult REF: Pages 48–52 OBJ: Interviews | Surveys

MSC: Analyzing

6. Why is it important that researchers have a representative sample when conducting survey research?

ANS:

A representative sample allows for information garnered by surveys to be utilized to make accurate inferences about the target population.

DIF: Easy REF: Page 51 OBJ: Surveys MSC: Understanding

7. How might researchers generate a representative sample from a target population?

ANS:

Answers may vary but should include the following: representative samples can be generated through probability sampling, where the sample reflects the characteristics of target population. This may be achieved through a simple random sample, where everyone in a target population has an equal chance of being randomly selected, or through more advanced sampling techniques of manipulating or weighting sample population responses.

DIF: Moderate REF: Pages 51–52 OBJ: Surveys MSC: Understanding

8. What difficulties does experimental research present for researchers?

ANS:

Experiments are only applicable in certain types of research—that which can be constructed and measured in a controlled setting. Experiments do not work in explaining complex processes and interactions, and researchers cannot always eliminate factors that will have an unforeseen effect on social outcomes.

DIF: Moderate REF: Pages 56–57 OBJ: Experimental Methods

MSC: Understanding

9. In action research, what role does the population studied perform?

ANS:

Participants are active, collaborative, and equal participants; researchers are doing research with the people rather than on them.

DIF: Moderate REF: Page 50 OBJ: Issues in Sociological Research

MSC: Understanding

10. Explain the importance of confidentiality in social research.

ANS:

Answers may vary but should include the following: breaching confidentiality can cause harm to research participants. For example, due to a breach of confidentiality, Muncie, Indiana, was perceived as an example of shallowness and triviality, and Carolyn Ellis destroyed her relationships with participants in her research who were emotionally hurt by their misrepresented portrayals.

DIF: Moderate REF: Pages 62–63 OBJ: Issues in Sociological Research
MSC: Understanding

11. What recommendations are set out in the American Sociological Association's Code of Ethics?

ANS:

The ASA's Code of Ethics are a set of guidelines for researchers on how to avoid bias, adhere to professional standards, and protect respondents from harm.

DIF: Easy REF: Page 63 OBJ: Issues in Sociological Research
MSC: Remembering

ESSAY

1. Why should sociologists generally follow the steps of the scientific method or approach?

ANS:

Answers to this question should address how the scientific method or approach has been accepted as a standard procedure for acquiring empirical and measurable knowledge. It gives an important structure to the research process, without which data might be thought less rigorous or compelling. Using the scientific method helps researchers avoid common mistakes—such as neglecting to conduct a literature review—that might make a study pointless. Following the steps of the scientific method or approach helps researchers contribute to and build the field. For example, when their research findings are disseminated, this informs participants, other professionals, and interested parties, thus creating a research community. Finally, following Kuhn's line of thinking, we are constantly gathering data to understand what is true. However, truth is relative and depends on the paradigm, or worldview, we are using. Using the scientific method generates data that can help us see the world in different ways and can contribute to paradigm shifts and new ways of understanding what is true.

DIF: Difficult REF: Pages 41–43 OBJ: An Overview of Research Methods
MSC: Analyzing

2. The scientific method provides a general plan for conducting research in a systematic way. Describe the series of steps in the scientific method.

ANS:

In the first step, the researcher identifies a problem or asks a question. Next, the researcher does a literature review. The third step in the scientific method is forming a hypothesis where the variables are clearly defined (or operationalized). Fourth, the researcher chooses a research method or design to conduct the study; fifth, data are collected; and six, the data are analyzed and evaluated. Finally, the researcher disseminates the findings.

DIF: Moderate REF: Pages 41–42 OBJ: An Overview of Research Methods
MSC: Remembering

3. In everyday life, it is assumed that science provides access to objective truths that will never change. However, the philosopher Thomas Kuhn argues that truth is relative and dependent upon the paradigm through which one sees the world. Explain what a paradigm is and how the scientific method can lead to paradigm shifts.

ANS:

Answers should begin by describing Kuhn's work, especially the idea that paradigms are broad theoretical models about how things work. A paradigm shift, a major break from the assumptions made by the previous model, occurs when new information force a new way of looking at the world, as in the shift from an Earth-centered solar system to a heliocentric solar system. And it is through the use of the scientific method that new data is generated; the scientific method demands that assumptions be tested with empirical data.

DIF: Difficult REF: Page 43 OBJ: An Overview of Research Methods
MSC: Applying

4. Each method of social research comes with its own advantages and disadvantages. This means that there is not necessarily a "right" answer to the question of which method should be used for a project. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of using ethnographic research.

ANS:

Ethnographic research allows researchers to tell detailed stories that contribute to understanding social life, study previously overlooked groups, challenge taken-for-granted assumptions, and develop innovative methodologies. However, ethnographic research is hard to replicate, not always representative, and easily affected by bias. Reflexivity must be taken into account when doing ethnographic research. This type of research is also time-consuming and involves many hours of fieldwork.

DIF: Moderate REF: Pages 44–46 OBJ: Ethnography/Participant Observation
MSC: Evaluating

5. The anthropologist Clifford Geertz coined the term "thick description" to describe well-written fieldnotes. What does he mean by this term?

ANS:

Thick description should provide both a straightforward portrait of the activities and events in a given setting and resources from which the ethnographer can identify group members' meanings in that setting. Making fieldnotes "thick" requires more than mere photographic details; it also requires sensitivity to context and to interactional details such as facial expressions and tone of voice, which enrich what might otherwise be just a list of happenings. Thick description means all the possible meanings of a phenomenon within a cultural setting.

DIF: Difficult REF: Page 45 OBJ: Ethnography/Participant Observation
MSC: Understanding

6. Both interviews and surveys require a researcher to write clear, unambiguous questions in order to generate good data. What are the pitfalls and benefits of crafting specific types of questions?

ANS:

Answers should mention leading, double-barreled, and negative questions. The text also mentions overly complex questions, ambiguous questions, and those that spark an emotional reaction on the part of the respondent. A discussion of open-ended versus closed-ended questions should include information about closed-ended questions being easier to code but not allowing respondents to fully answer in their own words. Open-ended questions allow respondents to fully answer questions with their own ideas but are much more time-consuming for researchers to code.

DIF: Difficult REF: Pages 48–51 OBJ: Interviews MSC: Applying

7. As far back as Auguste Comte, the theorist who coined the term “sociology,” it has been assumed by many sociologists that objectivity is important in studying society. Describe the assumptions surrounding the role objectivity plays in sociology.

ANS:

Any answer should first point out that many “facts” from the past are now seen as distortions based on racism, sexism, class privilege, and even religiosity. Second, social researchers are human and therefore understand the world through their own subjective natures. Third, some postmodern theorists have suggested that there is no such thing as objective reality.

DIF: Difficult REF: Pages 60–61 OBJ: Issues in Sociological Research
MSC: Understanding

8. Given what you learned in Chapter 2, why would interviewers’ appearance, including clothing and hairstyle, make a difference in determining what they learn?

ANS:

Any good answer will mention reflexivity, the idea that researchers’ presence affects how people respond around them. While the presence of anyone might change certain things about a setting, most of the important effects of reflexivity are based on the particular identity and activities of a particular researcher, so the way he or she chooses to present himself or herself to his or her research subjects will affect their responses.

DIF: Difficult REF: Page 61 OBJ: Issues in Sociological Research
MSC: Applying

9. In physics, the Heisenberg uncertainty principle states that to measure something is also to change it. Sociologists have observed a similar phenomenon—reactivity. Describe the classic example of reactivity, observed and explained by Elton Mayo at the Western Electric Hawthorne Plant between 1927 and 1932.

ANS:

Mayo sought to examine the effect of varying work conditions on motivation and productivity in the factory. He changed various conditions—such as lighting levels, rest breaks, and even rates of pay—and found that each change resulted in a rise in productivity. However, returning to the original conditions also resulted in a rise in productivity. Mayo concluded that the variables he had manipulated were not the only or dominant causes of productivity. Rather, it was the effect of being studied, or what is now referred to as the Hawthorne effect, that caused the increases. It was attention that had caused the improvement. The presence of researchers always affects those that they study.

DIF: Moderate REF: Page 61 OBJ: Issues in Sociological Research
MSC: Understanding

10. In recent years, ethnography has expanded beyond academic and scientific disciplines and is now often used for commercial purposes. Explain how ethnographic methods can help advertisers.

ANS:

Advertisers are interested in the complex relationships between people and products, and ethnographic methods help them uncover the interpretive strategies and meaning systems used by consumers. The text mentions both Nissan, which used ethnographic methods to discover how American consumers defined “luxury,” and “cool hunters,” who search for new and hip trends in popular culture by talking to trendsetters.

DIF: Difficult REF: Pages 58–59 OBJ: Issues in Sociological Research
MSC: Applying

11. Social researchers, especially ethnographers, sometimes find themselves faced with complicated moral dilemmas. Chapter 2 describes the case of the ethnographer Rik Scarce, who was subpoenaed to testify about the actions of the animal rights group he had been studying. What did Scarce feel was his most important moral obligation? Why?

ANS:

The subpoena had asked that Scarce testify in the case, which could have incriminated the animal rights group he was studying. This was problematic to him because it had taken months of fieldwork to gain the trust of his subjects. However, if he did not testify, he would doom himself to a jail sentence. Scarce felt a strong ethical obligation to protect his research subjects, whose confidentiality he had guaranteed, and he refused to testify in court.

DIF: Difficult REF: Page 63 OBJ: Issues in Sociological Research
MSC: Understanding

12. Every discipline that does research on humans needs a code of ethics in order to protect its research subjects. While it is easy to see that medical research could harm people if not carried out ethically, the risks associated with sociological research may seem more subtle. Describe these risks.

ANS:

This answer should mention breaches of confidentiality and issues of betrayal based on the way subjects are portrayed, as well as risks of physical and legal harm to researchers.

DIF: Difficult REF: Page 61|Page 63
OBJ: Issues in Sociological Research MSC: Understanding

13. A professor receives a grant to study local employment conditions and files the required paperwork with her university’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). Later, several graduate students, who were not around when the project started, are hired to take over the day-to-day management of the project. The IRB promptly cuts off the project’s funding. Explain what an IRB does and why it might revoke funding for a research project.

ANS:

The IRB is a group of scholars who review the research proposals of their colleagues at a school. It is the responsibility of the IRB to protect research subjects from any kind of harm. Although a researcher change is not problematic in and of itself, the IRB would be concerned that it might signal a larger shift in the nature of the project: from a research procedure that had been approved as safe and ethical to one that had not been reviewed.

DIF: Difficult REF: Page 63 OBJ: Issues in Sociological Research
MSC: Applying