

CHAPTER 1: The Sociological Imagination: An Introduction

MULTIPLE CHOICE

1. As defined by C. Wright Mills, which of the following “enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society”?



- a. formal sociology
- b. sociological imagination
- c. microsociology
- d. macrosociology

ANS: B DIF: Easy REF: 1.1 The Sociological Imagination
MSC: Remembering

2. A female manager is attempting to climb her way to the top of the corporate ladder. She works as hard as, if not harder than, her male colleagues, but nothing she does seems to help her advance. She begins to notice a pattern: Men are often promoted, but women are often overlooked for advancement. The realization that many women in her circumstance are experiencing the same discrimination is an example of:
 - a. anomie.
 - b. *Verstehen*.
 - c. sociological imagination.
 - d. social cohesion.

ANS: C DIF: Moderate REF: 1.1 The Sociological Imagination
MSC: Applying

3. In *Pulp Fiction*, two characters discuss how in Holland people put mayonnaise on their french fries instead of ketchup, which the author uses to illustrate the concept of:
 - a. the sociology of film.
 - b. the sociological imagination.
 - c. social institutions.
 - d. formal sociology.

ANS: B DIF: Easy REF: 1.1 The Sociological Imagination
MSC: Understanding

4. According to social theorist Randall Collins, getting a “piece of paper” is more important to many than actually having the knowledge to do a job. He calls the undue priority placed on formal education:
 - a. microsociology.
 - b. credentialism.
 - c. normlessness.
 - d. xenophobia.

ANS: B DIF: Moderate REF: 1.1 The Sociological Imagination
MSC: Understanding

5. Asha Rangappa, dean of admissions at Yale Law School, explained that most students who apply to Yale Law School have already benefited from opportunities that make them appear to be stronger candidates than those from less advantaged backgrounds. In the sociological perspective, this implies that:



- a. as a social institution, education tends to reinforce existing inequalities.
- b. education is the best opportunity for reducing inequality.
- c. America's universities are not social institutions.
- d. Yale Law School is an exceptional case of inequality.

ANS: A DIF: Moderate REF: 1.1 The Sociological Imagination
MSC: Understanding

6. Which of the following is defined as a complex group of interdependent positions that together perform a social role and reproduce themselves over time?
- a. a social identity
 - b. a social institution
 - c. a theory
 - d. anomie

ANS: B DIF: Easy REF: 1.2 What Is a Social Institution?
MSC: Remembering

7. The most age-segregated social institution in our society is a:
- a. hospital.
 - b. mental institution.
 - c. prison.
 - d. four-year college.

ANS: D DIF: Easy REF: 1.2 What Is a Social Institution?
MSC: Remembering

8. The Philip Morris Company changed its name to Altria in an attempt to create a new:
- a. brand of cigarettes.
 - b. defense against lawsuits.
 - c. social identity.
 - d. multinational company.

ANS: C DIF: Moderate REF: 1.2 What Is a Social Institution?
MSC: Remembering

9. The "grand narrative" that constitutes a social identity:
- a. is nothing more than the sum of individual stories.
 - b. remains the same throughout time.
 - c. can be defined only by the individual him- or herself.

d. is displayed online on Instagram and Facebook.

ANS: A DIF: Moderate REF: 1.2 What Is a Social Institution?
MSC: Remembering

10. In government, many social actors such as senators, legislative aides, and voters work together as a complex group of interdependent parts to influence society. Seen in this light, government is a:
- sociological role.
 - figment of the sociological imagination.
 - society.
 - social institution.

ANS: D DIF: Easy REF: 1.2 What Is a Social Institution?
MSC: Applying

11. Social institutions often appear monolithic and unchanging. The sociological perspective sees that:
- social institutions are socially constructed and changeable.
 - modern social institutions are socially constructed, but premodern institutions were unchanging.
 - family is relatively monolithic, whereas government and education are changeable.
 - each institution must be understood on its own terms; no generalizations regarding social construction are possible.

ANS: A DIF: Easy REF: 1.2 What Is a Social Institution?
MSC: Understanding

12. In *How to Observe Morals and Manners*, Harriet Martineau critiqued the institution of marriage as:
- based on an assumption that women are inferior.
 - based on an assumption that men are inferior.
 - reinforcing heterosexuality.
 - perpetuating social class stratification.

ANS: A DIF: Moderate REF: 1.3 The Sociology of Sociology
MSC: Remembering

13. Which of the following sociologists invented the theory of positivism?
- Auguste Comte
 - Émile Durkheim
 - Karl Marx
 - Max Weber

ANS: A DIF: Moderate REF: 1.3 The Sociology of Sociology
MSC: Remembering

14. “Social physics” or “positivism” is best defined as the:
- idea that we can scientifically and logically study social institutions and the individuals within them.
 - effect of religion on social institutions and the individuals within them.
 - study of the symbolic interactions between social institutions and the individuals within them.
 - relationship between scientific and religious social institutions.

ANS: A DIF: Difficult REF: 1.3 The Sociology of Sociology
MSC: Remembering

15. According to Auguste Comte, what were the three epistemological stages of human society?
- the theological stage, the scientific stage, and the postscientific stage

- b. the theological stage, the metaphysical stage, and the secular stage
- c. the theological stage, the scientific stage, and the positivist stage
- d. the theological stage, the metaphysical stage, and the scientific stage

ANS: D DIF: Moderate REF: 1.3 The Sociology of Sociology
MSC: Remembering

16. Which founder of sociology is known, in part, for providing the theoretical foundation of Communism?
- a. Auguste Comte
 - b. Émile Durkheim
 - c. Karl Marx
 - d. Max Weber

ANS: C DIF: Easy REF: 1.3 The Sociology of Sociology
MSC: Understanding

17. To Karl Marx, conflict between a small number of capitalists and a large number of workers would divide society. He referred to these workers as:
- a. employees.
 - b. the proletariat.
 - c. subordinates.
 - d. the working poor.

ANS: B DIF: Easy REF: 1.3 The Sociology of Sociology
MSC: Remembering

18. Karl Marx argued that social institutions in a society were the result of the economic makeup of that society. Max Weber argued that:
- a. there are no social institutions in a society.
 - b. ideas influence society, not just economics.
 - c. Marx was correct.
 - d. the epistemological stage of that society influenced the social institutions.

ANS: B DIF: Difficult REF: 1.3 The Sociology of Sociology
MSC: Remembering

19. Who wrote *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*?
- a. Karl Marx
 - b. Georg Simmel
 - c. Harriet Martineau
 - d. Max Weber

ANS: D DIF: Easy REF: 1.3 The Sociology of Sociology
MSC: Remembering

20. To truly understand why people act the way they do, we must understand the *meanings* they attach to their behaviors. Max Weber called this:
- a. functionalism.
 - b. historical materialism.
 - c. xenophobia.
 - d. *Verstehen*.

ANS: D DIF: Easy REF: 1.3 The Sociology of Sociology
MSC: Understanding

21. A sociologist is initially shocked by the practice of child marriage in Kenya. Instead of viewing the participants as objects to be examined, the sociologist tries to imagine himself in the position of the people being studied and tries to see child marriage from their perspective. Seeking to understand the insider's perspective is what Max Weber called:
- a. anomie.
 - b. functionalism.
 - c. *Verstehen*.
 - d. positivism.

ANS: C DIF: Moderate REF: 1.3 The Sociology of Sociology

MSC: Applying

22. Which of the following is the study of social meanings, emphasizing subjectivity in understanding human behavior?
- a. interpretive sociology
 - b. formal sociology
 - c. social ecology
 - d. positivism

ANS: A DIF: Moderate REF: 1.3 The Sociology of Sociology
MSC: Understanding

23. *The Division of Labor in Society* was the first of many intellectual contributions to sociology from:
- a. Auguste Comte.
 - b. Émile Durkheim.
 - c. Karl Marx.
 - d. Max Weber.

ANS: B DIF: Moderate REF: 1.3 The Sociology of Sociology
MSC: Remembering

24. According to Émile Durkheim, the division of labor in a society helps to determine:
- a. the sociological contribution of individuals.
 - b. the timing of the revolt of the proletariat.
 - c. the way social cohesion among individuals is maintained.
 - d. linguistic patterns.

ANS: C DIF: Difficult REF: 1.3 The Sociology of Sociology
MSC: Understanding

25. Which sociologist wrote *Suicide* in 1897?
- a. Auguste Comte
 - b. Émile Durkheim
 - c. Karl Marx
 - d. Max Weber

ANS: B DIF: Easy REF: 1.3 The Sociology of Sociology
MSC: Remembering

26. According to Durkheim's *Suicide*, rapid social change causes people to experience normlessness, an uncomfortable state that sometimes leads to suicide. This state of normlessness is called:
- a. anomie.
 - b. loneliness.
 - c. suicidality.
 - d. *Verstehen*.

ANS: A DIF: Moderate REF: 1.3 The Sociology of Sociology
MSC: Remembering

27. At what university did American sociology in the United States emerge?
- a. American University
 - b. University of Chicago
 - c. New York University (NYU)
 - d. Columbia University

ANS: B DIF: Easy REF: 1.3 The Sociology of Sociology
MSC: Remembering

28. The basic premise of the Chicago School was that human behaviors and personalities are shaped by social and physical environments. This is known as:
- a. formal sociology.
 - b. interpretive sociology.
 - c. social ecology.
 - d. quantitative *sociology*.

ANS: C DIF: Easy REF: 1.3 The Sociology of Sociology
MSC: Understanding

29. The most important reason that the Chicago School's main laboratory for sociological research was the city of Chicago itself was that:
- travel at that time was expensive, so fieldwork in Chicago was convenient.
 - it was an American city, and trends in America were very similar to global trends.
 - Chicago is in the American Midwest, and the center of the country was seen as a composite of all American cities.
 - industrialism, immigration, and increasing ethnic diversity in Chicago were all interesting trends for sociologists to study.

ANS: D DIF: Moderate REF: 1.3 The Sociology of Sociology
MSC: Understanding

30. Charles H. Cooley argued that the self emerges from how an individual interacts with others and then interprets those interactions. He called this:
- the looking glass self.
 - the social self.
 - the generalized other.
 - the significant other.

ANS: A DIF: Easy REF: 1.3 The Sociology of Sociology
MSC: Remembering

31. George H. Mead described how the self internalizes the views of society as a whole, transcending the individual and particular situations. He called this:
- the significant other.
 - the generalized other.
 - the looking glass self.
 - the social self.

ANS: B DIF: Easy REF: 1.3 The Sociology of Sociology
MSC: Remembering

32. Who was the first African American to receive a PhD from Harvard University?
- W. E. B. Du Bois
 - Jane Addams
 - C. Wright Mills
 - William Julius Wilson

ANS: A DIF: Easy REF: 1.3 The Sociology of Sociology
MSC: Remembering

33. Which sociologist applied Durkheim's theory of anomie to explain crime rates among African Americans after the abolition of slavery in the United States?
- W. E. B. Du Bois
 - Jane Addams
 - Robert Park
 - Charles H. Cooley

ANS: A DIF: Easy REF: 1.3 The Sociology of Sociology
MSC: Remembering

34. A white woman goes into an upscale shop to look at clothes. She is excited to see that there is a sale and gathers a huge pile of clothes to take into the dressing room. An African American woman goes into the store and is also excited about the sale but hesitates to take too many clothes into the dressing room because she is afraid the staff will accuse her of shoplifting. W. E. B. Du Bois would say that the African American woman has:
- racial bias.
 - double injustice.
 - a double consciousness.
 - experienced a division of labor.

ANS: C DIF: Easy REF: 1.3 The Sociology of Sociology
MSC: Applying

35. What was Jane Addams best known for?
- being the only female member of the Chicago School

- b. founding the field of American sociology
- c. founding the first American settlement house to help the poor
- d. studying diverse communities in Chicago

ANS: C DIF: Easy REF: 1.3 The Sociology of Sociology
MSC: Remembering

36. Which modern sociological theory states that the best way to analyze society is to identify the purpose that different aspects or phenomena serve in society?
- a. postmodernism
 - b. feminism
 - c. conflict theory
 - d. functionalism

ANS: D DIF: Difficult REF: 1.3 The Sociology of Sociology
MSC: Understanding

37. Functionalism argues that _____ is the main cause of social change; conflict theory argues that _____ is the main cause of social change.
- a. consensus; competition
 - b. politics; religion
 - c. people; society
 - d. education; economics

ANS: A DIF: Moderate REF: 1.3 The Sociology of Sociology
MSC: Understanding

38. Which feminist sociologist wrote *Sex, Gender, and Society* (1972), which argued that much of what we attribute to biological sex differences can actually be traced to learned behaviors and socialization?
- a. Jane Addams
 - b. Harriet Martineau
 - c. Ann Oakley
 - d. Margaret Mead

ANS: C DIF: Easy REF: 1.3 The Sociology of Sociology
MSC: Understanding

39. What do symbolic interactionists study?
- a. midrange theory
 - b. postmodernism
 - c. functionalism
 - d. shared meaning

ANS: D DIF: Moderate REF: 1.3 The Sociology of Sociology
MSC: Understanding

40. Erving Goffman used the language of theater to describe how people present themselves in everyday social life. This is known as:
- a. sui generis.
 - b. dramaturgical theory.
 - c. functionalism.
 - d. stage theory.

ANS: B DIF: Easy REF: 1.3 The Sociology of Sociology
MSC: Remembering

41. Which of the following argues that the organizing narratives of history are over and that progress has led to a condition where there are no shared, objective meanings?
- a. feminism
 - b. conflict theory
 - c. postmodernism
 - d. functionalism

ANS: C DIF: Difficult REF: 1.3 The Sociology of Sociology
MSC: Understanding

42. Postmodern sociologists argue that all so-called objective phenomena are open to debate because all meaning is subjective. Thus, to postmodernists, all “facts” are really:
- a. social constructions.
 - b. myths.
 - c. lies.
 - d. propaganda.

ANS: A DIF: Difficult REF: 1.3 The Sociology of Sociology
MSC: Applying

43. Some postmodern sociologists work to show us how all “facts” are created arbitrarily by people with varying degrees of power. This is known as:
- a. positivism.
 - b. anomie.
 - c. qualitative research.
 - d. deconstructing social phenomena.

ANS: D DIF: Difficult REF: 1.3 The Sociology of Sociology
MSC: Understanding

44. Native Americans may see the history of the United States differently from white Americans. Which theory would argue that there is not a unifying “grand narrative” of history because history itself is not objective, but rather socially constructed?

- a. midrange theory
- b. postmodernism
- c. symbolic interactionism
- d. functionalism

ANS: B DIF: Difficult REF: 1.3 The Sociology of Sociology
MSC: Applying

45. Robert Merton’s modern sociological theory focused on predicting how certain social institutions function. This subject matter lies between microsociology and macrosociology. This is known as:

- a. midrange theory.
- b. middling sociology.
- c. applied theory.
- d. postmodernism.

ANS: A DIF: Difficult REF: 1.3 The Sociology of Sociology
MSC: Remembering

46. In the discipline of history, focusing on historical figures such as Adolf Hitler is known as:

- a. “great man” research.
- b. popular history.
- c. historiography.
- d. historical materialism.

ANS: A DIF: Moderate REF: 1.4 Sociology and Its Cousins
MSC: Remembering

47. Though both may study the past, historians more often focus on _____ cases while sociologists more often focus on _____ cases.

- a. multiple; single
- b. military; social
- c. unique; comparative
- d. qualitative; quantitative

ANS: C DIF: Moderate REF: 1.4 Sociology and Its Cousins
MSC: Remembering

48. While historians are more likely to focus on unique cases, sociologists are more likely to focus on:

- a. competition.
- b. the experiences of soldiers.
- c. commonalities across cases.
- d. small-scale interactions.

ANS: C DIF: Difficult REF: 1.4 Sociology and Its Cousins
MSC: Understanding

49. Which area within the discipline of anthropology is most similar to sociology?

- a. physical anthropology
- b. cultural anthropology
- c. linguistic anthropology
- d. biological anthropology

ANS: B DIF: Easy REF: 1.4 Sociology and Its Cousins
MSC: Understanding

50. In psychology, the focus is on the individual. In sociology, the focus is on group-level dynamics and social structures above and beyond the individual. Sociology's focus is:

- a. intra-individual.
- b. interindividual.
- c. supra-individual.
- d. superindividual.

ANS: C DIF: Difficult REF: 1.4 Sociology and Its Cousins
MSC: Remembering

51. The examination of human behavior within a rational actor model is the focus of which of the following "cousins" of sociology?

- a. anthropology
- b. economics
- c. psychology
- d. the biological sciences

ANS: B DIF: Moderate REF: 1.4 Sociology and Its Cousins
MSC: Remembering

52. Sociology is the study of:

- a. how urges, drives, and the mind account for human behavior.
- b. group-level dynamics and social structures.
- c. causal mechanisms within the biological nature of individuals.
- d. humans as rational utility maximizers.

ANS: B DIF: Easy REF: 1.4 Sociology and Its Cousins
MSC: Understanding

53. Economists generally see humans as _____, but sociologists tend to include _____.

- a. irrational actors; deceit
- b. rational actors; irrational motivations
- c. irrational actors; rationality
- d. emotional actors; emotionlessness

ANS: B DIF: Easy REF: 1.4 Sociology and Its Cousins
MSC: Understanding

54. The most significant division within the discipline of sociology exists between:

- a. interpretive and positivist sociology.
- b. qualitative and quantitative sociology.
- c. functionalist and feminist sociology.
- d. conflict and symbolic interactionist sociology.

ANS: A DIF: Moderate REF: 1.5 Divisions within Sociology
MSC: Applying

55. Which of the following focuses its analyses on face-to-face encounters and interactions?

- a. microsociology
- b. macrosociology
- c. social ecology
- d. cultural sociology

ANS: A DIF: Moderate REF: 1.5 Divisions within Sociology
MSC: Understanding

56. Which of the following focuses its analyses on larger social dynamics at the societal and structural levels?

- a. microsociology
- b. macrosociology
- c. social ecology
- d. social psychology

ANS: B DIF: Moderate REF: 1.5 Divisions within Sociology
MSC: Remembering

57. Quantitative sociologists view data as numbers. Qualitative sociologists view data as:
- a. human beings.
 - b. feelings.
 - c. qualities.
 - d. words.

ANS: D DIF: Easy REF: 1.5 Divisions within Sociology
MSC: Understanding

58. _____ sociology makes a prediction about homelessness rates. _____ sociology seeks to understand the experience of homelessness.
- a. Positivist; Interpretive
 - b. Qualitative; Quantitative
 - c. Classical; Contemporary
 - d. Theoretical; Empirical

ANS: A DIF: Moderate REF: 1.5 Divisions within Sociology
MSC: Applying

ESSAY

1. Explain how a successful sociologist makes the familiar strange. Assess the value of a sociological perspective on ONE of the following topics: family or college. Describe what the sociological perspective might shed light on when it comes to these two topics.

ANS:

A successful sociologist makes the familiar strange by exposing what had seemed natural as, in fact, socially constructed. Sociologists use both theory and method to accomplish this purpose.

Students who choose the college topic may discuss credentialism or social inequality, discussing one of the conundrums of contemporary education—that it is said to be a social equalizer but in fact more often preserves existing inequalities.

Students who choose the family topic may critique the use of the term “traditional family,” a phrase that makes the social institution of family seem monolithic and unchanging. In fact, in society, law, and religion, people are constantly constructing, deconstructing, and reconstructing family.

Advantages of the sociological perspective may include sharper insight, a stronger commitment to justice and equality, and a more acute view of why people are positioned in society as they are. Disadvantages may include frustration with the difficulty of making social change and disappointment with one’s long-held beliefs in equal opportunity or the American dream. Disadvantages could also include what is missed by not using a psychological, historical, or other disciplinary approach.

DIF: Easy REF: 1.1 The Sociological Imagination MSC: Evaluating

2. One of Weber’s most important contributions to sociology was the concept of *Verstehen*, or “understanding” in German. First, describe what Weber meant by this concept. Then, describe how a sociologist might go about gaining this understanding.

ANS:

Weber was suggesting that if we truly want to understand people's behaviors (e.g., why they take particular actions or make particular decisions), we need to stand in "their shoes," or see it from their perspective. This was a call for understanding the meanings people attach to their actions. A real-life example of this would be if a sociologist wanted to understand why people become stressed. He or she would need to interview people in order to gain a better understanding of what stresses them—because what's stressful for one person (e.g., "Ugh, I hate having to go to this party and make small talk with a bunch of people I don't even know") may not be stressful to another (e.g., "I can't wait to meet/network with some new people tonight"). Weber would argue that if we truly want a better understanding of "what stresses people," we need to understand the events/situations they define as stressful.

DIF: Moderate REF: 1.3 The Sociology of Sociology MSC: Analyzing

3. List and discuss three contributions that Émile Durkheim made to sociology.

ANS:

Durkheim's main contributions include the theory of *functionalism*, which examines society as a sum of many parts working together (or not) like a well-oiled machine. He also defined *the division of labor*, or how jobs are specialized in a society. Division of labor is predicted to be partly responsible for determining the level of *social solidarity* (consensus within a society) of a given society.

Durkheim was also the first practitioner of *positivist sociology* with his 1897 book *Suicide*, even though Comte coined the term *positivism*. In this research, Durkheim found that normlessness resulting from drastic changes in one's lifestyle may lead to anomie, and that this normlessness may lead some people to commit suicide. Anomie is also used in many other ways to study people's behaviors.

DIF: Moderate REF: 1.3 The Sociology of Sociology MSC: Analyzing

4. Define the Chicago School's concept of *social ecology*. State a research question you could pose to better understand a particular phenomenon from a social ecology perspective. Explain how your question fits with social ecology.

ANS:

Social ecology is the study of human behaviors and personalities as shaped by our social and physical environments. It grew popular in Chicago in the 1920s, as the city was rapidly urbanizing and industrializing. It is practiced primarily through a community-based approach (e.g., interviewing research subjects and spending time with them).

An example of a research question would be: How has the steady growth of Latino populations in Siler City, North Carolina, affected the ethnic composition of the public schools in the area? Has this growth had any effect on the growth in private/charter schools within the city? Has this growth had any effect on the kinds of food carried in grocery stores? How has this population adapted to life? Have any particular changes emerged as a result of this steady growth in the Latino population (e.g., stretch on resources, decreasing/increasing racial and ethnic tolerance, etc.)?

DIF: Difficult REF: 1.3 The Sociology of Sociology MSC: Analyzing

5. Choose one of the following American social theorists: Park, Wirth, Cooley, Mead, Du Bois, or Addams. Describe the main idea of their theory, including relevant details, and describe their lasting contribution to sociology.

ANS:

Robert Park's main ideas include encouraging others to "go out and get the seats of [their] pants dirty with real research" by applying social-ecological (community-based) research to the real world.

Louis Wirth is known for his essay "Urbanism as a Way of Life," in which he borrowed from Durkheim and described how the city broke down traditional forms of social solidarity while still promoting tolerance, rationality, and individual freedom.

Charles Horton Cooley's main idea was that our *social self* is shaped during an interactive process in which we envision how others perceive us, and that leads to our *self-concept*. He called this the *looking glass self* theory.

George Herbert Mead wrote *Mind, Self, and Society*, in which he described how the self develops over the course of childhood as individuals learn to take the point of view of others in specific contexts and eventually the larger society, which he called the *generalized other*.

W. E. B. Du Bois is probably the most important black sociologist, as well as the first African American to earn a PhD from Harvard University. Du Bois cofounded the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909. His early work included contributions to criminology in which he used Durkheim's concept of anomie to explain crime rates among African Americans after slavery. Mainly, the sudden and newfound freedom of former slaves was found to be related to high crime rates among Southern blacks. Du Bois also argued that social stratification among Philadelphia's black population may have been necessary for progress in the black community. Thus, he created what he called "the talented tenth," an elite group of African American professionals that would lead blacks to success.

Jane Addams, like most women and nonwhite male sociologists, didn't always receive the respect she deserved. She founded Hull House in Chicago, a settlement house that served the poor. She was also marginalized by some as more of a social worker than a sociologist, but she wore that title proudly and encouraged sociologists to become social activists.

DIF: Moderate REF: 1.3 The Sociology of Sociology MSC: Evaluating

6. How would a conflict theorist look at the educational system in the United States? How would a functionalist look at the educational system? What is one commonality between these two perspectives? What is one important difference?

ANS:

A conflict theorist would see the educational system in the United States as unequal. People from lower classes don't receive the same education as those from higher social classes. This is due to the fact that even public schools are not equal. Schools in upper-status neighborhoods have more resources for learning, and therefore their students are more likely to be accepted into college. Families from upper-class neighborhoods are also more likely to be able to afford tutors and computers, and they may be alumni of good colleges and thus assist their children in applying.

A functionalist, however, might argue that the public school system in the United States is functional in allowing all students access to the same education. The organization of this system is beneficial for all who want to take advantage of it. The people who get into colleges are those who have studied harder in school and are smarter than those youths who aren't accepted into these institutions.

Commonalities could include: They are both sociology; they both consider how education is socially constructed; they both look at people's experience in light of social location.

Differences include the priority given to conflict and the priority given to social stability.

DIF: Moderate REF: 1.3 The Sociology of Sociology MSC: Analyzing

7. List two or three examples of a topic that midrange theory would address. Describe the value of midrange theory to contemporary sociology.

ANS:

Midrange theory would consider topics larger than the individual but smaller than society as a whole, such as gender, race, ethnicity, urbanism, religion, or education.

Where the other modern sociological theories are grand in their predictions and explanations and thus open to deconstruction, *midrange theory* borrows from functionalist Robert Merton. Merton said we should focus on how specific social institutions tend to function rather than trying to focus on the entire social structure. The key to understanding midrange theory is that it generates *falsifiable hypotheses* that sociologists can test by analyzing the real world in manageable chunks rather than trying to take on the whole world at one time.

DIF: Moderate REF: 1.3 The Sociology of Sociology MSC: Analyzing

8. Choose one “cousin” of sociology: history, anthropology, psychology, economics, or political science. List and describe two similarities between sociology and the cousin you chose. List and describe two differences.

ANS:

History: Historians are generally more concerned with explaining “unique” cases (e.g., why Hitler came to power), while sociologists focus more on the commonalities that can be extracted from a wide variety of cases (e.g., what common element allowed fascism to arise in Germany, Italy, Spain, and Japan, but not in other countries). You could say that sociology is more concerned with overarching patterns (nomothetic approach), while history is more focused on explaining particular instances (idiographic approach).

Anthropology: It used to be easier to paint these two disciplines as different creatures because sociologists generally studied “us” (Western society and culture) and anthropologists more often focused on “them” (other societies/cultures). Today, the subject matter of sociology is often indistinguishable from the subject matter of anthropology—especially cultural anthropology. You could argue that sociologists typically use a wider array of methods—including experiments and surveys—and that they make heavier use of comparative case studies than anthropologists. Because globalization has made divisions of the past (between “us” and “them”) less salient, scholars today often question the legitimacy of drawing strict boundaries between these two disciplines.

Psychology: Although sociology and psychology address the same questions, psychology focuses more on how things “within” a person (individual) affect behavior, and sociology focuses more on how things “outside” a person (supra-individual) affect behavior. As such, psychologists direct more of their attention toward drives, urges, instincts, and mental processes, while sociologists focus more on group dynamics, social structures (both small and large), and how a people’s social location affects their actions and feelings.

Economics and Political Science: Economists start with a view of humans as rational actors who seek to maximize benefits and minimize costs. Sociologists have a more expansive view of what motivates people to act, going beyond the maximizing of profit and including unconscious (nonrational, selfless, greed, cultural expectations) motivating factors. While sociologists focus broadly on social relations, political science focuses on one particular aspect of social relations—power. As such, sociology’s subject matter is much broader in scope.

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