Social Problems 15th edition Eitzen Test Bank

SKU: 9780137941445-TEST-BANK

Chapter 1 The Sociological Approach to Social Problems

A. Multiple Choice

1. As the number of the elderly increases, the divide between the older population and workers who support the old with payroll taxes will have both racial and generational dimensions because the elderly will be overwhelmingly _____.

A) Black
B) Asian
C) Hispanic
D) White

Answer: D
Page Reference: 2
Learning Objective: 1.1 Understand the major social trends facing Americans and their potential consequences.
Topic/A-head: An Introduction to Social Issues
Skill Level: Remember the Facts

2. In the underdeveloped world, conflicts over scarce resources will _____.

A) increase
B) decrease
C) stay the same
D) fluctuate

Answer: A
Page Reference: 4
Learning Objective: 1.1 Understand the major social trends facing Americans and their potential consequences.
Topic/A-head: An Introduction to Social Issues
Skill Level: Remember the Facts

3. The United States, with about 4.2 percent of the world's population, consumes about 17 percent of the world's _____.

A) food
B) energy
C) water
D) timber

Answer: B
Page Reference: 3
Learning Objective: 1.1 Understand the major social trends facing Americans and their potential consequences.
Topic/A-head: An Introduction to Social Issues
Skill Level: Remember the Facts

4. The widening inequality gap has resulted in a diminished _____.

A) underclass
B) lower class
C) middle class

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D) upper class

Answer: C
Page Reference: 2
Learning Objective: 1.1 Understand the major social trends facing Americans and their potential consequences.
Topic/A-head: An Introduction to Social Issues
Skill Level: Remember the Facts

5. Almost all the growth in the world's population by 2050 will occur among the _____.

A) poorest nations
B) wealthiest nations
C) democratic nations
D) industrialized nations

Answer: A
Page Reference: 4
Learning Objective: 1.1 Understand the major social trends facing Americans and their potential consequences.
Topic/A-head: An Introduction to Social Issues
Skill Level: Remember the Facts

6. Which type of new technology has shifted labor demand to high-level skills, hurting low- and middle-income workers and increasing income inequality?

A) Printing
B) Steam engine
C) Television
D) Artificial intelligence

Answer: D
Page Reference: 3
Learning Objective: 1.1 Understand the major social trends facing Americans and their potential consequences.
Topic/A-head: An Introduction to Social Issues
Skill Level: Remember the Facts

7. The U.S. economy has undergone a dramatic shift to a(n) _____.

A) digital economy
B) industrial economy
C) informal economy
D) service economy

Answer: A
Page Reference: 3
Learning Objective: 1.1 Understand the major social trends facing Americans and their potential consequences.
Topic/A-head: An Introduction to Social Issues
Skill Level: Remember the Facts

8. Population increases lead to _____.

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A) less traffic congestion
B) more landfills
C) less suburban sprawl
D) more alternative energy sources

Answer: B
Page Reference: 3
Learning Objective: 1.1 Understand the major social trends facing Americans and their potential consequences.
Topic/A-head: An Introduction to Social Issues
Skill Level: Remember the Facts

9. The _____ nature of social problems illustrates that social problems vary by time, place, and definition.

A) economic
B) objective
C) political
D) subjective

Answer: D
Page Reference: 6
Learning Objective: 1.2 Explain the complex nature of defining a social problem.
Topic/A-head: Defining Social Problems
Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

10. The actions that violate the norms of a social organization or society are referred to as _____.

A) social problems
B) deviant behavior
C) recidivism
D) person-blame

Answer: B
Page Reference: 7
Learning Objective: 1.2 Explain the complex nature of defining a social problem.
Topic/A-head: Defining Social Problems
Skill Level: Remember the Facts

11. The _____ nature of social problems describes the notion that societal conditions harm certain segments of the population.

A) economic
B) objective
C) political
D) subjective

Answer: B
Page Reference: 5
Learning Objective: 1.2 Explain the complex nature of defining a social problem.
Topic/A-head: Defining Social Problems
Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

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12. According to the text, _____ often escape criticism and are rarely identified as social problems.

A) institutions
B) criminals
C) the mentally ill
D) school dropouts

Answer: A
Page Reference: 8-9
Learning Objective: 1.2 Explain the complex nature of defining a social problem.
Topic/A-head: Defining Social Problems
Skill Level: Apply What You Know

13. Which of the following is a danger associated with relying on public opinion to define social phenomena as social problems?

A) It may increase focus on intuitions as the source of social problems.
B) It may divert attention from problems within the existing social order.
C) It may overlook conditions that are detrimental to the rich.
D) It may overlook individual responsibility.

Answer: B
Page Reference: 6
Learning Objective: 1.2 Explain the complex nature of defining a social problem.
Topic/A-head: Defining Social Problems
Skill Level: Analyze It

14. The nations of Western Europe, Scandinavia, and Canada have generous welfare policies for their citizens because they _____.

A) are monarchies
B) have high tax rates
C) restrict the freedoms of their citizens
D) are communist nations

Answer: B
Page Reference: 8
Learning Objective: 1.2 Explain the complex nature of defining a social problem.
Topic/A-head: Social Problems in Global Perspective
Skill Level: Remember the Facts

15. As a result of extensive and universal social services, the social welfare states have _____ than the United States.

A) higher infant mortality rates
B) lower literacy rates
C) lower rates of violent crime
D) higher rates of poverty

Answer: C

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Page Reference: 8
Learning Objective: 1.2 Explain the complex nature of defining a social problem.
Topic/A-head: Social Problems in Global Perspective
Skill Level: Remember the Facts

16. Social welfare states have a(n) _____ life expectancy when compared to the United States.

A) shorter
B) longer
C) identical
D) nonexistent

Answer: B
Page Reference: 8
Learning Objective: 1.2 Explain the complex nature of defining a social problem.
Topic/A-head: Social Problems in Global Perspective
Skill Level: Remember the Facts

17. Citizens in social welfare states likely have better health outcomes than those in the United States because _____.

A) they provide more tax-funded social services for their people
B) they have no unemployment
C) they have a more competitive system for social services
D) they access social services through private enterprise, which ensures higher quality

Answer: A
Page Reference: 8
Learning Objective: 1.2 Explain the complex nature of defining a social problem.
Topic/A-head: Defining Social Problems
Skill Level: Analyze It

18. A guiding assumption is that norm violators are _____.

A) solely responsible for their actions
B) universally criticized
C) symptoms of social problems
D) guiltless for their actions

Answer: C
Page Reference: 7
Learning Objective: 1.2 Explain the complex nature of defining a social problem.
Topic/A-head: Defining Social Problems
Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

19. The acts and conditions that violate the norms and values found in society are referred to as _____.

A) social problems
B) social welfare
C) social unrest

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D) social disorganization

Answer: A
Page Reference: 7
Learning Objective: 1.2 Explain the complex nature of defining a social problem.
Topic/A-head: Defining Social Problems
Skill Level: Remember the Facts

20. According to the text, early U.S. sociologists commonly assumed social problems resulted from _____.

A) cultural norms
B) social conditions
C) broad institutions
D) bad people

Answer: D
Page Reference: 5
Learning Objective: 1.2 Explain the complex nature of defining a social problem.
Topic/A-head: Defining Social Problems
Skill Level: Remember the Facts

21. Which type of model did early U.S. sociologists apply to the analysis of society to assess whether some pathology was present?

A) Cultural
B) Medical
C) Structural
D) Historical

Answer: B
Page Reference: 5
Learning Objective: 1.2 Explain the complex nature of defining a social problem.
Topic/A-head: Defining Social Problems
Skill Level: Remember the Facts

22. Sociologists in the 1920s and 1930s found that certain areas of cities undergoing the most rapid change had disproportionately high rates of _____.

A) family cohesiveness
B) literacy
C) civic participation
D) mental disorders

Answer: D
Page Reference: 5
Learning Objective: 1.2 Explain the complex nature of defining a social problem.
Topic/A-head: Defining Social Problems
Skill Level: Remember the Facts

23. Societal _____ are viewed as the key in determining what a social problem is and who is deviant.

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A) reactions
B) laws
C) institutions
D) structures

Answer: A
Page Reference: 5
Learning Objective: 1.2 Explain the complex nature of defining a social problem.
Topic/A-head: Defining Social Problems
Skill Level: Remember the Facts

24. The idea of the "sociological imagination" was developed by which sociologist?

A) C. Wright Mills
B) William Graham Sumner
C) Karl Marx
D) Emile Durkheim

Answer: A
Page Reference: 9
Learning Objective: 1.3 Explain and apply the sociological imagination to different social problems.
Topic/A-head: The Sociological Perspective
Skill Level: Remember the Facts

25. The sociological imagination involves which of the following components?

A) A focus on your individual point of view
B) A focus on genetic determinants
C) A focus on social, economic, and historical circumstances
D) A focus on individual decision-making

Answer: C
Page Reference: 9-10
Learning Objective: 1.3 Explain and apply the sociological imagination to different social problems.
Topic/A-head: The Sociological Perspective
Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

26. The system-blame approach assumes that social problems emanate from _____.

A) psychological conditions
B) broad institutions
C) religious tradition
D) deviant behavior

Answer: B
Page Reference: 9
Learning Objective: 1.3 Explain and apply the sociological imagination to different social problems.
Topic/A-head: The Sociological Perspective
Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

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27. Which concept best describes a situation in which an individual gets reinvolved with crime?

A) Recidivism
B) Retribution
C) Rehabilitation
D) Restoration

Answer: A
Page Reference: 10
Learning Objective: 1.3 Explain and apply the sociological imagination to different social problems.
Topic/A-head: The Sociological Perspective
Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

28. The concept of _____ refers to the belief that the placement of people in the stratification system is a function of their innate ability and talents.

A) the sociological imagination
B) Social Darwinism
C) the subjective nature of social problems
D) recidivism

Answer: B
Page Reference: 10
Learning Objective: 1.3 Explain and apply the sociological imagination to different social problems.
Topic/A-head: The Sociological Perspective
Skill Level: Remember the Facts

29. According to Social Darwinism, disadvantaged members of society _____.

A) do not have any control over their circumstances
B) are valuable parts of the community
C) deserve government welfare
D) deserve their fate, as do the successful

Answer: D
Page Reference: 10-11
Learning Objective: 1.3 Explain and apply the sociological imagination to different social problems.
Topic/A-head: The Sociological Perspective
Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

30. The person-blame approach assumes that social problems result from _____.

A) pathologies of individuals
B) social conditions
C) religious tradition
D) broad institutions

Answer: A
Page Reference: 9
Learning Objective: 1.3 Explain and apply the sociological imagination to different social problems.

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Topic/A-head: The Sociological Perspective
Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

31. Which of the following illustrates what a person-blamer would point to as the reason why the recidivism rate of ex-convicts is high?

A) Failure of the criminal justice system to rehabilitate individuals
B) Scarcity of employment for ex-criminals
C) An individual's weak impulse control
D) Lack of an adequate education due underfunded schools

Answer: C
Page Reference: 10
Learning Objective: 1.3 Explain and apply the sociological imagination to different social problems.
Topic/A-head: The Sociological Perspective
Skill Level: Analyze It

32. A person-blame approach to social problems would advocate for programs that would _____.

A) seek to change individual behavior
B) produce sweeping social change
C) reorganize social institutions
D) change long-held societal norms

Answer: A
Page Reference: 10
Learning Objective: 1.3 Explain and apply the sociological imagination to different social problems.
Topic/A-head: The Sociological Perspective
Skill Level: Apply What You Know

33. According to the person-blame approach to social problems, the cause of an individual's deviant behavior would be _____.

A) the educational system
B) the economy
C) the individual themselves
D) the government

Answer: C
Page Reference: 10
Learning Objective: 1.3 Explain and apply the sociological imagination to different social problems.
Topic/A-head: The Sociological Perspective
Skill Level: Analyze It

34. According to William Graham Sumner, success is the result of _____.

A) being superior
B) working hard
C) social reform
D) helping the poor

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Answer: A
Page Reference: 11
Learning Objective: 1.3 Explain and apply the sociological imagination to different social problems.
Topic/A-head: A Closer Look: William Graham Sumner and Social Darwinism
Skill Level: Remember the Facts

35. The system-blame orientation would attribute students' failure in schools to _____.

A) the failure of one to overcome limited intellectual capacities
B) the failure of the students to work hard to succeed
C) the failure of the educational system to meet their needs
D) the failure of their parents to provide proper guidance

Answer: C
Page Reference: 10–11
Learning Objective: 1.3 Explain and apply the sociological imagination to different social problems.
Topic/A-head: The Sociological Perspective
Skill Level: Analyze It

36. Which of the following would be a reason for a recently released criminal committing another crime according to the system-blame approach?

A) The person lacks a conscience.
B) The person is surrounded by ex-criminals.
C) The person is inherently criminal.
D) The person cannot find employment due to their record.

Answer: D
Page Reference: 10
Learning Objective: 1.3 Explain and apply the sociological imagination to different social problems.
Topic/A-head: The Sociological Perspective
Skill Level: Analyze It

37. According to the arguments made by the system-blamers, which institution is the first to fail ex-inmates in providing them with the minimum requirements for full participating in society?

A) Family
B) Religion
C) School
D) Government

Answer: C
Page Reference: 10
Learning Objective: 1.3 Explain and apply the sociological imagination to different social problems.
Topic/A-head: The Sociological Perspective
Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

38. The sociological perspective involves moving away from thinking in terms of the _____.

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A) economy
B) government
C) individual
D) society

Answer: C
Page Reference: 9
Learning Objective: 1.3 Explain and apply the sociological imagination to different social problems.
Topic/A-head: The Sociological Perspective
Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

39. If a person were to develop a sociological imagination, they would be required to _____.

A) view the world from their own perspective
B) think in terms of the individual and their problems
C) ignore the structural arrangements that shape social behavior
D) detach from the taken-for-granted assumptions about social life

Answer: D
Page Reference: 11
Learning Objective: 1.3 Explain and apply the sociological imagination to different social problems.
Topic/A-head: The Sociological Perspective
Skill Level: Apply What You Know

40. Social Darwinists would oppose social reforms such as welfare to the poor because _____.

A) they are too expensive to produce viable results
B) they allow people to get money for doing nothing
C) they reward the unfit and penalize the competent
D) they believe that it is more effective to provide technical training for the poor

Answer: C
Page Reference: 11
Learning Objective: 1.3 Explain and apply the sociological imagination to different social problems.
Topic/A-head: A Closer Look: William Graham Sumner and Social Darwinism
Skill Level: Analyze It

41. The authors assert that exclusively focusing on the individual when studying social problems _____.

A) overlooks deviations from society's norms as potential problems
B) takes an overly deterministic view of social problems
C) ignores the strains caused by the inequities of the system
D) treats social problems as being the product of systematic inequity

Answer: C
Page Reference: 12
Learning Objective: 1.3 Explain and apply the sociological imagination to different social problems.
Topic/A-head: The Sociological Perspective
Skill Level: Analyze It

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42. The analysis of social problems depends on _____.

A) politicians
B) reliable scientific data
C) public opinion
D) media representations

Answer: B
Page Reference: 12
Learning Objective: 1.4 Understand the four basic research designs and research methods that sociologists use to study social problems.
Topic/A-head: Studying Social Problems: The Craft of Sociology
Skill Level: Remember the Facts

43. Researchers who use _____ collect information about the same persons over many years.

A) longitudinal surveys
B) experiments
C) participant observation
D) existing data

Answer: A
Page Reference: 15
Learning Objective: 1.4 Understand the four basic research designs and research methods that sociologists use to study social problems.
Topic/A-head: Studying Social Problems: The Craft of Sociology
Skill Level: Remember the Facts

44. In experimental research, who is the "control" group?

A) They are the researchers who conduct the study.
B) They are subjects who are exposed to the independent variable.
C) They are subjects not exposed to the independent variable.
D) They are subjects who are aware of the experimental manipulation.

Answer: C
Page Reference: 15
Learning Objective: 1.4 Understand the four basic research designs and research methods that sociologists use to study social problems.
Topic/A-head: Studying Social Problems: The Craft of Sociology
Skill Level: Remember the Facts

45. Sociologists use _____ to explain a range of human behavior, culture, and social structure.

A) political discourse
B) media representations
C) public opinion
D) sociological theory

Answer: D
Page Reference: 13

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Learning Objective: 1.4 Understand the four basic research designs and research methods that sociologists use to study social problems.
Topic/A-head: Studying Social Problems: The Craft of Sociology
Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

46. Which of the following statements is accurate about sociologists doing research on social problems?

A) Sociologists do not let values affect their research.
B) Sociologists agree on a liberal agenda that sides with the disadvantaged.
C) Sociologists cannot escape from their own feelings and values.
D) Sociologists largely promote an agenda that maintains the existing social order.

Answer: C
Page Reference: 17
Learning Objective: 1.4 Understand the four basic research designs and research methods that sociologists use to study social problems.
Topic/A-head: Studying Social Problems: The Craft of Sociology
Skill Level: Analyze It

47. If a sociologist wanted to know whether the United States' public education system provides equal education opportunities for all youth, they would ask a _____ question.

A) historical
B) comparative
C) factual
D) conceptual

Answer: C
Page Reference: 12
Learning Objective: 1.4 Understand the four basic research designs and research methods that sociologists use to study social problems.
Topic/A-head: Studying Social Problems: The Craft of Sociology
Skill Level: Apply What You Know

48. A(n) _____ is something that can vary, such as a characteristics, value, or belief.

A) variable
B) sample
C) control group
D) experiment

Answer: A
Page Reference: 15
Learning Objective: 1.4 Understand the four basic research designs and research methods that sociologists use to study social problems.
Topic/A-head: Studying Social Problems: The Craft of Sociology
Skill Level: Remember the Facts

49. When a researcher uses _____, they join the group being studied in order to fully understand their behavior.

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A) existing data
B) experiments
C) survey research
D) participant observation

Answer: D
Page Reference: 15
Learning Objective: 1.4 Understand the four basic research designs and research methods that sociologists use to study social problems.
Topic/A-head: Studying Social Problems: The Craft of Sociology
Skill Level: Apply What You Know

50. If a researcher were to use a written questionnaire in their study, they would be using which source of data?

A) Existing data
B) Experiment
C) Survey research
D) Participant observation

Answer: C
Page Reference: 15
Learning Objective: 1.4 Understand the four basic research designs and research methods that sociologists use to study social problems.
Topic/A-head: Studying Social Problems: The Craft of Sociology
Skill Level: Apply What You Know

B. True/False

51. The racial and ethnic diversity in the United States is decreasing.

Answer: FALSE
Page Reference: 2
Learning Objective: 1.1 Understand the major social trends facing Americans and their potential consequences.
Topic/A-head: An Introduction to Social Issues
Skill Level: Remember the Facts

52. Early social pathologists viewed social problems as behaviors or social arrangements that disturb the moral order.

Answer: TRUE
Page Reference: 5
Learning Objective: 1.2 Explain the complex nature of defining a social problem.
Topic/A-head: Defining Social Problems
Skill Level: Remember the Facts

53. The sociological imagination is stimulated by a willingness to view the social world from the perspective of others.

Answer: TRUE
Page Reference: 9

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Learning Objective: 1.3 Explain and apply the sociological imagination to different social problems.
Topic/A-head: The Sociological Perspective
Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

54. The objective reality of social problems demonstrates that conditions, such as poverty, induce material or psychic suffering for certain segments of the population.

Answer: TRUE
Page Reference: 5
Learning Objective: 1.2 Explain the complex nature of defining a social problem.
Topic/A-head: Defining Social Problems
Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

55. The textbook examines two types of social problems: (1) acts and conditions that violate the norms and values present in society, and (2) the difficulties for those suffering from the deviant acts of norm violators.

Answer: FALSE
Page Reference: 7
Learning Objective: 1.2 Explain the complex nature of defining a social problem.
Topic/A-head: Defining Social Problems
Skill Level: Remember the Facts

56. Person-blame is an approach that looks at whether social problems emanate from the broader institutions in which individuals are involved.

Answer: FALSE
Page Reference: 9
Learning Objective: 1.3 Explain and apply the sociological imagination to different social problems.
Topic/A-head: The Sociological Perspective
Skill Level: Remember the Facts

57. A person-blamer would attribute high rates of recidivism to faults and failures of the individual criminals, including their greed, feelings of aggression, weak control of impulses, and relative lack of conscience.

Answer: TRUE
Page Reference: 10
Learning Objective: 1.3 Explain and apply the sociological imagination to different social problems.
Topic/A-head: The Sociological Perspective
Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

58. Sociologists who are interested in trends, like how immigration patterns have changed over time, ask historical questions.

Answer: TRUE
Page Reference: 13
Learning Objective: 1.4 Understand the four basic research designs and research methods that sociologists use to study social problems.
Topic/A-head: Studying Social Problems: The Craft of Sociology
Skill Level: Remember the Facts

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59. Bias is inevitable in the study and analysis of social problems.

Answer: TRUE
Page Reference: 17
Learning Objective: 1.4 Understand the four basic research designs and research methods that sociologists use to study social problems.
Topic/A-head: Studying Social Problems: The Craft of Sociology
Skill Level: Remember the Facts

60. The dependent variable is a variable that may or may not affect the independent variable.

Answer: FALSE
Page Reference: 15
Learning Objective: 1.4 Understand the four basic research designs and research methods that sociologists use to study social problems.
Topic/A-head: Studying Social Problems: The Craft of Sociology
Skill Level: Remember the Facts

C. Fill in the Blank

61. The _____ of America is a result of the increase in the number of older people.

Answer: graying
Page Reference: 2
Learning Objective: 1.1 Understand the major social trends facing Americans and their potential consequences.
Topic/A-head: An Introduction to Social Issues
Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

62. Activity that violates the norms of a social organization or larger society is considered _____ behavior.

Answer: deviant
Page Reference: 7
Learning Objective: 1.2 Explain the complex nature of defining a social problem.
Topic/A-head: Defining Social Problems
Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

63. There is a strong tendency for individuals to perceive social problems and prescribe remedies from an _____ perspective.

Answer: individualistic
Page Reference: 9
Learning Objective: 1.3 Explain and apply the sociological imagination to different social problems.
Topic/A-head: The Sociological Perspective
Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

64. When a person possesses a _____ they can shift from the examination of a person in poverty to national welfare policies.

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Answer: sociological imagination
Page Reference: 10
Learning Objective: 1.3 Explain and apply the sociological imagination to different social problems.
Topic/A-head: The Sociological Perspective
Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

65. _____ are highly complex phenomena that have both individual and systemic origins.

Answer: Social problems
Page Reference: 11
Learning Objective: 1.3 Explain and apply the sociological imagination to different social problems.
Topic/A-head: The Sociological Perspective
Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

66. _____ is the belief that the place of people in the stratification system is a function of "the survival of the fittest."

Answer: Social Darwinism
Page Reference: 10
Learning Objective: 1.3 Explain and apply the sociological imagination to different social problems.
Topic/A-head: The Sociological Perspective
Skill Level: Remember the Facts

67. A _____ is a set of ideas that explains a range of human behavior, culture, and social structure.

Answer: sociological theory
Page Reference: 13
Learning Objective: 1.4 Understand the four basic research designs and research methods that sociologists use to study social problems.
Topic/A-head: Studying Social Problems: The Craft of Sociology
Skill Level: Remember the Facts

68. A _____ is a smaller part of a larger population.

Answer: sample
Page Reference: 15
Learning Objective: 1.4 Understand the four basic research designs and research methods that sociologists use to study social problems.
Topic/A-head: Studying Social Problems: The Craft of Sociology
Skill Level: Remember the Facts

69. To understand the cause-and-effect relationship among a few variables, sociologists use controlled _____.

Answer: experiments
Page Reference: 15
Learning Objective: 1.4 Understand the four basic research designs and research methods that sociologists use to study social problems.
Topic/A-head: Studying Social Problems: The Craft of Sociology

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Skill Level: Remember the Facts

70. Sociologists ask three types of questions: factual, comparative, and _____.

Answer: historical
Page Reference: 12-13
Learning Objective: 1.4 Understand the four basic research designs and research methods that sociologists use to study social problems.
Topic/A-head: Studying Social Problems: The Craft of Sociology
Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

D. Short Answer

71. Analyze the differences between the subjective nature and the objective reality of social problems. Give an example of each.

Page Reference: 5–7
Learning Objective: 1.2 Explain the complex nature of defining a social problem.
Topic/A-head: Defining Social Problems
Skill Level: Analyze It

72. Explain why sociologists have difficulty agreeing on an adequate definition of social problems.

Page Reference: 6–7
Learning Objective: 1.2 Explain the complex nature of defining a social problem.
Topic/A-head: Defining Social Problems
Skill Level: Analyze It

73. Describe the components of the sociological imagination. Give an example of how you could use it to solve a social problem.

Page Reference: 9–10
Learning Objective: 1.3 Explain and apply the sociological imagination to different social problems.
Topic/A-head: The Sociological Perspective
Skill Level: Apply What You Know

74. Explain why the ideal of value neutrality is problematic for sociologists.

Page Reference: 16-17
Learning Objective: 1.4 Understand the four basic research designs and research methods that sociologists use to study social problems.
Topic/A-head: Studying Social Problems: The Craft of Sociology
Skill Level: Analyze It

75. Describe some of the different sources of data sociologists use to study social problems.

Page Reference: 14–16
Learning Objective: 1.4 Understand the four basic research designs and research methods that sociologists use to

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study social problems.
Topic/A-head: Studying Social Problems: The Craft of Sociology
Skill Level: Apply What You Know

E. Essay

76. Why do the authors of the text emphasize a system-blame approach?

Ideal Answer: The ideal answer should include the following:
1. Define the system-blame approach to studying social problems.
2. Outline how the system-blame approach provides balance to the person-blame approach.
3. Describe how the system-blame approach analyzes the role of institutions in the study of social problems.
4. Conclude with a brief summary of why the system-blame approach fits within the sociological perspective.

Page Reference: 12–13
Learning Objective: 1.3 Explain and apply the sociological imagination to different social problems.
Topic/A-head: The Sociological Perspective
Skill Level: Understand the Concepts

77. Discuss how each of the two main approaches to understanding social problems would explain a social problem like recidivism.

Ideal Answer: The ideal answer should include the following:
1. Define the two main approaches to studying social problems (person-blame and system-blame).
2. Define recidivism.
3. Outline how the person-blame approach explains recidivism.
4. Outline how the system-blame approach explains recidivism.
5. Conclude by giving an example of a sociological approach to solving recidivism using the system-blame approach.

Page Reference: 10–11
Learning Objective: 1.3 Explain and apply the sociological imagination to different social problems.
Topic/A-head: The Sociological Perspective
Skill Level: Apply What You Know

78. Discuss one of the major social trends facing Americans and the consequences associated with that particular trend.

Ideal Answer: The ideal answer should include the following:
1. Identify one of the major social trends discussed in the text.
2. Describe the social trend using any of the data or evidence that supports the trend.
3. Describe the consequences of this trend, or how it is impacting society.
4. Conclude by discussing whether you think the trend will continue and what can be done to address the problems it has created.

Page Reference: 2-4
Learning Objective: 1.1 Understand the major social trends facing Americans and their potential consequences.
Topic/A-head: An Introduction to Social Issues
Skill Level: Apply What You Know

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79. Discuss the three types of questions asked by sociologists and explain why they are not enough. What do sociologists do to go beyond those questions?

Ideal Answer: The ideal answer should include the following:
1. Outline the three types of questions discussed in the text (i.e., factual, comparative, and historical). Give examples of each type.
2. Explain why these questions are not enough and why sociologists have to ask "why."
3. Describe what asking "why" questions leads to.
4. Conclude by discussing why sociological theory is important.

Page Reference: 12-13
Learning Objective: 1.4 Understand the four basic research designs and research methods that sociologists use to study social problems.
Topic/A-head: Studying Social Problems: The Craft of Sociology
Skill Level: Analyze It

80. How do the authors justify the claim that the study of social problems cannot be free of bias? How do they suggest that we deal with bias?

Ideal Answer: The ideal answer should include the following:
1. Describe the concept of value neutrality.
2. Describe the three reasons why the ideal of value neutrality is problematic.
3. Conclude with a discussion of the methods sociologists use to deal with the problem of bias in research.

Page Reference: 16–17
Learning Objective: 1.4 Understand the four basic research designs and research methods that sociologists use to study social problems.
Topic/A-head: Studying Social Problems: The Craft of Sociology
Skill Level: Apply What You Know

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CHAPTER 1
The Sociological Approach to Social Problems

A. Chapter Overview

This chapter provides a framework for the textbook by presenting a sociological perspective for studying social problems. The chapter raises important questions: What is a social problem? What are the causes of social problems? What are the consequences of the social problems in society? How are social problems defined? Who defines them? These questions are at the core of understanding social problems. The authors devote the second section to defining social problems, and in the third section, the authors discuss two types of social problems: norm violations and social conditions. Additionally, this chapter introduces the framework of studying social problems from a "person-blame" versus a "system-blame" approach. Finally, the chapter introduces students to sociological methods and the power and difficulty of empirical data collection.

B. Learning Objectives

After reading Chapter 1, students should be able to:
1.1 Understand the major social trends facing Americans and their potential consequences.
1.2 Explain the complex nature of defining a social problem.
1.3 Explain and apply the sociological imagination to different social problems.
1.4 Understand the four basic research designs and research methods that sociologists use to study social problems.

C. Detailed Chapter Outline

I. An Introduction to Social Issues

A. Major social trends facing Americans and their potential consequences:
1. The growing diversity of America
2. The increasing polarization of America
3. The graying of America
4. The widening inequality gap and the plight of the poor
5. The increasing power of money to influence elections and public policy
6. The transformation to a digital economy
7. Increasing threats to the environment
8. Growing global inequality
9. An increasingly dangerous world
   a. Epidemics and pandemics
   b. National security

II. Defining Social Problems

A. Typically, social problems have been thought of as social situations that a large number of observers felt were inappropriate and needed remedying.

B. Early U.S. sociologists applied a medical model to assess social pathology.
1. Social pathologists assumed social problems resulted from "bad" people.

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2. Social pathologists assumed the basic norms of society are universally held.
3. Social pathologists viewed social problems as disturbances of the moral order—for example, alcoholism, suicide, theft, and murder.

C. Sociologists in the 1920s and 1930s focused on conditions of society that fostered problems. Societies undergoing rapid change from migration, urbanization, and industrialization were thought to have pockets of social disorganization.

D. Many sociologists returned to the study of problem individuals, developing two directions.
1. One direction sought the sources of deviation within social structure. Deviance is a result of the conflict between culturally prescribed goals and the obstacles to obtain them that some groups face.
2. The other more recent direction focused on the role of society in creating and sustaining deviance through labeling. Societal reactions were viewed as the key in determining what a social problem is and who is deviant.

E. The Objective and Subjective Nature of Social Problems
1. There is an objective reality of social problems.
2. Social conditions induce suffering in some segments of the population.
3. Sociocultural phenomena prevent some people from developing to their full potential.
4. There are discrepancies between the ideals of the United States and the conditions in which some people live.
5. There is an objective approach which assumes that some kinds of actions are likely to be judged a problem in any context.
6. Subjectivity is always present.
7. The definitions and values of people in power tend to become the basis of public opinion. The politically powerful provide the statistical data and define social reality to control the status quo (e.g., slavery was not a social problem, but slave revolts were).
8. Dangers in using public opinions or the opinions of the powerful in defining social problems:
   a. One may overlook social conditions that are detrimental to the powerless.
   b. Attention may be diverted away from what may be the most important social problems, which could be the existing social order.
   c. Attention may focus on the characteristics of the less powerful members of society, thus overlooking institutions as a source of social problems.
   d. One may overlook the unethical, illegal, and destructive actions of the powerful.

. F. Types of Social Problems
1. Norm violations: acts and conditions that violate the norms and values present in society.
   a. Focusing on norm violations directs attention toward society's failures: individuals who commit crime, individuals with mental illness, individuals

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who drop out of school, and individuals who are poor. It also directs attention away from the societal causes for these "failures" of society. Norm violations such as deviant behavior are symptoms of social problems.

b. Focusing on norm violations is a recognition that deviance is culturally defined and socially labeled (i.e., social problems are inherently relative).

c. Power determines the definition of a social problem.

2. Social conditions: socially induced conditions that cause psychic and material suffering for any segment of the population.

a. Here, the focus is on how the society operates and who benefits and who does not under existing arrangements.

b. Some types of social arrangements may reflect a bias in the system and therefore be unresponsive to many human needs.

c. Some conditions often escape criticism and are rarely identified as social problems.

d. The intent of this book is to view individual deviance as a consequence of existing societal arrangements.

III. The Sociological Perspective

A. There is a strong tendency for individuals to perceive social problems and prescribe remedies from an individualistic perspective.

B. This perspective helps explain the reluctance of people in authority to provide adequate welfare and programming to help the disadvantaged.

C. The fundamental issue is whether social problems emanate from the pathologies of individuals (person-blame) or the broad institutions in which individuals are involved (system-blame).

D. The book approaches social problems with an emphasis on the system-blame approach.

E. Wright Mills wrote that the task of sociology is to realize, through the sociological imagination, that individual circumstances are inextricably linked to the structure of society. The components of the sociological imagination include the following:

1. A willingness to view the social world from the perspective of others.
2. Moving away from individual terms and focusing rather on social, economic, and historical circumstances.
3. With the sociological imagination one can shift from the examination of a single individual to the analysis of a whole society.
4. To develop a sociological imagination requires (a) a detachment from taken-for-granted assumptions and (b) establishing a critical distance to question the structural arrangements that shape social behavior.
5. We begin to see solutions to social problems in terms of changing the structure of society.

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F. Interpreting social problems solely within a person-blame framework has serious consequences.
1. Social problems remain in place because societal causes are not addressed.
2. It frees institutions (i.e., government, economy, etc.) from any blame.
3. It demands a person-change solution.
4. It reinforces social myths about the degree of control individuals have over their fate.

G. The System-Blame Approach to Social Problems
1. While emphasis is given to the system-blame approach, there is recognition that social problems are highly complex phenomena that have both individual and systemic origins.
2. Authorities and citizens alike tend to interpret social problems from an individualist perspective. A balanced point of view is necessary.
3. The subject matter of sociology is society, not the individual. Social determinants of human behavior must be answered by analysis of social structure.
4. The institutional framework of society is the source of many social problems (e.g., racism, poverty, and war).

IV. Studying Social Problems: The Craft of Sociology

A. Sociological Questions
1. Sociologists ask factual questions. For example, how much money is spent per pupil by school districts within each state?
2. Sociologists ask comparative questions. For example, how does the situation in one social context compare with that in another?
3. Sociologists ask historical questions. For example, how have divorce rates changed over time?

B. Sociological theory: A set of ideas that explains a range of human behavior, culture, and social structure.

C. Sources of Data
1. Survey research
    a. Sample: a smaller part of a larger population.
    b. Longitudinal survey: the collection of information about the same persons over many years
2. Experiments
    a. Variable: something that can vary, such as a characteristics, values or beliefs. They can be considered independent or dependent.
    b. Control groups are not exposed to the independent variable, whereas experimental groups are.
3. Observation
    a. Participant observation: researcher joins a group to understand their behavior.

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b. Nonparticipant observation: researcher does not join the group that is being studied directly.

4. Existing data

D. Objectivity: The requirement that scientists be dispassionate, objective observers.
1. Objectivity is a problem for all social scientists.
2. The notion of value neutrality is problematic.
a. Should scientists be morally indifferent to the implications of their research?
b. Is a purely value-neutral position even possible?
3. Bias is inevitable in the study and analysis of social problems.
4. Sociologists must display scientific integrity, which involves recognizing and addressing biases so that biases do not invalidate the findings.

D. Lecture Suggestions

i. Lecture starters

1. Ask students to name some social problems that they feel are significant and write these up on the board. Next, have the students help you to come up with a list of who benefits and who suffers from these problems. As an instructor you might fill in some of the policies that have created these problems, briefly, as a way of foreshadowing future chapters. Finally, have students think of places, times, and societies where these things might not be considered social problems. Use this as a way of lecturing about the socially defined nature of social problems.

ii. Classroom activities

1. *How Do You Define Social Problems?*
This activity is a good icebreaker for the class. It also gives you an indication of why your students are taking the course, how they view social problems, and which problems concern them. Ask your students to do the following:

A. Individually write down the three most important social problems in society as defined by most people.
B. Individually write down the three most important social problems to them personally.
C. Break off into small groups to discuss their viewpoints. Each group must decide which social problem is the number one social problem confronting society. They must select a spokesperson from each group, and then report their highlights to the class. They need to justify their choice of social problem.

2. *Do You Have a Sociological Imagination?*
This activity is a good way to get students to understand the sociological perspective versus other perspectives on social problems.

A. Have the students break into small groups. Give each group a particular social problem to analyze.
B. They must explain the social problem using C. Wright Mills' concept of the sociological imagination.

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C. How would they explain the same social problem using a psychological perspective? A biological perspective?

3. *How Do You Pick an Appropriate Research Method?*
   A. Have the students break into small groups. Each group will be studying the topic of divorce.
   B. Assign groups a research method: survey research, experiment, observation, or existing data.
   C. Each group must come up with a research question regarding divorce and design a brief study using their assigned research method to answer that question.
   D. Report to the class and discuss the strengths, weaknesses, and problems of social science research.

iii. Discussion questions

How many people should suffer for something to be defined as a social problem? Who defines social problems? The powerful? The affected? Those who don't know they have a problem? How do you define a social problem? How do different values, beliefs, and norms affect the definition of social problems?

These questions should launch a general discussion about how issues are defined in general and may even get students discussing issues of value neutrality without even realizing it. If students have difficulty engaging in a theoretical discussion right away, then give them concrete examples that illustrate different aspects of the above questions.

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E. Suggested Assignments

1. Long Assignment—Policy Paper

Have students work in small groups to write a history of a significant social policy aimed at alleviating a social problem. This paper should include the identification of key political players, the arguments for and against presented at the time, and the public reaction to the policy.

2. Long Assignment—Public Opinion

Utilizing the sociological methods section of the chapter, have students collect some data through a designed survey and analyze the results. The data should focus on perceptions of a particular social problem in order to find out if public perception matches the depth of the problem. Have groups present their findings to the class.

3. Short Assignment—Interview

Students should conduct an in-depth interview with a family member or friend about a social problem in the past. It does not need to have been solved, but rather the student should attempt to find out how their interviewee felt about the social problem at some point in the past (e.g., racism in the civil rights era) versus how they feel now. Results could either be presented or written in a one-page paper.

F. Suggested Films

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The Social Dilemma (1 h 34 min, Netflix, 2020). This documentary examines the dangerous human impact of social networking and alarming consequences for society.

American Factory (1 h 50 min, Netflix, 2019). This Oscar-winning documentary explores what happens when a Chinese billionaire reopens a shut-down General Motors factory in Ohio.

G. Suggested Books

Desmond, Matthew. (2017). *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City.* In this winner of the Pulitzer Prize, Princeton sociologist Matthew Desmond follows eight families in Milwaukee who are struggling to afford housing, and the landlords that hold their fates in their hands.

Elliott, Andrea. (2022). *Invisible Child: Poverty, Survival & Hope in an American City.* Author Andrea Elliott details eight years in the life of a girl growing up homeless in New York City.

Samuels, Robert, and Toluse Olorunnipa. (2023). *His Name Is George Floyd: One Man's Life and the Struggle for Racial Justice.* The authors examine the life of George Floyd and how his fatal encounter with the police sparked an international movement for racial justice.

H. Suggested Websites

Americorps (https://americorps.gov) matches recent college graduates with social issues in a variety of contexts in a domestic program similar to the peace corps. Students can use the website to learn how to get engaged with issues and to discover what some people think are the most significant issues facing us.

Adbusters (www.adbusters.org) is committed to trying to change consumerist attitudes in a globalized world. Do your students think the things identified by Adbusters are actual problems?

U.S. PIRG (www.uspirg.org) is an organization at both the national and state level that engages people in research and activism around social issues. How does this website aid in the social construction of social problems?

Public Sociology (www.sspps.wordpress.com) is a section of the ASA for people committed to engaging in real-world issues with social research.

The Society for the Study of Social Problems (www.sssp1.org/) is an organized group of activists committed to studying social problems from a scientific perspective.

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