Understanding Social Problems 12th edition Mooney Test Bank

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Name:_____ Class:_____ Date:_____

Chapter 01 – Thinking about Social Problems

1. When supporters of a political party are entrenched in their party's policies, with no motive to compromise with opposing political views, this is referred to as
   a. the social context.
   b. state of the union.
   c. a social problem.
   d. political partisanship.

ANSWER: d

2. Far-right political systems are often characterized by
   a. a strong central authority.
   b. an encouragement of civil liberties.
   c. limited executive powers.
   d. strong checks and balances.

ANSWER: a

3. Which of the following claim to represent "the people" rather than government elites and their political parties?
   a. Fascists
   b. Communists
   c. Populist movements
   d. Centrists

ANSWER: c

4. The objective element of a social problem refers to
   a. our attitudes about social conditions.
   b. the existence of a social condition.
   c. the belief that a particular social condition is harmful to society.
   d. our beliefs about the importance of a condition.

ANSWER: b

5. Given the position of social identity, when someone has unquestioning loyalty to a political ideology or belief, this is known as
   a. political tribalism.
   b. social group.
   c. anomie.
   d. culture.

ANSWER: a

6. Which of the following best illustrates the subjective element of a social problem?
   a. U.S. Census statistics showing the percentage of the U.S. population living in poverty
   b. Reports that show the percentage of people who have lost their jobs because of the closing of factories in the United States
   c. The percentage of Americans who believe the availability of child pornography on the Internet is harmful to society
   d. World Health Organization estimates of the number of people in the world who have died of the AIDS virus in the last five years

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ANSWER: c

7. Which of the following best describes trends in media trust and misinformation?
   a. In general, younger Americans are more likely to trust news from social media than older Americans.
   b. In general, older Americans are more likely to trust news from social media than younger Americans.
   c. TikTok, Facebook, and Snapchat are considered the most trusted social media platforms.
   d. Donald Trump's Truth Social is the most trusted social media among Democrats.

ANSWER: a

8. Which is the best example of the objective element of a social problem?
   a. In 2012, over 650,000 daytime drivers operated an electronic device while driving.
   b. Surveyed Americans most frequently selected inequality as the greatest social problem in the world.
   c. Some husbands believe they have a right to discipline and control their wives.
   d. Europeans are less likely than Asians to consider pollution the greatest social problem in the world.

ANSWER: a

9. Which of the following is an example of a subjective element of a social problem?
   a. The poverty rate in the country has been consistently measured at 15% over the past decade.
   b. A sociologist collects data on the percentage of people experiencing food insecurity.
   c. A politician argues that the increasing wealth gap requires government intervention.
   d. A research study finds that pollution levels in urban areas exceed health guidelines.

ANSWER: c

10. Society's structure is made up of
   a. the people who share a culture.
   b. institutions, social groups, norms, and symbols.
   c. beliefs, values, norms, and symbols.
   d. institutions, social groups, statuses, and roles.

ANSWER: d

11. Which of the following illustrates part of the social structure of a society?
   a. The health care system
   b. A belief in God
   c. The value placed on education
   d. The primary language used

ANSWER: a

12. The way a society is organized, is called its
   a. structure.
   b. culture.
   c. ethos.
   d. sociological imagination.

ANSWER: a

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13. An established pattern of relationships constitutes a(n)
    a. institution.
    b. culture.
    c. social complex.
    d. social element.

ANSWER: a

14. You have been part of a volunteer organization for several months. While you collaborate on tasks, your interactions remain formal and focused on your shared mission rather than personal relationships. This group is an example of a:
    a. primary group.
    b. social institution.
    c. secondary group.
    d. status group.

ANSWER: c

15. Which of the following is a social group?
    a. All of the people in your favorite shopping mall at noon on Saturday
    b. People who usually watch *NBC Nightly News*
    c. Your college sociology class
    d. Fans of the Yankee baseball team

ANSWER: c

16. Which of the following is more likely to be found in primary rather than secondary groups?
    a. Task-oriented actions
    b. Impersonal interactions
    c. Intimate relationships
    d. Formal statuses and roles

ANSWER: c

17. Which of the following illustrates a primary group?
    a. A husband, wife, and child
    b. Your sociology class
    c. The college or university you are attending
    d. Your hometown

ANSWER: a

18. Sociologists refer to the position a person holds in a group as their
    a. status.
    b. folkway.
    c. institution.
    d. role.

ANSWER: a

19. Which of the following is an ascribed status?

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a. Native American
b. Single parent
c. High school graduate
d. Football player

ANSWER: a

20. Edward is a 26 year old Black man who married his high school sweetheart after they graduated from college. He is now the father of two children and is employed as a chemical engineer. Which of the following is one of Edward's achieved statuses?

a. Black
b. Man
c. Chemical engineer
d. Adult

ANSWER: c

21. What type of status is assigned on the basis of some characteristic or behavior over which the individual has some control?

a. Ascribed
b. Elementary
c. Achieved
d. Rational

ANSWER: c

22. A nurse interacts differently with doctors, nursing assistants, and patients. This is primarily because

a. everyone is a unique individual.
b. many roles are associated with a specific status.
c. institutions are fluid social structures.
d. of cultural constraints.

ANSWER: b

23. A family teaches their children that education is the key to success and should always be pursued. This perspective is best categorized as a

a. belief.
b. role.
c. values.
d. sanction.

ANSWER: a

24. Which of the following are norms with a moral basis?

a. Laws
b. Mores
c. Values
d. Beliefs

ANSWER: b

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25. Which term refers to ideas about what is desirable in a social setting?
    a. Norms
    b. Values
    c. Roles
    d. Beliefs

ANSWER: b

26. "Violence in movies and on television leads to increased aggression in children." This statement is an example of a
    a. belief.
    b. value.
    c. folkway.
    d. more.

ANSWER: a

27. Which of the following serve as guidelines for our behavior and for our expectations of the behavior of others?
    a. Beliefs
    b. Values
    c. Norms
    d. Sanctions

ANSWER: c

28. Folkways, laws, and mores are three types of
    a. sanctions.
    b. norms.
    c. values.
    d. statuses.

ANSWER: b

29. A parent left their child inside the car on a hot sunny day. The parent
    a. violated a more.
    b. violated a folkway.
    c. underscored a value.
    d. performed a sanction.

ANSWER: a

30. Frequently, social conditions are viewed as social problems when
    a. the conditions are compatible with closely held values.
    b. the conditions are incompatible with closely held values.
    c. they do not affect large portions of the population.
    d. the conditions benefit only a small group of people.

ANSWER: b

31. Cheating on a spouse is a violation of a
    a. folkway.

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b. more.
c. value.
d. belief.

ANSWER: b

32. Which of the following are norms that are formalized and backed by political authority?
a. Folkways
b. Mores
c. Laws
d. Values

ANSWER: c

33. Social consequences for conforming to or violating norms are
a. values.
b. folkways.
c. mores.
d. sanctions.

ANSWER: d

34. A person was caught speeding and given a fine. The fine is an example of a(n)
a. value.
b. folkway.
c. informal sanction.
d. formal sanction.

ANSWER: d

35. An individual talks loudly on their phone during a movie, causing other audience members to sigh, glare, and shush them. This illustrates
a. values.
b. folkways.
c. informal sanctions.
d. formal sanctions.

ANSWER: c

36. A student dieted and worked out, which led to a significant reduction in their size and weight. Which of the following is an informal positive sanction?
a. They feel much better about themselves than they did before the weight loss.
b. Friends tell them they look great.
c. They lost 25 pounds.
d. They fit into a much smaller size of jeans.

ANSWER: b

37. The neighbors didn't invite Charlotte to the block barbecue because Charlotte's dog is often on the loose, making a mess on their lawns. Not inviting her is an example of a(n)

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a. formal positive sanction.
b. informal positive sanction.
c. formal negative sanction.
d. informal negative sanction.

ANSWER: d

38. During a wedding ceremony, a couple exchanges rings as a sign of their commitment to each other. What are the rings an example of?
a. Sanction
b. More
c. Folkway
d. Symbol

ANSWER: d

39. Which of the following is an example of an ascribed status?
a. Becoming a company's CEO after years of hard work
b. Earning a college degree through dedication and study
c. Being elected as the mayor of a city
d. Being born into a financially-advantaged family

ANSWER: d

40. Which of the following conclusions best illustrates the use of the sociological imagination?
a. Jody's parents are getting a divorce because they do not love each other anymore.
b. Helen is not attending college because her parents do not have enough money to pay her expenses.
c. Tony's college failure illustrates problems of inner-city children whose schools inadequately prepare them for the rigor of college courses.
d. Megan has to request welfare payments because she lost her job.

ANSWER: c

41. An inner-city youth was caught burglarizing houses. Which of the following explanations views the youth's crime as a public issue?
a. The youth was unable to find a job because most of the factories had moved out of the inner city.
b. The person who did not receive a high school diploma or equivalent because he did not like his teachers.
c. The youth's mother did not provide adequate supervision because she was more interested in her boyfriend.
d. The youth thought burglarizing homes would be an easier way to make money than to work in a job.

ANSWER: a

42. According to C. Wright Mills, which of the following is the ability to see the connections between our personal lives and the social world?
a. The functional perspective
b. The sociological imagination
c. An ascribed status
d. Anomie

ANSWER: b

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43. The sociological imagination allows us to see the connections between private troubles and _____.
a. social institutions
b. sociology
c. social problems
d. public issues
ANSWER: d

44. Structural functionalists
a. emphasize the feelings of powerlessness of workers in industrialized societies.
b. focus on how groups with different interests compete for scarce resources.
c. view society as a system of interconnected parts that work together to maintain balance.
d. focus on how a person's self-concept is formed by their interaction with others.
ANSWER: c

45. Which of the following illustrates a latent function of education?
a. The transmission of knowledge
b. The development of reading and writing skills
c. A source of friends and potential mates
d. The high cost of a college education
ANSWER: c

46. A person enrolls in college to gain the necessary skills and credentials for a successful career. The college provides structured courses, degrees, and training programs aimed at preparing students for the workforce. This is an example of
a. a manifest function.
b. a latent function.
c. the sociological imagination.
d. an anomie.
ANSWER: a

47. According to the _____, which of the following, social problems result from a breakdown of the family, religious, economic, educational, or political institutions of a society?
a. Symbolic interactionist perspective
b. Social pathology model
c. Marxist conflict theory
d. Non-Marxist conflict theory
ANSWER: b

48. A society is in a state of "anomie" when
a. norms become weak or are in conflict with one another.
b. the major social institutions reinforce the same cultural values.
c. there are more secondary groups than primary groups.
d. some segments of society have more wealth than others.
ANSWER: a

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49. Which perspective sees the solution to social problems in slowing down change and strengthening norms?
    a. Labeling theory
    b. Social constructionism
    c. Social disorganization
    d. Social pathology

ANSWER: c

50. Which perspective argues that the division of society into the "haves" and "have-nots" will create social problems?
    a. Functionalist
    b. Interactionist
    c. Conflict
    d. Anomie

ANSWER: c

51. The two general types of conflict theories are
    a. labeling theory and social constructionism.
    b. social pathology and social disorganization.
    c. Marxist and non-Marxist.
    d. social recognition and social legitimation.

ANSWER: c

52. Magda feels powerless in her job as a warehouse worker. She finds little meaning in her work. According to conflict theorists, Magda is experiencing
    a. anomie.
    b. dysfunction.
    c. alienation.
    d. social pathology.

ANSWER: c

53. Which of the following is a major source of alienation in industrial societies, according to Marxist conflict theorists?
    a. A lack of socially shared symbols of communication
    b. The primary groups to which individuals belong
    c. Limited and repetitive tasks of specialized workers
    d. A lack of effective sanctions in society

ANSWER: c

54. Non-Marxist conflict theories focus on social conflict that results from
    a. weak norms.
    b. social disorganization.
    c. competing values and interests among groups.
    d. a lack of communication among groups.

ANSWER: c

55. Which of the following are most likely to see the solution to social problems as solving differences through

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negotiation or mediation or agreeing to disagree?

a. Non-Marxist conflict theorists
b. Marxist conflict theorists
c. Symbolic interactionists
d. Structural functionalists

ANSWER: a

56. A basic premise of symbolic interactionist theories of social problems is that a condition must be

a. defined or recognized.
b. measured statistically.
c. accepted by members of society.
d. solved by the government.

ANSWER: a

57. Symbolic interactionism emphasizes that

a. societal institutions meet the needs of people in society.
b. institutional inequalities cause social problems.
c. human behavior is influenced by meanings that are created through social interaction.
d. the important symbols of society are distributed unequally.

ANSWER: c

58. Micro-sociologists, such as W. I. Thomas, believe that human behavior is influenced mostly by

a. the social organization of a social situation.
b. the definitions of a situation.
c. the objective inequalities that exist in a situation.
d. the feelings of alienation that occur from a lack of power.

ANSWER: b

59. Which perspective claims our identity or sense of self is shaped by social interaction?

a. Social disorganization
b. Social pathology
c. Symbolic interactionism
d. Non-Marxist conflict theory

ANSWER: c

60. Which perspective is most likely to look at the dynamics of interpersonal relationships in small groups?

a. Conflict theory
b. Structural functionalism
c. Symbolic interactionism
d. Marxist theory

ANSWER: c

61. Which of the following concepts from Max Weber implies that, in conducting research, social scientists must try to understand others' view of reality and the subjective aspects of their experiences, such as symbols, values, and beliefs?

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a. Anomie
b. The looking glass self
c. *Verstehen*
d. Alienation

ANSWER: c

62. According to Herbert Blumer, the first stage of a social problem is
a. mobilization for action.
b. societal recognition.
c. implementation of a plan.
d. social legitimation.

ANSWER: b

63. Symbolic interactionist Herbert Blumer said that social problems develop in stages. In which of the following stages is a condition recognized as a social problem by the larger community, such as media, schools, and churches?
a. Objectification
b. Social legitimation
c. Mobilization
d. Implementation

ANSWER: b

64. A student struggles with math in elementary school. Teachers and classmates often refer to them as "bad at math," leading the student to believe they are incapable of improving, despite their potential. This is an example of
a. labeling theory.
b. social pathology.
c. social disorganization.
d. conflict theory.

ANSWER: a

65. Which of the following theories often questions the origin and evolution of social problems and examines how research institutes, government agencies, and the media influence the public's view of social problems?
a. Labeling theory
b. The social pathology model
c. The social disorganization model
d. Social constructionism

ANSWER: d

66. Which of the following topics is most likely to be the topic of study of a social constructionist?
a. Why marijuana use, but not alcohol and nicotine use, is illegal.
b. How rapid social change weakened traditional rules about sexual behavior.
c. How the economic structure of society influences elections.
d. How different social classes view the police.

ANSWER: a

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67. Which theoretical perspective emphasizes that a condition must be defined or recognized as a social problem in order to be a social problem?
    a. Structural functionalism
    b. Marxist conflict theory
    c. Non-Marxist conflict theory
    d. Symbolic interactionism

ANSWER: d

68. Which of the following social policies is most likely to be advocated by a conflict theorist?
    a. Repair weak institutions.
    b. Assure proper socialization.
    c. Create an equitable system for the distribution of resources.
    d. Reduce the pace of social change.

ANSWER: c

69. Conflict theory is more likely than structural functionalism or symbolic interactionism to view the cause of social problems as
    a. rapid social change.
    b. different interpretations of social roles.
    c. inequality.
    d. inadequate socialization.

ANSWER: c

70. The first stage in conducting a research study is
    a. reviewing the literature.
    b. formulating a research question.
    c. formulating a hypothesis.
    d. defining variables.

ANSWER: b

71. In a research study, gender, self-esteem, crime rates, and religiosity are examples of
    a. variables.
    b. hypotheses.
    c. operational definitions.
    d. samples.

ANSWER: a

72. Which of the following is an example of an independent variable in a study?
    a. The amount of study time in an experiment measuring its effect on test scores
    b. A student's final exam score in a study on academic performance
    c. The level of stress experienced by employees in a workplace study
    d. The rate of illness in a study examining the impact of pollution on health

ANSWER: a

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73. A company compares its customer service response times against the industry average to evaluate performance. What sociological concept does this best represent?
a. Hypothesis
b. Experiment
c. Benchmark
d. Variable
ANSWER: c

74. In research, an operational definition
a. defines variables that cannot be directly observed.
b. explains the relationship between two variables.
c. defines the researcher's hypothesis.
d. refers to any variable that cannot be measured.
ANSWER: a

75. A(n) _____ of religiosity could be the number of times respondents report going to church or synagogue in a month or year.
a. theory
b. operational definition
c. hypothesis
d. sample
ANSWER: b

76. A researcher's hypothesis
a. identifies a sample to use for the research.
b. explains how to measure variables.
c. summarizes the review of literature.
d. predicts a relationship between variables.
ANSWER: d

77. A researcher is studying whether drug use contributes to lower academic achievement of high school youth. In this scenario, the independent variable is
a. youth.
b. drug use.
c. high school.
d. academic achievement.
ANSWER: b

78. Operational definitions are particularly important for defining variables that
a. cannot be directly observed.
b. can be directly observed.
c. are universally agreed upon.
d. do not change over the time period.
ANSWER: a

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79. Which research method involves manipulating a variable in order to determine how it affects another variable?
    a. Experiment
    b. Field research
    c. Survey
    d. Secondary data

ANSWER: a

80. A researcher is curious about the impact of remote work on employees' job satisfaction. Before starting the study, they analyze previous research papers, journal articles, and existing data on the topic to understand what has already been discovered. At which stage of the sociological research process is this researcher?
    a. Defining variables
    b. Reviewing the literature
    c. Formulating a hypothesis
    d. Formulating a research question

ANSWER: b

81. The major strength of the experimental method is that
    a. experimental research findings are easily generalized to larger groups in society.
    b. it provides evidence for causal relationships.
    c. it shows an association between the variables of interest.
    d. it is an easy way to collect information on almost all sociological variables.

ANSWER: b

82. For which method of data collection is it most important to select a representative sample so that the information may be generalized to a larger population?
    a. An experiment
    b. A survey
    c. A participant observation
    d. A case study

ANSWER: b

83. The method of data collection in which a researcher asks respondents a series of questions and makes written notes or recordings to be analyzed later is called a(n)
    a. questionnaire.
    b. experiment.
    c. secondary data analysis.
    d. interview.

ANSWER: d

84. For which data collection method is response rate the major problem?
    a. An experiment
    b. Field research
    c. A questionnaire
    d. Secondary data research

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ANSWER: c

85. A study aims to explore the effects of sleep deprivation on student performance. To ensure the study is measurable, the researcher decides to define "sleep deprivation" as getting fewer than five hours of sleep per night and "student performance" as the GPA of each participant. Which stage of the sociological research process does this represent?

a. Reviewing the literature
b. Formulating a hypothesis
c. Defining variables
d. Formulating a research question

ANSWER: c

86. Researchers observe social behavior in the settings in which it occurs naturally when using which of the following methods of data collection?

a. Experiment
b. Questionnaire
c. Field research
d. Secondary data analysis

ANSWER: c

87. To study the interaction between prison guards and incarcerated individuals, a sociologist lived in a prison for several months. Only the warden and a few other administrators knew he had not been convicted of a crime. This is an example of

a. secondary data research.
b. nonparticipant observation.
c. participant observation.
d. an experiment.

ANSWER: c

88. Studying white power groups by observing their activities without participating in their activities is considered an example of

a. secondary data.
b. an experiment.
c. a survey.
d. field research.

ANSWER: d

89. One of the biggest disadvantages of secondary data research is that the

a. sample seldom represents the population of interest to the researcher.
b. researcher is limited to data already collected.
c. researcher may become too involved with the group to remain unbiased.
d. participants may act differently in a laboratory setting.

ANSWER: b

90. Instead of conducting personal or phone interviews, some researchers develop surveys that can be either mailed, posted online, or given to a sample of respondents as

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b. samples.
c. beliefs.
d. observations.

ANSWER: a

91. A researcher is interested in studying the effects of income inequality on mental health. The first step they take is identifying a specific focus, such as how financial stress influences anxiety levels in low-income households. Which stage of the sociological research process does this represent?
a. Reviewing the literature
b. Formulating a hypothesis
c. Defining variables
d. Formulating a research question

ANSWER: d

92. In a research study, instead of asking all middle school children about their delinquent activity, the researcher asked a representative sample of them and assumes that those who were not questioned would give similar responses. This is an example of a(n)
a. sample.
b. benchmark.
c. experiment.
d. population.

ANSWER: a

93. Which of the following is a disadvantage of field research?
a. Provides limited details about values, rituals, norms, and behaviors of those being studied.
b. The researcher becomes too involved in the group to be objective.
c. Usually based on large samples, the findings may not be generalizable.
d. Usually, it is not conducted naturally.

ANSWER: a

94. According to which of the following, social problems result from some "sickness" in society?
a. Social pathology model
b. Social disorganization view
c. Conflict perspective
d. Contemporary Marxist theorists

ANSWER: c

95. Elements of society are functional if they
a. contribute to social stability.
b. disrupt social stability.
c. create conflict between social groups.
d. lead to unpredictable social change.

ANSWER: c

96. According to which of the following, the solution to social problems lies in slowing the pace of social change and

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strengthening social norms?

a. Social pathology model
b. Social disorganization view
c. Conflict perspective
d. Contemporary Marxist theorists

ANSWER: b

97. Democrats and progressives are often referred to as being on the left, while Republicans and reactionaries are often referred to as being on the right.

a. True
b. False

ANSWER: True

98. The definition of a social problem involves a combination of objective and subjective criteria.

a. True
b. False

ANSWER: True

99. Recognized social problems vary by historical time period.

a. True
b. False

ANSWER: True

100. If you are born into a low socioeconomic status, then it is an example of ascribed status.

a. True
b. False

ANSWER: True

101. A single status, such as mother, can involve more than one role.

a. True
b. False

ANSWER: True

102. Values are characteristics of individuals rather than societies.

a. True
b. False

ANSWER: False

103. Being praised by one's neighbors for organizing a neighborhood recycling program is an example of a formal sanction.

a. True
b. False

ANSWER: False

104. Karl Marx developed the structural-functionalist perspective.

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a. True
b. False

ANSWER: False

105. According to structural functionalists, social problems occur when some part of the structure or culture of a society fails to work properly.
a. True
b. False

ANSWER: True

106. The social pathology model advocates proper socialization and moral education as a solution to social problems.
a. True
b. False

ANSWER: True

107. Non-Marxist conflict theorists focus on order and stability in a society.
a. True
b. False

ANSWER: False

108. According to Herbert Blumer, "social legitimation" of a social problem takes place when the problem achieves recognition by the larger community, such as the media.
a. True
b. False

ANSWER: True

109. Emile Durkheim, Talcott Parsons, and Robert Merton are representatives of conflict theory.
a. True
b. False

ANSWER: False

110. The first stage of conducting a research study is developing a hypothesis.
a. True
b. False

ANSWER: False

111. A dependent variable is the variable that the researcher believes contributes to a change in the variable of interest.
a. True
b. False

ANSWER: False

112. A researcher who analyzes information collected by the U.S. Census Bureau is using primary data research.
a. True
b. False

ANSWER: False

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113. An advantage of experiments is that they typically take place in natural settings.
a. True
b. False
ANSWER: False

114. The sociological imagination enables us to understand how social forces influence our personal misfortunes and failures.
a. True
b. False
ANSWER: True

115. Field research involves observing and studying social behavior in a setting in which it occurs naturally. This could be done via participant observation and nonparticipant observation.
a. True
b. False
ANSWER: True

116. Formulating a hypothesis involves manipulating the independent variable to determine how it affects the dependent variable.
a. True
b. False
ANSWER: False

117. Select a social problem and identify possible objective and subjective elements of that social problem.
ANSWER: Will vary

118. Society is organized into different parts: institutions, social groups, statuses, and roles. Define and exemplify each part.
ANSWER: Will vary

119. Choose a private trouble you have experienced. Use your "sociological imagination" to explain how this problem can also be viewed as a public issue.
ANSWER: Will vary

120. Explain the concept of *verstehen* and how it applies to social science research.
ANSWER: Will vary

121. Define the first four stages of conducting a research study.
ANSWER: Will vary

122. List five major social institutions in society and, for each, give an example of a possible breakdown in the institution and a social problem that might have resulted from that breakdown.
ANSWER: Will vary

123. What is the sociological imagination? Using two specific examples, explain how it can be used to understand social problems.

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ANSWER: Will vary

124. Explain the similarities and differences between contemporary Marxist conflict theory and non-Marxist conflict theory. Choose a social problem and discuss possible explanations of the problem from each conflict perspective (Marxist and non-Marxist).
ANSWER: Will vary

125. Differentiate between dependent and independent variables in research with the help of examples.
ANSWER: Will vary

126. Chapter 1 includes a discussion of good reasons for students to study social problems. Discuss at least four of the reasons given.
ANSWER: Will vary

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Instructor Manual

Mooney, Understanding Social Problems, 12e, CY26, 9798214147635;
Chapter 1: Thinking About Social Problems

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Purpose and Perspective of the Chapter

This chapter explores the relationship between politics, society, and social problems through a sociological lens. It examines the American political party system and the causes of political partisanship, highlighting their influence on societal issues. The concept of social problems is introduced within the framework of social structure and culture, emphasizing the connection between private troubles and public issues through the sociological imagination. The chapter also presents structural functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism, outlining how each perspective explains social problems. Additionally, it details the stages of sociological research and the four primary methods of data collection, providing a foundation for analyzing and understanding complex social issues.

Chapter Objectives

The following objectives are addressed in this chapter:

1-1: Describe the American political party system.

1-2: Discuss the causes of political partisanship in the United States.

1-3: Define a social problem.

1-4: Discuss the elements of the social structure and culture of society.

1-5: Explain the connections between private troubles and public issues, as well as how they relate to the sociological imagination.

1-6: Summarize structural functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism and their respective theories of social problems.

1-7: Describe the stages in conducting a research study.

1-8: Distinguish between the four methods of data collection used by sociologists.

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Key Terms

achieved status: A status that society assigns to an individual on the basis of factors over which the individual has some control.

alienation: A sense of powerlessness and meaninglessness in people's lives.

anomie: A state of normlessness in which norms and values are weak or unclear.

ascribed status: A status that society assigns to an individual on the basis of factors over which the individual has no control.

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beliefs: Definitions and explanations about what is assumed to be true.

benchmark: A standard by which something is compared.

culture: The meanings and ways of life that characterize a society, including beliefs, values, norms, sanctions, and symbols.

culture wars: Often rooted in political party affiliation, disagreements between groups over some element(s) of the culture of society.

dependent variable: The variable that researchers want to explain; that is, it is the variable of interest.

experiments: Manipulating the independent variable to determine how it affects the dependent variable. Experiments require one or more experimental groups that are exposed to the experimental treatment(s) and a control group that is not exposed.

field research: Observing and studying social behavior in settings in which it occurs naturally.

globalization: The growing economic, cultural, and technological interdependence between countries and regions.

hypothesis: A prediction or educated guess about how one variable is related to another variable.

independent variable: The variable that is expected to explain a change in the dependent variable.

institution: An established and enduring pattern of social relationships.

latent functions: Consequences that are unintended and often hidden.

manifest functions: Consequences that are intended and commonly recognized.

norms: Socially defined rules of behavior, including folkways, laws, and mores.

objective element of a social problem: Awareness of social conditions through one's own life experiences, through the media, and through education.

primary groups: Usually small numbers of individuals characterized by intimate and informal interaction.

political partisanship: Supporters of a political party are entrenched in their party's policies, with little to no motivation to compromise with opposing political views.

political tribalism: Unquestioning loyalty to a political belief or party that is then internalized and becomes part of one's social identity.

populist movements: Emphasize "the people" rather than the "government elite" and their political parties, tend to be conservative, right to far-right leaning, anti-immigrant, nationalistic, and anti-globalist.

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roles: The set of rights, obligations, and expectations associated with a status.

sample: A portion of the population, selected to be representative so that the information from the sample can be generalized to a larger population.

sanctions: Social consequences for conforming to or violating norms.

secondary groups: Involving small or large numbers of individuals, groups that are task-oriented and are characterized by impersonal and formal interaction.

social group: Two or more people who have a common identity, interact, and form a social relationship.

social movement: An organized group of individuals with a common purpose of promoting or resisting social change through collective action.

social problem: A social condition that a segment of society views as harmful to members of society and in need of remedy.

sociological imagination: The ability to see the connections between our personal lives and the social world in which we live.

status: A position that a person occupies within a social group.

structure: The way society is organized including institutions, social groups, statuses, and roles.

subjective element of a social problem: The belief that a particular social condition is harmful to society, or to a segment of society, and that it should and can be changed.

survey research: Eliciting information from respondents through questions.

symbol: Something that represents something else.

theory: A set of interrelated propositions or principles designed to answer a question or explain a particular phenomenon.

values: social agreements about what is considered good and bad, right and wrong, desirable and undesirable.

variable: Any measurable event, characteristic, or property that varies or is subject to change.

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WHAT'S NEW IN THIS CHAPTER

The following elements are improvements in this chapter from the previous edition:

- Revised State of the Union section
- New and expanded focus on changing perceptions of freedom and democracy in the United States

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- New *The Human Side* feature exploring the benefits of student protests
- New *Social Problems Research Up Close* examining how age and sex impact political identification
- New topics throughout the chapter, including:
    - Americans' declining confidence of Christian nationalism on U.S. politics
    - the recent decline of the United States in the global freedom rankings
    - the results of the 2024 election and the national and international implications of a Trump presidency

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CHAPTER OUTLINE

I. Thinking about Social Problems
    a. Because of **globalization**, i.e., the growing economic, cultural, and technological interdependence between countries and regions, some social problems are clearly universal, such as climate change, while others appear to only impact the nation in which they occur.
    b. Globalization was championed by the United States and other Western nations after World War II as a way to deter future international conflict (Goodman 2019; Posen 2018).
    c. Fears that globalization would reduce the importance of nation-states and lead to cultural homogenization wherein the lynchpins of American society—individual achievement, self-determination, hard work, and a national identity—would be lost, continue today.
    d. **Populist movements**, which claim to represent "the people" rather than government elites and their political parties, tend to be conservative, right to far-right leaning, anti-immigrant, nationalistic, and anti-globalist (Ruzza and Salgado 2020).
    e. The results of the most recent study by Freedom House (2024b) conclude that global freedoms, that is, democracy, have decreased every year for the last 18 years, impacting one-fifth of the world's population.
    f. America's freedom ranking in 2010 was 94, falling 11 points to 83 in 2020, where it remains today.
    g. France (89), Italy and Spain (90), the United Kingdom (91), Germany (93), Japan and Australia (95), Canada, Ireland, and the Netherlands (97), New Zealand and Sweden (99), and Finland (100), among many others, have higher freedom ratings than the United States.
    h. In 2024, the majority of respondents across a 34-country survey agreed with the statement that "democracy in the United States used to be a good example but has not been in recent years" (Wike et al. 2024).
    i. Even more alarming, 72 percent of Americans agreed with the same statement.

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II. The Global Context: A Nation Divided
    i. In the United States, social problems are commonly framed within the context of **culture wars** whereby various groups, often based on political party affiliation, disagree as to what constitutes a social problem and/or how it should be addressed.
    a. Politics in America
        (1) Historically, the United States has been characterized by a two-party system with either Democrats or Republicans winning the White House since the 1860s.
        (2) Democrats are often referred to as being on the left, while Republicans are often referred to as being on the right.
        (3) There are many Americans who identify as Independents i.e., they are not affiliated with either Republicans or the Democrats. Rather than voting along "party lines," Independents make voting decisions based on a candidate's qualifications and policies and their own personal values. Some Independent voters are called "swing" voters.
    i. The roots of Political Partisanship
        (1) When supporters of a political party are entrenched in their party's policies, with little to no motivation to compromise with opposing political views, it is called **political partisanship**.
    ii. The Growth of Political Partisanship
        (1) In 1960, just 4 percent of Republicans and 4 percent of Democrats said they would be "somewhat or very unhappy" if their child married someone from the opposite political party. In 2019, however, 45 percent of Democrats and 35 percent of Republicans said they would be "somewhat or very unhappy" if their child married someone from the opposite political party (Najle and Jones 2019).
        (2) Research indicates that ideological position as either a liberal or a conservative is a better predictor of partisan dislike of ideological opponents than positions on social issues, i.e., political party and its accompanying ideology has become a social identity in and of itself (Mason 2018).
        (3) Given the significance of social identity, it is not surprising that the term **political tribalism** is sometimes used to describe unquestioning loyalty to a political belief or party.
        (4) Political partisanship is thought to be the result of several interacting social forces in the United States (Mansbridge 2016; Bail et al. 2018; Blankenhorn 2018; Carothers and O'Donohue 2019; Murray and Marquez 2023; Kleinfeld 2023). These include:

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(a) Movement from the center of the political spectrum.
(b) Greater racial, religious, and ethnic diversity.
(c) Increased division between socioeconomic classes.
(d) Polarizing leaders who demonize opponents.
(e) The sense that it is a zero-sum game.
(f) Residential and geographical homogeneity.
(g) "Media ghettos" segregated by political party.
(h) Viral misinformation and disinformation.
(i) Exposure to "news" consistent with existing beliefs, that is, social media as an echo chamber.

(5) Brooks (2019) argues that polarization is "especially true among partisan elites—leaders who, instead of bringing us together, depict our differences in unbridgeable, apocalyptic terms" (p. 2).

iii. State of the Union

(1) Nearly half of the world's population, over two billion voters, held national elections in 2024 (O'Neill 2024). The results, as in previous recent elections, indicate two global trends.
(a) First, there is a general dissatisfaction with the status quo, often tied to economic woes resulting in, for example, incumbents losing re-election in 40 of 54 Western nations.
(b) Second, there is the movement toward far-right leadership.

(2) Sociologist Balint Magyaar offers insight into Donald Trump's win.
(a) Trump's appeal is primal, his message seductive, he "promise[d] that you don't have to think about other people" (Gessen 2024, p. 1)—he gave permission to vote in your own self-interest—an incredibly appealing message when the number one concern for U.S. voters in 2024 was the economy (Pew Research Center 2024).
(b) Several policies from Trump's first administration, as well as proposed policies for his second, reflect populism and nativism, which often lay the groundwork for autocratic governments.
(c) Further, Trump has established the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), tasked with making recommendations on how to reduce inefficiencies in the federal bureaucracy and save taxpayer dollars.

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(d) Lastly, Trump embraces a get-tough approach to crime, which includes “revitalizing police department and reclaiming safety, dignity, and peace for all law-abiding Americans” (Trump Platform 2024).
(e) Trump has said he will…
    (i) Withhold federal funding from organizations that have policies that don’t align with his administration (Martin and Khurana 2024; Binkley 2024).
    (ii) Rein in hostile journalists and politically unfriendly mass media (Gold 2024; Gross 2024; Reich 2024).
    (iii) Make it easier to fire federal employees by classifying them outside of civil service protections (Barrow 2024).
    (iv) Staff his administration with loyalists rather than experts (Barrow 2024; Frum 2024).
    (v) Crackdown on perceived enemies and dissenters (Phillips 2024; Frum 2024).
(f) In terms of social issues, many of Trump’s domestic policies are at odds with public opinion (cf. Breslin 2022; PRRI 2024a; PRRI 2024b; EESI 2023; AP-NORC 2024b). These include:
    (i) Restricting transgender rights (Barrow 2024; Binkley 2024).
    (ii) Eliminating LGBTQ discrimination protections.
    (iii) Opposing across-the-board student loan forgiveness (Asbury et al. 2024).
    (iv) Withdrawing from the Paris Climate Agreement (Barrow 2024; Bergen 2024; Montalbano, Cheeseman and McDaniel 2024; Lefebvre and Coleman 2024; Phillips 204).
    (v) Restricting some reproductive rights (Barrow 2024; Beard, Cheeseman and McDaniel 2024).
    (vi) Pardoning the January 6 rioters (Phillips 2024; Wells et al. 2024).

(3) Sixty percent of Americans say they have very little or no confidence in the U.S. Congress.
(4) Fifty percent say they have very little or no confidence in the presidency.
(5) Thirty-eight percent say they have little or no confidence in the U.S. Supreme Court.

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III. What is a Social Problem
  a. Objective and Subjective Elements of Social Problems
    i. The **objective element of a social problem** refers to the existence of a social condition.
    ii. The **subjective element of a social problem** refers to the belief that a particular social condition is harmful to society or to a segment of society and that it should and can be changed.
    iii. A **social problem** is a social condition that a segment of society views as harmful to members of society and is in need of remedy.
  b. Media and Social Problems
    i. Media, including social media and blogs, print media, and television and radio, increasingly play a critical role in how social problems are defined.
    ii. Most Americans see intentionally misleading information in the media as a major problem in the United States (McCorkindale 2020).
      (1) Thirty-two percent of Americans see the news, in general, as untrustworthy or very untrustworthy.
      (2) Forty-three percent report seeing false or misleading information online daily (Orth and Bialik 2024).
    iii. Ironically, although many Americans say they get their news from social media, more Americans believe it is untrustworthy than it is trustworthy—TikTok, Facebook, and Snapchat being the least trusted platforms.
    iv. In 2021, following the January 6 insurrection inspired by allegations that the results of the 2020 election were falsified, Dominion Voting Systems sued Fox Corporation for defamation based on their claims that Dominion's voting machines were rigged in favor of Democrats.
      (1) In 2023, Fox Corporation was ordered to pay Dominion Voting Systems $787 million in damages, the largest settlement ever paid by a media company (Coster and Queen 2023).
      (2) In 2024, a judge ruled that a second defamation suit against Fox seeking $2.7 billion in damages could move forward (Timm 2024).
    v. In one of the largest studies of its kind, Pan et al. (2023) analyzed 1.8 million headlines from major American news outlets between 2014 and 2022.
      (1) They analyzed the language used in headlines and the frequency of topics over time across ideologically different news outlets—left-leaning (e.g., *The New York Times*), right-leaning (e.g., *The Federalist*), and centrist (e.g., *The Wall Street Journal*).

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(2) In two of the four themes, domestic politics and social issues, media bias was detected. For example, in headlines on abortion, *Reason*, a right-leaning outlet, used the term 'abortion laws' compared to left-leaning *CNN* which used the term 'abortion rights.'

c. Variability in Definitions of Social Problems
   i. *Individuals* and *groups*, often based on demographic variables such as age, race, gender, and political party, frequently disagree about what constitutes a social problem.
   ii. Definitions of social problems, and their importance, vary not only within societies but also *across societies and geographic regions*.
   iii. What constitutes a social problem also *varies over time*.
   iv. Social problems change over time not only because definitions of conditions change, as in the example of the use of force in marriage, but also because the *conditions themselves change*.
   v. Using a sociological perspective to examine social problems requires knowledge of the basic concepts and tools of sociology.

IV. Elements of Social Structure and Culture
   a. Elements of Social Structure
      (1) The **structure** of a society refers to the way society is organized.
   i. Institutions
      (1) An **institution** is an established and enduring pattern of social relationships. The five traditional institutions are family, religion, politics, economics, and education, but some sociologists argue that the other social institutions—such as science and technology, mass media, medicine, sports, and the military—also play important roles in modern society.
   ii. Social Groups
      (1) A **social group** is defined as two or more people who have a common identity, interact, and form a social relationship.
      (2) **Primary groups** tend to involve small numbers of individuals, and are characterized by intimate and informal interaction.
         (a) Examples include families and friends.
      (3) **Secondary groups**, which may involve small or large numbers of individuals, are task-oriented and characterized by impersonal and formal interaction.
         (a) Examples include employers and their employees or clerks and their customers.

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iii. Statuses
(1) A **status** is a position that a person occupies within a social group.
(2) An **ascribed status** is one that society assigns to an individual on the basis of factors over which the individual has no control.
(a) Examples include sex, race, ethnic background, and socioeconomic status into which you are born.
(3) An **achieved status** is assigned on the basis of some characteristic or behavior over which the individual has some control.
(a) Examples include college graduate, spouse, parent, bank president, or prison inmate.
(4) A person's *master status* is the status that is considered the most significant in a person's social identity. In the United States, a person's occupation status is typically regarded as a master status.

iv. Roles
(1) Every status is associated with many **roles**, or the set of rights, obligations, and expectations associated with a status.
(2) Roles guide our behavior and allow us to predict the behavior of others.

b. Elements of Culture
(1) Whereas the social structure refers to the organization of society, the **culture** refers to the meanings and ways of life that characterize a society.

ii. Beliefs
(1) **Beliefs** refer to definitions and explanations about what is assumed to be true.

iii. Values
(1) **Values** are social agreements about what is considered good and bad, right and wrong, desirable and undesirable.

iv. Norms and Sanctions
(1) **Norms** are socially defined rules of behavior. Norms serve as guidelines for our behavior and for our expectations of the behavior of others. There are three types of norms.
(a) *Folkways* refer to the customs, habits, and manners of society—the ways of life that characterize a group or society.
(b) *Laws* are norms that are formalized and backed by political authority.
(c) *Mores* are norms with a moral basis.

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(2) All norms are associated with **sanctions**, or social consequences for conforming to or violating norms.
(a) Types of sanctions include positive informal sanctions, positive formal sanctions, negative informal sanctions, and negative formal sanctions.

v. Symbols
(1) A **symbol** is something that represents something else. The symbols of a culture include language, gestures, and objects whose meanings the members of a society commonly understand.

V. The Sociological Imagination
a. The **sociological imagination**, a term C. Wright Mills (1959) coined, refers to the ability to see the connections between our personal lives and the social world in which we live.
b. When we use our sociological imagination, we can distinguish between "private troubles" and "public issues" and see connections between the events and conditions of our lives and the social and historical context in which we live.
c. If the various elements of the social structure and culture contribute to private troubles and public issues, then society's social structure and culture must be changed if these concerns are to be resolved.

VI. Theoretical Perspectives
i. A **theory** is a set of interrelated propositions or principles designed to answer a question or explain a particular phenomenon; it provides us with a perspective.
ii. *Macro-sociology* looks at the big picture of society and suggests how social problems are affected at the institutional level. This includes structural-functionalism and conflict theory.
iii. *Micro-sociology* is concerned with the social-psychological dynamics of individuals interacting in small groups. Symbolic interactionism is a micro theory.

a. Structural-Functionalist Perspective
i. According to **structural functionalism**, society is a system of interconnected parts that work together in harmony to maintain a state of balance and social equilibrium for the whole.
ii. Structural functionalists use the terms *functional* and *dysfunctional* to describe the effects of social elements on society. Elements of society are functional if they contribute to social stability and dysfunctional if they disrupt social stability.
iii. Sociologists have identified two types of functions: manifest and latent (Merton 1968).
(1) **Manifest functions** are consequences that are intended and commonly recognized.

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(2) **Latent functions** are consequences that are unintended and often hidden.

b. Structural-Functionalist Theories of Social Problems
   i. Social Pathology
      (1) According to the social pathology model, social problems result from some "sickness" in society.
      (2) Society becomes "ill" when its parts no longer perform properly.
      (3) Social "illness" also results when members of a society are not adequately socialized to adopt its norms and values.
      (4) To prevent or solve social problems, members of society must receive proper socialization and moral education, which may be accomplished in the family, schools, places of worship, and/or through the media.
   ii. Social Disorganization
      (1) According to the social disorganization view of social problems, rapid social change disrupts the norms in a society.
      (2) When norms become weak or are in conflict with one another, society is in a state of **anomie**, or *normlessness*.
      (3) According to this view, the solution to social problems lies in slowing the pace of social change and strengthening social norms.

c. Conflict Perspective
   i. The conflict perspective views society as composed of different groups and interests competing for power and resources.
   ii. The conflict perspective explains various aspects of our social world by identifying which groups have power and benefit from a particular social arrangement.
   iii. Feminist theory argues that we live in a patriarchal society—a hierarchical system of organization controlled by men.
   iv. The division of society into two broad classes of people—the "haves" and the "have nots"—is beneficial to the owners of the means of production.

d. Conflict Theories of Social Problems
   i. Marxist Conflict Theories
      (1) According to contemporary Marxist theorists, social problems result from class inequality inherent in a capitalistic system.
      (2) In addition to creating an impoverished class of people, capitalism also encourages "corporate violence." *Corporate violence* can be defined as actual harm and/or risk of harm inflicted on consumers, workers, and the public as a result of decisions by corporate executives or managers.

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(3) Marxist conflict theories also focus on the problem of **alienation**, or powerlessness and meaninglessness in people's lives.
(a) Alienation is bred not only in the workplace but also in the classroom.
(4) Marxist explanations of social problems imply that the solution lies in eliminating inequality among classes of people by creating a classless society.

ii. Non-Marxist Conflict Theories
(1) Non-Marxist conflict theorists are concerned with conflict that arises when groups have opposing values and interests.
(2) Solving the problems that are generated by competing values may involve ensuring that conflicting groups understand one another's views, resolving differences through negotiation or meditation or agreeing to disagree.

e. Symbolic Interactionist Perspective
i. Symbolic interactionism emphasizes that human behavior is influenced by definitions and meanings that are created and maintained through symbolic interaction with others.
ii. Symbolic interactionism also suggests that social interaction shapes our identity or sense of self.
(1) By observing how others view us, we see a reflection of ourselves, what Cooley called the "looking glass self."
iii. Last, the symbolic interactionist perspective has important implications for how social scientists conduct research.
(1) Max Weber argues that to understand individual and group behavior, social scientists must see the world through the eyes of that individual or group. Weber called this approach *verstehen*, which in German means "to understand."
(2) Verstehen implies that, in conducting research, social scientists must try to understand others' views of reality and the subjective aspects of their experiences, including their symbols, values, attitudes, and beliefs.

f. Symbolic Interactionist Theories of Social Problems
i. Blumer's Stages of a Social Problem
(1) Herbert Blumer (1971) suggested that social problems develop in stages.
(a) First, social problems pass through the state of *societal recognition*—the process by which a social problem, for example, drunk driving, is "born."
(b) Second, *social legitimation* takes place when the social problem achieves recognition by the larger community, including the media, schools, and churches.

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(c) The next stage in the development of a social problem involves *mobilization for action*, which occurs when individuals and groups, such as Mothers Against Drunk Driving, become concerned about how to respond to the social condition.
(d) This mobilization leads to the *development and implementation of an official plan* for dealing with the problem, involving, for example, highway checkpoints, lower legal blood-alcohol levels, and tougher regulations for drunk driving.

ii. Labeling Theory
(1) Labeling theory suggests that a social condition or group is viewed as problematic if it is labeled as such.
(2) According to labeling theory, resolving social problems sometimes involves changing the meanings and definitions that are attributed to people and situations.

iii. Social Constructionism
(1) Social constructionists argue that individuals who interpret the social world around them socially construct reality.
(2) Society, therefore, is a social creation rather than an objective given. As such, social constructionists often question the origin and evolution of social problems.

VII. Social Problems Research
a. Stages of Conducting a Research Study
i. Formulating a Research Question
(1) In some cases, researchers have a personal interest in a specific topic because of their own life experiences.
(2) Other researchers may ask a particular research question because of their personal values—their concern for humanity and the desire to improve human life.
(3) Researchers may also want to test a particular sociological theory or some aspect of it to establish its validity or conduct studies to evaluate the effect of a social policy or program.
(4) Research questions may also be formulated by the concerns of community groups and social activist organizations in collaboration with academic researchers.
(5) Finally, government and industry also hire researchers to answer questions.

ii. Reviewing the Literature
(1) After a research question is formulated, researchers review the published material on the topic to find out what is already known about it.

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(2) Reviewing the literature provides researchers with ideas about how to conduct their research and helps them formulate new research questions.
(3) A literature review serves as an evaluation tool, allowing a comparison of research findings and other sources of information, such as expert opinions, political claims, and journalistic reports.

iii. Defining Variables
(1) A **variable** is any measurable event, characteristic, or property that varies or is subject to change.
(2) An *operational definition* specifies how a variable is to be measured.
(3) Operational definitions are particularly important for defining variables that cannot be directly observed.

iv. Formulating a Hypothesis
(1) After defining the research variables, researchers may formulate a **hypothesis**, which is a prediction about how one variable is related to another variable.
(2) The **dependent variable** is the variable that researchers want to explain; that is, it is the variable of interest.
(3) The **independent variable** is the variable that is expected to explain the change in the dependent variable.

b. Methods of Data Collection
i. Experiments
(1) **Experiments** involve manipulating the independent variable to determine how it affects the dependent variable.
(2) Experiments require one or more experimental groups that are exposed to the experimental treatment(s) and a control group that is not exposed.
(3) The major strength of the experimental method is that it provides evidence for causal relationships.
(4) A primary weakness is that experiments are often conducted on small samples in artificial laboratory settings; thus, the findings may not be generalized to other people in natural settings.

ii. Surveys
(a) **Survey research** involves eliciting information from respondents through questions.
(b) A **sample** is a portion of the population, selected to be representative so that the information from the sample can be generalized to a larger population.

(1) Interviews
(a) In interview survey research, trained interviewers ask respondents a series of questions and make written notes or tape-record the respondents' answers.

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(b) Interviews may be conducted over the phone or face-to-face.
(c) One advantage of interview research is that researchers can clarify questions from respondents and follow up on answers to particular questions.
(d) The most serious disadvantages of interview research are cost and the lack of privacy and anonymity.

(2) Questionnaires
(a) Questionnaires can be either mailed, posted online, or given to a sample of respondents.
(b) Questionnaire research offers the advantages of being less expensive and less time-consuming.
(c) Questionnaire research also provides privacy and anonymity to the research participants.
(d) The major disadvantage of mail or online questionnaires is that it is difficult to obtain an adequate response rate.

(3) Web-based Surveys
(a) Web-based surveys, although still less common than interviews and questionnaires, are growing in popularity and are thought by some to reduce many of the problems associated with traditional survey research.

iii. Field Research
(1) **Field research** involves observing and studying social behavior in settings in which it occurs naturally.
(2) In *participant observation research*, researchers participate in the phenomenon being studied to obtain an insider's perspective on the people and/or behavior being observed.
(3) In *nonparticipant observation research*, researchers observe the phenomenon being studied without actively participating in the group or the activity.
(4) The main advantage of field research on social problems is that it provides detailed information about the values, rituals, norms, behaviors, symbols, beliefs, and emotions of those being studied.
(5) A potential problem with field research is that the researcher's observations may be biased.
(6) In addition, because field research is usually based on small samples, the findings may not be generalizable.

iv. Secondary Data Research
(1) Sometimes researchers analyze secondary data, which are data that other researchers or government agencies have already collected or that exist in forms such as historical

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documents, police reports, school records, and official records of marriages, births, and deaths.
(2) A major advantage of using secondary data in studying social problems is that the data are readily accessible, so researchers avoid the time and expense of collecting their own data.
(3) The disadvantage of secondary data is that researchers are limited to the data already collected.

VIII. Ten Good Reasons to Read This Book
a. Understanding that the social world is too complex to be explained by just one theory will expand your thinking about how the world operates.
b. Developing a sociological imagination will help you see the link between private troubles and public issues.
c. Understanding globalization can help you become a safe, successful, and productive world citizen.
d. Understanding the difficulty involved in "fixing" social problems will help you make decisions about your own actions, for example, whom you vote for or what charity you donate money to.
e. Although this is a social problems book, it may actually make you more rather than less optimistic.
f. Knowledge is empowering.
g. The *Self and Society* exercises increase self-awareness and allow you to position yourself within the social landscape.
h. *The Human Side* features make you a more empathetic and compassionate human being by personalizing the topic at hand.
i. The *Social Problems Research Up Close* features teach you the basics of scientific inquiry, making you a smarter consumer of "pop" sociology, psychology, anthropology, and the like.
j. Learning about social problems and their structural and cultural origins helps you—individually or collectively—make a difference in the world.
    i. You may choose to create change by participating in a social movement—an organized group of individuals with a common purpose of promoting or resisting social change through collective action.

IX. Understanding Social Problems
a. Sociologists have been studying social problems since the Industrial Revolution.
b. Social problems provided the initial impetus for the development of the field of sociology and continue to be a major focus of sociology.
c. There is no single agreed-on definition of what constitutes a social problem.

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d. Most sociologists agree, however, that all social problems share two important elements: an objective social condition and a subjective interpretation of that condition.

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Additional Discussion Questions

The following are discussion questions that do not appear in the text, PPTs, or courseware – they are for you to use as you wish. You can assign these questions in several ways: in a discussion forum in your LMS, as whole-class discussions in person, or as a partner or group activity in class.

1. How might the definition of a social problem differ based on geographical location? Could an issue, considered a social problem in one region, be viewed differently or not seen as a problem at all in another? (LO 1-3; 30 minutes)
2. How can we use our understanding of social problems to address issues in society? What obstacles exist in efforts to eliminate social problems, and are these challenges rooted in cultural beliefs or societal structures? (LO 1-4; 45 minutes)
3. What challenges do researchers encounter when collecting data? Are the methods discussed in the text adequate, or should researchers develop new approaches to adapt to changing times? (LO 1-8; 45 minutes)

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Additional Activities and Assignments

The following are activities and assignments developed by Cengage but are not included in the text, PPTs, or courseware – they are for you to use if you wish.

Student Projects

1. **Unsung Heroes of Social Change: A Student Research Project** (LO 1-1)
   Have students research and write one-page profiles of lesser-known yet significant activists in U.S. social movements. These profiles can be compiled into a class resource (webpage or booklet) for shared learning. As a creative extension, students can design their own hypothetical social movement, and outline its goals, challenges, and strategies for gaining support.
2. **Examining the Feminist Movement and Gender Inequality** (LO 1-3)
   Have students research the feminist movement from colonial times to the present, examining the evolving status of women. Then, ask them to share

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their perspectives on women and inequality, the concept of the glass ceiling (whether real or perceived), and issues surrounding equal pay.

3. **Exploring Local Efforts to Address Social Problems** (LO 1-3)
   Have students research and contact a local organization working to address a social problem. In their report, they should include the following information.
   - The organization's name, address, and contact information.
   - The specific social problem the organization focuses on.
   - The strategies and actions the organization takes to address the problem.
   - Whether the organization is independent or part of a larger state, national, or international network.
   - Whether the organization operates with paid staff, volunteers, or both.
   - The primary sources of funding for the organization.
   - An assessment of the organization's success in achieving its goals.

4. **Investigating Student Organizations Addressing Social Issues** (LO 1-3)
   Have students explore a university website to find a list of student organizations and select one focused on a social problem. Instruct them to contact a representative from the organization and gather the following information for their report:

   - The organization's name and the university with which it is affiliated.
   - Whether the organization is part of a larger state, national, or international network.
   - The specific social problem the organization addresses.
   - The activities the organization engages in to tackle the social problem.
   - An evaluation of the effectiveness of these activities—have they made a meaningful impact, and do they contribute to solving the issue?

Classroom Activities

1. **Analyzing Social Problems: Cultural and Structural Causes** (LO 1-4)
   Assign students to small groups and have each group select (or be assigned) a social problem. Ask each group to brainstorm potential cultural causes of the problem using the elements of culture discussed in the text. Additionally, they should identify possible social structural causes based on the elements of social structure outlined in the text. After their analysis, have each group create a video or infographic designed for students, parents, and community leaders. Their project should highlight what they believe is the most pressing social problem facing our culture today and provide an explanation based on their research.

2. **Applying Sociological Perspectives to a Social Problem** (LO 1-6)
   Select a widely publicized event related to a social problem, such as school shootings. Divide the class into small groups and instruct them to analyze the problem using the three major sociological perspectives: structural-functionalism,

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conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism. Each group should brainstorm potential causes of the issue based on these perspectives. After their analysis, facilitate a class discussion where students share their findings and explore possible solutions through the lens of each sociological perspective.

3. **Global Approaches to Social Problems** (LO 1-3)
   Assign students to small groups that they will work with throughout the semester. Each group will be assigned a specific world region to research. Ask them to investigate how countries in their assigned region address various social problems. Periodically, have groups present their findings and lead class discussions comparing global approaches to social issues, encouraging critical analysis of different cultural, political, and economic responses.
4. **Analyzing the Challenges of Social Problem Solutions** (LO 1-3)
   Divide the class into small groups, providing each group with a list of proposed solutions to a social problem. Instruct the groups to brainstorm potential issues or challenges associated with each solution. They should consider aspects such as implementation difficulties, possible unintended consequences, and how the solutions might lead to new social problems. After the discussion, ask a spokesperson from each group to present their findings to the class, outlining the problems or challenges they identified with each solution.
5. **Using the Sociological Imagination to Understand Social Problems** (LO 1-5)
   Divide the class into small groups and assign each group a personal trouble. Instruct the groups to apply their sociological imaginations to explain how their assigned personal trouble could be understood as a broader social problem. Encourage students to consider societal factors, cultural influences, and structural issues that contribute to the problem. Once the groups have discussed their analysis, have a spokesperson from each group share their findings with the class, explaining how their personal trouble would be framed as a social problem from a sociological perspective.

Internet Assignments

1. **Exploring Current Events Through a Sociological Lens** (LO 1-5)
   Have students read articles on **The Conversation** to gain a sociological perspective on current events. Throughout the semester, have students select and report on three events they find impactful. For each event, students should summarize the story and relate it to the sociological theories discussed in the textbook, encouraging them to analyze the event through different theoretical frameworks.
2. **Exploring Elected Officials' Positions on Social Issues** (LO 1-1)
   Have students visit the **Vote Smart** website to research their local and state elected officials, paying special attention to their positions on various social problems. Ask students to select one official and write a short paper detailing that official's stance on a specific social issue, highlighting their proposed solutions or actions.

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3. **Tracking News Articles on Social Problems** (LO 1-3)
   Have students search the internet to find the website of a major newspaper such as **The New York Times**, **The Washington Post**, or the **Chicago Tribune**. Ask them to bookmark their selected newspaper's website and visit it weekly to find news articles related to social problems. Students should keep a record of these articles in a file and be prepared to share relevant information with the class when the corresponding topic is discussed. At the end of the semester, students should submit their article files for review.

4. **Researching Social Movements and Campus Involvement** (LO 1-3)
   Have students visit **Student PIRGs** and choose an issue, social movement, or activist organization that interests them. Ask students to explore the provided resources on their selected topic. Next, they should use their college or university website to research whether any movements or organizations addressing the same issue exist on their campus.

   After conducting their research, students should write a two- to three-page paper summarizing their findings and analyzing the presence or absence of campus involvement in the chosen social issue. Finally, students will be asked to present their findings to the class, fostering a discussion about campus activism and its alignment with broader social movements.

5. **Researching Government Initiatives on Social Problems** (LO 1-3)
   Have students select a social problem and conduct an internet search to identify federal or state government initiatives aimed at addressing the issue. Students should prepare a report summarizing the initiatives they found and present it to the class. After each presentation, facilitate a class discussion on the potential effectiveness of these initiatives, encouraging students to critically assess the strengths and limitations of the government's approach to solving the social problem.

Video Activity Suggestions

1. ***Dreamworlds 3: Desire, Sex and Power in Music Video*** (LO 1-5; 91 minutes)
   This is a documentary that examines the impact of music videos in shaping attitudes toward femininity, masculinity, sexuality, and race. It relates to the concept of culture and could be used to demonstrate the sociological imagination as it shows how individual thoughts, perceptions, and behaviors are shaped by social institutions, culture, and society.
   Discussion Questions:
   a. How are women and men portrayed in the videos examined in the film?
   b. How do these portrayals impact people's perceptions of gender, sexuality, and race?
   c. We typically think of our thoughts, perceptions, and behaviors as being private and personal, but this video challenges us to think about how they are impacted by society. How does this relate to the sociological imagination?

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2. ***Hate.Com: Extremists on the Internet*** (LO 1-5; 42 minutes)
   This is a documentary that examines racist, antisemitic, and heterosexist hate websites and their consequences. The video includes interviews of individuals who promote these websites, including adults and children. This video relates to the topic of culture by illustrating subcultures that exist on the Internet and the impact of technology on the recruitment of individuals into hate groups.
   Discussion Questions:
   a. What are some of the consequences of hate websites?
   b. Do you think the websites shown in the video should be censored or banned? Why or why not?
   c. What elements of U.S. culture make these websites possible?

3. ***Made in L.A. (Hecho en Los Angeles)*** (LO 1-3; 70 minutes)
   This documentary shows the working conditions of immigrant women in the garment industry of Los Angeles. It follows a three-year battle fought between workers and workers' rights advocates and a popular clothing chain, *Forever 21*. It provides examples of social activism and resistance.
   Discussion Questions:
   a. What kinds of working conditions led to the lawsuit against *Forever 21*? Explain the controversy surrounding the company that was responsible for the working conditions. Who do you think is responsible?
   b. What actions did the workers take to try to gain their rights? How effective were their actions?
   c. What rights do you think undocumented workers in the U.S. should have?

4. ***The UP Series 1964-2019*** (LO 1-4; 150 minutes)
   This classic documentary by Michael Apted follows children in England, interviewing them every seven years about their current lives, hopes for the future, and long-term dreams.
   Discussion Questions:
   a. What do you think should determine whether someone reaches their long-term dreams and goals?
   b. How are the people in the film similar to you? How are they different? Which person did you identify with most?

5. ***Life is Beautiful*** (LO 1-4; 122 minutes)
   Life is Beautiful (Italian: La vita è bella) is a 1997 Italian comedy-drama film directed by and starring Roberto Benigni. Benigni plays Guido Orefice, a Jewish Italian bookshop owner who must employ his fertile imagination to shield his son from the horrors of internment in a Nazi concentration camp.
   Discussion Questions:
   a. Why were the Jewish people singled out as a group to be persecuted?
   b. What would you do if a similar situation were to occur in your society?

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Additional Resources

Solving Social Problems

Idealist is a good place to go if you are interested in a career that deals with social issues. They can help you find a job, internship, and volunteer openings to work with issues that you care about across the country. Locally, you can always start with a Boys and Girls Club or a United Way agency to get hooked up with local issues.

Related Social Movements

Social Justice: The Society for the Study of Social Problems is an organization that uses sociological research to work for social justice.

Public Sociology: One of the ways that sociologists make their work impact social issues is by practicing public sociology, where they intentionally design research projects which will inform the public debate about social issues. Visit the section of the American Sociological Association on Sociological Practice and Public Sociology. Make sure to check out other resources on this page.

External Videos or Playlist

- Social Problems YouTube Channel: Use the Social Problems YouTube Channel as a resource to help students further understand concepts and topics from each chapter.

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Appendix

General Rubric

Providing students with rubrics helps them understand the expectations and components of assignments. Rubrics help students become more aware of their learning process and progress, and they improve students' work through timely and detailed feedback.

Customize these rubrics as you wish. The writing rubric indicates 40 points, and the discussion rubric indicates 30 points.

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Standard Writing Rubric

Criteria	Meets Requirements	Needs Improvement	Incomplete
Content	The submission clearly and comprehensively addresses all questions in the assignment. 15 points	The submission partially addresses some or all questions in the assignment. 8 points	The submission does not address the questions in the assignment. 0 points
Organization and Clarity	The submission presents ideas in a clear manner and with a strong organizational structure. The assignment includes an appropriate introduction, content, and conclusion. Coverage of facts, arguments, and conclusions are logically related and consistent. 10 points	The submission presents ideas in a mostly clear manner and with a mostly strong organizational structure. The assignment includes an appropriate introduction, content, and conclusion. Coverage of facts, arguments, and conclusions are mostly logically related and consistent. 7 points	The submission does not present ideas in a clear manner and with a strong organizational structure. The assignment includes an introduction, content, and conclusion, but coverage of facts, arguments, and conclusions are not logically related and consistent. 0 points
Research	The submission is based upon appropriate and adequate academic literature, including peer-reviewed journals and other scholarly work. 5 points	The submission is based upon adequate academic literature but does not include peer-reviewed journals and other scholarly work. 3 points	The submission is not based upon appropriate and adequate academic literature and does not include peer-reviewed journals and other scholarly work. 0 points
Research	The submission follows the required citation guidelines. 5 points	The submission follows some of the required citation guidelines. 3 points	The submission does not follow the required citation guidelines. 0 points

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Grammar and Spelling	The submission has two or fewer grammatical and spelling errors. 5 points	The submission has three to five grammatical and spelling errors. 3 points	The submission is incomplete or unintelligible. 0 points

Standard Discussion Rubric

Criteria	Meets Requirements	Needs Improvement	Incomplete
Participation	Submits or participates in discussion within the posted deadlines. Follows all instructions for initial post and responses. 5 points	Does not participate or submit discussion within the posted deadlines. Does not follow instructions for initial post and responses. 3 points	Does not participate in discussion. 0 points
Contribution Quality	Comments stay on task. Comments add value to discussion topic. Comments motivate other students to respond. 20 points	Comments may not stay on task. Comments may not add value to discussion topic. Comments may not motivate other students to respond. 10 points	Does not participate in discussion. 0 points
Etiquette	Maintains appropriate language. Offers criticism in a constructive manner. Provides both positive and negative feedback. 5 points	Does not always maintain appropriate language. Offers criticism in an offensive manner. Provides only negative feedback. 3 points	Does not participate in discussion. 0 points

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