

Answer Key for In-Text Questions

Chapter 1

Title: Chapter 1 Questions for Review

Question/Prompt: 1. What is the sociological imagination?

Correct Answer Example(s):

The sociological imagination refers to the ability to see the underlying societal causes of individual experiences and issues.

Question/Prompt: 2. How did sociology as a discipline develop? Mention at least two historical events and how they influenced the formation of the discipline.

Correct Answer Example(s):

The widely accepted view is that sociology emerged as a discipline two or three centuries ago and was influenced by the Age of Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution. These historical events challenged traditional hierarchies, religious superstition, and despotic political power, and promoted science, rationality, and secularism. With the use of evidence-based theories, sociologists thought that people would be able to build better communities in the future.

Question/Prompt: 3. What is a social role?

Correct Answer Example(s):

A social role refers to the way people expect us to act in a social situation as a member of a particular category. For example, the way people expect us to act as a man or a woman, an old or young person, a teacher or student, and so on. Everyone plays multiple roles at any given time, and changes roles as they pass through life.

Question/Prompt: 4. How does symbolic interactionism differ from conflict and functionalist theories?

Correct Answer Example(s):

Symbolic interactionism focuses on the ways people interact with one another, and the meanings, definitions, and interpretations that influence these interactions. Conflict theory is mainly concerned with the unequal distribution of wealth and power in a society. Finally, functionalism views society as a set of parts that work together to preserve the overall stability and efficiency of the whole.

Question/Prompt: 5. Explain how studying sociology teaches critical thinking skills.

Correct Answer Example(s):

In studying sociology and exercising your sociological imagination, you learn to apply critical thinking skills to social issues. Sociology involves carefully examining evidence, thinking about how individual lives interact and evolve in time, and seeing life in new, more interesting, and provocative ways.

Title: Chapter 1 Questions for Critical Thought

Question/Prompt: 1. How would the four sociological approaches give you different insights into the experience of being an undergraduate student? Are these insights compatible or in conflict with one another?

Correct Answer Example(s):

Your answer should include or relate to the following points:

- Conflict theory is about the distribution of wealth and power. For example, it considers the unequal access to postsecondary education and the opportunities it provides.
- Functionalism sees society as a set of parts that work together. For example, it considers how postsecondary education fits into your role in society.
- Symbolic Interactionism is about small-group interactions. For example, it considers how undergraduate life results in interactions that shape society.
- Feminism is about gender inequality. For example, it considers how societal expectations of gender performance influence which faculty you enter.

Whether these insights conflict or are compatible will depend on your answers, but you should note that the range of approaches provides broader insights.

Question/Prompt: 2. Why, according to Durkheim, are people more likely to commit suicide during periods of rapid change? Do you think there would be a similar connection between social change and homicide?

Correct Answer Example(s):

During periods of rapid change, social norms are weakened and social order is disrupted. According to Durkheim, this leads to negative feelings of “normlessness,” or anomie. This social breakdown can lead to an increase in suicide, as well as crime and deviant behaviours.

Question/Prompt: 3. In what ways can conflict in society be useful? Does it become more useful, the more conflict there is?

Correct Answer Example(s):

Some theorists note that conflict has useful social functions that explain why it is universal and never-ending. For example, under many conditions, groups can remain locked in struggle for long periods without any change, thus preserving the status quo. Equally, long-term struggles can produce alliances between groups and clarify the boundaries between opponents. In this way, conflict may promote communication and cooperation, upholding the social order so long as people—even enemies—are talking to each other. Too much conflict, however, can cause increased inequality and injustice and lead to social disorder and breakdown.

Question/Prompt: 4. Why do people have trouble understanding their own (and other people's) everyday lives? How does sociology overcome this difficulty?

Correct Answer Example(s):

Your answer should include or relate to the following points:

- Our actions are the product of invisible norms and values that exist in every society and change over time.
- Behind all our choices, no matter how deeply personal they may seem on the surface, is what we call social structure: that set of often-invisible rules that regulates how we behave, and that transforms and constrains us in different social situations.
- Two of sociology's key concerns – culture and social structure – are invisible but the key to understanding how societies work.
- Developing a sociological imagination means learning to shift from one way of thinking to another. This often means trying to see the world from a new angle, from outside our culture and outside the socialization we have received. Often, we can do this only by questioning what everyone thinks is true. In short, applying the sociological imagination forces us to break free from personal experiences and assumptions.

Question/Prompt: 5. Describe how studying sociology will improve your skills and knowledge needed for your future career of choice.

Correct Answer Example(s):

Your answer should include or relate to the following points:

- Sociology gives you four things that few other fields can offer: currency, concepts, classics, and context.
- Sociology is a cross-disciplinary approach that tries to explain real life in its proper context. Students learn to integrate the findings of other social science disciplines in the study of pressing social issues.

- Exercising your social imagination teaches critical thinking skills and a careful examination of evidence.
- Sociology teaches important social skills like cooperation, empathy, and flexibility.
- Sociology teaches research abilities; cross-cultural awareness and understanding; problem-solving and critical thinking skills; communication, reading, and writing skills; and recognition of trends and patterns.