

What is Sociology?

The Basis of Sociology – _____

Sociology is the _____

More than just common sense...sociology differs from common sense in that it seeks _____ and _____ through the use of _____.

-Sociology helps us dispel many myths and confusion that make up our common sense understanding of social life.

The Appreciation of Social Diversity - By studying the _____ of the U.S., sociology can help us understand the various ways society influences the lives of different groups and individuals, especially those who experience _____ (**being excluded from mainstream society**), such as certain ethnic minorities and homosexuals.

The Importance of Global Analysis – We can gain further insight into ourselves and our society by going beyond our national boundaries to study other societies. Whatever happens far away can affect our lives here, so it is important to consider the various ways in which _____ (**the interrelationships among the world's economies**) can influence the U.S. economy and society at large.

Potential Negative Influences on the U.S. Economy

-Abundance of low-paid workers in relatively poor countries tends to decrease the wages of American workers because employers want to reduce production costs, including wages, in order to compete.

-Abundance of low-paid foreign workers also encourages _____ (the practice of producing inexpensive products by building factories and hiring workers abroad). This may increase plant closings, unemployment, low-wage employment, poverty and community breakdown in the U.S. Out-sourcing also tends to impoverish the government by reducing its tax base, because U.S. companies and their employees abroad do not pay taxes to the U.S. government. All of this may cause the living standard in the U.S. to decline and its social problems to increase.

Potential Positive Influences on the U.S. Economy

-Competing with foreign firms here and abroad forces U.S. corporations to become more efficient and productive. Shifting low-skilled jobs from the U.S. to poor nations is likely to raise those countries' incomes, making them bigger markets for U.S. goods.

-Globalization encourages each country to specialize in what it does best - a poor country, for example, in making shoes and a wealthy country in producing computer software. Competition in the global market may increase the availability of well-made but inexpensive products in all nations.

Sociology as a science: Hypothesis and Theory – When scientists discover a pattern, they describe it in the form of a hypothesis or a theory. These attempt to explain how events relate to one another. *A good theory will apply to a wide range of existing observations and suggest testable predictions about what can be observed in the future.* A scientific theory is always subject to verification or refutation by other scientists.

-Hypothesis: a tentative statement of how various events are related to one another.

-Theory: a set of logically related hypotheses that explains the relationship among various phenomena.

The Sociological Imagination – To understand human behavior, sociologists stand back and look “_____” at individuals as members of society, rather than “inside” to examine their thoughts, personalities, or motivations.

Social Forces (forces that arise from the society of which we are a part) – *C. Wright Mills* referred to the ability to see the impact of social forces on individuals, especially in their private lives, as the _____. Society exercises so much power on individuals that we can see it through their behaviors.

Emile Durkheim examined suicide rates in the late 1800s and looked at social forces. One force that he found to have great impact on suicide was _____.
_____ (the degree to which people are tied to a social group). Where there is either excessive or inadequate social integration, suicide rates are likely to be high. (examples pg. 7)

History of Sociology – Sociology has a relatively short history.

1800's in Europe – A period of social upheaval – societies had been stable for centuries, but now were chaotic. Relate migration from farms to cities, congestion and poverty in cities, crowded housing, broken families and rising crime. There was also an emphasis on science and the scientific method – observation and forming/testing hypotheses to explain our physical world. The first sociologists used the scientific model of the natural sciences to explain what was going on in society.

Sociology gained popularity in the United States during the Civil Rights Movement (late 1950s-1970s). The Conflict Perspective, specifically, was supported by many people in the U.S. during this time.