

CHAPTER 1: THE SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Web Link *American Sociological Association*

Annotation: This web link leads students to the homepage of the American Sociological Association, exposing them to the variety of resources provided by the association. A hyperlink then leads to a web site that shows the diversity of occupations available to sociology graduates.

Learning Objective: To expand the awareness of students new to sociology to both the career possibilities available to students who major in sociology and the skills they will develop through their coursework that will prepare them for these careers.

Faculty Note: The American Sociological Association is undoubtedly the premier professional organization dedicated to the discipline. In addition to being a part of the Web Links, it is also listed in the menu bar under *Careers in Sociology*. Have your students scan this section of the *Companion Website* too. The *Careers in Sociology* section is user friendly. Students can access web pages devoted to describing careers in sociology with a click on the web site's address. This exercise is important because few students have exposure to sociology as a discipline or career field before entering college. It will expose students to the range of job possibilities available to sociology graduates and provide students (and their parents) reassurance that earning a B.A. or B.S. degree with a major in sociology can lead to a real job. The exercise will also help them appreciate that they will need to develop a wide range of skills to succeed in their future occupations.

Activity: Using the ASA web link and the web links in *Careers in Sociology*, have your students make a list of the five occupations available to a sociology graduate that appeal to them the most. Then have them choose the job that most appeals to them and why. Finally, have them develop a plan that includes the courses they would plan to take in sociology and related areas to achieve this goal.

Additional Resources: The U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Outlook Handbook <http://www.bls.gov/oco/> is an excellent place for students to look up educational requirements, job descriptions, and projected future demand for workers in all occupational fields.

Video Activity (Premium Resource CD Rom) *Sociological Perspectives: Homeless v. The Cops*

Annotation: This video clip shows a public demonstration following the shooting by city police of 54 year old Margaret Laverne Mitchell, a black woman, and the response to that demonstration by city authorities. It also includes a demonstration of another group protesting the demonstrators. The details of why and how Mrs. Mitchell was shot are not provided, nor are details of where this incident is taking place.

Learning Objective: To analyze group activity from multiple perspectives.

Faculty Note: This video provides material that may be treated in a variety of ways. One way, suggested in this activity, is to use it to provide practice in distinguishing between empirical generalizations and value statements. Some students have difficulty understanding how sociology can fit with their personal values. This exercise will guide students through the process of determining how sociology can be used to understand differences between groups that transcend the actual act and how all demonstrations may not be motivated by the incident that immediately precedes them. This video clip is provided on the *Premium Resource CD Rom* under chapter one.

Activity: Have students watch the video clip Homeless v. The Cops. Discuss with students their views of what is actually the issue being protested by the group. Does the shooting of the black woman symbolize other issues? What are some of the other symbols and the meaning they convey found in the clip? What is the symbolic significance of the mayor being white and his police chief being an African American? In this case, why does intervention by the federal authorities symbolize justice? Because the other group of protestors disagrees with the protestors, does this

mean they agree with the mayor's and police chief's explanation of the incident? How does this clip meet the elements of both symbolic interactionism and the conflict perspective?

Additional Resources: The web site at <http://www.communitypolicing.org/about2.html> addresses community policing. How does this perspective on community and police relationships differ from that which is shown in the video clip? How does community policing represent the functionalist perspective?

Test Question: (Essay) Analyze and discuss the symbolism conveyed in the video clip regarding the death of Margaret Laverne Mitchell. Why was the protest damaging to the plight of the homeless as asserted by the other group?

Answers might include: The death of Mrs. Mitchell represented what the protestors perceived as a lack of sensitivity and fair treatment by the police, not just towards Mrs. Mitchell, but all African American residents of the city. The mayor, being white, represented a continuation of oppressive policies. His chief of police, although African American, was a token member of the mayor's regime. The federal authorities, in this case, represented a sense of fairness because federal authority is usually viewed as more powerful and prestigious than local authority. Would there have been a similar demonstration if a federal officer had shot Mrs. Mitchell in the line of duty?

Web Link *Dead Sociologists Index*

Annotation: The study of sociological theory and the social scientists that developed that theory are a major part of Chapter 1. *The Dead Sociologist Society* is located at <http://www2.pfeiffer.edu/~lridener/DSS/INDEX.HTML> and can be accessed by clicking on the appropriate title under Web Links. It contains thumbnail sketches of all the major sociological theorists since Auguste Comte.

Learning Objective: To have students identify the major contributors to the field and their work.

Faculty Note: You may need to provide the students with the web site address for this exercise. An alternative is to simply type "Dead Sociologists Society" into the search box to find the web site.

Activity: After reading about the sociologists in *The Dead Sociologist Society*, have the students categorize them as to the sociological perspective in which their theories and work would best fit.

Web Link *A Sociological Tour Through Cyberspace*

Annotation: This is Trinity University's sociology web site. It covers most of the field of sociology, with connections to several other disciplines, in a colorful, interesting format.

Learning Objective: To understand C. Wright Mills' construct "the sociological imagination."

Faculty Note: The activity below involves reading C. Wright Mill's brief, original statement about "the sociological imagination." Appreciating the implications of the "sociological imagination" may be the key to engaging students in the subject matter of sociology. If they can begin to connect the events in their lives to the larger pattern of human experiences, they will begin to "See the Broader Social Context".

Activity: Have students follow [Web Links](#) to "A Sociological Tour Through Cyberspace" <http://www.trinity.edu/~mkearl/> & Theories <http://www.trinity.edu/~mkearl/theory.html> Ask students to read C. Wright Mills' definition of the "sociological imagination." Have them define this term in their own words and produce an example of how the sociological imagination is useful to understanding society. Discuss with them how the exercise of the sociological imagination might be useful to them in making decisions about their own lives.

Additional Resources: A selection from Lemert's *Social Theory* <http://spot.colorado.edu/~wehr/301RD1.TXT> provides extensive biographical and theoretical background for the concept.

Content Select Activity *Reviewing Articles on Structural Functionalism, the Conflict Perspective, and Symbolic Interactionism*

Annotation: The students will need to go to Chapter One of the *Content Select Activity*. Using the search engine, they need to type in the appropriate key words to find an article they wish to review on all three perspectives. The three key words are “Functionalism,” “Conflict Theory,” and “Symbolic Interactionism.” The student can view the abstract of the articles they are considering before actually choosing them.

Learning Objective: To train students how to use search engines, to preview articles, and to develop skills on how to objectively evaluate articles.

Faculty Note: Students need to develop research skills early in their college careers. Too often the “cut and paste” method is used to “write” term papers and even short assignments. This exercise will promote a discriminating use of library resources.

Activity: Students are required to compare and contrast the three articles. This exercise can be assigned as a short paper, a class discussion, or a set of small group discussions. Small group discussions can be set up in class or they may be an interactive out of class assignment the students of each small group conduct via e-mail.

Additional Resources: The instructor may have articles he or she has used in the past they consider as being ideal for the assignment. If the instructor is using a reader in the course, they may wish to assign articles from that reader for this purpose.

The Video Professor *Shrek*

Annotation: *Shrek* was a popular animated movie release in 2001. It features the voices of Mike Myers, Eddie Murphy, Cameron Diaz, and John Lithgow as the major characters. *Shrek* should be available to students as an economical rental at either movies houses or libraries.

Learning Objective: To develop an understanding of symbolic interactionism and to recognize potential flaws in our own interaction with other individuals and small groups.

Faculty Note: You may wish to show a short clip from the beginning of the film to inspire the students’ interest in the assignment. Based on the clip you show, ask the class to consider what the obvious plot appears to be. Even if a student has already seen the movie, they can answer the question based upon what their initial reaction was to the first twenty minutes of the film.

Activity: This exercise can be assigned as a short paper, a class discussion, or a set of small group discussions. Small group discussions can be set up in class or they may be an interactive out of class assignment the students of each small group conduct via e-mail.

Additional Resources: Students may wish to consult their textbooks or articles they have read in the *Content Select Activity* to review the paradigms related to Symbolic Interactionism. This also includes the theories by George Herbert Mead and Charles Horton Cooley. There is an entertaining web site on the movie found at <http://www.shrek.com/>.

Census 2000 *The Census: Researching the U.S. Population*

Annotation: Census 2000 marks the 22nd Decennial Census. It posed a number of challenges and controversial issues to the federal government’s efforts to count the entire population. This included using statistical sampling techniques to estimate population size, rather than counting every person; counting members of minority groups that resist giving information to census workers; and preserving citizen’s privacy while getting required information. The site <http://www.jointcenter.org/census.htm> provides an alternative look at the issues faced in the 2000 Census.

Learning Objective: To familiarize students with searching for and using U.S. Census data available on line. Personalize these data by encouraging students to examine information about their home areas.

Faculty Note: The U.S. Census is the largest application of survey research techniques. The exercise below is designed to expose students to the some of the difficulties inherent in surveying the population, familiarize them with information readily available on the web, and personalize this information by having them examine data about their home area.

Activity: Have students click on the web site of the U.S. Census Bureau www.census.gov. Then have them click on the "State and County Quick Facts" and examine the U.S. map that shows the data collected for each state. Have students search for data collected in their state, then in their county and city of residence. Ask students to write a brief paper comparing the data collected in their state, county, and city to the national rate. Ask them to suggest why the data in their state, county, and city may have varied from the national rate.

Additional Resources: The United States Historical Census Data Browser <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/census/> provides background on the US Census from 1790 to 1960. There is also a table of data collected located at <http://www.smu.edu/cul/gir/census/topicstable.html> that summarizes the kind of information recorded by each U.S. Census from 1790 through 1990.

Video Activity (Premium Resource CD Rom) *Starvation Experiment*

Annotation: This video shows photos and movie clips of researchers and subjects involved in an experiment, conducted by Ancel Keys at the University of Minnesota in 1945, to test the effects of starvation on humans. Each of the 36 male, volunteer subjects was to lose 25% of his body weight. Three questions about the ethics of the experiment follow the video.

Learning Objective: To get students to think about the ethics of research and to sensitize students to the difficult ethical questions created by the investigation of certain aspects of human behavior.

Faculty Note: The ethics of sociological research pose many interesting and challenging questions. One of the issues is whether or not any type of research can be conducted ethically if the subjects volunteer. The activity below draws students into the ethical quandary posed by this question. Video clips are provided on the *Premium Resource CD Rom*.

Activity: Have students watch "The Starvation Experiment" video. Ask them whether the experiment was ethical. Ask them whether the fact that the subjects volunteered influenced their decision about whether the experiment was ethical. If they said the experiment was ethical, ask them whether *any* experiment would be ethical if the subjects volunteer. If they answer affirmatively, present them with outrageous examples (e.g., an experiment that involves intentionally killing the voluntary subject). Work with students toward developing a principle that sets limits on human experiments even if people would volunteer for them.

Additional Resources: See the article "Meet Monsieur Cholesterol," for a biography of Ancel Keys, the scientist who led the starvation experiment. Keys reported the results of this study in *The Biology of Human Starvation* (U. of Minnesota Press, 1950). See http://www.mbbnet.umn.edu/hoff/hoff_ak.html

Interactive Map *Foreign Language Spoken in US Households by State*

Annotation: The first map listed in this section is entitled "Foreign Language Spoken, US Households by State." It provides a color-coded glimpse of the percentage of households per state that speak a foreign language and also provides greater detail by simply clicking on a respective state. This *Interactive Map* can be accessed by going to another Henslin site http://wps.ablongman.com/ab_henslin_sociology_6/0,5241,209875-,00.html. Click on

Interactive Maps in the left column, then pick the “Foreign Language Spoken, US Households by State” from the menu.

Learning Objective: To become aware of the multi-cultural patterns within the United States and how the multiple-culture phenomenon is represented at a greater rate in specific regions of the country.

Faculty Note: Have students work with the data available in *Census 2000* and other web sites to get the most from this exercise.

Activity: Using both *Census 2000* and this *Interactive Map*, have the students compose an essay on the multi-cultural presence in America. Include in the essay the reasons for this, how it has developed and changed over the past 50 years, and what can be expected in the next 50 years. This may also serve as a small group project where the students work together through e-mail. To personalize the project, have the students include data collected from these sources on their home state, county, and hometown.

Additional Resources: There are a number of web sites and other sources addressing immigration issues and problems associated with it. Among them are <http://www.americas.org> and <http://immigration.about.com/>

Web Link *The Qualitative Report*

Annotation: This web link directs students to the homepage of "The Qualitative Report," an on-line journal that publishes articles about qualitative research methods and results of studies using qualitative methods.

Learning Objective: To learn about unusual, creative social science research methods.

Faculty Note: The heavy emphasis on quantitative research methods and data analysis in sociology often leaves new qualitative methods largely ignored. The exercise described below exposes students to new, creative methods that are used to study social phenomena.

Activity: Have students click on the Web Link "The Quantitative Report," then Volume 4, Numbers 3 & 4 at <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/OR/OR4-3/index.html>. Within that volume, have them read the article "Creativity Within Qualitative Research on Families: New Ideas for Old Methods" by Sharon A. Deacon. Ask students to write brief descriptions of the creative research methods reported in this article: sculpting, drawing, metaphors, writing, timelines, videography/photography, and psychodrama/role playing. Discuss with students the advantages and disadvantages of these methods over traditional qualitative methods.

Additional Resources: The Qual Page <http://www.ualberta.ca/~jrnorris/qual.html> contains links to many other qualitative research resources on the web.

Test Question: (Essay) Describe the advantages of the creative, qualitative research methods described in by Sharon A. Deacon in her article, "Creativity within Qualitative Research on Families: New Ideas for Old Methods."

Answers might include: Researchers and subjects participate in creation of the data together, these methods elicit data that might not be elicited with traditional methods, researchers can display the data to other researchers, and these methods can be combined with traditional methods.

The Video Professor *Young Frankenstein*

Annotation: *Young Frankenstein* is a satirical tribute to one of the most famous monsters in Hollywood's history. Although quite amusing, the story line continues to present some serious ethical questions about scientific research. Just because we have the technology to create life through cloning, does this mean we have the obligation to do so? Should moral issues be considered? Whose morals?

Learning Objective: To evaluate the importance of social ethics and issues of morality in scientific experimentation.

Faculty Note: Some issues associated with cloning, stem cell research, and other advances in the health sciences can be complicated and controversial.

Activity: Pursue through class discussion or essay the questions posed in the Annotation. Just because we have the technology to create life through cloning, does this mean we have the obligation to do so? Should moral issues be considered? Whose morals? Remember that the concept of morality is relative and differs considerably based on one's cultural values. How do these questions relate to individuals who protest the use of lab animals, such as rats and guinea pigs, in medical experiments? Would the sacrifice of a handful of human lives to find a cure for cancer or AIDS be justified?

Additional Resources: Suggest students utilize a search engine to discover additional information on cloning, stem cell research, partial-birth abortion, and other issues that may be equated to questionable medical procedures today as the creation of Victor Frankenstein's experiment did a hundred years ago.