Chapter Activities

# Chapter 1: Sociology: A Unique Way to View the World

## Connecting the Individual to Society

**Objective:** Illustrate the sociological imagination by having students understand the connection between the individual and society.

**Directions:** Present students a list of social issues and have them individually list ways that this social problem influences the individual and how the social issue influences society. Example social problems include substance abuse, food insecurity, juvenile crime, poverty, unemployment, urban sprawl, discrimination, and so forth. You can break students into groups and assign them a social issue or have them select one from a list that you present in class.

## Which Group to Study?

**Objective:** Help students understand the various types of social groups and levels of analysis and that more than one level of analysis/social group can be used to examine the same social phenomenon.

**Directions:** Break the class into small groups (three to five students) and hand each a worksheet (below). Ask the groups to decide what size group they would choose to study and which level of analysis would be most appropriate for the questions asked. After all groups have completed the worksheet, reconvene the entire class and ask for answers/reactions. You should find that students have chosen different groups and levels of analysis for study of the same questions (if a particular group size/level is not mentioned, brainstorm how this group/level could be used to answer the question). Explain that this is because there are multiple ways of examining the same phenomenon, all which add to our understanding of social issues.

## What Effect Has Sociology Had?

**Objective:** This discussion-based project will help students see the impact of sociology over time.

**Directions:** Break students into groups. Provide groups with a list of social upheavals that occurred during the 19th century. The list should include many traditions and social norms that were destroyed, including challenges to the divine right of kings and religion. Have half the groups discuss the 1960s and the other half of the groups discuss today’s society and make a list of traditions and social norms that are/were being challenged.

## How Can We Address This Sociologically?

**Objective:** Help students understand the difference between those questions that are best answered through sociological methods and those that must be left to philosophers or theologians.

**Directions:** Either in small groups or as a whole class, name the following issues one at a time:

* Stem cell research
* Adoption by same-sex parents
* Religious fundamentalism
* Abortion
* Bias in the media
* Abstinence-only education
* Affirmative action

For each issue, have students come up with one question that is appropriate to study from a sociological perspective and one that is not. If students provide incorrect answers, help them reshape their philosophical or moral question into one that is more appropriate for sociological inquiry.

*Note*: Do not allow students to debate these issues at this time; this exercise is only meant to illustrate the kinds of questions that sociologists pose and the kind they do not attempt to answer.

## How Does Sociology Differ From Other Social Sciences?

**Objective:** Explore how sociology is distinct from anthropology, psychology, political science, and economics.

**Directions:** As an alternative (or in addition) to the “How Can We Address This Sociologically?” exercise above, have students work as a class or in small groups to explore one of the issues above from each of the five perspectives (sociology, anthropology, psychology, political science, and economics). Students should choose which issue they wish to explore further and decide what research questions they would choose to answer from each of the different perspectives.

## Getting the Most From Your Introductory Sociology Course

**Objective:** This activity will get students invested in the course, and it is intended to get them excited about learning sociology. It will also help them understand how the skills they learn in sociology will apply to their life aspirations.

**Directions:** After the first lecture in which you introduce sociology to your students, ask them to do the following:

1. After hearing all about what sociology is, how does this differ from what you thought it was when you enrolled in the course?
2. Flip through the Table of Contents in your *Our Social World* text. Find three to five topics you will address in the course that you are excited to cover.
3. Then examine the section “Why Study Sociology . . . And What Do Sociologists Do?” State your major or career aspirations. Using this section, describe how studying sociology will help you be successful and help you accomplish these goals.

Instructors, then, can use this information to know what students are most interested in learning about sociology, and students can start seeing how useful and interesting the course can be.

## Thinking About Your Educational Experiences

**Objective:** This activity will give students a chance to think about their own educational experiences during their time spent from Kindergarten to 12th grade and discuss which level of sociological analysis would be most useful in studying these issues.

**Directions:** Divide the students into groups of four. Ask the students to discuss the biggest issues they faced during their time in grade school and ask them to come up with a list to share with the class. Then ask the students which level of analysis (micro or macro) would be most useful in studying these issues. Why? Then to the class present the list and the levels of analysis used to study each issue.

# Chapter 1: Classroom Exercise #2

## How Will You Study This?

Your team has been asked to conduct research that answers the following questions. As a group, come to a consensus about what one size group you will study (recall that group sizes include dyads, small groups, large groups, nations, and the global community) and which one level of analysis is most appropriate (micro, meso, or macro). Justify your answers.

1. How does the number of cultural groups in a nation affect the prevalence of terrorist acts within that nation?

Group Size: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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Level of Analysis: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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2. Why do women in cities have fewer children than women who live in rural areas?

Group Size: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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3. What types of crime are women committing and what types of crime are men committing?

Group Size: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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4. Why do people who practice some form of religion live longer than those who do not?

Group Size: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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