Discussion Questions

# Chapter 2: Examining the Social World: How Do We Know?

1. If you were to examine the relationship between the government and the economy in the United States today, which of the four major theoretical perspectives outlined in the chapter would be most helpful? Why?

2. Imagine you would like to conduct a sociological study of the students with whom you attended the fourth grade to determine what key factors influenced their academic achievements. Which of the four major theoretical perspectives would you employ in your study? Why?

3. Why do research questions have to be asked in a precise way? Give an example of a precise research question. How do precise questions make it possible for you to test and measure your topic?

4. Sociologists must be continually open to having their findings reexamined and new interpretations proposed. Describe a time when you changed your mind due to new information. Was it difficult for you to change your mind? Why, or why not?

5. Why is the ability to be open to new ideas and interpretations and to be objective so vital to the scientific perspective? Do you think you could carry this aspect of the scientific process out successfully—no matter how you feel about a topic? Why, or why not?

6. If you were to conduct a study to measure student satisfaction with a particular academic department on campus, what research method(s) would you use? Why? How would the method(s) you select vary according to (a) the size of the department and (b) the type of information you sought?