

Delta State University
Sociology 101
Spring Semester 2004

Study Questions Week 1

(1) Identify the following sociologists and their contributions to the discipline:

Auguste Comte
Emile Durkheim
Ferdinand Tönnies
Max Weber
Karl Marx
Herbert Spencer
Jane Addams
W.E.B. DuBois

(2) McIntyre begins Chapter 1 by discussing the laws of the physical world. This is an odd way to begin a book about sociology. Why does McIntyre do this? What conclusions can we draw about sociology from her discussion of physics?

(3) On p. 11, McIntyre says

"The new urbanites included many unfortunate souls—people working long hours for tiny wages, insufficient food, and inadequate shelter. These urban poor terrified the urban middle and upper classes—and it was easy to see why. There were obvious and strong links between poverty, riots, and revolutions. In France the urban poor were referred to as the dangerous classes."

Are such conditions unique to the middle-19th century? Can you think of circumstance today that illustrate similar conditions?

(4) Define these important concepts attributed to the work of Emile Durkheim:

Division of Labor
Collective Conscience
Mechanical Solidarity
Organic Solidarity
Social Fact

(5) Tönnies and Weber both distinguish between relationships that are ends unto themselves, and relationships that are means to other ends. Think about some of the social relationships you've had and groups you've been involved with in your life—your family; your classes in school; your schoolmates; your friends from your neighborhood, dorm floor, or fraternity/sorority; church members; a waitress that serves you in a restaurant; a policeman that gives you a ticket, etc. In each case, have these relationships served primarily as ends in and of themselves, or have they served primarily as means to other ends? Explain how you draw such a conclusion in each case.

(6) What is meant by *gemeinschaft*? What is meant by *gesellschaft*? Do you think associations in the Mississippi Delta are primarily *gemeinschaft* or *gesellschaft* in nature? How about associations in New York City? How about in remote jungle regions of Brazil?

(7) What did Weber mean by "rational" behavior? Can you think of cases of rational and nonrational behavior that you have witnessed? Can you think of rational and nonrational institutions?

(8) Karl Marx suggested that all of our actions, tastes, values, ideas, and culture stemmed from one basic condition—our relationship to our society's means of production. Some people own the land and factories used to produce things, while others only own their labor, and must sell this to the propertyholders. What names did Marx use for these two groups? What are some characteristics that you associate with the owners? With the workers? Does Marx's theory apply today, to U.S. society? Why or why not?

(9) McIntyre suggests that the American tradition in sociology, as represented by early sociologists such as Jane Addams and W.E.B. DuBois, is more applied than theoretical. What does this mean? Why do you think American sociologists have adopted this approach?

(10) What is meant by "the social construction of reality?" Is the constructivist perspective the opposite of the positivist perspective? Explain.