

Study Questions
Week 5

- (1) What is a *variable*? What are the important characteristics of a variable? Provide examples of social variables.
- (2) What is a *hypothesis*? How are hypotheses usually stated? How are they usually written? How do hypotheses relate to variables?
- (3) What is the difference between an *independent* and a *dependent* variable? What is meant by *cause* and *effect*? Which variables posit a cause and which posit an effect?
- (4) What do scientists mean by the term *relationship*? Distinguish between a *positive* and a *negative* relationship?
- (5) Why do scientists use *tables* and *figures*? How should you go about interpreting and understanding data presented in a table or figure?
- (6) What is a *social fact*? How do these differ from other types of facts?
- (7) On page 6, Durkheim asserts that social facts are “endowed with coercive power,” and thus place *constraints* on the actions of an individual; yet, the constraint is not felt if one conforms to facts, rather, it is felt if one resists. What does Durkheim mean by this? Can you think of an example that illustrates this insight?
- (8) What does Durkheim mean by *social currents*? How do these differ from social facts? How do they confirm the existence of social facts?
- (9) What is a *theory*? What are the functions of a theory? What is the relationship between theories and hypotheses? Between theories and variables?
- (10) Distinguish *macrotheory* and *microtheory*. What are some of the important topics in various macrotheories?
- (11) What do social scientists mean by *rational*? What do they mean by *objective*? Is science always rational and objective? Explain.