

Sociology

Second Edition

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First Edition

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Contents

Series Introduction: Senior High Electives	vii
Unit Introduction	ix

Domain 1: The Sociological Perspective and Methods of Inquiry

Unit 1: Sociological Perspectives

Lesson 1: What Is Sociology?	2
Handout 1: The Role of Influence in Our Lives	3
Lesson 2: Sociological Imagination	5
Handout 2: Sociological Imagination	6
Handout 3: Time Capsule for Future Students	7
Lesson 3: Sociological Perspectives / Theories	8
Handout 4: Sociological Perspectives / Theories	10
Lesson 4: Social Construction of Reality	11
Handout 5: Social Construction of Reality	13
Lesson 5: Social Problems	14
Handout 6: Social Problems	16

Unit 2: Methods of Inquiry

Lesson 6: How Does Sociology Relate to Other Sciences?	18
Handout 7: What Are the Social Sciences?	19
Lesson 7: How Do Sociologists Use the Research Process?	20
Handout 8: The Research Process	22
Lesson 8: How Are Statistics Used?	23
Handout 9: Numbers Always Tell the Truth	25
Handout 10: How to Read a Table	26
Lesson 9: Qualitative Methods of Inquiry	28
Handout 11: Fieldwork Notes and Post-Fieldwork Analysis	30
Lesson 10: Sociology Project	32
Handout 12: Sociology Project	34
Handout 13: Sociology Project Score Card	36

Domain 2: Social Structure Culture, Society, and Institutions

Unit 3: Culture and Society

Lesson 11: Cultural Variation	38
Handout 14: Death Rituals and Cultural Variation	39
Lesson 12: Material and Nonmaterial Culture	40
Handout 15: Material and Nonmaterial Culture.....	42
Lesson 13: Language	43
Handout 16: Synonyms.....	45
Lesson 14: Media	46
Handout 17: Media	47
Lesson 15: Science and Technology	48
Handout 18: Disruptive Technologies	50

Unit 4: Institutions

Lesson 16: Economic Systems	52
Handout 19: Types of Economic Systems.....	54
Handout 20: Identifying Economic Systems	56
Handout 21: Labor Terms	57
Lesson 17: Government	58
Handout 22: Disaster	60
Lesson 18: Religion	61
Handout 23: Religion and Presidential Choices	63
Handout 24: Analysis of a Religion.....	64
Handout 25: Comparison and Evaluation of Religions	65
Lesson 19: Health	66
Handout 26: Mental Illness: Myth or Fact	68
Handout 27: Mental Illness Research.....	69
Lesson 20: Education	71
Handout 28: American Education System: Manifest and Latent Functions.....	72

Unit 5: Social Change

Lesson 21: Agricultural and Industrial Societies	76
Handout 29: Agricultural Society versus Industrial Society	78
Handout 30: Statistics.....	79
Handout 31: Comparisons	80
Lesson 22: Social Movements	82
Handout 32: Types of Social Movements.....	84
Handout 33: Stages of Social Movements	85
Lesson 23: Globalization	87
Handout 34: Globalization	88
Lesson 24: Collective Action and Social Change	89
Handout 35: Collective Action and Social Change	90

Domain 3: Social Relationships Self, Groups, and Socialization

Unit 6: Socialization

Lesson 25: I, Me, and the Generalized Other	94
Teacher Resource: I, Me, and the Generalized Other	96
Handout 36: I, Me, and the Generalized Other.....	97
Lesson 26: The Early Years	99
Handout 37: Educational Shows	101
Lesson 27: Adolescence	102
Handout 38: Personal Life Shield.....	104
Handout 39: Is Growing Up Easier or Harder?	105
Lesson 28: Adulthood	106
Handout 40: What Is Adulthood?.....	107
Handout 41: Career Choices.....	108
Lesson 29: Old Age	109
Handout 42: Senior Citizen Interview	111
Handout 43: What about Early Retirement?	112
Lesson 30: Sexuality	113
Handout 44: Sexuality in Advertising.....	114

Unit 7: Groups and Group Behavior

Lesson 31: Groups and Peers	118
Handout 45: Agents of Socialization	120
Lesson 32: Subcultures	121
Handout 46: Subcultures	123

Unit 8: Socialization and Sanctions

Lesson 33: Cultural Values, Rules, and Sanctions	126
Handout 47: “American Values”	128
Handout 48: Norms and Sanctions.....	130
Lesson 34: Crime	132
Handout 49: Crime and Justice	134
Lesson 35: Social Control	136
Handout 50: Social Control and Total Institutions	138
Lesson 36: Surveillance	139
Handout 51: Everyday Surveillance.....	141

Domain 4: Stratification and Inequality

Unit 9: Stratification and Inequality

Lesson 37: Social Inequality	144
Lesson 38: Power and Privilege	146
Handout 52: Power and Privilege.....	147
Lesson 39: Class Inequality	148
Handout 53: Class Inequality.....	150
Lesson 40: Poverty	151
Handout 54: Poverty.....	153
Lesson 41: Ethnocentrism	154
Handout 55: Ethnocentrism.....	155
Lesson 42: Race Inequality	156
Handout 56: Racial Inequality	158
Lesson 43: Gender Inequality	159
Handout 57: Gender Equity and Inclusivity	
Program Evaluation.....	161
Lesson 44: Global Inequality	162

What Is Sociology?

Objectives

- To define the nature and scope of sociology and understand why it is defined as a social science
- To realize that sociology is a science that studies human behavior and social interaction
- To gain an appreciation of the impact and influence we have on others

Notes to the Teacher

Unlike other social sciences, sociology is a relatively new study. It emerged out of the need to understand better the effects of industrialization on people's lives. As sociology developed, it became useful in analyzing the social factors that influence human beings on a daily basis.

In studying sociology, it is important for students to develop a sociological perspective. This perspective emphasizes people's thoughts, feelings, and actions, which are strongly influenced by the social interaction of the groups to which they belong. Sociologists concentrate on the ways that people relate to one another and influence each other's behavior. Sociology focuses on groups of individuals rather than the individuals themselves.

Students are introduced to this sociological perspective beginning with a comprehensive discussion of the definition of sociology. Students complete a handout showing how people influence them and how they influence others.

This lesson calls for active student participation and helps students understand the nature of social interaction.

Procedure

1. Auguste Comte called sociology the study of society. Divide the class into small groups and give them Comte's definition. Have the groups make the definition more specific and create their own definition of sociology.

The following definitions may be used as a comparison:

- Sociology is the scientific study of a society and the social activity of human beings.
 - Sociology is concerned with the study of groups—how they are formed and how they change—and with the actions of individuals within these groups.
 - Sociology is a science that studies human society and social behavior.
 - Sociology is the study of human beings and their interaction with each other.
2. Have students complete **Handout 1**. This handout develops the idea of the individual as part of an interactive social system. Have students think critically about each question. Encourage complete answers.
 3. Discuss students' responses in class. After a full discussion, summarize by showing the similarities and the uniqueness of students' responses. Allow sufficient time to discuss **Handout 1** completely.

Extension

Develop the idea of influence and social interaction. Ask students to write an essay that addresses how the following factors determine how members of society treat individuals: age, sex, race, religion, education, socioeconomic background, and nationality. Students should note the individual opinions they have regarding these topics. Have students share their essays with classmates.

The Role of Influence in Our Lives

Complete the chart by identifying how these individuals and groups influenced you during certain periods of your life. Answer the questions that follow.

Period/Group	Who influenced you and in what manner?	Whom did you influence and in what manner?
Infancy		
Preschool play groups		
Elementary school		
Junior high school		
High school		
Organizations		
Workplace		

Personal Life Shield

Answer each of the following questions by drawing in the appropriate area on your life shield a picture, design, or symbol. Words may be used if you do not wish to draw.

1. What do you regard as your greatest personal achievement to date?
2. What do you regard as your family's greatest achievement?
3. What is the one thing that other people can do to make you happy?
4. What do you regard as your greatest personal failure to date?
5. What would you do if you had one year to live and were guaranteed success in whatever you attempted?
6. What three things would you most like to have said about you if you died today?

My Life Shield

