Test Bank for Art and Science of Social Research 2nd Carr

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Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Chapter 1

Review Quiz

1. Which broad topic would be covered under macrosociology?
   a. interpersonal relationships
   b. online dating using a particular website
   c. the American education system
   d. racial dynamics at an adoption agency

2. Which sociologist is credited with recognizing and defining the sociological imagination?
   a. W. E. B. DuBois
   b. Wright Mills
   c. Max Weber
   d. Karl Marx

3. Which of the following types of observations would be generalizable to a broader population?
   a. survey of a random selection of the population
   b. discussions about politics with your friends

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c. interviews with Sociology 101 students

d. Psychology 101 experiments

4. Which of the following is an example of agency?

a. From a set of eight colleges, I decide which one I will ultimately attend.

b. My parents' socioeconomic status permitted me to attend private SAT prep classes and get into better colleges.

c. The neighborhood in which I grew up was districted for one of the best public high schools in the state.

d. The college that I ultimately attended selected me because they really wanted someone in their freshman class who plays the oboe.

5. The median age at first marriage in the United States _____ for men and _____ for women between 1956 and 2016.

a. decreased; decreased

b. increased; decreased

c. decreased; increased

d. increased; increased

6. The increase in median age at first marriage in the United States highlights how seemingly personal choices are deeply intertwined with larger social and historical forces. This is an example of which sociological concept?

a. intersectionality

b. the sociological imagination

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c. cultural relativism

d. triangulation

7. Dr. Silva is doing extensive ethnography work of an immigrant community and sees a number of things that might be upsetting to a traditional middle-class white American. She decides to adopt the viewpoint of her subjects and continue her work without judgment. This is an example of which research concept?

a. intersectionality

b. applied research

c. cultural relativism

d. triangulation

8. Most basic research takes place in _____.

a. business settings

b. the United States

c. academia

d. classrooms

9. The goals of applied research are entirely _____.

a. practical

b. theoretical

c. academic

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d. experimental

10. Dr. Jackson wants to evaluate whether the Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring program increases the likelihood that low-income youth attend college. What type of research is Dr. Jackson conducting?

a. basic

b. applied

c. quantitative

d. qualitative

11. What is the most widely used quantitative method in sociology?

a. interviews

b. ethnography

c. experiments

d. survey research

12. Which type of research is usually useful for gaining breadth but not detail on a particular topic?

a. basic

b. applied

c. quantitative

d. qualitative

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13. Vincent Roscigno's work on age discrimination used which type of method(s)?

a. quantitative methods

b. qualitative methods

c. mixed-methods approach

d. experimental methods

14. A _____ design is the only type of time design that collects data at one time point.

a. cross-sectional

b. repeated cross-sectional

c. longitudinal

d. panel

15. Establishing causality requires knowledge about the _____ of events, thus longitudinal studies are necessary to understanding cause and effect.

a. time order

b. importance

c. specificity

d. generalizability

16. If you want to study changing experiences and opinions over the lifetimes of people who were teenagers when 9/11 occurred, which type of design would you use?

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a. panel

b. cross-sectional

c. repeated cross-sectional

d. cohort

17. Which of the following is the most serious drawback to panel studies?

a. cost

b. time

c. attrition

d. generalizability

18. Dr. Lintz has collected data on state legislatures including variables on the number of women and minorities in each state legislature, the number of bills passed, and the total budget of each. What is the unit of analysis?

a. individual legislators

b. state legislatures

c. states

d. surveys

19. If Dr. Lintz tried to make inferences about the outcomes of individuals based on her data of state legislatures, what mistake would she be making?

a. an ecological fallacy

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b. attrition

c. lack of triangulation

d. intersectionality

20. What is the third step in the scientific method?

a. Analyze the data to determine whether the prediction is accurate.

b. Construct a hypothesis, or prediction, about the answer to this question.

c. Gather data that allow the researcher to assess the accuracy of this prediction.

d. Draw and report conclusions.

21. Three general conditions guide a social scientist's formulation of their question: its social importance, scientific relevance, and _____.

a. complexity

b. their own training

c. personal interest

d. feasibility

22. Most experts agree it is virtually impossible for researchers to be completely _____ in their work.

a. accurate

b. scientific

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c. value-free

d. interested

23. Which most accurately states the focus of sociology? Sociology is the study of

a. everything.

b. individuals.

c. social life.

d. cultural differences.

24. Which of the following is an example of a macrosociological topic?

a. dynamics of a town hall political meeting

b. common problems in therapist–client relationships

c. trends in global capitalism

d. how individuals experience grief

25. The most important difference between macrosociology and microsociology is that macrosociology focuses on _____, while microsociology focuses on _____.

a. quantitative methodologies; qualitative methodologies

b. large data sets; small data sets

c. large-scale social systems; personal concerns and interpersonal interactions

d. topics with large-scale implications; topics of concern to specific social groups

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26. Select the most precise answer. Danika exercises her sociological imagination when she thinks about

a. how her life connects with gender, race, and class dynamics in society.

b. the fact that social inequality is so persistent.

c. how to pass her sociology class.

d. the challenges faced by socially disadvantaged groups.

27. Which accurately describes how sociologists view macro-level issues and micro-level issues?

a. They are often unrelated to one another, which is why sociologists focus on either macro or micro research.

b. Macro-level issues and micro-level issues are linked because large-scale systems affect personal experiences.

c. Micro-level issues are better understood with theories from psychology; macro-level issues are better understood with theories from history.

d. Macro-level issues are the true subject of sociology; micro-level issues are for scientists trained in human biology or psychology.

28. Which statement demonstrates generalizability?

a. A sociologist defines “stress” using four characteristics, and then uses those characteristics in survey questions about stress.

b. A study of stress among 500 Hispanics offers insight about what is typical among all Hispanics in the United States.

c. Race should first be studied as a broad concept, before looking at specific racial groups.

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d. One Asian person's life history reflects broader social realities of race, gender, and age.

29. Dr. Mahoney's study focuses on why certain high-risk individuals do not continue in a life of crime. Because it seeks to understand individual choices, this study highlights

a. macrosociology.

b. agency.

c. generalizability.

d. structural constraints.

30. Will wants to lose 75 pounds. Which of the following represents the constraining influence of social structure against his agency?

a. He fails to lose weight because he continues in his long-established habits.

b. High-quality food and gym memberships are costly, and Will's income is low.

c. He exerts amazing willpower and loses 75 pounds on his own, without a gym or a coach.

d. Obesity is widespread in society.

31. Jeremiah plans a study that asks, "Why are young people postponing marriage?" He applies the sociological imagination to this question by focusing on

a. the life histories of one older couple and one younger couple.

b. a national sample of thousands of young adults.

c. the influence of housing costs and diminishing stigma against premarital sex.

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d. individual morals and values.

32. In its attention to race, class, gender, age, and other characteristics, intersectionality is most concerned with how the various dimensions of _____ affect people's lives.

a. generalizability

b. microsociology

c. inequality

d. agency

33. Damon uses his sociological imagination to reflect on intersectionality in his life. He considers how _____ intersects with _____.

a. macro; micro

b. gender; race

c. structure; agency

d. opportunity; constraint

34. In her study of 50 middle-class heterosexual black women, sociologist Averil Clarke found that the women's singlehood was due to

a. personal choice.

b. a decision to prioritize career over romance.

c. persistent social inequalities.

d. personal reasons that varied by individual.

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35. Anthropology's method of _____ is also used by _____ sociologists.

a. fieldwork; qualitative

b. cultural relativism; micro-level

c. qualitative sociology; in-depth

d. materials-based investigation; macro-level

36. A sociologist takes a problem-based approach, identifying drug addiction as a social ill that should be addressed. An anthropologist's cultural relativistic approach would

a. also be problem-based, but in a nonwestern context.

b. try to grasp the drug user's view (the insider view).

c. use archives and physical remains to interpret human behavior.

d. focus on refining theories of human behavior.

37. Sociologists are more interested in _____, whereas psychologists are more interested in _____.

a. the past; the present

b. the global scene; local communities

c. groups and societies; individuals

d. social problems; cultural relativism

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38. Historians aim to understand and document the particular details of an event. Sociologists tend to approach history by

a. using theory to make broad conclusions about human behavior.

b. focusing on social problems of the past and present.

c. identifying individual motivations and constraints.

d. reducing the complexity of the past to variables that can be analyzed quantitatively.

39. Identify the accurate statement regarding sociologists doing interdisciplinary research.

a. Interdisciplinary research is more often quantitative than qualitative.

b. Interdisciplinary research can be more comprehensive, because it uses diverse theoretical and methodological approaches.

c. Sociologists prefer to work with history or anthropology more than with political science.

d. Sociologists work on interdisciplinary teams when addressing macrosociological phenomena more than when working on microsociological topics.

40. Rupert designs a basic research study about farmers' markets in rural Vermont. It is considered basic research because it

a. trains farmers to conduct important data collection.

b. uses an intersectional lens.

c. contributes to theory about local and global economic intersections.

d. will be used by the farmers to strengthen their markets.

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41. Twila designs a sociology research study about gender-based violence. After she proposes the study, she decides that she really wants it to be applied research. Accordingly, she refines the study to

a. make a contribution to theories of human violence.

b. be grounded in a mixed-method approach to data collection.

c. evaluate a local nonprofit organization devoted to reducing domestic violence.

d. be grounded in political science instead of sociology, so it can have a policy outcome.

42. Qualitative methods typically collect data that enable rich description in

a. trends and forecasts.

b. interpretations of the past.

c. words and images.

d. numbers and abstractions.

43. Which of the following is an example of a quantitative method?

a. textual analysis of historical documents

b. structured interviews

c. surveys

d. ethnographic fieldwork

44. A sociology student wants to develop a mixed-method study, so he plans to

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a. use methods from both sociology and one related discipline (psychology, anthropology, or history).

b. study the micro-level and macro-level dimensions of the topic.

c. use interviews and a survey.

d. use cultural relativism as a framework, instead of a problem-based framework.

45. In her study of car shows, Dr. Ingram sets triangulation as a research goal because she believes that

a. a sample size of three will allow for analysis that is both focused and broad.

b. using several methods to collect data will allow for a superior understanding of car shows.

c. car shows have implicit dimensions of intersectionality.

d. her supervising committee should have members from at least three different academic disciplines.

46. After his study of social networks and life stress, what did sociologist Mario Small conclude?

a. Life stress is a subject better studied with qualitative methods than with quantitative methods, because it involves personal experience and emotion.

b. Quantitative data offer a statistical snapshot of social networks, and qualitative data reveal human interactions and processes.

c. This research had to be applied, not basic, because life stress has a negative impact on people's lives.

d. Small would have used multiple methods, but triangulation restricted him to just three: survey, interviews, and life history.

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47. Emile plans a study about the health of deep-sea divers. In determining whether to use a cross-sectional design or a longitudinal design, Emile should ask, “Do I want to know about

a. diver health at a single moment in time, or diver health over time?”

b. just a few divers, or many divers?”

c. several different demographic groups, or just one?”

d. what divers say they do, or what they can be observed doing?”

48. A repeated cross-sectional design results in description of change or continuity

a. across geographical regions.

b. between cultures.

c. of qualities (not quantities).

d. over time.

49. Sierra conducts a study of unemployment and reaches this conclusion: “In 2016, the unemployment rate in Dover County was 6%.” Such a conclusion may be reached with which type of study design?

a. repeated cross-sectional

b. longitudinal

c. cross-sectional

d. panel

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50. Leo uses a panel design to study marital satisfaction. Accordingly, he interviews

a. one sample drawn at one time.

b. two samples, drawn at two different times.

c. three samples, drawn at three different times.

d. one sample, drawn at three different times.

51. Which feature of research design distinguishes repeated cross-sectional design from other designs?

a. It draws a single sample.

b. It draws two or more distinctive samples.

c. It draws two or more samples at two or more distinctive time points.

d. It draws a single sample at two or more distinctive time points.

52. A researcher distributes a survey to college students. One question asks, “How many hours per night do you sleep?” and another asks, “What is your GPA?” If the study has a cross-sectional design, which conclusion is possible?

a. Students who sleep more have higher GPAs.

b. Excessive sleep boosts GPAs.

c. Because they don’t sleep enough, some students have lower GPAs.

d. Having a higher GPA causes students to sleep less.

53. A cross-sectional study cannot establish causality because

a. science can establish correlation, but not causation.

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b. cross-sectional studies measure people at just one point in time.

c. social life has so many variables influencing events.

d. it uses only two samples drawn at two points in time.

54. Dr. Kichler uses a cohort design to investigate young adults and job switching. Accordingly, she draws a sample of

a. 30 job-seekers in Seattle in 2013, and then a sample of 30 job-seekers in Miami in 2018.

b. 25 job-seekers in Seattle in 2013, and follows up with that same sample in 2016 and 2018.

c. 25 job-seekers in Minneapolis in 2013, and follows up with each job-seeker at different times in the future.

d. 1,500 job-seekers in every region of the nation, and follows up her survey with phone interviews.

55. Causal ordering is difficult to establish, but it is considered valuable because researchers often want to understand

a. why something is happening, not simply that it is happening.

b. our capacity to make our own choices and act autonomously.

c. which variable came first, thus influencing another variable.

d. how people report data differently if the researcher is present.

56. Which is a synonym for *cohort design*?

a. cross-sectional design

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b. trend design

c. prospective design

d. causality design

57. Dr. Han plans a large-scale panel study, with prospective design, and secures funding. There are many challenges to the project, and in an effort to minimize attrition, he

a. uses two different samples at two different times.

b. incentivizes participants with moderate cash payments.

c. establishes causality by collecting data at two different times.

d. increases the sample size for an initial national survey.

58. Sociologists have studied social media use and loneliness for some time. What can most definitely be claimed, based on the research by Primack and colleagues?

a. Social media use causes loneliness.

b. Loneliness causes increased social media use.

c. Social media use and loneliness are correlated.

d. Social media use correlates with dozens of variables, one of which is loneliness.

59. Which scenario describes attrition?

a. A panel study begins with a sample of 50, By the third year, though, 12 participants have dropped out.

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b. In a study using cross-sectional design, its sample was supposed to include only women. However, the researcher accidentally included two men.

c. A researcher used surveys, interviews, and historical methods, but the interviews did not go very well.

d. A study would have been stronger if it had been interdisciplinary, but the researcher relied only on one academic discipline.

60. In *Suicide*, what was Emile Durkheim's unit of analysis?

a. individuals

b. families

c. religious denominations

d. a panel of individuals

61. Dr. Lang plans a study of why some high schoolers join honor societies. Which of the following is the unit of analysis?

a. Dr. Lang

b. high-school students

c. honor societies

d. the research question, "Why do some high schoolers join honor societies?"

62. Roger is a student using Emile Durkheim's work in *Suicide* to write a sociology paper. Unfortunately, his paper exhibits the ecological fallacy. Durkheim found that nations that were largely Catholic had lower suicide rates than nations that were largely Protestant. Which conclusion exhibits the ecological fallacy?

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a. The religious dynamics of nations are the same today as in Durkheim's day.

b. Nations that are largely Catholic also have lower suicide rates than nations that are largely Muslim.

c. Protestant students at Roger's university are at higher risk of suicide than the Catholic students.

d. Protestant theologians need to alter theology to reduce suicide rates.

63. In order to avoid the ecological fallacy, researchers should follow a simple rule:

a. Use triangulation as a principle for choosing research methods.

b. Avoid making longitudinal conclusions based on a study that uses cross-sectional design.

c. Generate large samples so that attrition won't have a strong effect.

d. Data from one level of analysis should be used to draw conclusions about that level of analysis only.

64. A _____ design is one type of longitudinal time design.

a. cross-sectional

b. repeated cross-sectional

c. mixed-methods

d. qualitative

65. In order to successfully use the scientific method, a researcher must

a. have a degree in a scientific field, or be pursuing one.

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b. study living humans.

c. gather and analyze data.

d. construct a hypothesis that shows variables in relation to one another.

66. Which of the following expresses the best value-free approach to the scientific method? Dr. Dubus launches a sociological study of opioid addiction. She

a. is personally neutral about whether opioid addiction rates decrease.

b. asks the research question, “What factors influence individuals to become opioid addicts?”

c. does not apply her work in the political sphere, even after her study is completed.

d. asks the research question, “How could better parenting prevent individuals from ruining their lives with opioids?”

67. Which of the following is a research question for a descriptive study?

a. Which policies could best promote home ownership?

b. What is the rate of home ownership in the United States?

c. How do economic factors influence first-time home ownership?

d. Why do some regions of the United States have higher rates of home ownership than others?

68. When qualitative researchers use ethnographic fieldwork to conduct a study, what is the best outcome?

a. a correlation between two variables

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b. establishment of causation of a phenomenon

c. thick description of a social context

d. a longitudinal analysis that identifies a trend

69. Exploratory research often answers questions of

a. when.

b. how.

c. what.

d. why.

70. Which is an example of explanatory research?

a. documentation of the causes and effects of domestic violence

b. an ethnographic description of violence in one culture

c. an account of how survivors cope with domestic violence

d. a cross-sectional approach to collecting data about domestic violence

71. Bella proposes a study about birdwatchers in national parks. In order to interpret her data, she chooses

a. among many sociological theories that she can apply to this topic.

b. one of two or three sociological theories that scholars use for this topic.

c. to avoid theory, so she can just learn from the data.

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d. the theory that is the least abstract.

72. Which of the following restates the importance of ethics in sociology?

a. Sociologists follow the ethics of their personal value systems, religious or otherwise.

b. Protestant ethics are the backbone of sociological ethics.

c. Sociology relies on a moral system that determines whether research actions are right or wrong.

d. Because it is value-free, sociological research relies only on law, not ethics.

73. Jay wants to be sure his study is reliable, so he

a. tests whether his measure produces consistent results.

b. checks to see whether his measure accurately captures the concept it is intended to capture.

c. meets ethical guidelines.

d. conducts the study in the manner it was proposed.

74. Why is validity a challenging ideal in a sociological study?

a. It is difficult to match a measure to the concept it is supposed to capture.

b. People may change between the time they report data and the time of publication.

c. There are so many variables at play in every situation.

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d. A measure may have captured a concept one time, but not the next time it is tried.

75. Sampling is necessary because

a. causality cannot be established at a single moment in time.

b. a researcher cannot study every member of the population of interest.

c. it reduces the number of variables at play in a situation.

d. it focuses on one dimension of a complex social problem.

76. Which of the following is always considered qualitative data?

a. a survey

b. ethnographic observations

c. numbers

d. bivariate analysis

77. Which type of data would definitely be handled with quantitative data analysis?

a. audio recordings

b. photographs

c. numerical data

d. interview transcripts

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78. What is the purpose of theory?

a. to determine whether actions are right or wrong, good or bad

b. to explain and illuminate some element of social life

c. to document or describe social phenomena

d. to document causes and effects

79. Choose one element of your life and describe it using the sociological imagination (for example, you might choose your neighborhood, language, clothing, music, friends, or favorite book). Explain how the sociological imagination influenced your description.

80. What does it mean to say that sociology is both an art and a science? In your view, is this a strength or a weakness of sociology, and why?

81. You are planning a research study about men in the United States. Intersectionality is the guiding principle you will use to narrow this area of interest. List three research questions about men in the United States that reflect the tradition of intersectionality. Then, explain how intersectionality shaped the way you asked questions.

82. You are planning a sociology research study about teenagers and community volunteering. Decide whether your study will be basic research or applied research. What will be the features that will mark your study as basic or applied? Why do you think this is the best approach for this study?

83. Describe one weakness each of cross-sectional design and longitudinal design.

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84. Your research topic is education. Write one research question that is value-laden. Write one research question that is value-free. Why is it important to frame research questions as value-free?

85. Consider the research topic of human slavery. Is it possible for a sociologist to be value-free when investigating a topic such as this? How could a sociologist uphold the value-free ideal, even while holding a strong personal view?

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Answer Key

Chapter 1

1. Answer: C

2. Answer: B

3. Answer: A

4. Answer: A

5. Answer: D

6. Answer: D

7. Answer: C

8. Answer: C

9. Answer: A

10. Answer: B

11. Answer: D

12. Answer: C

13. Answer: C

14. Answer: A

15. Answer: A

16. Answer: D

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17. Answer: C

18. Answer: B

19. Answer: A

20. Answer: C

21. Answer: D

22. Answer: C

23. Answer: C

24. Answer: C

25. Answer: C

26. Answer: A

27. Answer: B

28. Answer: B

29. Answer: B

30. Answer: B

31. Answer: C

32. Answer: C

33. Answer: B

34. Answer: C

35. Answer: A

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36. Answer: B

37. Answer: C

38. Answer: A

39. Answer: B

40. Answer: C

41. Answer: C

42. Answer: C

43. Answer: C

44. Answer: C

45. Answer: B

46. Answer: B

47. Answer: A

48. Answer: D

49. Answer: C

50. Answer: D

51. Answer: C

52. Answer: A

53. Answer: B

54. Answer: B

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55. Answer: C

56. Answer: C

57. Answer: B

58. Answer: C

59. Answer: A

60. Answer: C

61. Answer: B

62. Answer: C

63. Answer: D

64. Answer: B

65. Answer: C

66. Answer: B

67. Answer: B

68. Answer: C

69. Answer: B

70. Answer: A

71. Answer: A

72. Answer: C

73. Answer: A

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74. Answer: A

75. Answer: B

76. Answer: B

77. Answer: C

78. Answer: B

79. Answer: (This is an example; students will choose a broad variety of life elements.) My favorite book is Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*. It is my favorite just because I like it, but when I look at this book with a sociological imagination, I see it in a new light. It is written in English, and is from American history, which is derived from Western history. I am a white person of Scottish and British descent, so this book is from a racial, political, and historical trajectory that I also share. If this book were Confucian or Shoshone, it would be less likely to be my favorite because it would be culturally unfamiliar. *Walden* is also about nature, and for my generation, environmentalism is an important value and concern. *Walden* speaks to me personally, but that is partly because it speaks to the social location and social setting where I am. The sociological imagination influences this description because it shows that while we are socialized to see our lives individually, there are social dimensions that deeply influence personal experience.

80. Answer: Sociology is a science because it has well-established guidelines for carrying out rigorous research on social behavior. Sociologists develop measures for seemingly subjective phenomena and have standards for how to collect and analyze data. Sociology is also an art because people are not as predictable as cells or molecules. Additionally, there are countless factors that influence social life; thus, scientists do not have as much control in research as in the natural sciences.
Students who see this as a strength may value the so-called both/and ability of sociology to capture both patterns and idiosyncrasies. It may be simply inevitable, given the nature of humans and social life, that sociology be both art and science, so it is a strength to embrace this and make the most of it by portraying human life both rigorously and persuasively.
Students who see this as a weakness may see natural sciences as the ideal of highly controlled experimental research that can limit the variables that enter the experiment. In this view, sociology is less than the strongest science possible, thus, doing the best it can within the limits of its subject matter.

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81. Answer: Examples: How do white working-class men in the United States experience unemployment?
How is masculinity defined by male Syrian refugees in the United States?
How do transgender men relate with socially dominant masculinities?
How do men of different races view masculinity and femininity?
Intersectionality shapes these questions because it highlights the ways overlapping identities and group memberships are critical to our life experiences. Thus, the questions are not just about men as a single group; rather, they bring together the "man" category with social class, race, sexuality, and country of origin. The most important areas of inquiry for intersectionality are those structural or macrosociological factors that affect social hierarchies and social life in a given context.

82. Answer: Students may choose either type of study.
Basic research: With a basic research approach, my study will be designed to contribute to knowledge within the field of sociology and to develop theory regarding social cohesion and community. It is designed to contribute to the pursuit of knowledge. This is the best approach for this study because although the topic of teenagers and community volunteering is important, it is not urgent such that my findings would need to be applied in the short term. Topics that are less urgent are ripe for theoretical exploration, methodological development, and contributions to ongoing knowledge in the field.
Applied research: With an applied approach, I would design this study in consultation with the local United Way, and application would be one of its goals. I would publish and present the work at sociology conferences, engaging the tradition of basic research, but application would be an equally important goal. This is the best approach for this study because the findings matter to real people and to society. Volunteering is important, and putting sociology in service of worthy social goals is a worthwhile endeavor. A research study is costly in time and resources, including those of research subjects, so making the project matter to society is an important contribution that sociologists can make.

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83. Answer: Cross-sectional studies provide a snapshot of a particular population at a particular time and do not show change or trends over time. This design cannot help sociologists learn about social and historical change. This is a quantitative approach that does not contribute “thick description” or nuance, as qualitative approaches can.
Longitudinal designs are very time-consuming and expensive. They carry the weakness of subject fatigue and attrition, losing subjects over time that are necessary for completion of the study. Longitudinal designs that solve this problem by sampling different populations at different times carry the associated weakness of not knowing whether particular individuals changed over time. This also is a quantitative approach that does not contribute “thick description” or nuance, as qualitative approaches can.

84. Answer: Value-laden questions: What has gone wrong with American education? Why are students today worse than in the past? How do teachers describe the downward trend in American education? What factors make American education better than education in most other nations? (These questions all have embedded assumptions about better and worse. The researcher is not leaving open the possibility that their assumptions about better and worse might not be borne out by the data.)
Value-free questions: How do teachers describe the state of American education? How does American education compare with European education in the area of math? What factors shape gender patterns in STEM education? (These questions have values behind them, because they are important to society and to the researcher. They are framed in open ways that allow for positive or negative findings.)
It is important to frame questions as value-free so that reality can be observed, measured, and recorded. The data should speak about reality, not simply be used to confirm the researcher’s preexisting view. Bias is checked at many points in the research process, including critical review throughout research and dissemination. Sometimes subtle biases seep in very early in the project by the way scientists ask and frame their research questions. It is inevitable that personal interests and concerns may guide the choice of a research topic, but sociologists need to avoid posing the research question in a biased manner.

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85. Answer: Most experts agree that it is virtually impossible for researchers to be completely value-free in their work. Value-free does not mean “not caring”, or being morally neutral about one’s research subject. It means being objective about how the question is framed. In this example, “What are global patterns in human slavery?” is a relatively value-free question. In order to uphold the value-free ideal, sociologists take many precautions such as subjecting their research to critical review and working on research teams so people can check each other’s biases. Objectivity, or value-free sociology, is an important ideal, even when issues are of great personal, moral, or political consequence.

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