**CHAPTER 1**

**WHAT ARE SOCIAL PROBLEMS?**

**Multiple Choice Questions**

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ refers to a social condition or pattern of behaviour believed to warrant public concern and collective action.
   1. Crime
   2. Deviance
   3. Social cohesion
   4. Action potential
   5. Social problem
2. The rise of sociology coincided with the rise of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in the nineteenth century.
   1. intellectualism
   2. modern societies
   3. curiosity
   4. war
   5. literacy
3. According to structural functionalists, if a way to slow the pace of societal change and to strengthen social norms were found, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ would be solved.
   1. social problems
   2. teen angst
   3. world hunger
   4. societal stress
   5. normlessness
4. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ refers to the measurable features of a problem.
   1. Selective elements
   2. Visible elements
   3. Logical elements
   4. Objective elements
   5. Vital elements
5. A micro-level analysis \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
   1. focuses on society and its institutions
   2. explores the ways that changes in major institutions affect the population as a whole
   3. studies people’s understanding and experience of social problems at the personal level
   4. is the best way to properly understand social problems
   5. cannot be used in studies of social problems
6. No other century combined as much technological progress with as much intentional death and destruction as the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ century
   1. eighteenth
   2. nineteenth
   3. twentieth
   4. twenty-first
   5. none of the above
7. The “sociological imagination” refers to connecting \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
   1. things that have happened in the past to events on the news today
   2. public concern to collective action
   3. personal troubles and public issues
   4. sociological perspectives to events in the real world
   5. theoretical perspectives to events in the real world
8. In his study *Suicide*, Émile Durkheim pointed out that mental distress and even suicide result from \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
   1. high unemployment
   2. insufficient social integration and social control
   3. limited obedience and loyalty
   4. a failure of religious conviction
   5. mental illness
9. According to the Thomas theorem \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
   1. the varying ways people think about reality are rooted in history
   2. crusading reformers will set out to correct social problems by constructing and publicizing stories about it
   3. people promote a particular moral vision of social life that defines who or what is a social problem
   4. how you see things shapes how you behave
   5. the meaning of anything is the product of dominant cultural and symbolic practices
10. Describing, explaining, and blaming people who are involved with a problem and perhaps labelling them as deviants or wrongdoers is a process known as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
    1. complaining
    2. claims-making
    3. agitating
    4. complying
    5. finger-pointing
11. The meaning of anything, including a social problem, is the product of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in a group or society.
    1. social structures
    2. historical practices
    3. religious beliefs
    4. cultural and symbolic practices
    5. perceptions and assumptions
12. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ refers to elites, interest groups, or community leaders who stereotype and classify some situations as problems.
    1. Claims-makers
    2. Ideologues
    3. Social constructionists
    4. Whistle-blowers
    5. Moral entrepreneurs
13. According to the chapter, whistle-blowers are types of claims-makers who \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
    1. referee certain sports
    2. speak out in the court of public opinion
    3. disagree with public opinion
    4. speak out against their own immediate interests
    5. support questionable political parties
14. Sociologists use the term \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to refer to a short-lived, intense period of concern.
    1. pressure cooker
    2. real problem
    3. public concern
    4. moral panic
    5. fad
15. Formal schooling is intended to provide students with the necessary knowledge and skills to work effectively in society. According to Robert Merton, this is a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
    1. manifold function
    2. later function
    3. manifest function
    4. latent function
    5. vital function
16. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is *not* one of the main sociological approaches in the study of social problems.
    1. Social production
    2. Feminism
    3. Structural functionalism
    4. Population health
    5. Symbolic interactionism
17. According to Marx, under capitalism, the proletariat \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
    1. owns the means of production
    2. sells their labour
    3. maintains dominance over the workers
    4. has power and influence
    5. provides a living wage
18. According to Karl Marx, workers’ powerlessness and feelings of being stuck in their jobs describes \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
    1. limitation
    2. job dissatisfaction
    3. the glass ceiling
    4. alienation
    5. psychic death
19. The \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ approach to sociology holds the perspective that society is made up of a collection of varied groups struggling over unequally distributed wealth and power.
    1. structural functionalist
    2. conflict theory
    3. symbolic interactionist
    4. feminist
    5. population health
20. Émile Durkheim introduced the term \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to describe the condition of disorder that causes social norms to be weak or uncertain.
    1. moral panic
    2. patriarchy
    3. anomie
    4. sociological imagination
    5. deviant
21. Structural functionalists blame \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for the existence of social problems.
    1. moral panic
    2. immigration
    3. not enough police
    4. social disorganization
    5. lack of self-control
22. Sociologists who study how particular behaviours and conditions might come to be defined or framed as social problems are most likely working the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ approach to sociological research.
    1. structural functionalist
    2. symbolic interactionist
    3. feminist
    4. conflict theory
    5. population health
23. According to social constructionists, human beings do not react to physical objects or to events but rather to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
    1. fears of these objects or events
    2. shared meanings of these objects or events
    3. memories of these objects or events
    4. delusions related to what they might mean
    5. confusion around what they might mean
24. All the varieties of feminism focus on the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ form of inequality.
    1. wage
    2. social
    3. familial
    4. gender
    5. marital
25. According to feminist theory, gender interacts with other victimizing social characteristics such as class and race to produce other forms of disadvantage. The term \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is used to describe this.
    1. interactionism
    2. multiple threats
    3. three strikes
    4. oppression
    5. intersectionality
26. Post-modernism \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
    1. makes universal, sweeping statements about the world or groups of people within the world
    2. analyzes the motives behind sweeping statements and the consequences of people believing them
    3. has gained significance in mainstream society in recent decades
    4. takes analytical deconstruction one step further than post-structuralism
    5. all of the above
27. The \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ approach to sociology suggests that the goal in dealing with social problems is always to avoid and reduce harm.
    1. structural functionalist
    2. conflict theory
    3. symbolic interactionist
    4. feminist
    5. population health
28. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is an ideal vehicle for mobilizing a social group.
    1. Social movement
    2. Social education
    3. Collective action
    4. Government
    5. Social media
29. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ plays a influential new role in collective action around the world.
    1. Social change
    2. Technology
    3. Emotionality
    4. Social media
    5. Manufacturing
30. In Canada, food banks \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
    1. are the ideal way to help those who are unable to afford food
    2. work hard to address larger issues that lead to hunger
    3. are a temporary solution to the problem of hunger
    4. create a public perception that hunger is an area where government intervention is needed
    5. support the politicization of hunger

**True or False Questions**

Sociologists believe that social life could be improved through the systematic study of social issues.

Sociology cannot do much to help educate us about current problems and their possible solutions.

Social research is a valuable means of diagnosing social problems.

Sociologists no longer struggle to see and record the patterns of social life that cause social problems.

Positivism says that we can know reality with our senses.

Unemployment is not just a private or personal trouble; it describes a public issue.

Canadian homeless youth are usually on the street because of family poverty.

Sociological researchers focus on macro-analysis at the group level or micro-analysis at the small-group level.

Microsociology focuses on the ways small business operations affect society.

Sociologists identify the psychological conditions that make people vulnerable to personal troubles.

All social reality is conditional and temporary.

The meaning of anything, including a social problem, is the product of dominant cultural and symbolic practices in a group or society.

The persecution of midwives and wise women as witches is an example of how sociologists work effectively.

One goal of the powerful people in our society—elected politicians, corporate leaders, and heads of important public institutions—is to undermine dissent they want to control by producing public concern or confusion about it.

Sociologists in Canada conduct research using only one specific approach.

The role of universities in bringing different people together to provide opportunities for them to enter into relationships (matchmaking) is an example of a latent function of a social institution.

According to conflict theorists, for the capitalist class to preserve its power and privilege, it must ensure that working-class people have no opportunity to take it away.

Critics of the symbolic interactionist perspective propose that social problems may exist even when people fail to recognize them as problems.

Second wave feminism was a reaction against the first-wave concern with highly educated white women.

Feminists believe that both the public and private spheres of life are gendered.

**Short Answer Questions**

1. How can the social policies you choose to support be traced back to sociological research?
2. Why does a social problem consist of both objective conditions and subjective concerns?
3. What are the differences between personal troubles and public issues?
4. What is the role of the media in relation to claims-making?
5. How can moral panics, which are short-lived by definition, have long-term effects?
6. According to conflict theorists, under capitalism how does the dominant class maintain its status?
7. What are norms and what roles do they have in society?
8. What is the main focus of the symbolic interactionist perspective and what critique does the chapter make?
9. What is patriarchy?
10. What role do food banks play in alleviating poverty?

**ANSWER KEY**

**Multiple Choice Questions**

1. **e** (p. 4)
2. **b** (p. 4)
3. **a** (p. 6)
4. **d** (p. 6)
5. **c** (p. 7)
6. **c** (p. 8)
7. **c** (p. 9)
8. **b** (p. 9)
9. **d** (pp. 9–10)
10. **b** (p. 10)
11. **d** (p. 10)
12. **e** (p. 10)
13. **d** (p. 11)
14. **d** (p. 11)
15. **c** (p. 13)
16. **a** (p. 13)
17. **b** (p. 14)
18. **d** (p. 14)
19. **b** (p. 14)
20. **c** (p. 14)
21. **d** (p. 14)
22. **b** (p. 15)
23. **b** (p. 16)
24. **d** (p. 17)
25. **e** (p. 18)
26. **b** (p. 19)
27. **e** (p. 20)
28. **b** (p. 22)
29. **d** (p. 24)
30. **c** (p. 24)

**True or False Questions**

1. **T** (p. 4)
2. **F** (p. 4)
3. **T** (p. 5)
4. **F** (p. 5)
5. **T** (p. 6)
6. **T** (p. 7)
7. **F** (p. 7)
8. **T** (p. 7)
9. **F** (p. 7)
10. **F** (p. 9)
11. **T** (p. 9)
12. **T** (p. 10)
13. **F** (p. 10)
14. **T** (p. 11)
15. **F** (p. 12)
16. **T** (p. 13)
17. **T** (p. 14)
18. **T** (p. 16)
19. **F** (p. 17)
20. **T** (p. 18)

**Short Answer Questions**

1. Understanding how something is a social problem and being able to explain its cause and effects allows us to take a side in public debates. Social research involves the study of social problems. Social research can diagnose a social problem, then invent and evaluate solutions. Early sociologists thought that such humanity could direct social change to better ends: to resolving conflict and rebuilding society around new principles of organization. (p. 5)
2. Social problems all have measurable or objective realities that we can experience with our senses and hence we are able to verify these aspects of a problem. We understand social problems by noting changes in this measurable reality as well as by expressing how we feel and think about that same reality, which is the subjective concern related to it. (p. 6)
3. Personal troubles are private matters connected with individuals’ characters or confined to their immediate relationships (with family members, friends, acquaintances, co-workers, etc.). Public issues are matters that transcend the lives of individuals and cannot be resolved by changing them or their personal relationships. Unemployment is a personal problem when it is confined to individuals who lose their jobs due to personal shortcomings such as incompetence or dishonesty. It is a public issue when large numbers of people are unemployed as a consequence of bankruptcies, company downsizings, plant shutdowns and relocations, and other large-scale changes in the economy. (p. 7)
4. How the media present a social problem works to shape public perception. This can be done in overt ways by sensationalizing a problem or in more subtle ways such as the ways for example talk shows present scripted “public” responses to problems. (p. 9)
5. People can continue to believe the claims that led to their perpetuation in the first place. They can “leave a legacy of laws, stereotypes, cultural beliefs, or changed attitudes.” (p. 11)
6. The working class is dependent on them for survival since they must sell their labour power for a loving wage. The capitalists must ensure that the working class is unable to change their status by limiting opportunity. (p. 14)
7. Norms are society’s written and unwritten rules and expectations that specify how people should behave in particular kinds of situations. They regulate behaviour in different contexts and serve to hold society together. (p. 14)
8. Symbolic interactionism focuses on small-group interactions and the ways people interpret and respond to each other’s actions. A critique is that since the perspective relies on people’s interpretation of something as being a social problem, some problems may remain unnoticed because they have not been recognized as being problems. (p. 15)
9. Patriarchy is a form of social inequality in which men are in control in the family and in society. It structures how most societies work and is an example of a relation of dominance and subordination in male–female relations. (p. 18)
10. One-third of the food banks do not meet the nutritional needs of their clients, either because they run out of food, give people less food out of fear of running out, or because they close too early on in the day. The demand for food usually exceeds the amount of donations a food bank receives. Food banks, then, can mainly be seen as a starting point to ending hunger in Canada. They make no contribution to solving the problem of poverty, which is the cause of widespread hunger. Nor do they help to solve the problem of economic inequality, which is the cause of widespread poverty. (p. 24)