

Doing Sociology Guide

A Guide for Students Enrolled in SOC
280/Introduction to Sociology
(Online/Fall 2012)

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The Assignment

Purpose

I have assigned a Doing Sociology prompt that goes with each chapter in *You May Ask Yourself* (YMA), though you will need to use the *Everyday Sociology Reader* to help you with some of the prompts, too. The goal is to get you to not only read about sociology, but actually do sociology. Some prompts require more doing than others, but you will get some experience doing sociology through all of the prompts.

Requirements

- There are 16 Doing Sociology discussion prompts. There is one due with each Learning Module on Instructure Canvas.
- You are required to complete ten of these prompts. This means, you can do all 16 and your six lowest scores will be dropped or you could complete the first 10 and if you are happy with your grade, skip the remaining six. The choice is yours.
- Your responses should be between 300-600 words (1-2 complete pages). If you do not reach 300 words, you most likely have not answered the prompt and will not earn full credit.
- Use paragraphs to organize your writing.
- If you state information as fact, you must provide a reference using APA format. You do not need to include a reference to your textbooks, but you do need to provide a reference to any other sources.
- You do need to include any information that is directly quoted with an in-text citation regardless of where it came from.
- Doing Sociology will be graded for spelling and grammar. Take your time. Proofread. Use spell check.
- Several of the prompts require additional work beyond doing the assigned reading. In other words, you can't wait until right before the assignment is due and throw something together. You won't have time to get the information you need to answer these questions at the last minute. Plan ahead.
- Your entries will be graded as pass (5 points), partial pass (3 points), and no pass (0 points). An entry will receive full credit if it (1) fully answers the prompt and (2) shows good effort to engage with the material.
- Doing Sociology is due by Sunday at midnight each week.

Doing Sociology #1

Look at the picture below.



Refer to the above pictures as you work through answering the questions below.

Describe

What is the object in the photo? How would you describe it in detail? What do you call it? How is it referred to?

- Visit The Pop vs. Soda Page at <http://popvsoda.com/>. Explore the county level map (<http://popvsoda.com/countystats/total-county.html>) detailing what it is most often referred to where you live.

Local Analysis

How does this item relate to your personal life?

How does the object relate to other aspects of social life? How is it used? How is it bought and sold? Who buys and sells it? In what context does it exist? Who benefits from it? Who suffers because of it? Why does it appear the way it does? How does it directly relate to your life?

Read about:

- Using Coca-Cola to cook: <http://www.thecoca-colacompany.com/heritage/recipes.html>
- Using Coca-Cola to clean: <http://www.howtocleananything.com/general-cleaning-tips/coca-cola-for-cleaning/>

Global Analysis

How is this item used in other cultures?

Does this object exist in other countries? If so, in what form? How is it used? How is this use different than its use in the United States? Is it altered in any way when used elsewhere? Does it affect life on the planet in any significant way? Where and how is it made?

Read or listen to this news story about Coca-Cola's use of water in India:

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/asia/july-dec08/waterwars_11-17.html

Historical Analysis

What is the history of this object?

When did the object come into existence? Why did it appear at this time? How has the object changed over time? What other aspects of social life have changed as a result of this object? How has your use of this object changed over time? What will the object be like in the future? Will it still exist?

Read about:

- The history of Coca-Cola: <http://www.worldofcoca-cola.com/coca-colahistory.htm>
- New Coke:
http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1991915_1991909_1991730,00.html

The Takeaway

A can of Coca-Cola® may appear obvious, but our culture influences our perspective on this cultural object. Using our sociological imagination, we can see how what we call the item, how we use the item, and how it impacts our lives varies depending on our cultural location.

Reference

This assignment is based on:

Kaufman, Peter. 1997. "Michael Jordan Meets C. Wright Mills: Illustrating the Sociological Imagination with Objects from Everyday Life." *Teaching Sociology* 25:309-314.

Doing Sociology #2

Create a research design to collect empirical data to either support or disprove one of the following claims:

1. People on welfare are lazy and don't want to work.
2. Women are worse drivers than men.
3. Blacks are naturally more athletic than other racial groups.

Remember to discuss the different variables involved (e.g., independent and dependent variables), whether you are aiming to establish correlation or causality (and you define those concepts), and what method of data collection (e.g., content analysis, surveys) is best suited for your research question.

Keep in mind you are planning the study, not actually completing the study.

Doing Sociology #3

Think about the multiple uses of the concept of culture. Ask five people you know what they think when they hear the word culture. Which definitions occur most frequently? Has this exercise (and chapter 3) changed how you think about culture? Start your response with a list of the responses you heard from others and then discuss the above questions.

Doing Sociology #4

Parents of different social classes socialize children differently. For example, middle-class parents are more likely to stress independence and self-direction, whereas working-class parents prioritize obedience to external authority. Using this example, how does socialization through families potentially reproduce social inequality? In other words, how do these different parenting styles socialize children into specific social classes? It might be helpful to read the article, "Class Differences in Spending on Children" at <http://thesocietypages.org/socimages/2012/04/03/class-differences-in-spending-on-children/>.

Doing Sociology #5

Have you ever gotten involved with a club or community group like one Putnam mentions? Did you feel more connected to your community? Have you gotten involved in an online community, like one Raskoff describes? Did you feel a greater sense of connection with other participants? Did this involvement lead to any in-person meetings or activities? If you do not have any experiences with any clubs or community groups, explain why. How do you think your life might change if you were involved with one of these groups?

NOTE: Putnam and Raskoff refer to the authors of readings in your Everyday Sociology Reader. Keep in mind that a community group or club could be a religious organization, a school club, hobby group, among others.

Doing Sociology #6

Watch a reality show (e.g., Survivor, American Idol, Jersey Shore). What are your initial impressions about the celebrities? Now watch the same episode again. How do the stars on the show attempt to shape their identities through the program, and, if applicable, the struggles they go through? How does this exemplify Cooley's concept of the looking-glass self, as Raskoff describes it? Be sure to specify what show you watched and how you watched it (on TV, on DVD, etc.).

NOTE: Many reality shows are available online. You do not have to watch the show live, but can watch it online, on Netflix, Amazon Prime, and so on. Again, Raskoff can be found in your Everyday Sociology Reader.

Doing Sociology #7

To talk about the rich, the poor, and the way society is economically stratified sounds like the job of economists. Why should sociologists be interested in stratification? How does a better understanding of stratification potentially contribute to the well-being of society?

Doing Sociology #8

There are many programs and agencies to help the poor. Locate one agency (or organization) that helps the poor in your community. Speak with a person who works or volunteers at that agency and gather information on what he or she does. How does that person help the poor? How many people does he or she help in a given year? How is the agency funded (government, church, private donors, etc.)? Are there any structural challenges that you can perceive which might make it difficult for the poor to access the agency's benefits? Is there any way that person might be doing more harm than good? If you work in one of these organizations, you can use your experience to answer the questions. I still suggest you talk to someone else involved to get another perspective.

Doing Sociology #9

Have you ever been to a store and started to look at items of clothing, then realized you might be in the "wrong" department (i.e., clothes for the other gender)? Did you ever walk into the wrong restroom? Make a list of gender-inappropriate behaviors you have encountered. How did people react to these incidents? Would you feel weird at all if you considered buying a jacket meant for the other gender? How do these examples--for example, the separation of stores into "women's" and "men's" sections--demonstrate the way gender is socially constructed and enacted? Read the articles/watch the videos linked below to learn a bit more about some recent cases of gender-norm violation by children:

- The Mom of a 'Princess Boy' Speaks Out at <http://moms.today.msnbc.msn.com/news/2011/01/03/5738901-the-mom-of-a-princess-boy-speaks-out?lite>
- J. Crew Ad Showing Boy with Pink Nail Polish Sparks Debate on Gender Identity at <http://www.foxnews.com/us/2011/04/11/jcrew-ad-showing-boy-pink-nail-polish-sparks-debate-gender-identity/>

Doing Sociology #10

Thinking about the history of race, what do you predict for the future of "race" and "ethnicity" as social categories? Will they stay the same? What do demographic trends and history lessons suggest might happen in the coming decades in the United States? Read the articles linked below to learn a bit more about some of the changing demographic trends:

- More Marriages Cross Race, Ethnicity Lines at <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970204880404577226981780914906.html>
- Growing Latino Population at http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2011-08-11/news/chi-110811puente_briefs_1_latinos-sylvia-puente-early-childhood-education

Doing Sociology #11

Sin taxes are additional taxes that are applied to those things Americans find "sinful" as a way to discourage people from using these things. Sin taxes have typically been applied to things like alcohol and tobacco. Some argue that sin taxes should be applied to fast food. What would be an argument in support of sin taxes on fast-food meals? Considering that fast-food meals are usually less expensive than healthier options and provide food quickly for underpaid and overworked Americans, how might sin taxes unintentionally reproduce class differences?

Doing Sociology #12

According to Conley, what is the pecking order and what does the term mean for children in a family? According to this concept, does your birth position in the family or number of siblings matter to your life chances for success in school and beyond? Be sure to explain what is meant by life chances in your response.

Doing Sociology #13

Through the meritocratic education system everyone has the chance to succeed in America." Do you agree with this statement? Find a theory or a research finding from chapter 13 (YMA) that supports this assertion and another that challenges it. Do these theories or findings complicate your view of America as a meritocracy?

Doing Sociology #14

Find unemployment statistics for the nation, your state, and the nearest major city. How do these rates vary on factors such as age, gender, and race? What do these numbers indicate about the likelihood of people in your region finding work? Look at the Bureau of Labor Statistics (www.bls.gov), the U.S. Census (www.census.gov), and the Illinois Department of Labor Security (<http://www.ides.illinois.gov/>) to find your statistics. If you still are having trouble finding these statistics, look for the information in newspapers. For the nearest major city, Champaign, Decatur, St. Louis, or Chicago are possible options.

Doing Sociology #15

In a democratic society, why is it possible for a small group of elites to get what it wants at the expense of the larger population? In your answer, consider the work on collective action.

Doing Sociology #16

Explain how Marx and Weber differ in the way they link religion and the economy.