

***Exploring Society:
Sociology for New Zealand Students***

Third edition

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Tutorial Guide

Classes should be divided into small groups of four or five individuals to discuss the key questions listed below. This small-group discussion should be followed by a reporting-back session in the tutorial, during which all the students can discuss the questions together.

This could be done either after each question (i.e. every 10–15 minutes), or at the end of the class.

Chapter 1 – The sociological imagination: insights, themes and skills

This chapter covers the following topics.

- The key features of sociology.
- The usefulness of sociology as a course of study.
- The three core themes of the book, namely:
 - the social and the personal;
 - the local and the global;
 - differences and divisions.
- A general discussion of sociological inquiry.

Tutorial discussion questions

- Briefly describe how you came to be studying sociology. What do you hope to get out of it?
- In what ways is sociology similar to other social science disciplines (for example psychology, social anthropology, geography, history, economics, political science)? How does it differ from these disciplines?
- Willis suggests that the sociological imagination allows us to see that many events that seem to concern only the individual actually reflect larger issues. Think of some examples from your own life.

Chapter 2 – The story of sociology I: understanding modernity

This chapter covers the following topics.

- A discussion of sociology in relation to modernity and the Enlightenment.
- An outline of the key ideas of classical sociological theorists, including Auguste Comte, Spencer, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber.

Tutorial discussion questions

- The Enlightenment is considered to be a key part of the development of sociology as a discipline. What are some of the main aspects of the Enlightenment?
- What is meant by the term ‘modernity’?
- Think about the contribution Marx, Durkheim and Weber made to sociology. To what extent do you think their ideas are a result of the time and place in which they were theorising?

Chapter 3 – The story of sociology II: classical to contemporary

This chapter covers the following topics.

- A discussion of the growing influence of American sociologists, including Charles Cooley, George Herbert Mead, Talcott Parsons and Erving Goffman.
- The significance of feminist and black sociology in the mid-twentieth century.
- A discussion of the plurality of sociological theory in the late twentieth century, including the re-emergence of Marxist sociology, the development of post-structuralism and postmodernism.

Tutorial discussion questions

- To what extent do you think the changing focus of sociology in the twentieth century was a result of changes that were occurring in Western society more generally?
- What is 'structural functionalism'? Who are the main proponents of this theory, and what do they argue?
- How does a micro-analysis of society differ from a macro- or structural approach? Who are some of the main 'micro' theorists discussed in the book?
- How does postmodernism differ from modernism? List some of the similarities and differences between modernism and postmodernism.

Chapter 4 – Sociological methods

This chapter covers the following topics.

- The point of social research.
- The process of social research.
- The introduction of a variety of methods used in social research and an explanation of how and why specific methods are used for particular kinds of social research.
- The context of social research in New Zealand.

Tutorial discussion questions

- Sociology is an empirical discipline. Explain what this means with reference to one of the examples in the text.
- Discuss the five different methods for gathering data cited in Chapter 4. Outline the differences between them and any difficulties involved with them.
- Discuss some of the issues that might be involved in studying the inequalities in education among ethnic groups in New Zealand.

Chapter 5 – Population dynamics

This chapter covers the following topics.

- The definition and description of the key elements in population changes.
- The social influences and impacts of births, deaths, aging and migration.
- The local and global effects of population trends.

Tutorial discussion questions

- It can be said that New Zealand has an aging population. Why is this significant for New Zealand society?
- What does migration mean in terms of personal challenges? What impact can migration have on life chances?
- What are some of the gender dimensions of migration for Pacific Island migrants? Are these the same issues as would affect Asian migrants?

Chapter 6 – Gender, sexuality and identity

This chapter covers the following topics.

- The connections between gender and sexuality.
- The ways in which gender and sexuality are socially shaped.
- Gender and inequality, including a discussion of male violence and rape.
- The social construction of the body.

Tutorial discussion questions

- Sociologists make a distinction between sex and gender. What are some aspects of this distinction?
- What do sociologists mean when they say that gender and sexuality are ‘socially constructed’?
- What are some of the problems with socio-biological explanations for male violence? Can differences between men and women be fully reduced to biological explanations? Why, or why not?

Chapter 7 – Family life

This chapter covers the following topics.

- A discussion of the ways in which ‘the family’ can be defined, including a variety of different theoretical perspectives.
- The relationship between family and identity.
- Gendered divisions within the family.
- The connection between globalisation and the family, including a discussion of colonialism, and modernisation theory and how it views the role of the family.

Tutorial discussion questions

- What is the role of the family in society?
- Why do sociologists suggest that defining ‘the family’ is problematic?
- Think of your own family and the families of the people you know. How have family forms changed in New Zealand from the nineteenth to the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries?

Chapter 8 – Work and economic life

This chapter covers the following topics.

- A discussion of the way in which work is defined, including a critique of the distinction between paid and unpaid work.
- An outline of the changes in the way in which economic production is organised and managed, including a discussion of industrialisation, de-industrialisation, Keynesianism, Fordism and post-Fordism.
- A discussion of who participates in the labour market, and who is excluded from it.

Tutorial discussion questions

- What impact did the industrial revolution have on the way that work was organised in Western society?
- What is Fordism? What impact did Ford’s ideas have on work in modern Western society?
- What is meant by the term ‘McDonaldisation’? Do you think we live in a ‘McDonaldised’ society in terms of the work that we do?

Chapter 9 – Cyberworlds and new technologies

This chapter covers the following topics.

- The consequences of society's greater reliance on information and communication technologies (ICTs).
- The different dimensions and rules used to examine these consequences.
- The shape that connected worlds, knowledge economics and virtual relationships take in the New Zealand context.
- An assessment of ICTs on inequality and the practice of democracy.

Tutorial discussion questions

- What is 'cyberbole'? What is the danger associated with cyberbole?
- Steve Woolgar (2002) suggests there may be five 'rules of virtuality'. What are these five 'rules'? Give a New Zealand example or context for each one.
- Think about the 'Access Grid' (see pp. 177–181) as a teaching technology. Identify four ways in which the grid could enhance, and four ways in which it could hinder your sociological learning.

Chapter 10 – Stratification and class

This chapter covers the following topics.

- The key characteristics of class stratification.
- A review of the sociological debates about the nature and the significance of class stratification, including the work of Marx, Weber, Wright, Bedggood and Wilkes.
- An exploration of poverty in contemporary Western society.

Tutorial discussion questions

- What is meant by the term 'stratification'?
- What are some of the similarities and some of the differences between a Marxist and a Weberian analysis of class?
- Is a discussion of class still relevant in New Zealand today?

Chapter 11 – The city and city life

This chapter covers the following topics.

- An exploration of the changing nature of cities.
- The influence of globalisation on urban development.
- The relationship between the city and changing notions of community.
- The relationship between post-World War II urban development and growing inequality in society.

Tutorial discussion questions

- What social and economic processes help to shape the development of large cities in the mid-nineteenth century?
- What are some of the positive aspects of living in a large city? What are some of the negative aspects?
- What is gentrification? Thinking about your own city. Can you see evidence of gentrification?
- What impact does gentrification have on local communities?

Chapter 12 – Racism and ethnicity

This chapter covers the following topics.

- The distinction between ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’.
- The processes of colonisation and de-colonisation.
- The relationship between ethnic identity and notions of citizenship.
- An assessment of ‘racism’ in society.

Tutorial discussion questions

- What are some of the main differences between ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’?
- ‘Pākehā’ is a controversial label for many New Zealanders of European descent. Why do you think that this is so?

- What do you think an individual would gain or lose from living in a ‘cultural melting pot’?

Chapter 13 – Health, illness and medical power

This chapter covers the following topics.

- Definitions of ‘health’.
- A discussion of the biomedical model explaining why people get ill.
- The relationship between health and inequalities in society.
- A discussion of medical power and medicalisation.

Tutorial discussion questions

- Some people are more likely to get ill than others. Why do you think this is so?
- How are personal experiences of illness connected to broader social ideas about physical and mental well-being? Think about how definitions of ‘health’ and ‘illness’ have changed over time, and how they differ from one society to another.
- Think of your own interaction with the medical profession. Does medicalisation help explain the form of your interactions? How?

Chapter 14 – Deviance and crime

This chapter covers the following topics.

- A discussion of how people come to be defined as ‘deviant’.
- The relationship between poverty and growing crime.
- A discussion of the gendered nature of crime and the way criminal women are perceived.

Tutorial discussion questions

- Who is more likely to be defined as deviant? Why?
- What is the difference between ‘white-collar’ crime and ‘blue-collar’ crime? In New Zealand, white-collar crime tends to be treated as less serious than blue-collar crime. Why do you think that this is the case?
- Why does society find it easier to accept women as victims, rather than as perpetrators of violent crimes?

Chapter 15 – Leisure and sport

This chapter covers the following topics.

- The differences between ‘leisure’ and ‘work’.

- The ritualistic nature of sport.
- The connection between sport and national identity.
- The globalisation of sport.
- A discussion of the way in which sport can reinforce existing inequalities in society.

Tutorial discussion questions

- Why, in your opinion, do sociologists make a distinction between sport as work, and sport as leisure?
- In your opinion, to what extent are the sports we play a reflection of the society in which we live?
- In your opinion, to what extent do sports reinforce ideas about masculinity and femininity? Think about sports like rugby or bodybuilding.

Chapter 16 – Religion

This chapter covers the following topics.

- The trends in religious adherence and the significance of religious institutions and beliefs.
- The nature of secularisation and fundamentalism.

Tutorial discussion questions

- One of the most striking features of recent times has been the ‘revival of religion’. Why are these trends surprising?
- There has been much debate in society about whether the so-called revival of religion is a ‘good thing’. What has sharpened these debates?
- Discuss the differences between religion, churches, sects and cults. Name two examples of sects in New Zealand.
- Weber’s contribution to an understanding of religion was profound. What were his arguments about religion?
- What is secularisation? Is New Zealand an example of a secular society? Explain your answer.
- Discuss the three components of religious diversity.

Chapter 17 – The story of sociology III: new society, new sociological imagination

This chapter covers the following topics.

- The implications of a fully ‘global sociology’.
- Whether or not sociology can keep pace with our complex ‘post-society’.
- A re-visiting of society’s moral purpose in relation to humanity’s future.
- The ‘four sociologies’ schema.

Tutorial discussion questions

- Contemporary sociology is done in the context of ‘post-society’. Do you think that sociology is up to the task? Why, or why not?
- How has the ‘data explosion’ affected sociology?
- Fuller argues that sociology’s moral purpose is more important than ever. Discuss this idea, using some of the topics covered in previous chapters.
- Burawoy devised four types of sociological endeavour and these are discussed in the book. Which of the four do you find most interesting? Why?
- Do you think that the link Mills saw between personal troubles and public issues (the sociological imagination) remains useful? Why?