Introduction to Sociology Practice

Use this key to check answers and read the explanations.

1. A fictional repair café holds weekly sessions. Which question directly studies social interaction among volunteers?

A. How do volunteers decide whose turn it is to use a shared workbench?
B. How much electrical power does a bench light use?
C. What kinds of metal were used to make the oldest tools?
D. How many square meters of floor space are in the room?

Correct answer: A. How do volunteers decide whose turn it is to use a shared workbench?
Sociology examines how people interact and organize shared activities. Deciding whose turn it is involves people working out a practice together.

2. At a fictional board game club, members expect everyone to wait until a player finishes speaking before responding. They follow this custom without a written rule. What kind of expectation is it?

A. A formal sanction
B. A material artifact
C. An informal norm
D. A research hypothesis

Correct answer: C. An informal norm
An informal norm is a shared expectation about behavior that people learn through ordinary interaction. The club’s custom guides how members take turns speaking.

3. A fictional theater group passes a wooden token to the performer who will go next. Which detail is part of the group’s material culture?

A. The meaning members attach to the token
B. The wooden token itself
C. The expectation that others wait their turn
D. The value members place on giving everyone a chance

Correct answer: B. The wooden token itself
Material culture includes physical objects that people make or use. The token is an object. The practices and meanings around it are parts of nonmaterial culture.

4. A fictional community garden welcomes a new volunteer. By watching others and joining in, the volunteer learns how members share tools and hand off unfinished tasks. What process is taking place?

A. Content analysis
B. Role conflict
C. Social stratification
D. Socialization

Correct answer: D. Socialization
Socialization is how people learn shared norms and expectations. Other volunteers model the garden’s practices as the new member takes part.

5. Volunteers on a fictional exhibition committee meet only to assemble one display. They share updates on the work and disband when the display is ready. Which label fits their task-focused ties?

A. Primary group
B. Secondary group
C. Social aggregate
D. Reference group

Correct answer: B. Secondary group
A secondary group can be organized around a specific task for a limited time. The committee’s members interact to finish their shared project.

6. At a fictional orchestra, several regular musicians start missing rehearsals after the venue changes from a fixed weekly time to a rotating schedule. Which response uses the sociological imagination?

A. Examine how the scheduling rule might affect whether members can take part.
B. Treat each absence as evidence of that musician’s personal commitment.
C. Compare how loudly the musicians play during a rehearsal.
D. Add up the absences and assume the change in scheduling is unrelated.

Correct answer: A. Examine how the scheduling rule might affect whether members can take part.
The sociological imagination connects individual experiences to wider social circumstances. A change in how the group organizes rehearsals may help explain a pattern of individual absences.

7. A fictional hiking club elects Ren as equipment steward. The club expects the steward to track borrowed gear and check equipment when it comes back. Which pair names a social status and one role expectation, in that order?

A. Checking returned gear, then tracking borrowed gear
B. Tracking borrowed gear, then equipment steward
C. Equipment steward, then being elected to that position
D. Equipment steward, then tracking borrowed gear

Correct answer: D. Equipment steward, then tracking borrowed gear
The steward position is Ren’s status in the group. Tracking borrowed gear is a behavior the club expects from the person in that position.

8. In a fictional puppet workshop, participants tap a pencil twice to signal that it is time to switch partners. Which question reflects symbolic interactionism?

A. Which members are most able to reserve the limited workshop places?
B. How do the workshop’s divisions of labor keep the program running?
C. How do participants learn a shared meaning for the pencil taps through their interactions?
D. How consistently can two observers count the number of taps?

Correct answer: C. How do participants learn a shared meaning for the pencil taps through their interactions?
Symbolic interactionism examines how people develop and use shared meanings in everyday encounters. The signal works because people in the workshop learn what the taps mean.

9. A fictional tool library starts drop-in hours so people can borrow tools more easily. Borrowing becomes easier, and some borrowers form friendships that the organizers had never anticipated. Which interpretation fits?

A. Easier borrowing is a manifest function. The new friendships are a latent function.
B. Easier borrowing is a latent function. The new friendships are a manifest function.
C. Both outcomes are manifest functions because the organizers learn about them.
D. Both outcomes are latent functions because they involve people interacting.

Correct answer: A. Easier borrowing is a manifest function. The new friendships are a latent function.
A manifest function is an intended outcome. A latent function is an unintended outcome. Easier access was the aim, and new friendships developed along the way.

10. With volunteers’ consent, a researcher joins the setup team for a fictional costume exchange. The researcher helps sort donations and takes notes on how the team coordinates its work. Which method does this illustrate?

A. Content analysis of existing records
B. A standardized survey
C. A controlled experiment
D. Participant observation

Correct answer: D. Participant observation
Participant observers take part in a group’s activity while studying it. Here the researcher participates in setup and also records the team’s interactions.

11. A fictional study compares what share of promised shifts each volunteer actually works. Every volunteer agreed to at least one shift. Which operational definition directly measures that share?

A. The volunteer’s scheduled shifts divided by all event shifts
B. The total number of shifts the volunteer worked
C. Promised shifts worked divided by shifts the volunteer agreed to work
D. Shifts the volunteer worked before noon divided by all of their completed shifts

Correct answer: C. Promised shifts worked divided by shifts the volunteer agreed to work
An operational definition specifies what to record and how to calculate it. Dividing completed commitments by total commitments measures the share for each volunteer.

12. A fictional music club permits a researcher to invite adult members to a survey. Which plan both gives individuals an informed choice about participating and keeps their individual responses confidential?

A. Ask the organizer to enroll everyone, then publish only combined results.
B. Explain the survey, let each person opt in, restrict access to individual answers, and publish combined results.
C. Explain the survey and let people opt in, then publish responses with their names.
D. Collect responses first, explain the study afterward, and publish only combined results.

Correct answer: B. Explain the survey, let each person opt in, restrict access to individual answers, and publish combined results.
An informed choice requires explaining participation before an individual agrees. Limiting access to individual answers and reporting group totals protects confidentiality.

13. Two researchers independently apply the same counting rule to entry scans at a fictional arts center. Their counts always agree. Several activities use doors with no scanners, and the study aims to measure all activity visits. What follows?

A. Missing scans make it impossible for the researchers to produce matching counts.
B. The agreement makes the scan count valid as a measure of all visits.
C. The missing scans make the scan count valid and the coding unreliable.
D. The coding is reliable. The scan count has limited validity as a measure of all visits.

Correct answer: D. The coding is reliable. The scan count has limited validity as a measure of all visits.
Agreement shows consistency in how the researchers count the scans. The measure misses visits through unscanned doors, so it covers only part of what the study aims to measure.

14. In a fictional volunteer study, people choose whether to attend an orientation. Of 15 attendees, 12 return for the next event. Of 25 people who skip it, 15 return. What conclusion do the counts support?

A. Attendees returned at a rate 20 percentage points higher. This shows an association in the observed group.
B. Attendees returned at a rate 20 percentage points higher. This proves the orientation caused the difference.
C. People who skipped had the higher return rate because 15 is greater than 12.
D. The groups had equal return rates after accounting for their sizes.

Correct answer: A. Attendees returned at a rate 20 percentage points higher. This shows an association in the observed group.
The rates are 12/15 = 80% and 15/25 = 60%, a difference of 20 percentage points. People chose whether to attend, so the comparison leaves other explanations for the gap open.

15. A fictional community rehearsal space introduces a shared calendar to prevent double bookings. Evening times are limited. Which pair gives a structural functionalist question first and a conflict theory question second?

A. What does a star icon mean to the musicians who use it? Which groups have an advantage in securing the limited evening times?
B. Which groups have an advantage in securing the limited evening times? How does the calendar coordinate rehearsals?
C. How does the calendar coordinate rehearsals? Which groups have an advantage in securing the limited evening times?
D. How does the calendar coordinate rehearsals? How accurately does a clock record the start of each session?

Correct answer: C. How does the calendar coordinate rehearsals? Which groups have an advantage in securing the limited evening times?
Structural functionalism asks how a practice helps a larger group or institution operate. Conflict theory asks how groups compete for scarce resources and gain access to them.