

CHAPTER 2

WHAT DO SOCIOLOGISTS DO?

Chapter 2-What Do Sociologists Do? At-a-Glance	
Detailed Outline	Key Terms and Theorists
What Is a Valid Sociological Topic?	Sociologists conduct research on nearly every area of human behavior from micro-level to macro-level of analysis.
Common Sense and Sociological Research	Regardless of the research question, we must look beyond guesswork and common sense to find out what is really going on; for accurate answers, we need sociological research.
Six Research Methods: 1. Surveys 2. Participant Observation 3. Qualitative Interviews 4. Secondary Analysis 5. Documents 6. Unobtrusive Measures	<p>Surveys: collection of data by having people answer a series of questions, most often selecting a sample from among a target population. In a random sample everyone in the population has the same chance of being included in the study. Questions must allow respondents to select appropriate responses to standardized questions which must not be biased. Questionnaires may be self-administered at relatively low cost, or administered as structured interviews; both use closed-ended questions. It is vital for researchers to establish rapport with their respondents.</p> <p>Participant observation: Researcher participates in a research setting and observes and records what is happening in that setting. Participant observers face the problem of generalizability--the ability to apply findings to larger populations. However, generalizability is rarely a concern in modern-day science. Participant observations are rich in description and often provide significant theoretical insight.</p> <p>Qualitative interview or field interview is commonly referred to as a structured conversation. A researcher might begin by creating an interview schedule or list of questions about the topic he or she wants to study, but should not be afraid to stop and listen when the participant strays from the guided tour of questions. A researcher's personal characteristics are extremely important in fieldwork.</p> <p>Secondary analysis: researchers analyze data that have already been collected by others. A recent source is Data Liberation Initiative (DLI), begun in 1996 as a five-year pilot project.</p> <p>Documents: To investigate social life, researchers examine such diverse sources as film. Videos, photographs, books, newspapers, diaries, bank records, police reports, household accounts, immigration files, and records kept by various organizations.</p> <p>Unobtrusive measures: observing the behavior of people who do not know they are being studied. Example: visit to graveyard to study community's history of infant mortality rate, ethnic makeup.</p>

<p>Types of research. A Research Model: Basic steps in Sociological Research</p>	<p>Quantitative research methods: emphasize measurement, numbers, and statistics are likely to use structured questionnaires or surveys.</p> <p>Qualitative research methods: emphasize observing, describing, and interpreting people's behaviour.</p> <p>Eight basic steps in sociological research:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Select a topic 2. Define the problem 3. Review the literature 4. Formulate a hypothesis 5. Choose a research method: Survey, Participant observation, Qualitative interviews, Secondary analysis, Documents, Unobtrusive measures 6. Collect the data 7. Analyze the results 8. Share the results
<p>Ethics in Sociological Research</p>	<p>The research must meet the professional ethical criteria. Ethics clearly forbid the falsification of results, as well as plagiarism—stealing someone else's work.</p>
<p>Relationship of Research and Theory</p>	<p>Research and theory are both essential to sociology. C. Wright Mills argued that research without theory is of little value and is simply a collection of unrelated facts. Surprising research result, in turn, stimulate the development of theory to explain them.</p>

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- Sociologists conduct research on nearly every area of human behaviour.
- Sociological research is needed to test common sense ideas because not all common sense ideas are true.
- Sociologists use six basic research methods: surveys, participant observations, qualitative interviews, secondary analysis, documents, and unobtrusive measures. The choice of the research method depends on the research questions to be asked and the sampling methods need to fit the research.
- Typically, eight basic steps are included in scientific research: (1) selecting a topic, (2) defining the problem, (3) reviewing the literature, (4) formulating a hypothesis or research question, (5) choosing a research method, (6) collecting the data, (7) analyzing the results, and (8) sharing the results. By random sampling researchers attempt to compensate for lack of experimentation. Major characteristics of the various methods are explained.

- Ethics are of concern to sociologists, who are committed to openness, honesty, truth, and protecting subjects. Research by Brahuja, Scarce, and Humphreys, illustrate the ethical problems faced by sociologists.
- Research and theory must work together because without theory research is of little value, and if theory is unconnected to research it is unlikely to represent the way life really is. Real-life situations often force sociologists to conduct research in less than ideal circumstances, but even such research stimulates both the development of theory and the need for more research.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students can access these detailed learning objectives on MySocLab and are suggested to use them to organize their notes. After completing their reading, they are encouraged to briefly state an answer to each of the objectives.

1. What is a valid sociological topic?
2. Why isn't common sense adequate?
3. How do sociologists choose a particular research method?
4. What are the eight basic steps of scientific research?
5. How important are ethics in sociological research?
6. What is the relationship between theory and research?

CHAPTER OUTLINE

***Suggestions for Introduction:**

The vignette in chapter 2 from one of the author's illustrates the techniques of one form of research-participant observation. It demonstrates the value of this technique and provides a relevant and interesting example of research methods that will draw student interest.

Taking advantage of student interest, assign students in groups and each group one of the other five research methods discussed in the chapter. Have each group discuss how their assigned research method would differ from participant observation in studying professional wrestling.

I. What is A Valid Sociological Topic?

- A. Sociologists research just about every area of human behaviour.
- B. Sociologists study social interaction; no human behaviour is ineligible for research, whether it is routine or unusual, respectable or reprehensible.

***Discussion Topics:**

- Explain to the students why the abstract concepts they are often interested in cannot be researched without operational definitions. Are some concepts harder to define than others? Why? Would people from different socioeconomic status groups have different definitions? Why? Explain how many variables may be multidimensional and that there is no one absolutely "right" way to define a concept.
- Which steps in the research process do you think would take the most time?
- What is the difference between a quantitative and a qualitative research method?

How would you be able to use the “Data Liberation Initiative” (DLI) in a personal research project? How would it fit into “secondary analysis?”

***Student Project:**

- 2.1 Develop a hypothetical research model for a sociological problem that interests you. Think through and explain the following step (You don’t actually have to do the research, but think and write it up as if you were going to):
 1. *Select a topic:* What social problem do you want to know more about?
 2. *Define the problem:* What exactly do you want to find out?
 3. *Review the literature:* What sources would you use? Mention University Library.
 4. *Formulate a hypothesis:* What relationship do you predict between the variables you have chosen?
 5. *Choose a research method:* Which method would be best for gathering the data you need?
 6. *Collect the data:* How would you go about collecting your data? How would you ensure your data’s validity and reliability?
 7. *Analyze the results:* What statistical tests would you use in your analysis?
 8. *Share the results:* How would you communicate your findings?

II. Common Sense and the Need for Sociological Research

- A. Common sense cannot be relied on as a source of knowledge because it is highly limited and its insights often are incorrect.
- B. To move beyond common sense and understand what is really going on, it is necessary to do sociological research.

III. Six Research Methods

- A. Surveys involve collecting data on a research topic by having people answer a series of questions.
 1. The first step is to determine a population, the target group to be studied, and selecting a sample, individuals from within the target population who are intended to represent the population to be studied.
 2. In a random sample everyone in the target population has the same chance of being included in the study.
 3. The respondents (people who respond to a survey) must be allowed to express their own ideas so that the findings will not be biased.
 4. The questionnaires can be administered either by asking respondents to complete the survey themselves (self-administered questionnaires) or by directly questioning respondents (interviews).
 5. In designing a questionnaire, the researcher must consider the effects that interviewers have on respondents that lead to biased answers (interview bias), and whether to make the questions structured (closed-ended questions in which the answers are provided) or unstructured (open-ended questions which people answer in their own words).
 6. It is important to establish rapport—a feeling of trust between researchers and subjects.

- B. In participant observation (fieldwork), the researcher participates in a research setting and observes and records what is happening.
 - 1. Participant observation was a well-established research technique in the early history of sociology in Canada.
 - 2. Participant observations are rich in description and often provide significant theoretical insights.
 - 3. To some sociologists, participant observers face the problem of generalizability.
 - 4. **Elton Mayo** is famous for his research at the Western Electric Company Hawthorne plant during the 1920s. He found that workers' productivity changed in directions that had not been originally hypothesized. He concluded that workers adjusted their productivity because they knew they were being observed. This phenomenon came to be known as the Hawthorne effect.
- C. A qualitative (or field) interview, commonly referred to as structured conversation, is used to gather in-depth information from one or more participants. The interviewer is a participant in this conversation, but records it on tape and asks most of the questions.
 - 1. Qualitative interview or field interview is like a journey into a new territory, where we seek help from those who know what to see and do, and what to expect along the route.
 - 2. Feminist researchers have attempted to develop a distinctive feminist methodology that uses qualitative interviews to allow women to "tell their own stories."
 - 3. **Diana Scully and Joseph Marolla** interviewed convicted rapists in prison and found that rapists are not sick or overwhelmed by uncontrollable urges, but rather men who have learned to view rape as appropriate in various circumstances.
- D. Secondary analysis—analysis of data already collected by other researchers—is used when resources are limited and/or existing data are an excellent source of information.
 - 1. To avoid many of the methodological pitfalls of secondary analysis, such as reliability and validity of collected data, many researchers in Canada use Statistics Canada databases.
 - 2. The recent creation of the Data Liberation Initiative (DLI) has proved an invaluable resource.
- E. Documents—written sources—may be obtained from many sources, including books, newspapers, police reports, and records kept by various organizations.
- F. Unobtrusive measures are the process of observing social behaviour of people who do not know they are being studied. For example, important insights into a town's history, infant mortality rate, and ethnic makeup can be gained from examining the community's graveyards.
- G. Deciding which method to use involves four primary factors:
 - 1. Purpose of the research: the researcher will choose the method that will be most suitable for obtaining answers to the questions posed.

2. Resources: the researcher must match the method to both time and money available.
3. Access to subjects: the sample may be physically inaccessible to the researcher, thereby influencing the choice of methods.
4. the researcher's background or training: those trained in use of quantitative research methods (emphasis is placed on precise measurement, the use of statistics and numbers) are likely to choose surveys, while those trained in use of qualitative research methods (emphasis is placed on describing and interpreting people's behaviour) lean toward participant observation. Ethical considerations must also be taken into account.

***Discussion Topics:**

- What forms can surveys take? Bring to class a sampling of different short surveys and ask the students to assess the advantages and disadvantages of each?
- What factors would you take into account in deciding what method to use if you wanted to do research on sexual harassment on campus?
- What difficulties do you think social scientists encounter in their research that natural scientists do not? Are the natural sciences more "scientific" because of that?
- How do you explain the difference between correlation and causation? If two factors always occur, does that mean one caused the other? Can we know if one factor is the cause of another?
- If you are interested in studying a group of high school seniors, how might you establish rapport? Would dressing and acting like them be the best, perhaps the only way?
- Why might a crisis intervention centre be unwilling to cooperate with a researcher who wanted to talk with abuse victims at the centre? How might the researcher inadvertently endanger the safety of these victims?

***Student Projects:**

- 2.2 The instructor asks you to put together a panel discussion on a controversial social issue. The panel must be composed of those who have had personal experience with this issue. Which type of sampling would you use to get access to this type of panel?
- 2.3 Collect samples of research reported in the news media and evaluate the research methods, including sampling and ethics, according to the standards used by social scientists. Report your findings to the class.
- 2.4 In an essay describe the major types of bias that could affect the sociological research problem that interests you. What could you do to avoid these biases?
- 2.5 As you do your daily commute to school or work, report your findings as a participant observer. Keep a logbook of your observations for two weeks. Note dates and times of your observation periods. Other observation settings might be a class, a dormitory, a workplace, or a laundromat. Be a participant observer in that setting over a period of time and report on your experience. Who was in your research population? What

social behaviour did you observe that interested you? What research questions did your observations suggest? Did you experience role conflict as both a participant and an observer? What do you feel is the value of this research model? What are its limitations?

- 2.6 What documents could you collect as part of your research on the sociological problem that interests you?

***Class Activities:**

- 2.1 Ask students to form small groups and assign a research problem to each. Students discuss and agree upon a method to research the problem and defend their choice to classmates.
- 2.2 Divide the class into small groups and ask them to choose a research topic that the whole group can help to plan, including sampling procedures and research model. Then ask the groups to exchange research “proposals.” Have the groups discuss the ease or difficulties they would encounter in replicating the research proposal of the initiator group.

IV. A Research Model

- A. Selecting a topic is guided by sociological curiosity, interest in a particular topic, research funding from governmental or private source, and pressing social issues.
- B. Defining the problem involves specifying exactly what the researcher wants to learn about the topic.
- C. Reviewing the literature uncovers existing knowledge about the problem, helps to narrow down the problem, and provides ideas about what questions to ask.
- D. Formulating a hypothesis involves stating the expected relationship between variables, based on a theory. Hypotheses need operational definitions—precise ways to measure the variables.
- E. Choosing a research method is influenced by the research topic.
- F. Collecting the data involves concerns over validity, the extent to which operational definitions measure what was intended, and reliability, the extent to which data produce consistent results. Inadequate operational definitions and sampling hurt reliability. Triangulation compensates for the weakness of various methods.
- G. Analyzing the results involves the use of either qualitative or quantitative techniques.
 1. Qualitative analysis is especially useful for data gathered by participant observation and in-depth interviews.
 2. Quantitative analysis involves statistically analyzing relationships between variables.
 3. Computers have become powerful tools in data analysis, because they reduce large amounts of data to basic patterns, and take the drudgery out of analyzing data.

- H. Sharing the results by writing a report and publishing the results makes the findings available for replication.

***Discussion Topics:**

- Define qualitative and quantitative methodology and the advantages and limitations of each and discuss whether these are opposing or complimentary methodologies?

***Student Projects:**

- 2.7 Select a group to which you belong, and analyze the group's norms and your role in the group. Write about ways you could study that group using both a qualitative approach, such as participant observation, and a quantitative approach, such as a questionnaire. What biases would be built into one and avoided in the other? Would sampling and generalizability be a problem in either case? Would you confront any ethical issues?

***Class Activities:**

- 2.3 Randomly assign students to participate in a "participant" observation situation in your classroom. Hand an assignment to each student and request them NOT to reveal their assignment to ANYONE. Half of the students have been asked to dress in some peculiar fashion (still within the university's or college's dress code and moral mandates) like wearing jacket inside out, wearing ski goggles to class. The other half of students has been requested to come into class to observe anything unusual happening in the classroom. Have the students also observe the reactions outside the classroom context. Discuss the results.
- 2.4 Organize students into groups and assign each group the same research question but a different method. Ask groups to develop a study and compare their method, sampling, ethical issues, potential findings, generalizability, and value of the research. Each group defends its method and critiques the others.
- 2.5 Go to a large shopping Mall and rent a wheel chair. Have students experience both pushing the "handicapped" and being the handicapped. Then observe the interactions and experience the stigma. Report back to the class the results.

V. Ethics In Sociological Research

- A. Ethics are of fundamental concern to sociologists when it comes to doing research.
- B. Ethical considerations include being open, honest, and truthful, not harming the subject in the course of conducting the research, protecting the anonymity of the research subjects, and researchers not misrepresenting themselves to the research subjects.
- C. **Mario Brajuha:** During an investigation into a restaurant fire, officials subpoenaed notes taken by this sociologist in connection with his participant observation research on restaurant work. He was threatened with jail. **Rik Scarce** was a graduate student doing research on animal rights groups when there was a break-in and vandalism in one of his university's research labs. He

became famous because he refused to turn over research information that he had collected to authorities investigating the crime. He was imprisoned for 159 days on contempt charges. These examples demonstrate the lengths sociologists will go to in order to protect the anonymity of research subjects.

- D. In contrast, **Laud Humphreys** carried out doctoral research on homosexual activity, but ran into problems when he misrepresented himself to his research subjects. Although he earned his doctorate degree, he was fired from his position because of his questionable ethics.

***Discussion Topics:**

- What ethical issues are involved in sociological research?
- Are there some types of research or some topics that should not be allowed because they are ethically questionable?
- How successful are sociological researches in reaching their goal to be in Weber's sense "value free?" Should the researcher make his/her own biases known to the public or hide them from view?
- Should there be limitations on who has access to the research findings of sociologists? Why or why not?
- Why did so many people question Humphreys' research? Do you think there was anything unethical about his research methods?
- Describe the ethical issues involved in the sociological research conducted by Brajuha, Scarce, and Humphreys.

***Class Activities:**

- 2.6 Invite students to debate the ethics of the Humphreys' research and the question of whether there are some topics that sociologists should not investigate. Ask students to try to achieve a consensus on the issue of confidentiality.
- 2.7 Invite students to debate the ethics of the Humphreys' research and the question of whether there are some topics that sociologists should not investigate. Ask students to try to achieve a consensus on the issue of confidentiality.

VI. How Research and Theory Work Together

- A. **C. Wright Mills** argued that research without theory is of little value, simply a collection of unrelated "facts," and theory that is unconnected to research is abstract and empty, unlikely to represent the way life really is.
- B. Sociologists combine research and theory in different ways. Theory is used to interpret data (i.e., functionalism, symbolic interaction, conflict theory, feminist theories, and postmodernism provide frameworks for interpreting research findings) and to generate research. Research helps to generate theory.
- C. Social researchers must operate under less than ideal circumstances because of real-life situations. Researchers must often settle for something that falls short of the ideal.
1. Sociology needs more imaginative, and sometimes daring, research conducted in an imperfect world under less than ideal conditions.
 2. Research takes people beyond common sense and allows them to

penetrate surface realities so they can better understand social life.

***Discussion Topics:**

- Discuss in what way research and theory are both essential to sociology. What do sociologists have to do with every new theory they develop?
- Ideally, how are research and theory combined? Note reasons why most research must be conducted under less than ideal circumstances.

***Suggestions for Guest Speaker:**

-
- A social science reference librarian to explain the various sources of data. Depending on your situation, you might schedule training sessions in the library instead of or in addition to a guest lecture.
 - A colleague engaged in participant observation to report on the advantages and disadvantages of this research method.

KEY TERMS

Closed-ended questions: questions followed by a list of possible answers to be selected by the respondent

Documents: in its narrow sense, written sources that provide data; in its extended sense, archival material of any sort, including photographs, movies and so on

Generalizability: the extent to which the findings from one group (or sample) can be generalized or applied to other groups (or populations)

Hypothesis: a statement of the expected relationship between variables according to predictions from a theory

Interview: direct questioning of respondents

Operational definition: the way in which a variable in a hypothesis is measured

Participant observation (or fieldwork): research in which the researcher *participates* in a research setting while *observing* what is happening in that setting

Population: the target group to be studied

Qualitative or field interview, commonly referred to as **structured conversation:** a research method used to gather in-depth information from one or more participants through a structured conversation that is tape recorded

Qualitative research method: research in which the emphasis is placed on observing, describing, and interpreting people's behaviour

Quantitative research method: research in which the emphasis is placed on precise measurement, the use of statistics and numbers

Questionnaires: a list of questions to be asked

Random sample: a sample in which everyone in the target population has the same chance of being included in the study

Rapport: a feeling of trust between researchers and subjects

Reliability: the extent to which data produce consistent results

Replication: repeating a study in order to test its findings

Research method (or research design): one of seven procedures sociologists use to collect data: surveys, participant observation, qualitative interviews, secondary analysis, documents, unobtrusive measures, and experiments

Respondents: people who respond to a survey, either in interviews or in self-administered questionnaires

Sample: the individuals intended to represent the population to be studied

Secondary analysis: the analysis of data already collected by other researchers

Self-administered questionnaire: questionnaire filled out by respondents

Structured conversation: another name for **qualitative or field interviews**

Structured interviews: interviews that use closed-ended questions

Survey: the collection of data by having people answer a series of questions

Triangulation: a research strategy that includes not only comparisons of different data sources but also different data gathering techniques and methods

Unobtrusive measures: the various ways of observing people who do not know they are being studied

Validity: the extent to which an operational definition measures what was intended

Variable: a factor or concept thought to be significant for human behaviour, which varies from one case to another

“DOWN-TO-EARTH SOCIOLOGY”

1. If you were to pursue a career in sociology what research topics would you find interesting? What methods would you use?
2. Have you ever changed your appearance or behaviour because you knew you were being observed or studied? Was your change an example of the Hawthorne effect?
3. After reading about how some sociologists use their training and knowledge to do marketing research, do you see this as a legitimate area of research for them? How does it relate to the ethical concerns of the profession? The need to be objective?
4. The author provides examples of three different research projects that involved some ethical considerations. In each of these cases, did you agree or disagree with the position taken by the researcher? How would you have reacted in the same situation?
5. Why do you think that sociologists like Scully and Marolla pursue certain research topics even when it requires them to work under less than ideal conditions?

Title: Bevel Up (DVD 1)

{Major Topic/Theme}

Community Nursing, Outreach, Social Determinants of Health, S.T.D.n, Harm Reduction, Disease Prevention

{Corresponding Learning Objective/Sub Topic}

EXPLORING SOCIOLOGY, Ravelli & Webber:

- 1- (Chapter 9 – Sexualities) Outline sexual health issues - sexually transmitted infections, safe sex practices, sex education - as socially shaped and having social implications.
- 2- (chapter 15 – Aging, Disability, and Health Policy) Outline the defining features of Canada's health care system and review some of the challenges it faces today.

SOCIETY: THE BASICS, Macionis:

- 1- (Chapter 2 – Culture) Why is it important to understand people's cultural differences?
- 2- (Chapter 14 – Education, Health, and Medicine) How are schooling and health linked to social inequality in Canada?

SOCIOLOGY, Macionis & Gerber:

- 1- (Chapter 21 – Health and Medicine) Understand how and why health is a social issue and not just a matter of biology.
- 2- (Chapter 21 – Health and Medicine) Evaluate the importance of race, social class, and gender to patterns of health.

Rating: NA

Scene Location: Excerpts from the original 45 minute version directed by Nettie Wild for the National Film Board of Canada, 2007.

Web Link(s): www.streethealth.ca (Street Health)

www.bccdc.ca/SexualHealth/Programs/StreetOutreachNurseProgram/SNHHistory.htm (BC Center for Disease Control)

Running Time: 8:38

Synopsis of the Film: This film follows a group of innovative health care providers as they walk the viewer through a day in the life of a Vancouver Street Nurse. The film provides many examples of the work done by these nurses, the environment that they work in, the people they work with, and the roles that they play in the community of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. The nurses profiled discuss their mandate to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS and the harm reduction strategies used in providing nursing to marginalized urban populations. Filmmaker Nettie Wild uses this innovative team to give the viewer a window into the health problems experienced by the street population as well as the changing nature of providing universal health care in Canada.

Synopsis of the Clip: In this clip, we see two nursing interventions taking place on the streets of downtown Vancouver. The clip provides an introduction to some of the Street Nurses team and also the patients and environments that they interact with on a daily basis. In this clip, we see the nursing team discuss the many struggles and rewards of working within this innovative health care approach. In both

interventions highlighted in this clip, the Street Nurses successfully administer blood tests, establish a trusting rapport with their patients and provide pertinent medical information while attempting to establish a means of future contact with the patient. The nurses profiled in this clip discuss the trials and tribulation of their job and the health advantages of giving nurses direct access to a highly marginalized population.

Teaching Notes: This clip is a great tool for demonstrating innovation in health care provision and social services. It could easily provide a backdrop for a debate about the merits of outreach and harm reduction programs, such as the Street Nurses, versus the costs. It can also be used to introduce students to outreach services in general and the functions that they serve in the wider community. It might be interesting to have students research and profile an outreach service that is operating in their community.

This clip can also serve as an excellent introduction to the social determinants of health, getting students to consider, and maybe even provide a list of, the many social and environmental factors that influence individual health. This clip also examines the role of nursing, preventative medicine and the importance of health care access to the underclass, especially those “at risk” and marginalized populations, such survival sex workers and the homeless.

This clip also provides information on the protocol and legal requirements for patients who are discovered to be HIV positive. This very sensitive but important feature of the job is demonstrated in a very engaging conversation between a Street Nurse and a long-term drug user in a Vancouver alley. In this sequence, we see the true merit and importance of reaching out to people who have slipped through the cracks of the urban social structure.

Discussion Questions (*short answer/essay questions*):

- 1- What are the primary objectives of Vancouver’s Street Nurses? Are these Street Nurses an important feature of the public health system in an urban setting? Explain and justify your answer.
- 2- What is the key to a successful encounter between a nurse and a patient on the street?
- 3- What are the major challenges of being a health care provider in an environment such as this? How do the Vancouver Street Nurses deal with these challenges?
- 4- What is a social stigma? How does a social stigma affect an individual’s self-concept? How does a person’s self-concept affect their health status?
- 5- What are the social determinants of health? List 5 social factors that affect a person’s health. What are the major hurdles to staying healthy while living on the streets?
- 6- What is Harm Reduction and why is it a type preventative medicine? How are these nurses involved in a Harm Reduction initiative?

Title: Marx Reloaded 1: Class Struggle and Exploitation (DVD 2)

{Major Topic/Theme}

Classical Theory, Capitalism, Class System, Class Conflict, Class Struggle, Communism

{Corresponding Learning Objective}

EXPLORING SOCIOLOGY, Ravelli & Webber:

- 1- (Chapter 1 – Understand the Sociological Imagination) Understand the historical development of Sociology.
- 2- (Chapter 2 – Classical Social Theories) Describe the early contributions of social philosophers and their relevance to classical sociological theory.
- 3- (Chapter 2 – Classical Social Theories) Review and critique conflict theory and the contributions of its founding theorists.

SOCIETY: THE BASICS, Macionis:

- 1- (Chapter 8 – Social Stratification) What is social stratification?
- 2- (Chapter 8 – Social Stratification) Why does social inequality exist?

SOCIOLOGY, Macionis & Gerber:

- 1- (Chapter 10 – Social Stratification) Evaluate ideology that is used to support social inequality.
- 2- (Chapter 16 – Economy and Work) Evaluate both capitalism and socialism in terms of productivity, equality, and individual freedom.
- 3- (Chapter 16 – Economy and Work) Understand the three economic revolutions that have reshaped human societies.

Rating: NA

Scene Location: Excerpt from the original 52 minute version directed by Jason Barker for Film Noir, 2011.

Web Link(s): www.marxreloaded.com (Marx Reloaded)

Running Time: 12:49

Synopsis of the Film: Can the ideas and philosophy of Karl Marx's be used to offer new solutions to the mounting social problems caused by capitalism. Director Jason Barker states, "The film isn't about Marxism; it's about exploring whether Marx's ideas can have any sort of relevance to the world we live in today. There is a difference." With that being said, Marx Reloaded is a thoughtful and inspiring reexamination of capitalist ideology and the spirit of communist thinking that is reestablishing itself as a born again movement, ready to stand watch over the exploits of capitalism. The film uses the American Banking crisis and the global recession as a point of departure for a new discussion on the ideas of Marx and merits of communist thinking. The film asks can Marx's ideas offer new solutions to modern problems of class exploitation, wealth and power. Using an array of provocative thinkers on both sides who add detail and banter to this discussion. Marx Reloaded brings into question the structure of capitalism, and examines the claim that capitalism requires crisis in order to evolve and function. What you have is a very engaging discussion of the merits of Marx in a postmodern economy; do the old ideas still tread water?

Synopsis of the Clip: The work of Karl Marx has long been studied and valued in sociology, but this clip looks into the practical value of these teaching for a postmodern society? In this clip, we meet a number of scholars who elaborate on how the work of Karl Marx might be applied to help remedy the problems of modern capitalism such as poverty, exploitation and environmental destruction. This clip examines the classic Marxist dichotomy of worker vs. owner, bourgeois vs. proletariat, or what Marx's called class struggle. The clip takes a look at modern forms class struggle and how the classic categories of class are no longer relevant, but none the less, we see that class struggle continues to exist in capitalism economies. It looks at the profit motive; a concept suggests is Marx written into the very design of capitalism, fuelling a never ending series of class struggles and class conflict.

Teaching Notes (*how does the clip relate/explain/reinforce the learning objective?*): Combining interesting animated segments and a host of passionate intellectuals, the film is an interesting way of teaching classic social theory. In particular, this film clip focuses on class struggle and exploitation and the basic philosophy of Karl Marx.

One way to approach this is to have students consider TV families. In fact they might be asked to create a list of TV families they recall. A staple of American mainstream television programming throughout history, the TV family has come to both, reflect and define family values and popular culture in the West. We have seen them presented in all shapes and sizes, race and ethnicities, and has represented a social class position and accompanying class values. The subsequent development of characters, plotlines and themes will have writ these characters to embody the core values, norms and rituals of their respective social class position. With all this in mind, ask students to select a TV family, past of present and place them in the social class hierarchy. Ask them to justify their categorization of this family by was of a few class based social criteria such as occupation of parents to the type of neighborhood they live in. Have them deconstruct the content of one episode and write a short paper demonstrating whether or not their TV families embodies the values of the class position that the students has placed them in? Given television's reputation with representation, it might also be interesting to have them elaborate on the concept of stereotypical representation and how these might be used to perpetuate class based stereotypes.

You could have students play Star Power the social simulation game, where in the course of an hour, through an engaging and enjoyable process of trading and accumulation, the students are divided into a three class system where upward mobility grows increasingly more very difficult as the game progresses. The game is an excellent way to introduce the students to ideas such as class consciousness and class struggle, as students participate in this first hand. Finally, have student reflect on the game and the role that they played within the game. You could have them discuss concepts such as class consciousness, class values, class conflict, wealth, income, private property, status, prestige, and social power.

Have students research labor struggles in the media. What are the issues at hand and how are they being covered by the media? Ask students to identify if they see these examples as fitting into Marx's concept of class conflict? In a more specific way, you could have students examine the modern labor disputes of professional athletes. Ask students to use Marxist ideas of class struggle and class conflict to explain these labor disputes. Ask them to highlight the main factors in dispute and relate these specifics to Marxist analysis of class and class conflict. Expanding on this idea, you could have students do some research on labor unions of the present. Have them identify examples of powerful labor unions and the

role they play in class struggle. Building on this, the clip from the film **Coca Cola Case** (also included in this video series), examines the diminishing role and strategic extermination of labor unions in Columbia. More specifically, this clip examines accusations that multinational corporations such as Coca Cola are indirectly involved in the ousting of labor unions in Columbia. The combination of these two clips can create a macro view of the details of Marx's concept of class struggle and the realities of the capitalist system.

Discussion Questions (*short answer/essay questions*):

1. Who was Karl Marx and what kind of ideas did he have about the world he was living in?
2. What is capitalism and how does it function as an economic system?
3. What were Marx's thoughts on capitalism, and how did he describe class structure in capitalist's societies?
4. In your own words, explain the profit motive that Marx's suggests is built into the very design of capitalism. Explain how the profit motive is linked to exploitation of both workers and nature?
5. How does exploitation lead to class conflict? Can we find present day examples of this notion of class conflict?
6. According to Marx, who are the bourgeoisie and what role do they play in perpetuating this notion of class struggle? Is there a "new" bourgeoisie that has emerged in modern society? How does this group maintain their power in society?
7. Who is Michael Hart and what are his ideas about the changing form of capitalism in modern society? How has exploitation become a global affair?
8. What is meant by the classic logic of worker exploitation? How is a call center described as a contemporary example of a classical form of capitalist exploitation of the worker?
9. What is ideology? Why are people re-examining the merits of communist ideology?
10. What was the Communist Manifesto and what kind of influence has it had on society? What influence might it still have as a critique of capitalism?
11. What are some of the key critiques of Marxist thinking in modern society? Why is it important to have a critical perspective?
12. What can we still learn from the work of Karl Marx?