SOCIOLOGY · STUDY GUIDE

Exam 1 Study Guide

This guide covers the first two chapters. You will learn what makes sociology its own way of seeing, who founded it, and the three lenses sociologists still look through. Then you will learn how sociologists turn a hunch into evidence and the ethical rules that protect the people they study. Work one chapter at a time. Read the "what to know" paragraphs, copy the tables out by hand, then try each worked case with the steps covered. Finish each chapter with its ten self-test items. The cram sheet at the end puts every name and term in one place.

WHAT THIS GUIDE COVERS

- Chapter 1 · sociology and social facts, the sociological imagination (troubles and issues), Comte, Durkheim, Marx and Weber, the three paradigms, manifest and latent functions, micro and macro, and Durkheim's study of suicide.
- Chapter 2 · the scientific method step by step, theory and hypothesis, variables and operational definitions, surveys and sampling, field research and ethnography, experiments, secondary data, reliability and validity, correlation and causation, and research ethics.

CHAPTER 1

The Sociological Perspective

Read it in full: **Chapter 1 in the textbook**. Practice it in the lab: **The Sociological Imagination** and **Three Paradigms, One Topic**.

What to know

Sociology is the systematic, evidence based study of human social life: groups, institutions, whole societies, and the ties that bind people to them. Psychology looks inward at the mind and biology looks at the body. Sociology looks outward and across. It asks how the groups you belong to shape what you think, feel and do.

The core insight is that behavior is not just the sum of private choices. Rates of marriage, unemployment, church attendance and even suicide stay steady from year to year inside a society, even though the people involved change completely. Durkheim called these regularities **social facts**. A social fact is **external** to any one person, **general** across the group, and able to **constrain** behavior. You did not invent your language, your money or your manners, yet they shape you.

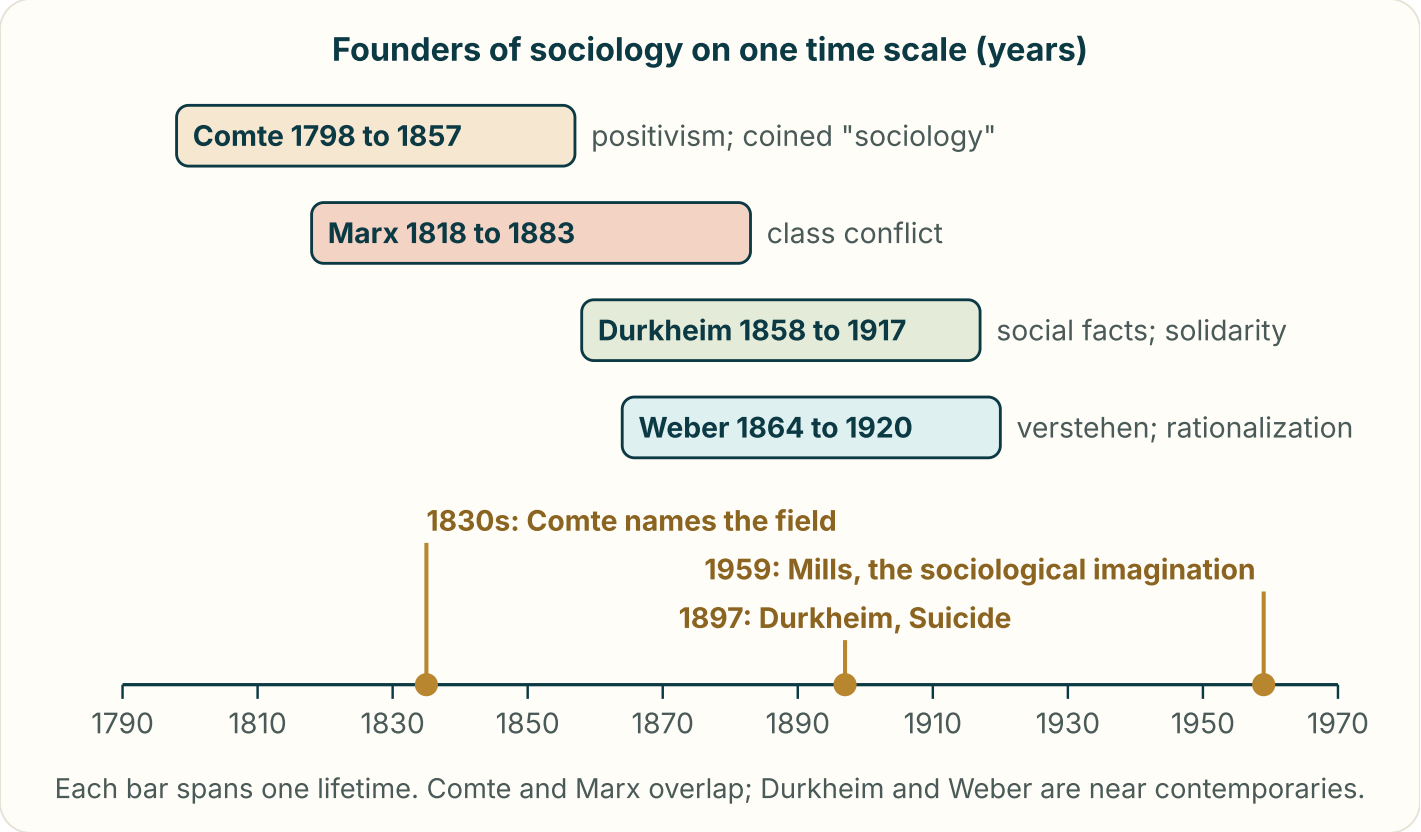
C. Wright Mills named the habit of mind in 1959: the **sociological imagination**, the awareness of the link between private experience and the wider society, where biography meets history. His key tool is the split between a **personal trouble** (private, inside one person's circle) and a **public issue** (rooted in the structure of society and beyond any one person's effort to fix). One worker out of a job in a city of 100,000 is a trouble. Fifteen million out of work in a nation of 50 million employees is an issue. Peter Berger called the same move "seeing the general in the particular," and it starts by making the familiar strange.

Four founders set the agenda. **Comte** (1798 to 1857) coined "sociology" in the 1830s and championed **positivism**, knowledge built on observable evidence. **Durkheim** (1858 to 1917) made the social fact the field's object, contrasted **mechanical** solidarity (sameness) with **organic** solidarity (interdependence), and warned of **anomie**, normlessness. **Marx** (1818 to 1883) put class conflict between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat at the center, with exploitation and alienation. **Weber** (1864 to 1920) stressed meaning through **verstehen**, the rise of **rationalization**, and bureaucracy as its purest form. Harriet Martineau, who translated Comte, is often recognized as the first woman sociologist.

A **paradigm** is a broad lens that decides which questions you ask. **Structural functionalism** (macro; Durkheim, Parsons, Merton) sees interdependent parts that keep the whole stable. Merton split **manifest** functions (intended) from **latent** functions (unintended) and named **dysfunctions**. **Conflict theory** (macro; Marx, Du Bois, feminist theorists) sees a struggle over scarce resources and asks who benefits. **Symbolic interactionism** (micro; Mead, named by Blumer, with Cooley and Goffman) sees society built from everyday interaction in which people trade and read symbols. Cooley gave us the **looking-glass self** and Goffman gave us **dramaturgy**.

Microsociology studies face to face interaction. **Macrosociology** studies large structures and whole populations. Some add a **meso** level for organizations and communities. These are two

resolutions on one reality, not two subjects. Durkheim's *Suicide* (1897) is the classic proof that the perspective works: suicide rates held steady within groups and differed between them (higher among the unmarried, Protestants and the childless, and rising in times of sudden disruption). Only a social fact, **social integration**, could explain a steady group rate.



Founders on one time scale. Each bar is one lifetime, drawn to scale. Comte set the goal of a science of society; Marx, Durkheim and Weber each set an agenda that a modern paradigm still follows.

LOCK THESE IN

- Sociology studies social life and the forces that pattern it; it looks outward and across, not inward.
- Social fact (Durkheim): external, general and constraining.
- Sociological imagination (Mills, 1959): personal troubles versus public issues; biography meets history.
- Comte coined the word and championed positivism; Martineau is often called the first woman sociologist.
- Durkheim: social facts, mechanical versus organic solidarity, anomie, *Suicide* (1897).
- Marx: bourgeoisie versus proletariat, exploitation, alienation. Weber: verstehen, rationalization, bureaucracy, the Protestant ethic.
- Functionalism and conflict theory are macro; symbolic interactionism is micro.
- Manifest functions are intended; latent functions are unintended; dysfunctions disrupt the system.

Key terms and comparisons: the three paradigms

Paradigm	Level	View of society	Guiding question	Key figures
Structural functionalism	Macro	A stable system of interdependent parts	What function does this serve for the whole?	Durkheim, Parsons, Merton
Conflict theory	Macro	An arena of struggle over scarce resources	Who benefits, and who is disadvantaged?	Marx, Du Bois, feminist theorists
Symbolic interactionism	Micro	A fabric woven from everyday meaningful interaction	How do people create and read meaning?	Mead, Cooley, Blumer, Goffman

The founders at a glance

Founder	Big question	Key ideas	Legacy
Comte	Can society be studied scientifically?	Coined "sociology"; positivism; law of three stages	Scientific method in sociology
Durkheim	What holds society together?	Social facts; solidarity; anomie; *Suicide*	Structural functionalism
Marx	Who has power, and how do they keep it?	Class conflict; bourgeoisie and proletariat; alienation	Conflict theory
Weber	What meanings drive social action?	Verstehen; rationalization; bureaucracy; Protestant ethic	Interpretive and interactionist work

Worked cases

WORKED CASE 1 · TROUBLE OR ISSUE?

Dana, a fictional 24 year old, cannot find work after finishing a degree. Her uncle says she just needs to try harder. Use Mills to decide whether this is a personal trouble or a public issue.

STEP 1 · ASK HOW MANY SHARE IT

Check how many others are in the same boat. If local unemployment is low and Dana's classmates are hired, the cause points to her own skills, effort or luck.

STEP 2 · LOOK FOR A STRUCTURAL CAUSE

If a recession has pushed unemployment up across the nation, or automation has cut entry level jobs in her field, many people face the same wall.

STEP 3 · NAME IT

When the cause lies in the economy's structure, it is a **public issue**. Individual grit cannot fix a shortage of jobs.

STEP 4 · KEEP THE PERSON IN VIEW

The imagination does not excuse Dana. It says her choices are made inside conditions she did not design. Blaming her alone for a recession is like blaming one swimmer for a riptide.

WORKED CASE 2 · ONE TOPIC, THREE LENSES

Apply the three paradigms to a community college.

STEP 1 · FUNCTIONALISM

It trains workers and passes on shared values (manifest functions). It also keeps young adults out of a crowded job market for a time and introduces future partners (latent functions).

STEP 2 · CONFLICT THEORY

Ask who benefits. Students from wealthier families may be steered toward transfer and four year degrees while others are tracked into lower paid programs, so the college can reproduce class advantage.

STEP 3 · SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM

Zoom in on a classroom. A student praised as "a natural" may come to see herself as capable (the looking-glass self). Students also manage impressions in front of instructors (dramaturgy).

THE POINT

No lens is the whole truth. Each catches what the others miss, which is why sociologists switch lenses on purpose.

WORKED CASE 3 · MICRO OR MACRO?

Place three fictional research questions at the right level.

STEP 1 · HOW STRANGERS SHARE AN ELEVATOR

This is face to face interaction among a few people: **micro**, the home of symbolic interactionism.

STEP 2 · WHY WEALTH IS SPREAD THE WAY IT IS ACROSS A NATION

This is a large structure across a whole population: **macro**, the level of functionalism and conflict theory.

STEP 3 · HOW A HOSPITAL ORGANIZES ITS NIGHT SHIFT

An organization sits between the two: some sociologists call this the **meso** level.

CHECK

Same world, different resolutions. A macro pattern such as unequal graduation rates is built one interaction at a time, and those interactions are steered by the structures people were born into.

TRAPS PEOPLE FALL INTO

- **Calling sociology "psychology about groups."** Sociology explains behavior by social position and social forces, not by the inner workings of one mind.
- **Thinking a social fact is any fact about society.** It has three features: external, general and constraining.
- **Saying the sociological imagination excuses people.** It says choices are made inside conditions people did not design. It does not deny that people choose.
- **Mixing up Marx and Weber.** Marx put economics and class conflict first. Weber said ideas and meaning also drive history and used verstehen.
- **Putting symbolic interactionism at the macro level.** It is the micro paradigm. Functionalism and conflict theory work at the macro level.
- **Swapping manifest and latent.** Manifest is intended and recognized. Latent is unintended and often unnoticed.
- **Thinking Durkheim studied suicidal individuals.** He studied steady group **rates** in official records and explained them with social integration.
- **Treating micro and macro as different subjects.** They are two resolutions on the same subject.

Chapter 1 self-test · ten items

1. What makes sociology's explanation of behavior different from a purely psychological one?

A. It explains behavior through groups, institutions and social position
B. It explains behavior through the choices of famous leaders in history
C. It explains behavior through the workings of one person's mind
D. It explains behavior through inherited traits passed in families

A. It explains behavior through groups, institutions and social position Sociology looks outward and across. Steady group rates persist even as the individuals change, which points to social forces.

2. A rate of divorce that you did not create, that applies across your society and that presses on your choices is best called a:

A. Public issue
B. Social fact
C. Paradigm
D. Latent function

B. Social fact Durkheim's social fact is external, general across the group and constraining.

3. In a nation of 50 million workers, 15 million are unemployed. Mills would call this a:

A. Latent function of a healthy and stable labor market
B. Personal trouble, rooted in each worker's own skills
C. Case of anomie caused by the workers' own weak norms
D. Public issue, rooted in the structure of the economy

D. Public issue, rooted in the structure of the economy When the cause lies in the structure of society and affects millions, no single person's effort can fix it. That is a public issue.

4. Who coined the word "sociology" and argued society could be studied with the rigor of physics?

A. Max Weber
B. Karl Marx
C. Auguste Comte
D. C. Wright Mills

C. Auguste Comte Comte coined the term in the 1830s and championed positivism.

5. Durkheim contrasted two kinds of solidarity. Organic solidarity is based on:

A. Interdependence and a complex division of labor
B. Shared blood ties among members of one family line
C. Loyalty to one ruler whose word is final law
D. Sameness and shared belief in a small community

A. Interdependence and a complex division of labor Mechanical solidarity rests on sameness. Organic solidarity, typical of modern societies, rests on interdependence.

6. Which pair of ideas belongs to Max Weber?

A. Dramaturgy and impression management
B. Verstehen and rationalization
C. Anomie and social facts
D. Alienation and class conflict

B. Verstehen and rationalization Weber used verstehen to grasp the meaning of action and saw rationalization as the master trend of modern life.

7. A university's role in introducing future spouses is an example of a:

A. Social fact
B. Dysfunction
C. Manifest function
D. Latent function

D. Latent function It is an unintended, often unnoticed consequence. The manifest function is to educate.

8. A researcher asks who profits from smartphones and how unequal access widens the digital divide. Which paradigm is this?

A. Symbolic interactionism
B. Positivism
C. Conflict theory
D. Structural functionalism

C. Conflict theory Asking who benefits and who is kept down is the guiding question of conflict theory.

9. The idea that we form a self-image by imagining how others see and judge us came from:

A. Cooley
B. Durkheim
C. Blumer
D. Goffman

A. Cooley Cooley called it the looking-glass self. It belongs to symbolic interactionism.

10. What did the steady group suicide rates in Durkheim's study show?

A. That religion has no link at all to how people live and die
B. That suicide rates change at random from one year to the next
C. That suicide is explained mainly by each person's own psychology
D. That a social fact, social integration, shapes even private acts

D. That a social fact, social integration, shapes even private acts Rates were steady within groups and differed between them. Only a social fact could explain a steady group rate.

Sociological Research

Read it in full: **Chapter 2 in the textbook**. Practice it in the lab: **The Research Process, Step by Step** and **Drawing a Sample**.

What to know

Sociology replaces the confident guess with **empirical evidence**, information you can observe, measure and check. Common sense is often wrong, which is why the scientific method exists. Durkheim's suicide study is the founding example: he used official records to find steady, predictable rates across religions and family situations.

The research process runs in order: define the problem as an answerable question, review the literature, state a hypothesis, write **operational definitions** so each idea can be measured, collect data, analyze the results, and draw and report a conclusion so others can **replicate** it. The **independent variable** is the presumed cause. The **dependent variable** is the outcome that may respond. A **theory** is a broad, evidence tested explanation of how facts relate (the map). A **hypothesis** is one narrow, testable prediction drawn from it (today's route). **Deductive** reasoning moves from theory to a test. **Inductive** reasoning moves from observations toward a theory.

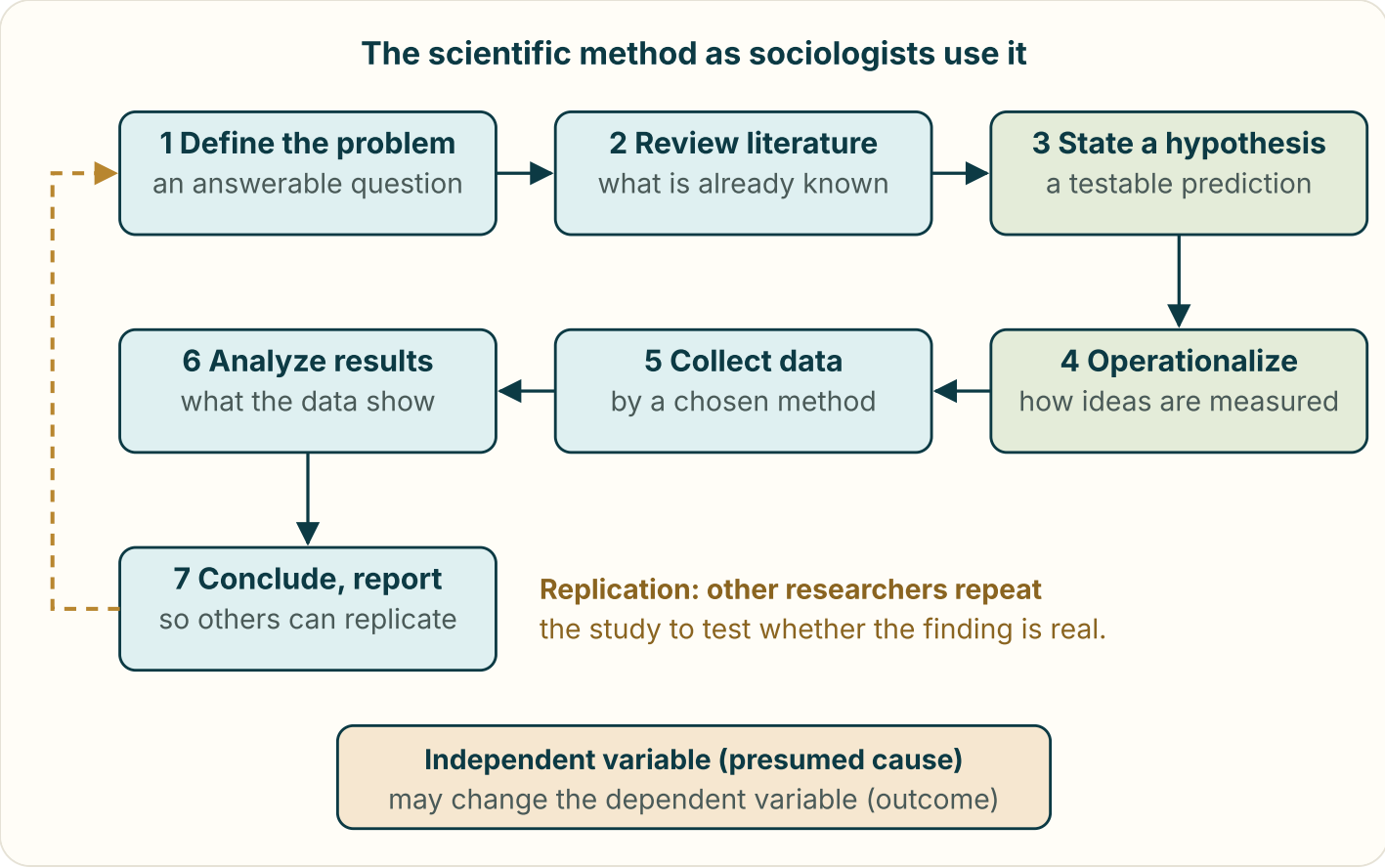
A **survey** gathers self reported answers by written questionnaire (cheap and broad, no follow up) or interview (fewer people, but it can probe). **Closed-ended** questions give fixed choices and tidy numbers; **open-ended** questions give rich detail. Surveys fight **social-desirability bias**: people overstate voting and exercise and understate drinking. A **sample** is the subset studied; the **population** is the whole group of interest. A **probability sample** gives everyone a known, non-zero chance; a **simple random sample** gives everyone an equal chance. A **representative** sample earns **generalizability**. A **convenience sample** does not. The 1936 *Literary Digest* poll had over two million replies and still called the election for Landon, because its names came from phone books and car registrations; Gallup's much smaller representative sample was right.

Field research studies people in natural settings. In **participant observation** the researcher joins the group and keeps field notes (Whyte's *Street Corner Society*); in **nonparticipant observation** the researcher watches without joining. **Ethnography** is long term immersion in a whole setting, aiming for thick description, with reflexivity about the researcher's own effect (Goffman's

Asylums). The danger is "going native." Field research is strong on **validity** (measuring what really happens) but weak on **reliability** (getting the same result when repeated) and generalizability. The **Hawthorne effect** (reactivity) is people changing because they know they are watched.

An **experiment** tests cause and effect. Participants are split, ideally by **random assignment**, into an **experimental group** that gets the treatment and a **control group** that does not. If the groups started alike, a difference in outcome can be credited to the treatment. **Secondary data analysis** reuses existing records such as censuses and archives; it is cheap, wide and **nonreactive**. **Content analysis** codes texts and media. A **correlation** means two things move together; it never proves causation, because a third variable (summer heat behind ice cream sales and drownings) can drive both.

Ethics come first. Weber's **value neutrality** means keeping personal values from distorting the research, not having no values. **Informed consent**, **voluntary participation** (anyone may quit), and **confidentiality** (the researcher knows but does not reveal) or **anonymity** (not even the researcher can link answers to names) protect participants. Deception must be minimal and followed by debriefing. An **Institutional Review Board (IRB)** approves studies in advance, and the American Sociological Association has a Code of Ethics. The Tuskegee syphilis study (1932 to 1972), which deceived about 600 poor Black men and withheld penicillin, led to the National Research Act and the **Belmont Report**: respect for persons, beneficence and justice.



The research process. Seven steps turn a hunch into a finding. The operational definition in step 4 decides what gets measured, and replication tests whether the result holds.

LOCK THESE IN

- Steps: question, literature, hypothesis, operational definitions, data, analysis, conclusion and report.
- Theory is the broad explanation; a hypothesis is one testable prediction about variables.
- Independent variable is the presumed cause; dependent variable is the outcome.
- Representativeness, not size, earns generalizability (the 1936 *Literary Digest* lesson).
- Validity means measuring what you claim; reliability means getting the same result again.
- Only an experiment with a control group and random assignment shows causation.
- Secondary data is nonreactive; the Hawthorne effect haunts observation.
- Belmont principles: respect for persons, beneficence, justice.

Key terms and comparisons: research methods

Method	What you do	Best for	Watch out for
Survey	Questionnaire or interview of a sample	Many people, attitudes and reported behavior	Social-desirability bias; poor samples
Participant observation	Join the group and record field notes	Insider meaning in natural settings	Reactivity; "going native"
Ethnography	Long term immersion in a whole setting	Thick description, strong validity	Not generalizable or repeatable
Experiment	Vary an independent variable; compare experimental and control groups	Cause and effect	Artificial settings; many variables cannot be assigned
Secondary data	Analyze existing records, statistics or archives	Big patterns, trends, low cost	Data gathered for someone else's purpose
Content analysis	Code texts, images or media	Patterns in culture and communication	Coding choices can inject bias

Sampling approaches

Approach	How members are chosen	Representative?	Generalize?
Simple random	Everyone has an equal chance	Yes, if done well	Yes
Stratified random	Split into groups, then random within each	Yes, often more precise	Yes
Convenience	Whoever is easy to reach	No	No
Volunteer	People opt in	No: joiners differ	No

Worked cases

WORKED CASE 1 · NAME THE VARIABLES

A fictional researcher, Dr. Okafor, asks whether smaller class sizes raise reading scores in a district.

STEP 1 · FIND THE PRESUMED CAUSE

Class size is what she thinks makes the difference, so it is the **independent variable**.

STEP 2 · FIND THE OUTCOME

Reading score is what may respond, so it is the **dependent variable**.

STEP 3 · OPERATIONALIZE

She defines class size as students enrolled on the first day, and reading score as the result on one standard test. Without these definitions the question cannot be studied.

STEP 4 · STATE THE HYPOTHESIS

"Classes of 18 or fewer will score higher than classes of 25 or more." It is narrow and testable, drawn from a broader theory about attention and learning.

WORKED CASE 2 · JUDGE A SAMPLE

A campus club posts an online poll and gets 4,000 replies saying most students favor a new fee. A second team randomly draws 400 names from the full student list and reaches 360 of them. Which result generalizes?

STEP 1 · CHECK HOW PEOPLE WERE CHOSEN

The online poll is a **volunteer** sample. People who feel strongly opt in, so it is not representative.

STEP 2 · CHECK THE SECOND SAMPLE

Random selection from the full list gives every student a known, equal chance: a **simple random sample**.

STEP 3 · WEIGH SIZE AGAINST FAIRNESS

Size cannot fix a skewed frame. The *Literary Digest* had over two million replies and still missed the winner.

STEP 4 · CONCLUDE

The 400 name random sample generalizes to the student body. The 4,000 reply poll describes only the people who chose to answer.

WORKED CASE 3 · SPOT THE ETHICS PROBLEM

A fictional proposal: a researcher will hand out a "study habits" survey in her own class, tell students it is required for credit, and secretly record which students say they have cheated.

STEP 1 · VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Students who need their grade from her cannot easily refuse. Making it required breaks voluntary participation.

STEP 2 · INFORMED CONSENT

Hiding the cheating question means students do not understand what they are agreeing to.

STEP 3 · CONFIDENTIALITY AND HARM

Linking admissions of cheating to names exposes students to real harm.

STEP 4 · FIX IT

Send it through the IRB, make it optional with no grade attached, explain its purpose, and collect it anonymously.

TRAPS PEOPLE FALL INTO

- **Swapping theory and hypothesis.** A theory is the broad explanation. A hypothesis is one narrow, testable prediction.
- **Thinking a bigger sample is always better.** A big biased sample only makes you more confident in a wrong answer.
- **Reversing the variables.** The independent variable is the presumed cause. The dependent variable is the outcome.
- **Mixing up reliability and validity.** Reliability is consistency. Validity is accuracy: measuring what you say you measure.
- **Reading a correlation as a cause.** A third variable may drive both. Only a controlled design rules that out.
- **Calling secondary data reactive.** No one is responding to a researcher in the room, so there is no Hawthorne effect.
- **Thinking value neutrality means having no values.** It means not letting values forge the data, and being open about assumptions.
- **Confusing confidentiality with anonymity.** With confidentiality the researcher knows who said what. With anonymity no one can link answers to names.

Chapter 2 self-test · ten items

1. Which of these is a narrow, testable prediction, not a theory?

A. Towns with more civic clubs will have lower suicide rates
B. Society is a system of parts that keep the whole stable
C. Class conflict is the engine that drives history forward
D. Weak social bonds raise the risk of suicide in a society

A. Towns with more civic clubs will have lower suicide rates A hypothesis is one narrow, testable prediction stated as a relationship between variables.

2. A study asks whether hours of paid work affect college grades. Hours of paid work is the:

A. Dependent variable
B. Control group
C. Operational definition
D. Independent variable

D. Independent variable It is the presumed cause. Grades are the outcome, the dependent variable.

3. Deciding in advance that "religiosity" means services attended per month is writing a:

A. Testable hypothesis
B. Content analysis plan
C. Operational definition
D. Review of the literature

C. Operational definition An operational definition states exactly how an abstract idea will be measured.

4. Why did the 1936 *Literary Digest* poll fail despite millions of replies?

A. Its results were lost before they could be tallied by the editors
B. Its sample was drawn from sources that skewed toward the wealthy
C. Its interviewers asked open-ended questions that could not be counted
D. Its sample was far too small to reflect national opinion

B. Its sample was drawn from sources that skewed toward the wealthy Phone books and car registrations overrepresented the wealthy, and few people mailed ballots back. Size could not fix the bias.

5. Which sample lets a researcher generalize to a whole population?

A. A sample of people who chose to answer an online poll
B. A sample made of the researcher's own students and friends
C. A random sample drawn from a full list of the population
D. A sample of shoppers stopped at one mall on a weekday

C. A random sample drawn from a full list of the population Only a probability sample can be representative and support generalizing.

6. People tell a surveyor they vote and exercise more than they really do. This is:

A. Researcher reflexivity
B. Social-desirability bias
C. Sampling frame error
D. The Hawthorne effect

B. Social-desirability bias People report the flattering answer rather than the true one.

7. Field research and ethnography are usually strongest on:

A. Validity
B. Replication
C. Sample size
D. Reliability

A. Validity They capture what really happens in context but are hard to repeat and hard to generalize.

8. What lets an experiment credit a change in the outcome to the treatment?

A. Asking many people about their attitudes on a written questionnaire
B. Joining a group for years and taking careful field notes on it
C. Coding a large set of news stories for recurring patterns of words
D. Comparing a randomly assigned experimental group with a control group

D. Comparing a randomly assigned experimental group with a control group If the groups start alike and differ only in the treatment, any difference in outcome can be credited to it.

9. Ice cream sales and drownings rise together each summer. The best conclusion is:

A. Ice cream causes drowning by slowing swimmers
B. A third variable, heat, likely drives both
C. The two have no relationship of any kind
D. Drowning causes people to buy more ice cream

B. A third variable, heat, likely drives both Correlation is not causation. Summer heat raises both.

10. The Belmont Report, written after the Tuskegee study, rests on which three principles?

A. Reliability, validity and generalizability
B. Positivism, verstehen and value neutrality
C. Consent, anonymity and replication
D. Respect for persons, beneficence and justice

D. Respect for persons, beneficence and justice Those three principles anchor research ethics and the IRB system today.

ONE PAGE

Cram sheet

Everything from chapters 1 and 2 in one place. Cover the right column and see if you can rebuild each row.

Names and ideas

Name	Idea	Note
Comte (1798 to 1857)	Coined "sociology"; positivism	Law of three stages
Martineau	Translated Comte	Often called the first woman sociologist
Durkheim (1858 to 1917)	Social facts; solidarity; anomie	*Suicide* (1897): social integration
Marx (1818 to 1883)	Class conflict; bourgeoisie and proletariat	Exploitation and alienation
Weber (1864 to 1920)	Verstehen; rationalization; bureaucracy	Value neutrality; Protestant ethic
Mills (1959)	Sociological imagination	Troubles versus issues
Berger	Seeing the general in the particular	Debunking; make the familiar strange
Merton	Manifest, latent, dysfunction	Functionalism
Mead, Blumer	Symbolic interactionism	Blumer named it
Cooley; Goffman	Looking-glass self; dramaturgy	Micro level

Research terms

Term	Meaning	Remember
Independent variable	Presumed cause	The one the researcher changes
Dependent variable	Outcome	Responds to the independent variable
Operational definition	How an idea is measured	Ask "how did they measure that?"
Representative sample	A miniature of the population	Earns generalizability
Reliability; validity	Consistency; accuracy	Field work: high validity, low reliability
Hawthorne effect	Change because watched	Secondary data avoids it
Correlation	Two things move together	Not causation
Ethics	Consent, voluntary, confidential, no harm	IRB; Belmont: respect, beneficence, justice

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