

# Impact Academy – Sociology Deeper Learning Assignments

I want to see you critically engaged in the ‘sociology concepts’; that is, show me you’re thinking and you understand the concepts! *So use your sociological imagination* when you do these assignments.

Use EMAIL to submit your work: [ffenn@henry.k12.ga.us](mailto:ffenn@henry.k12.ga.us)

## Assignment 1: Photo Depictions of Society

For this assignment you are to depict sociological concepts through photographs. Each lesson should be depicted pictorially. You are to take 10 photographs for each Unit you wish to replace the Test for. For each photograph you are to add a caption beneath it describing, using correct sociological terms, what is being depicted. It is highly recommended that you take the photographs as we cover them in the class so you will have a clear idea of the concept and if you do this correctly, and you will spread out the workload over the semester instead of procrastinating. The best way to accomplish this assignment is to create a blog or website to host your photos and captions ([www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com) or [www.weebly.com](http://www.weebly.com) are good examples). All photos *must* be your own. The captions *must* include a sociological description of the photograph (all terms used correctly!). On the day the final project is due you will turn in/EMAIL a blurb with your name and the link to your blog/website on it.

Remember: five photos depicting any concept from the lesson for each of the following topics:

- What is sociology (ex: sociological imagination)
- Theories and theorists (ex: rationalization)
- Research methods (ex: this one is tougher; you can divide of the five from here to any other lesson you prefer)
- Culture (ex: material, food, fashion)
- Self and social interaction (ex: dramaturgy)
- Life in Groups (ex: various groups, primary, secondary)
- Deviance and conformity (ex: deviant or conforming behavior – be creative!)
- Social Class (ex: house in different neighborhoods, poverty)
- Race and Ethnicity (ex: the effects of race and ethnicity)
- Gender and Sexuality (ex: be creative; gender presentation)
- Life at Home (ex: home life, dating, second shift)
- Popular culture (ex: interpretation of media)

## Assignment 2: A Sociological Event

Analyze a major event sociologically. Be sure to include the following questions in your analysis:

- Why did this happen from a sociological perspective?
- What social context did it occur in?
- How many are affected annually by the problem?
- Use sociological vocabulary (correctly!) and thoroughly explain your ideas.
- Which sociological theory best explains this event? Does it take multiple theories?

Remember I want to see you critically engaged in the material; that is, show me you’re thinking and you understand the material. A recent example is the shooting of congress member Giffords in Tucson this last year. Other examples include 9/11, major elections, crime, poverty, racism, sexism, homophobia, Columbine, etc, marriage, diet, tv, any other aspect of American culture that interests you. *Search pop media feeds like Fox, CNN, or others for more recent ideas.*

*One thing to remember, you are to explain this event sociologically in light of a (or multiple) social problems. In doing so you are to explain why the common explanations we hear in the media and by laypersons is inadequate for fully explaining the event.*

An extremely brief example of what I'm talking about (DO NOT use this example):

The Virginia Tech school shooting was mostly framed within a psychological perspective. Much of the arguments we heard were that the man was mentally deranged, sick in the head or under stress. While certainly pertinent to the discussion they are not the only explanations. Using the sociological imagination we look for the link between the individual and society. Why is it that studies show school shooters are disproportionately male? Why don't females usually commit these types of crimes? How were his cries for attention handled within the institution of the school? The type of society we live in glorifies violence; our history is fraught with violence (e.g. our genocide of Native Americans, etc.). Our culture also glorifies guns and guns as a method of solving disputes. How are men socialized to deal with anger and other emotions? These are examples of using then link between society and the individual to explain human actions.

### **Assignment 3: Dirty Hands**

For this assignment I want you to go out and 'get your hands dirty' so to speak. That is, you are going to go out into a social setting you are unfamiliar with and document what you are seeing. You will be conducting an ethnography and/or a participant observation. Using *Ethnomethodology*, perform a *breaching* experiment. Remember, don't do anything illegal! This should be no less than 3 pages. Tell me what ethnography and its methodology is, why it's useful (that is what does it expose?), what you did, what norm you breached and why is that norm important (that is, what does it do for society?), how did people react and why?

A 'breaching' experiment for Sociology means inserting yourself into a social gathering of a group that is very different from your own values and mores. Ex: An African American person attends a gathering of the KKK – (This has been done by a [CNN comedian/reporter](#))

This is a 'high risk' experiment, and you MUST consult with me before you attempt doing it. Also, please take time to find out what 'ethnomethodology' is before you consider actually doing a social breach. This type of experimentation requires that you put away your 'anxieties', or even better, facing and conquering them. You can do it! Bring a friend for support!

Another example would be to go into a church you are unfamiliar with and write down your observations. Anywhere where people are that you have not been before. What are the people doing, what are the norms for this specific place? How are the people behaving? Are they in groups, are they alone? If they're in groups what do you notice about the group dynamics (remember Simmel's work; dyads, triads, etc.)? Write about this place as though you know nothing about it... at all. Take detailed notes and include them with your write up. Remember use sociological terms, so what are the norms, the statuses and the roles associated with the statuses, etc. Do not be limited to what I have listed here; all of sociology is at your disposal.

For the second part of this assignment I want you to go into a *familiar* setting and do the exact same thing. Document it as though you have never been there before. This is the more difficult part of the assignment. It is harder to see familiar as something extraordinary but if you actively use your sociological perspective you can see otherwise hidden idiosyncrasies in your familiar world. Write down people's behaviors, rules, etc. The point here is to see the ordinary as extraordinary. The familiar should become unfamiliar.

The final part involves comparing the two settings, what do you notice? What is similar what is different? Why? What became apparent that you wouldn't have otherwise noticed? Pay special attention to the social

structure of each setting. Regardless of where you choose they should be remarkably similar in this regard. Tell me how and why this is so.

#### **Assignment 4: Sociological Autobiography**

Write an autobiography. Not just any autobiography but your **sociological** autobiography. That is, tell your life story, where you came from, how you got where you are, etc. using sociology as your guide. So this should be incredibly full of correctly used sociological terms.

→ This should include ALL of the following (points will be deducted for each one left out):

- social class,
- gender,
- race/ethnicity,
- religion,
- place of birth
- sexual orientation.
- Family dynamics (traditional nuclear family, step parents/siblings?, live with grandparents, foster family, etc)
- Peer relations, outside activities (clubs/sports/organizations), community involvement
- Anything else you deem relevant to who you are and where you are in life should also be included.

A caveat: This is first and foremost a *sociological* autobiography.

- **How do these sociological variables contribute to who you are today?**

Every variable listed has had a profound impact on who you are today.

Remember Mill's point about the sociological imagination being a method to understand the individual in terms of their broader social context; history plus biography.

#### **Assignment 5: Sociological Analysis of Age and Stage of Life:**

- Interview three people of different ages. They can be family members if you wish. Ideally you would have someone in young adulthood, (maybe a college student or someone just moving out on their own), an adult with children ages 25 through 50, and an older person like a Grandparent over 60 years of age.

You should prepare and ask them questions about

- What their goals were when they were younger, and did they reach them?
- How did their goals change as they aged?
- Were there any life events that caused them to change their life goals?
- What are their current life goals for the future?
- What surprised them the most about life so far?
- What do they feel the "best" age is, and why?

Summarize your findings in a written reflection paper, comparing your findings between age groups, with discussion on YOUR own answers to these questions, thoughts and what surprised you and why!

#### **Assignment 6: Sociological Analysis of Children's Literature: Then & Now**

1. Visit a local book store and look at the children's book section. Find book from when you were a child and look at them. You could bring a parent and they could do the same from their childhood if they like. Or you could use children's books from a later time period, like Golden Books, or books your parents read as children.

2. Now find the most current children's books and make a comparison on how children, children's interests and lifestyles and the world itself has changed based on the type of books written for children today. Explain what your favorite books were and why and how they are the same or different than what is out there today.
3. We currently live in a politically correct age. Design and complete the world's most tolerant inclusive children's book that includes as many groups, subgroups, cultures, sub cultures, counter cultures, and family patterns as possible.

**Assignment 7: Sociology and Society: Design a High School that will provide students with what they need for the future.**

- Design a school and a school program that would be ideal for an adolescent of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. You can draw/design the school, create a new curriculum, schedule, types of programs, period schedules, and anything else that you believe would do the following things:
- Prepare the current adolescent generation for their specific future in society
- Be realistic of the inequity of human beings in reference to economics, emotional and physical and social differences among adolescents. Remember....the goal is to create a high school that will create an environment where adolescents will not only flourish, but be prepared to take care of themselves in the future.
- Be sure to explain why you made the decisions you did. You can create this as a packet with drawings or create a PowerPoint or a Weebly site that will also explain your decisions. (You may need to hand this one earlier in order to present it.

**Assignment 8: Self-chosen Research on a Sociological Issue**

Using the research methods discussed in the course, conduct your own research and submit the findings to me. This should involve all the steps of a research design including: state and define the problem, literature review (GALILEO allows access to scholarly journals for this purpose; ask me for the password), hypothesis and/or research questions, determine the research design, data collection, analysis of the data and implications and conclusions. You must clearly define what it is you are doing, why, and how. Are you using qualitative methods or quantitative? Why? Is one more appropriate than another? What are the limitations to your approach? If you were to do it differently what would you change and why? Did you get the information you were expecting? Why or why not?

- Here is a great place to start: <https://owlcation.com/social-sciences/Great-Sociology-Research-Topics>
- I can provide more guidance on a step-by-step basis, with checklists, outlines, etc, if needed.

\* You must clear your research design and what you plan to study with me first so that I can make sure you are on the right track and not spinning your wheels.

Again, let me know what you plan to do for this and the dates, times, locations, groups, etc. I might make a surprise visit for additional support! Mr. Fenn – 678-369-1089, [ffenn@henry.k12.ga.us](mailto:ffenn@henry.k12.ga.us)