

CHAPTER 1: The Social Problems Process

MULTIPLE CHOICE

1. Which of the following is *not* one of the questions an objectivist may ask to determine whether a social condition is a social problem?
 - a. Is it harmful to individuals or groups?
 - b. How many people does it harm?
 - c. How serious or damaging is the harm it creates?
 - d. Why do people think of it as harmful?

ANS: D

2. The objectivist definition of *harm* can be criticized for being
 - a. so narrow that it excludes many conditions that may really be problems.
 - b. so broad that it is vague to the point of losing its meaning.
 - c. so detailed that it is difficult for anyone but experts to understand.
 - d. so grounded in the social sciences that it cannot be applied to hard science phenomena.
 - e. all of the above

ANS: B

3. Subjectivists tend to think of social problems as
 - a. social conditions that cause problems for people.
 - b. the process of responding to social conditions.
 - c. social conditions that cause problems for society.
 - d. the process of a condition becoming problematic.

ANS: B

4. A subjectivist might suggest that heightism is not a social problem in the United States because
 - a. there is no research to indicate that people are discriminated against on the basis of their height.
 - b. Americans do not think of discrimination based on height as a problem.
 - c. heightism is not illegal in the United States.
 - d. discrimination based on height does not hurt enough people to cause serious harm to society.

ANS: B

5. The term *social constructionism* refers to the way people
 - a. create fresh understandings of the world around them.
 - b. learn language from their parents.
 - c. use language to define their place in society.
 - d. learn to differentiate social conditions from social problems.
 - e. all of the above
 - f. b and c only

ANS: A

6. Saying that something is socially constructed means that it is
 - a. not real.

- b. only real because a group of people created it.
- c. real only to those who have had experience with it.
- d. shaped by people's definitions and understandings of it.

ANS: D

7. The discussion of reclassifying Pluto as a minor planet or an interplanetary body illustrates the fact that
- a. even scientists are sometimes unsure of what is really a problem.
 - b. the way we use and change language reflects our efforts to better describe and understand the world around us.
 - c. even natural phenomena are difficult to define clearly.
 - d. even those in the hard sciences such as astronomy have a difficult time defining concepts.

ANS: B

8. Claimsmaking can most accurately be described as a process in which people
- a. claim the right to profit from a troubling situation.
 - b. lie about conditions to make them seem problematic.
 - c. bring to the attention of others a situation that they find troubling.
 - d. find objective proof of a problem.

ANS: C

9. Which is *not* one of the six stages in the natural history model of the social problems process?
- a. social problems work
 - b. media coverage
 - c. research confirmation
 - d. policy outcomes

ANS: C

10. The social problems process discussed in your text refers to the process through which
- a. a condition worsens to become a problem.
 - b. people come to define a condition as a social problem.
 - c. public officials determine the best way to solve a problem.
 - d. a problem is identified, discussed, and acted upon.

ANS: D

11. When it comes to claimsmaking about obesity as a social problem, _____ may act as claimsmakers.
- a. experts who have done research on obesity
 - b. people who have direct experience with obesity
 - c. policymakers who must deal with public opinion regarding obesity
 - d. all of the above
 - e. none of the above

ANS: D

12. The term *troubling conditions* is used when describing the situations people make claims about in order to draw our attention to the fact that
- a. we often notice problems for the first time while they are still small and manageable.
 - b. claimsmaking is about people pointing out things that trouble them rather than making a purely objective assessment of problematic conditions.

- c. problems are often blown out of proportion once people begin to make claims about them.
- d. what troubles some people may not turn out to be a real social problem.

ANS: B

13. Your text argues that because we know that knowledge is socially constructed,
- a. it is important to carefully evaluate claims and evidence.
 - b. we can discount knowledge from the hard sciences as less scientific because it fails to focus on the social world.
 - c. there is no way to actually understand reality.
 - d. all assessments of the world and what is happening in it are equally valid.

ANS: A

14. The natural history model of social problems outlines the process that
- a. most social problems go through.
 - b. every social problem goes through.
 - c. social problems that get solved go through.
 - d. social problems that get media attention go through.

ANS: A

15. Claimsmakers who are activists typically must
- a. draw attention to their cause.
 - b. recruit people to join their movement.
 - c. manage their movement's operations.
 - d. maintain interest in their cause.
 - e. all of the above

ANS: E

16. The term *natural history* refers to the sequence of stages that social problems
- a. often move through.
 - b. move through when they are not interfered with by claimsmakers.
 - c. create in a typical community.
 - d. create through their environmental impact.
 - e. all of the above

ANS: A

17. The impact of claimsmaking on the public's perceptions is typically measured using
- a. in-depth interviews with leaders.
 - b. media analysis.
 - c. public opinion polls.
 - d. counts of who votes for politicians with particular views.

ANS: C

18. Policymaking that is intended to reduce social problems is done by
- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| a. school officials. | d. local communities. |
| b. legislative bodies. | e. all of the above |
| c. government agencies. | f. b and c only |

ANS: E

19. Social problems workers are typically responsible for
- developing an accurate definition of what a problem really is.
 - helping policymakers better understand a problem.
 - carrying out the practical actions deemed necessary to manage a problem.
 - identifying the implications of particular solutions proposed for a problem.
 - all of the above

ANS: C

20. The term *policy outcomes* refers to
- the extent to which the policy solves the problem.
 - people's reaction to the social problems process.
 - critics' concerns about how the policies are implemented.
 - critics' concerns about the production of new problems through the solutions to the old problems.
 - all of the above

ANS: E

21. The role of resources in the social problems process refers to
- access to policymakers.
 - access to the media.
 - influence.
 - money.
 - all of the above
 - a and d only

ANS: E

22. The role of rhetoric in the social problems process can be seen in how
- claimsmakers put together an effective argument.
 - the media make decisions about which claims to cover.
 - policymakers choose to focus on certain aspects of a problem and not others.
 - people tend to reinterpret previous claims once the policy outcomes associated with them can be observed.
 - all of the above
 - a and d only

ANS: E

23. The term *feedback* is used to refer to
- the fact that each social problem influences the process through which other social problems will progress.
 - the fact that each stage in the social problems process influences the stages both before and after it.
 - the relationship between claimsmakers who are making claims about the same social problem.
 - the way in which social problems workers can disrupt the social problems process by discrediting the claims made by experts.

ANS: B

24. Resources primarily impact the social problems process at the level of
- media coverage.
 - social problems work.

- b. claimsmaking.
- c. policymaking.
- e. all of the above
- f. b and c only

ANS: E

25. The goal of your text is to provide readers with
- a. a framework for determining which social problems have the greatest impact in the modern United States.
 - b. an understanding of what causes social problems.
 - c. a better way of thinking about social problems that interest them.
 - d. a framework for assessing the objectivity of claims.

ANS: C

ESSAY

1. What are the three major flaws in the objectivist approach to social problems? For each, explain what the flaw is and how it might confuse us as we try to differentiate between social problems and social conditions. Give examples to illustrate your points.

ANS:

Answer will vary.

2. What does a subjectivist approach add to our ability to define effectively what is and what is not a social problem?

ANS:

Answer will vary.

3. Describe the six stages in the natural history model of the social problems process. Be sure to clearly describe the actions and actors involved in each stage.

ANS:

Answer will vary.

4. Choose any social problem with which you are familiar and briefly describe the extent to which you believe it followed the natural history of the social problems process and why.

ANS:

Answer will vary.

5. Why might a wealthy corporation have more power within the social problems process than a low-income community? Be sure to address multiple stages in the process.

ANS:

Answer will vary.

6. What is the relationship between rhetoric and feedback within the social problems process?

ANS:

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Answer will vary.