

Heavily logical disciplines such as mathematics, geology, and astronomy are all academic fields based around truth and factual matters, and being as such, employ various procedures such as the scientific method specifically designed to assure truth. Other fields, however, such as a painting, poetry, and music, do not seek “truth” per se but rather to understand and venerate those arts for their emotive qualities. For these, applying the scientific method is not only useless but counterproductive, for there is no right or wrong in crafting a sonnet or a symphony, merely a different emotive effect. There are then some fields which walk the line between sciences and arts, engendering vigorous debates over the appropriate use of quantitative analysis. One of these fields is sociology, an area of research dedicated to learning about and understanding human society.

On this issue, there is little consensus amongst those in the discipline. The notion that sociology should be governed by the scientific method is called “sociological positivism.” Set out by social scientists such as August Comte and Emile Durkheim, this ideology focused on “social facts” – things like rates of divorce, crime, or suicide. To the contrary, writers such as Georg Hegel questioned such a hard analysis of human society, instead preferring a more qualitative approach as the best way to understand peoples’ interrelations. This view is commonly referred to as “sociological antipositivism.”

Those of the latter view would likely undertake an open-ended question analysis to understanding a particular social phenomenon and focus on descriptive rather than binary “yes or no” factors. In investigating social problems such as chronic welfare dependency, for example, they might be inclined to look to individualized case studies and the specific circumstances of each particular subject. Positivists, however, would look to which variables are strongest predictors – things such as background, education, intelligence, and mental illness – and draw conclusions based on a statistical analysis of these numbers and their interrelation.

The better view is that the “sociological positivism” of Comte and his followers is generally speaking no better than its opposite. Like all things, usefulness varies by circumstance, and sociology is no exception. Particular methods of understanding a situation might vary with effectiveness depending on the given situation and the availability of data, and therefore, “sociological antipositivism” might prove invaluable in one circumstance and nugatory in another. Like the technician who uses a plethora of tools for various jobs, both schools of thought have their place in understanding human society.

20. Which one of the following most accurately expresses the main point of the passage?
- (A) The traditional approach of “sociological positivism” which applied the scientific method to social science has come under criticism more recently and has been phased out by many modern sociologists in favor of a more subjective approach.
 - (B) While “Sociological positivism” is the predominant methodology of contemporary sociologists, it is not without criticism, and many argue against it.
 - (C) Sociological positivists believe that all fields of study should utilize the scientific method, while their opponents hold exactly the opposite view.
 - (D) There is disagreement in sociology between the “sociological positivists” who advocate an objective approach to sociology utilizing the scientific method, and their opponents who desire a more qualitative analysis.
 - (E) Sociology is a unique field in that it does not fall completely within those fields for which the scientific method is the predominant methodology or within those fields for which more qualitative approaches are taken, and scholars debate on how to classify it.
21. Based on the passage, which one of the following research methods would LEAST likely be employed by sociological antipositivists?
- (A) Holding follow-up interviews with recently paroled criminals.
 - (B) Exploring memoirs of mid-life crises for common themes.
 - (C) Investigating the median household income of different residential neighborhoods.
 - (D) Observing the early social interactions of young children.
 - (E) Interviewing protesting citizens as to their reasons for taking action.

22. In the final paragraph, the author is primarily concerned with
- (A) applying previous principles to a current problem
 - (B) articulating the advantages of sociological positivism
 - (C) explaining how the different theories operate in practice
 - (D) showing how both mentioned views are flawed and should be abandoned
 - (E) expressing a position on an established controversy
23. The use of which one of the following types of data would best exemplify what the author means by “hard analysis” in line 25?
- (A) Logbook entries of an employee about workplace experiences.
 - (B) Chapel records of the most common month and date for marriages.
 - (C) Responses to surveys of reasons for naming a child a particular name.
 - (D) Photographs of what was considered stylish fashion over the years.
 - (E) Narratives of an annual folk festival.
24. The view articulated in the last paragraph is most analogous to
- (A) A motorcyclist who owns and rides different motorcycles for off-road riding and highway riding.
 - (B) A physician who checks all patients experiencing chest pain for many unusual disorders so as to be on the safe side.
 - (C) An architect who defers to an engineer’s judgment as to the best way to make a building structurally sound.
 - (D) A birdwatcher who uses high-quality adjustable binoculars for their range and clarity.
 - (E) A student who repeatedly takes courses from the same professor that the student likes.
25. Which one of the following best describes the organization of the passage?
- (A) A basic principle is articulated; two different applications of that principle are then discussed.
 - (B) An important difference between disciplines is identified; the implications of that difference are elaborated upon for one particular discipline.
 - (C) A conclusion is advanced; two key reasons for that conclusion are expounded upon.
 - (D) An idea is proposed; the implications and potential problems with the idea are then acknowledged.
 - (E) A basic assumption is questioned; the reasons for such questioning are elaborated upon.
26. Based on the passage, which one of the following statements would the social scientists mentioned in line 22 be most likely to agree with?
- (A) Sociologists should be focused on publishing and sharing their ideas.
 - (B) In sociology, the most important goal should be to advise future social leaders.
 - (C) Sociology cannot be effectively categorized with any other academic discipline.
 - (D) Sociology should be about the pursuit of “truth” through observation and demonstration.
 - (E) For sociologists, gathering data is more important than interpreting it.

STOP

IF YOU FINISH BEFORE TIME IS CALLED, YOU MAY CHECK YOUR WORK ON THIS SECTION ONLY.
DO NOT WORK ON ANY OTHER SECTION IN THE TEST.