**Introduction to Sociology**

Chapter 12 “Modernization”: Assignments

**12.1 Is the World Getting Worse?**

**Q1**

Is the world getting worse according to you?

**Q2**

Why is it important that, if pessimistic world views are based on misconceptions, these beliefs are dispelled? Use the example of the commonly held belief that people are becoming less friendly and that crime is increasing -in other words, the belief that social cohesion erodes. In answering your question, rely on the concept of a self-fulling prophecy (Chapter 5.2).

**12.2 Wealth and health**

**Q1**

Suppose you read the following in your local newspaper:

“*Significant changes to welfare are no longer limited to the western world. The rapid increase of GDP per capita in developing countries reduces the gap between poor and rich in the world.”*

Do you agree that the gap between poor and rich has reduced? You may want to check Chapter 9 before answering this question.

**12.3 Peace and safety**

**Q1**

Chapter 12 describes trends in peace and safety, such as declining homicide rates and decreasing risks of plane crashes. Visit the website ‘Human Progress’ <https://humanprogress.org/finddata>), and select one aspect of which you think it relates to peace and safety.

Q1a. Then present and discuss the trend findings for this indicator: is there an increase in peace and safety? Why (not)? Which period do you focus on, and which countries (world regions) are included in your comparison?

Q1b. Can you also compare countries or world regions for the most recent time period for which you have data? Are there differences between countries (world regions)?

**12.6 Scientization**

**Q1**

Suppose that in the year 2000, two people at a certain university were ending up in a bit of fruitless discussion about who of the two was actually smartest. One was a professor (age 50 at that time), the other one was a student (age 20). The professor told the student that he did an IQ test 30 years ago (in the year 1970), when he was of the same age as the student, and that his IQ score was 151. The professor challenged the student to take an IQ test. The student agreed, and he ended up with a score of 148. The professor, hearing about the results, argued that he is smarter. Do you agree? Or do you have a strong counterargument?

**12.7 McDonaldization**

**Q1**

Take a certain sports you find interesting, such as soccer, tennis, swimming. Try to find out, using various reliable sources, how this sports has changed in the past decades in light of the long-term development called McDonaldization. Do you see an increase in rationalization in the sports you selected, i.e. more quantification, standardization, control and predictability? In which way?

**12.8 Value change**

**Q1**

Visit the Google Ngram Viewer, which can be found through the following link: <https://books.google.com/ngrams>. We are going to examine whether there seems to be a relation between modernization and the trust people have in each other. At the top of the webpage, you can insert any word or sentence you are interested in. The graph will display the usage of this word over time in all books of the Google Books library.

Q1a. What do you find when you enter the word ‘conformity’? And what happens when you use the word ‘self’?

Q1b. Are the findings in line with the modernization-individualism proposition?

Q1c. Can you reflect on possible issues of external validity when using a tool like the Ngram Viewer?

Q1d. Can you reflect on possible issues of reliability when using a tool like the Ngram Viewer?

**12.9 Population change**

**Q1**

As discussed in Chapter 12, there is consensus among social researchers that the demographic shifts over the past centuries have (had) many impactful consequences for societies. What do you think will be the biggest social problems?

**12.10 The dynamics of modernization**

**Q1**

The rationalization process is well documented, and the McDonaldization of society is still growing in significance, extending to sports teams, companies, and school systems. Explain how the increasingly rapid diffusion of rationalization and elements of quantification, standardization, control and predictability through society can partly be explained by *social learning* (Chapter 5). Which types of learning biases are likely of promote the diffusion of rational opinions? Which type(s) of learning biases may work as a counterforce?

**Chapter generic assignments**

**Q1**

Q1a. Fill out the following multi-level scheme to represent the second demographic transition, such that the macro-level outcome are ‘fertility rates’ and that these macro-level outcomes are influenced by the rise of ‘individualistic’, ‘emancipative’ values in society (paragraph 12.8).



Q1b. Someone might argue that, in this multilevel scheme, we don’t really need the initial macro condition (the top left box) because the values in society are just the sum of all individual values. Can you explain why this is not the case using insights you gained in e.g. Chapter 5.