Sociology A’ Level

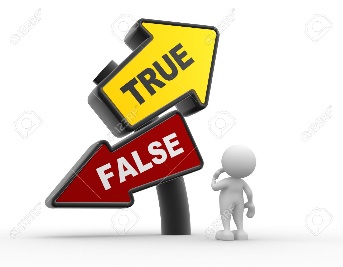
2025

Bridging tasks

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Name:

What is sociology?

[](https://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwiYxd7Fjp7OAhXFcRQKHeyBDF8QjRwIBw&url=http://www.123rf.com/photo_36627152_3d-people--man-person-and-directional-sign-true-or-false.html&bvm=bv.128617741,d.ZGg&psig=AFQjCNENE45HehYkEbbq2nQl95o8bZqpZA&ust=1470068623097175)

**Which of the following statements about sociology do you think are true and which are false?**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **True** | **False** |
| Sociologists study human behaviour like obedience and memory |  |  |
| Sociologists collect data themselves by doing research |  |  |
| Sociologists can be controversial in their views of the world |  |  |
| Sociologists will often work with mentally ill people |  |  |
| Sociologists ask difficult questions about social issues like cybercrime |  |  |
| Sociologists are interested in patterns and causes of social behaviour |  |  |
| Sociologists believe that they can solve the problems in society |  |  |

**Now read the section ‘What is sociology’ in the scanned pages from the A1 Sociology textbook and summarise what sociology is about in the space below.**

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The distinction between nature and nurture

Scientists often debate about what causes humans to behave in the ways that they do. Some think human behaviour is driven by nature and others think it is nurture. Decide whether the following words relate to nature or nurture. Write them in the table below.

* Environmental
* Internal
* Learnt
* Inherited
* Biological
* Inborn
* External
* Genetic
* Socialised

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Nature** | **Nurture** |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |



Ask the expert!

Using ChatGPT, find out if you were right.

Now read the section ‘Nature and Nurture’ in the scanned pages from the A1 Sociology textbook and summarise where sociologists side in this debate in the space below.

Checking your understanding!

Suggest **two behaviours** that are caused by nature and **two** that are caused by nurture.

Explain why you think this.

* One behaviour that is caused by nature is….

I think this because….

* A second behaviour that is caused by nature is….

I think this because….

* One behaviour that is caused by nurture is….

I think this because….

* A second behaviour that is caused by nurture is….

I think this because….

A close-up of a book

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

**Answer the questions in the space below.**

Culture, norms and values

When sociologists study society, they try to understand the way of life people have. That is to say, they are interested in the norms, values, beliefs and traditions of a group of people. They make NO assumptions and take nothing for granted.

The aim of sociologists is to understand not to judge, and certainly not to try and change how people live. In understanding society, sociologists are actually trying to find about about the way of life of a group of people, no matter how small or how different to their own. We refer to the way of life as the **culture** of society.

Sociologists define **culture** as all those things that are **learned** and **shared** by a society or group of people and **transmitted** from generation to generation. Culture includes all the things society thinks are important, such as **customs, traditions, language, skills, knowledge, beliefs, norms** and **values**.

Here's an example:



It is part of the culture (way of life) of Americans to pledge their allegiance to their country.

This is usually done at significant events and on specific occasions. It is even done in the morning in kindergarten, where children will stand and face the US flag, place their right hand on their heart and in unison repeat the words of the pledge of allegiance.

**Think of some examples of things that are important to your culture.**

Read the section on culture, norms and values in the scanned pages from the A1 Sociology textbook and complete the tasks that follow.

1. What are values?
2. What are values?
3. What might happen if we break a norm?
4. What are sanctions and why are they a form of social control?
5. Cultural norms and values vary between societies and between groups within one society. What do we call the groups within society who may have different norms and values? Suggest one example.

Socialisation

Sociologists define **socialisation** as the **process of learning** about one’s culture. We are not born with a culture – instead, we must learn it from other members of society.

**[](https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwix5_uiqJ7OAhXMnRoKHaPmAngQjRwIBw&url=https://georginatalksgender.wordpress.com/2012/02/28/socialisation-and-gender/&bvm=bv.128617741,d.ZGg&psig=AFQjCNGCbvznh2VLf9IMedctum3RU8gwMA&ust=1470075429317022)**

Socialisation begins when we are born and continues throughout our life. Sociologists distinguish between **Primary Socialisation** and **Secondary Socialisation**.

**Primary Socialisation….**

**Secondary Socialisation….**

The whole purpose of socialisation, whether at home or in wider society, is to prepare us for the **roles** we need to perform in society.

**In the table below, think of 4 roles you perform (or will perform in the future) and then explain what the role will require of you and how you have been prepared for this through your socialisation.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Role** | **What the role requires of you** | **How you have been prepared for this role** |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

Complete the activity below.

A screenshot of a social media post

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

Each role has a **status**. Some roles have an **ascribed status**: based on fixed characteristics we are born with, for example, our sex or ethnicity and others are **achieved** through effort, for example, becoming a doctor by going to university.

A person’s status determines which norms of behaviour that person should have.

**For each of the roles below, decide if they are ascribed or achieved.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Role** | **Ascribed** | **Achieved** |
| **Parent** |  |  |
| **Teacher** |  |  |
| **Child** |  |  |
| **Pilot** |  |  |
| **Husband/wife** |  |  |
| **Fashion designer** |  |  |

There are, however, some issues with this argument. You could say that people may well be born male and be ascribed a male identity but as they grown up, they decide that they have been ascribed the wrong gender. This is known as being transgender.

Therefore, it is more likely that many of our roles are ascribed and achieved.

**For each of the roles below compile a set of norms for that role.**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Child | Doctor | Parent | Teacher |
| Dependent | Responsible | Nurturing | Organised |

[](https://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=&url=http://weshuffstutter.tumblr.com/&psig=AFQjCNH1ZzuGQIfLD7pCzhkryUmhsbRFQA&ust=1470128069173593)Check your understanding!

Sociologists study \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ behaviour and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ issues. They often ask controversial \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and can be very \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of society. Sociologists argue that we are not born with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ but must learn it through a process known as socialisation. This is how other members of society teach us the \_\_\_\_\_\_ and values, rules and expectations. This helps explain why culture varies from society to society, since the norms and values we are socialised to believe in vary in each society. There are two types of socialisation, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ socialisation that occurs within the family, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ socialisation that occurs outside of the family, within other institutions such as education. We also earn about roles and status through the socialisation process. \_\_\_\_\_\_ are the different things we will do in our life, such as being a parent or employee. Some roles have an \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ status: based on fixed characteristics we are born with, for example, our sex or ethnicity and others are achieved through\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, for example, going to university.A person’s \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ determines which norms of behaviour that person should have.

Primary Social Status

Secondary Ascribed Human

Critical Culture Norms

Questions Effort Roles

The difference between structural and social action views of society, and between consensus and conflict views

There are many sociologists who have tried to explain how society works and why there are social issues such as crime and poverty. Sociologists do **not** all agree with each other. A little like politicians!

Throughout the course you will learn about these different sociologists and their explanations. You will also learn to be critical of them.

Before you start the course though, it is important that you have a basic understanding of some of the **assumption’s** sociologists make.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **The structuralist view** | | **The Social Action view** |
| **Assumptions**  These sociologists argue that we are entirely shaped by the structure of society. We behave according to the way we were socialised. Society has the power to shape us.  **Society determines behaviour.** | | **Assumptions**  These sociologists argue we have free will or choice and individuals have the power to create society through their actions and interactions.  **Individuals determine society.** |
| Consensus theories | Conflict theories | Interactionist theories |

**Which view do you think you agree with? Why?**

[](https://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwjD4NP895_OAhVHPRQKHcdhD8wQjRwIBw&url=http://www.clipartpanda.com/categories/man-thinking-image&bvm=bv.128617741,d.ZGg&psig=AFQjCNFPig2foUyk-ZCRFKHAoDcAuheTlw&ust=1470131269054635)

In practice, most sociologists accept that individuals do have some degree of choice, as the Social Action view argues, but that their choices are limited by the structure of society, as the structural view argues.

**For example:**

****Society expects all children to be educated in the UK. This is a compulsory activity; over which children have no free will or choice. Therefore, the structure of society expects all children to attend some form of education or training up until the age of 18 years old. However, children do have some choice over the school they attend and the qualifications they study for, so therefore, there is a degree of choice too.

**Suggest another example that illustrates this point.**

Structuralist views of society

Structuralists **agree** that society shapes our behaviour, but they **disagree** about who this benefits.

There are four Structuralist theories/approaches. They are:

* **Functionalism**
* **New Right**
* **Marxism**
* **Feminism**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **The structuralist view** | |
| **Assumptions**  Argues that we are entirely shaped by the structure of society. We behave according to the way we were socialised. Society has the power to shape us.  **Society determines behaviour.** | |
| Consensus theories | Conflict theories |
| Functionalist and New Right | Marxist and Feminist |

We can split Structuralists into **consensus** and **conflict** theories.

**Consensus Structuralists**, most notably **Functionalists**, argue that society is based on value consensus (agreement) and therefore society exists in harmony.

**Conflict Structuralists**, most notably **Marxists**, argue that society is based on conflict. They argue there is a conflict of interests between the social classes.

Read the section ‘consensus or conflict’ in thescanned pages from the A1 Sociology textbook and summarise the Marxist and Functionalist views of society in the table on the next page.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Functionalist view of society** | **Marxist view of society** |
|  |  |

Inequality

Britain remains an unequal society. For example, the richest 10% of the population own 44% of the nation’s total wealth, while the poorest half of the population share 9% of the total wealth.

Sociologists are interested in social stratification –that is, inequalities between groups such as social classes, gender ethnicity and age.

Read the section ‘inequality’ in thescanned pages from the A1 Sociology textbook and summarise how inequality exists in each of the social groups.

Ethnicity

Gender

Inequality

Age

Social class

[](https://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwiYxd7Fjp7OAhXFcRQKHeyBDF8QjRwIBw&url=http://www.123rf.com/photo_36627152_3d-people--man-person-and-directional-sign-true-or-false.html&bvm=bv.128617741,d.ZGg&psig=AFQjCNENE45HehYkEbbq2nQl95o8bZqpZA&ust=1470068623097175)True or false?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **True** | **False** |
| More women than men live in poverty in the UK |  |  |
| The very old and very young are likely to be the poorest in society, compared to other age groups |  |  |
| The infant mortality rate for African Caribbean and Pakistani babies are more than double that of white babies in the UK |  |  |
| People in the highest social class are 3 times more likely to be smokers and 5 times more likely to die of lung cancer than lowest class |  |  |
| Unemployment is almost twice as high for minority ethnic groups than for white people in the UK |  |  |
| On average men earn 15% less than women earn |  |  |
| Younger people are restricted from working and earn less than older workers in the UK |  |  |

**Why does this matter? In your own words, explain why you think these inequalities are important to understand.**

[](https://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=&url=http://knitting40shadesofgreen.typepad.com/jazzyjas/personal_history/&bvm=bv.128617741,d.ZGg&psig=AFQjCNG_63_HT1Rb_NRpWBQvo6FThsSOgQ&ust=1470138130866413)How do sociologists study society?

Just like all research-based science subjects, sociologists must collect evidence to support their theories. To collect evidence sociologist’ use a range of different research methods.

These include:

* **Social surveys** (questionnaires or interviews): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* **Participant observations**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* **Official statistics**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Independent learning task**

Using the Internet, find out about one of the research methods above. You need to be able to describe some of its features, as well as one strength and one weakness.

The method I have chosen is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Features of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

One strength is:

One weakness is: