

Key introductory terms

Sociology	The study of society. Sociologists look at a range of factors in someone's social world.
Society	A social grouping that shares the same geographical territory and has the same political authority and expectations.
Culture	The whole way of life of a group of people in society e.g. clothes, food, music.
Norms	These define appropriate and expected behaviour in different certain settings e.g. classroom, cinema, restaurant.
Values	Ideas and beliefs that people have about what is desirable and worth striving for e.g. privacy & respect
Socialisation	Learning the norms and values of your culture and society.
Primary socialisation	This takes place in early childhood and is where we learn basic behaviours and skills we need. Family are responsible.
Secondary socialisation	This takes place in later childhood and beyond, learn norms, values and culture. Agencies include education and media.
Nature	The idea that behaviour and characteristics are innate (we are born with them) and due to biology.
Nurture	The idea that behaviour and characteristics are learnt from our environment (sociologists believe this)
Social structures	These form society's framework and set limits and guide behaviour e.g. family, class.
Social processes	The ways that humans are affected by their interactions with others in society e.g. racism.
Social issues	These form society's framework and set limits and guide behaviour e.g. family, class.
Status	A person's social standing or position in society. This can be affected by gender, age, class etc.

GCSE Sociology Knowledge Organiser Sociological approaches and methods

Functionalist approach

Key sociologist: Durkheim

- * Society is positive and is in harmony
 - * There is value consensus – everyone agrees on what is important
 - * Society is like a human body, we need all parts of it to be able to function
 - * Agencies such as family, education and crime all help to keep society running smoothly and these are positive
 - * No group in society has more power than another group
- But... Functionalists are accused of viewing society too positively.

Marxist approach

Key sociologist: Karl Marx

- * Society is negative and is based on conflict
- * Capitalism creates a divide between two social classes
- * The ruling class (bourgeoisie) own the businesses and exploit the working class (proletariat) for profit
- * Family, education, crime etc. all work to keep the class divide and benefit the ruling class
- * The working class do not realise they are being exploited
- * The only way to overcome this inequality is a revolution (and society becoming communist)

Feminist approach

- * Society is negative and is based on conflict
- * Society is divided by gender and is based on patriarchy (male domination and power)
- * Men have power and dominance in society and women are oppressed
- * Family, education, crime etc. all work to keep the gender divide and exploit women
- * For example, women may be victims of domestic abuse and may be taught gender roles that limit their opportunities in society

Weber's approach

- * People's ideas, values and skills have more of an influence on their position in society than class and money
- * Status (someone's social position) is not always linked to their class/money
- * E.g. some people have high status but do not have a lot of money (junior doctors) whereas some people may have low status but lots of money (lottery winners)

Interactionist approach

- * Society does not influence everyone in the same way
- * Everyone's experiences are different, you can't generalise about behaviour
- * People can be labelled as something (e.g. clever, naughty) which can affect how they see themselves
- * People might accept and live up to the label through a self-fulfilling prophecy

New Right approach

- * Society should be based on traditional values such as marriage
- * People should not be reliant on welfare benefits as this can create an underclass
- * Nuclear families are the best type (with a married mum and dad) and lone-parent families can cause issues

Consensus vs. conflict theories

Consensus theories

- * These theories believe society is based on consensus (agreement) and is in harmony
- * Everyone shares the same norms and values and no one group has more power than another
- * E.g. functionalism

Conflict theories

- * These theories believe society is based on conflict (disagreement) and is divided
- * People in society have different norms/beliefs/values
- * Some groups have more power than others
- * E.g. feminism, Marxism

Key methods terms

Aim	A general statement about what a sociologist expects to find out in research
Hypothesis	A prediction about what the sociologist expects they will find in research
Pilot study	A small test-run of a study which is carried out before the main study to check for any problems (e.g. equipment)
Sampling	How participants are chosen to take part in a study (e.g. volunteer, opportunity)
Primary data	Data which is collected first hand by the researchers (e.g. using a questionnaire or interview)
Secondary data	Data that already exists and is used by the researcher (e.g. official statistics, letters)
Quantitative data	Data which IS in the form of numbers
Qualitative data	Data which is NOT in the form of numbers and tends to be visual or in letters (e.g. diaries, photographs)
Validity	The accuracy of the findings – how truthful the data is.
Reliability	How consistent the findings are. If we repeated the study, would we find the same results?

Sampling methods

Random – all participants have an equal chance of being chosen (e.g. names out of hat)
 ✓ Less biased and likely to be more representative
 ✗ May not be fully representative – could choose all males

Volunteer – participants choose/self-select to take part (e.g. responding to an advert)
 ✓ Easy to gain a sample, less likely to drop out
 ✗ May not be representative – only certain people will agree

Opportunity – participants who are available are chosen
 ✓ Easy to gain a sample ✗ may not be representative

Stratified – participants chosen according to % in the population
 ✓ Most representative ✗ difficult for the researcher to do

Primary research methods

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
Questionnaires	✓ Participants are likely to be honest as anonymous ✓ Can be given to a large sample so more representative	✗ Participants may not understand the questions ✗ May not be honest as want to appear desirable
Structured interviews (set questions)	✓ Can compare responses easily between participants ✓ Less likely to be biased as set questions	✗ May not get full detail or gain a deep understanding ✗ Cannot ask additional questions
Unstructured interviews (no set questions)	✓ Can get full detail and a deep understanding ✓ You can build rapport/relationship so may be more honest	✗ May not get full detail or gain a deep understanding ✗ Cannot ask additional questions
Group interviews	✓ Can gain a variety of opinions ✓ May be more honest as have group support	✗ Some participants might take over the interview ✗ Participants might be embarrassed to be honest
Participant observation (researcher joins group)	✓ May understand behaviour more as joining in ✓ Can ask questions to help with research	✗ Could be biased as too involved ✗ Difficult to note behaviour so may not be accurate
Non-participant observation (watches from a distance)	✓ Less likely to be biased as not involved ✓ Easier to note behaviour so more likely to be accurate	✗ May not get full understanding of behaviour as not involved in the group
Longitudinal study (follows a group over time)	✓ Can look at the influence of different factors over time ✓ Can gain detailed information of the group you study	✗ Participants may drop out of the study ✗ Sample is likely to be small so not representative

Secondary sources of data

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
Official statistics (quantitative)	✓ Often large sample sizes – more representative ✓ Easy to analyse and compare over time as quantitative ✓ Likely to be accurate as collected by the government	✗ May not give reasons for behaviour (just trends) ✗ May not include all behaviours e.g. crime statistics may ignore the dark figure
Documents (qualitative) e.g. letters, diaries, school reports	✓ Lots of detailed data as qualitative ✓ Can find reasons behind behaviour	✗ May be small sample sizes and not representative ✗ May be time-consuming to analyse ✗ Could be biased and not valid

Triangulation and mixed methods

Where a sociologist uses more than one method to find out lots of information about a topic e.g. using a questionnaire, interview and observation.
 Is used to:
 Gain more data on a topic
 Check the validity/accuracy of the data
 ✗ But, the data may be difficult compare as it is collected using different methods.