

S6F Sociology A-Level

What is Sociology?


Which unit do I think I will enjoy the most?

What is the one thing I can't wait to discuss or learn more about...




Paper 1
Education
 Methods in Context

Paper 2
Families & Households

Paper 3
Crime & Deviance


Paper 2
Media


Paper 1 & 3
 Theory and/or Methods



The Study of Human Behaviour: Nature or Nurture?

People disagree about whether our behaviour is something natural that we are born with (nature) or whether it is the result of our upbringing in society and our environment (nurture).

Biologists would examine how our behaviour is shaped by natural instincts. However sociologists question this and argue that much of our behaviour is learned. Instead of looking at biological reasons for our behaviour, sociologists look towards **culture and socialisation** instead.

Culture: Without human contact we are reduced to basic and instinctive behaviour. But when humans work together they create cultures that are complex and different. We become human through this interaction with others, creating our culture. If human behaviour were really directed by just our genes or instincts, we would expect to find people behaving in much the same way all over the world. But what is regarded as normal behaviour varies from one culture to another. If we lived in Victorian Britain or in modern China, we would follow different customs and have different lifestyles. So human behaviour is flexible and diverse. It varies according to the culture we live in.



Sociologists usually define culture as the shared values and norms of a society or group.

There may be some cultural variation within one society. For example, in Britain there are many different groups that may have their own subcultures that vary from the mainstream. Cultures may also change over time. Attitudes to different behaviours may change, such as attitudes to smoking or sex before marriage.

Values: are things we regard as important, the most significant standards or principles in our lives. The value of human life is an obvious example. Other examples are religious convictions and political loyalties. In everyday life, most people subscribe to the values of honesty, consideration towards others, justice and fairness.



Norms: are social expectations or rules about how people should or should not behave- for example, you should hold the door open for others, you should join the back of a queue. There are different rules for different situations and contexts – you can let your hair down at an end-of-term party, but the same behaviour would be frowned upon during normal class time. Norms also vary in their degree of seriousness. Committing murder will result in severe legal punishment but bad table manners might only provide irritation in others.

Socialisation

The process of learning our culture is called socialisation. When living in a human society, we learn our social norms and values from being children. Many of the social institutions described earlier in this resource – family, education – are involved in the process of socialisation. One of the key functions of the family, according to some sociologists, is to socialise children into the norms and values of society. Sociologists make the distinction between:

- Primary socialisation: this takes place in the family, where we are taught by our parents. These are often the norms that are expected of us within our family.
- Secondary socialisation: this takes place later, in education, the workplace or by the media. These are norms which are from the wider society and the adult world.

Social Control

The methods society uses to ensure people comply with the rules and regulations are known as social control. Social control may involve punishments or rewards to help reinforce what acceptable norms of behaviour are within society. Social control can also take place in an informal way, such as through peers, neighbours and our families.



Task A

1. Briefly explain how sociologists define culture.
2. Give one example of how culture can vary within a society.
3. Using examples explain the difference between high culture and popular culture
4. Briefly explain the difference between primary and secondary socialisation.
5. Give one example of formal social control.
6. Briefly explain the process of informal social control.
7. Using examples explain how a person learns the norms and values of society.

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

6.	
7.	

Task B: In Sociology we love to discuss and debate, here are some of the most fun debates we've had. Let me know what you think! Can you find any news articles that support your point?

	Your Opinion	Evidence	Someone else's opinion... family member/friend etc.
Footballers pay - Should they be paid more/less?			
Are gender and sex the same thing?			
Are reality tv shows good for us? Are reality stars real celebrities?			
Does the UK education system work?			
Is Meghan Markle treated fairly by the press?			

Is there a class divide in the UK?			
Does the criminal justice system do its job?			
Write one of your own...			

TASK C: Pick one of the statements from above and write a little rant about it

TASK D: Can you now argue the opposite point of view?