

GCSE SOCIOLOGY

UNIT 1 REVISION BOOKLET

Studying Society The Family Education

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STUDYING SOCIETY

Studying Society tests your knowledge of sociology in 2 main ways:

1. The terms and concepts sociologists use;
2. The research that sociologists do.

KEY TERMS

Below are the sociological terms you need to know – you could be asked for the definitions of any of these on the exam.

Term	Definition
Sociological approach	A way of understanding human society that focuses on social structures
Psychological approach	A way of understanding human behaviour by looking at individual make-up (brain, thinking patterns, personality etc.)
Biological approach	A way of understanding humans by looking at their biological make-up (genes, chromosomes, hormones etc.)
Power	Where a person or group is able to direct the behaviour of another person or group. This can be through direct exercise of power (force, dominance, authority) or indirectly (coercion, persuasion, expertise).
Social Control	Ways of ensuring people behave in socially acceptable ways, such as socialisation, laws, exercise of power etc.
Social Structure	Structures organised around people, such as the family, schools, government, religion etc.
Culture	Where a group of people share common norms, values and beliefs.
Subculture	A smaller group of people who share norms, values and beliefs that are different from the main culture.
Socialisation	The process of learning norms, values and beliefs. This can be primary or secondary.
Institution of socialisation	The different social structures that are involved in socialising members of society, such as the family, education system, mass media, religion etc.
Race	A term that suggests differences in culture, nationality, skin colour etc. are biological.
Ethnicity	A term that refers to differences in culture but is not based on biology – this is about social differences.
Sex	A term referring the biological categories of male and female, as defined by genes, chromosomes and hormones.
Gender	A term referring to the social categories of masculine and feminine, which are usually related to the biological categories of male and female due to stereotyping and gender role socialisation.
Age	The process of aging is biological, but there are sociological points to make about this (for example, children are treated differently to adults, the mass media tend to present negative stereotypes of older people etc.)
Stereotype	A 'typical' image of a person based on social categories such as gender, age, ethnicity, family position, job etc.
Deviance	Acting in a way that goes against a culture's norms, values and beliefs.
Norms	Ways to act and behave that are seen as 'normal' within a culture / subculture.
Values	The things that a culture / subculture believes are important (eg. earning a living, owning a house).
Beliefs	The things that a culture / subculture believes in (God, the innocence of children etc.).

SAMPLING METHODS

A sample is a selection of the population who are chosen to take part in research. Sociologists use samples because it is not practical to ask all of the population. It is important that the sample is as *representative* of the population as possible.

A sampling method is how the sample is selected.

Sampling Method	Strengths	Weaknesses
<p><u>Stratified Sampling</u> This involves picking people from different groups within the population (eg. different genders, ethnicities, ages, social classes).</p>	The sample will be representative and give the point of view of all the different groups in the population.	It is more time-consuming to select the sample than other sampling methods.
<p><u>Random Sampling</u> The sample is selected by picking names out of a hat (or with a computer) – like the National Lottery balls.</p>	There is no researcher bias in who is selected and everyone stands an equal chance of being selected. It is also quick and easy to use.	The sample might be all the same sort of people (eg. too many males), so it will not be <i>representative</i> of the whole population.
<p><u>Quota Sampling</u> The researcher picks participants until they have the number they need (ie their 'quota').</p>	It is a quick and easy way to select the right sort of people for the research.	The sample is likely to be biased because the researcher is choosing the participants.
<p><u>Systematic Sampling</u> The researcher uses a system to pick the participants (eg. every 10th name on the register).</p>	The participants will be a cross-section of the population, so will hopefully be representative.	Only the people on the register stand a chance of being selected.
<p><u>Snowball Sampling</u> The researcher selects one person, then asks them to put them in touch with other people, etc.</p>	Useful for researching hard to contact groups (eg. gangs).	Very time-consuming, so only small samples are used and the results are not generalisable.

ETHICS

- Ethics are morals.
- Researchers follow ethical guidelines, which are rules about how they treat their participants. These are set out by the British Sociological Association.
- Ethical issues can arise in research and sociologists must do everything they can to address these.

The main ethical issues:

- Get informed consent (or parents' consent for under 16s).
- Debrief participants after the research.
- Do not harm or distress the participants.
- Give participants the right to withdraw.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Keep the research anonymous.
- Do not deceive the participants.

RESEARCH METHODS

- Primary research is the best way to obtain valid data, but it is time-consuming and not always necessary.
- Secondary data can be useful, especially when looking at historical events, or if another researcher has already investigated the thing we want to know about.
- Most sociologists use a mix of primary and secondary research.

The Key Terms below are used when explaining how good or bad a piece of research is.



The table below is a summary of the main primary and secondary research methods / sources of information (data).

PRIMARY RESEARCH	SECONDARY RESEARCH
<p>This is when researchers collect the data themselves.</p> <p>Strengths (<i>more valid</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The information is 'firsthand' so is more likely to be accurate. • The information is more likely to be relevant. <p>Weaknesses (<i>less reliable</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting research can be very time-consuming and expensive. • It is difficult to collect a lot of information. 	<p>This is when researchers use data collected by somebody else.</p> <p>Strengths (<i>more reliable</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is easy to collect a lot of data quickly and cheaply. • There are lots of sources of data available. <p>Weaknesses (<i>less valid</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The information is more likely to be biased. • The researchers might have their own agenda.
Primary Research Methods (Sources of Information)	Secondary Research (Sources of Information)
<p>Questionnaires A set of written questions that are completed by the respondent.</p> <p>Interviews A one-to-one discussion with the respondent.</p> <p>Observations Watching participants to investigate their behaviour.</p> <p>Experiments Situations designed to test the participants (not used much in Sociology).</p>	<p>Statistics Numerical (quantitative) data collected by official organisations, private companies or other researchers.</p> <p>Media reports, blogs, forums etc. Written reports and commentaries by journalists and other people.</p> <p>Letters, emails, profile pages etc. Personal correspondence between people.</p> <p>Research Studies Studies conducted by other researchers.</p>
MORE DETAILS ON THESE METHODS / SOURCES COMING NEXT!	

Primary Research Methods	Secondary Research (Sources)
<p>Postal / Email Questionnaires: The researcher sends out the questionnaires to the respondent. They complete them and send them back to the researcher.</p> <p>ADVANTAGES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they are quick to distribute, so it is possible to send them to lots of people (representative and reliable). <p>DISADVANTAGES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • people might not send them back (only about 10% do usually – reduces reliability and representativeness); • people also might not understand the questions (less valid). 	<p>Official Statistics: These are statistics published by the government (or government agencies, such as the police or NHS).</p> <p>ADVANTAGES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The data is usually based on the whole population (representative). <p>DISADVANTAGES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The way the data is collected can change (for example: the definitions of crime change all the time – less reliable); • The data may be politically biased (less valid).
<p>Direct Questionnaires: The researcher waits whilst the respondent fills in the questionnaire.</p> <p>ADVANTAGES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • everyone who received a questionnaire completes it (representative and reliable); • the researcher can also explain what questions mean if they need to (valid). <p>DISADVANTAGES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the respondent might be influenced by the researcher and therefore doesn't answer honestly (researcher effects). 	<p>Media Reports: These are articles published by newspapers and magazines.</p> <p>ADVANTAGES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The data is easy to access; • Old articles can be analysed to understand important historical events. <p>DISADVANTAGES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The information is biased – newspapers and magazines have their own opinions, but also write sensational stories to sell papers.
<p>Formal (Structured / Semi-structured) Interviews: The researcher decides on questions beforehand and asks the participant face-to-face in a spoken interview.</p> <p>ADVANTAGES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All participants are asked exactly the same questions (reliable); • The researcher can explain what questions mean (valid); • The participant can also explain their answers further in a semi-structured interview (valid). <p>DISADVANTAGES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the respondent might be influenced by the researcher and therefore doesn't answer honestly (researcher effects). 	<p>Letters: These are personal letters, often from people in unusual circumstances.</p> <p>ADVANTAGES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letters can help us understand the experiences of people in rare situations (eg. times of war – highly valid); • Letters provide information we may not be able to find any other way. <p>DISADVANTAGES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The information is biased – letters are based entirely on personal experiences and opinions.
<p>Informal (Unstructured) Interviews: The researcher has an open discussion with the participant with no set questions.</p> <p>ADVANTAGES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants can talk about what is important to them (valid); • The researcher can ask the participant what their answers mean (valid). <p>DISADVANTAGES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every interview is different, so it is hard to compare the results of all the interviews (less reliable); 	<p>Research Studies Studies conducted by other sociologists are the most useful of all types of secondary data.</p> <p>ADVANTAGES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studies are conducted properly, using carefully planned research methods (valid and reliable); • Studies are much less biased than newspapers and government reports (valid). <p>DISADVANTAGES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The original aim of the study may be different to ours, so not all information may be relevant (less valid);

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>the respondent might be influenced by the researcher and therefore doesn't answer honestly (researcher effects).</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>We have to rely on the researcher doing it properly.</i>
Primary Research Methods continued!	
<p>Participant Observations: The researcher joins in with the activities of the participants (the people they are observing).</p> <p>ADVANTAGES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The researcher can directly watch how participants behave (valid);</i> • <i>The researcher can see the world from participants' point of view (valid).</i> <p>DISADVANTAGES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>If participants know they are being observed, then they will not act naturally (Hawthorne Effect – less valid);</i> • <i>The researcher might have to get involved in criminal behaviour (unethical);</i> • <i>If participants do not know they are being observed, then they can not give their permission (consent – unethical).</i> 	
<p>Direct (Non-participant) Observations: The researcher observes the participants at a distance (fly on the wall).</p> <p>ADVANTAGES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The researcher can directly watch how participants behave (valid).</i> <p>DISADVANTAGES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>If participants know they are being observed, then they will not act naturally (Hawthorne Effect – less valid);</i> • <i>The researcher can not see the world from the participants' point of view (less valid);</i> • <i>If participants do not know they are being observed, then they can not give their permission (consent – unethical).</i> 	
<p>Observations can also be:</p> <p>Overt The participants know they are being observed.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Covert The researcher goes undercover, so the participants do not know they are being observed.</p>	

THE FAMILY

KEY DEFINITIONS

- A household is the term used to describe the group of people living together in the same place e.g. a family, group of students, a couple fostering children, a lodger renting a room in a house.
- A family is all the people who are related to each other either through blood, marriage or adoption.

SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO THE FAMILY

Approach	Views on the family
Functionalism	<p>Functionalists see the family as POSITIVE for society.</p> <p>They believe that the nuclear family is a positive institution that is beneficial to society - they look at the functions that the nuclear family performs for the good of society as a whole. These functions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reproduction - the family has children which means the human race keeps going • Primary socialisation - the family teaches children norms (acceptable behaviour) and values (right and wrong) • Economic support – The family gives financial support, it feeds and provides shelter for it's members
New Right	<p>The New Right see the family as NEGATIVE for society if it is not a nuclear family.</p> <p>They have similar views to Functionalists. They believe that the nuclear family is very important to society. They say that children from nuclear families:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do better at school • Get better jobs • Do not turn to crime <p>The New Right believe that Single parents and same sex couples are bad for society.</p>
Marxism	<p>Marxists see the family as NEGATIVE for society.</p> <p>Marxists are critical of the family and society. They believe society is based on a conflict between the classes – working class and ruling class. The family helps to maintain class differences in society as the rich can afford to give their children a better start in life than the poor, e.g. pay for a better education, get them a good job either in their own business or their friends businesses. Marxists believe the family socialises the working class to accept that it is fair that the classes are unequal.</p>
Feminism	<p>Feminists see the family as NEGATIVE for society.</p> <p>Feminists believe the family is bad for women. Girls and boys learn their different gender roles within the family through socialisation. Girls copy their mothers, doing housework, whilst boys copy their fathers, doing DIY. They then learn that this is how male and female roles should be. Feminists believe that the family is male dominated – the term for this is patriarchal.</p>

DIFFERENT FAMILY STRUCTURES

There are many different family types that exist in Britain today. The 2 main family types people are aware of are extended and nuclear families.

- A **nuclear family** typically consists of a mother, father and dependent children.
- An **extended family** consists of parents and children along with either:
 - Grandparents – vertically extended (different generations)
 - Aunts and uncles – horizontally extended
- **The modern nuclear family** – married or cohabiting couples with or without children.
- **The reconstituted family** – a family created as a result of divorced couples remarrying who may have children from their previous marriage.
- **The lone parent family** – the fastest growing family structure in Britain. Where one parent brings up 1 or more children
- **Same sex families** (lesbian or gay) account for a small proportion of all families but have increased in number more recently as a result of The Civil Partnership Act of 2005 which legally recognised same-sex relationships.

CHANGES IN THE FAMILY

In the 1950s most families were traditional nuclear families, with a mother, father and their children. The parents were married and usually the children would be their biological offspring.

Nowadays there are many different types of families – the modern nuclear family is closest to the traditional nuclear family, but the adults may live together without being married (cohabit) and they might not have children. In the past it made sense to talk about “The Family”, but now it is more accurate to talk about “Families” because there is so much diversity.

On the next couple of pages you will find a table containing a list of some of the main changes that have happened to families during the last 60 years or so and some of the reasons why the family has changed.

Different sociologists will view these changes in different ways, seeing some of them as good or bad for society. Some of the main sociological opinions are also given below.

I have not included the Marxist view on different families in the table as they are critical of all family structures, because they are still used maintain class inequality. They do say that there are class differences in these changes, with the middle class more likely to be traditional nuclear families and more single parents in the working and under class (the unemployed).

IMPORTANT REVISION TIP FOR ANYONE STRUGGLING WITH ALL THIS!!!!

If you are finding this all a bit too much, then make sure you can explain the ways that the family has changed and the top reason for each change. Don't worry about remembering the whole table below!

Change In Family	Reasons	Opinions (Perspectives)
More people living together without being married.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less people practice religion nowadays (going to church, believing in God etc.) so do not see living together or having children outside of marriage as a sin. People can now opt for a civil partnership rather than traditional marriage. More people get divorced and may decide not to remarry when they meet a new partner. There are more same sex couples, who until recently were not allowed to marry. People are more likely to live together as a trial before deciding to get married. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feminists say this is a good thing, as marriage is a patriarchal institution, meaning it keeps men in power and oppresses (pushes down) women. Gay rights groups also say this is a good thing, as gay couples are only allowed to marry in some religions, but in others being homosexual is a sin. Living together or having a legal civil partnership increases gay equality. Most Functionalists are OK with the traditional nuclear family, as it still serves the function of socialising children and teaching them how to be useful members of society. Some Functionalists and the New Right believe that the traditional nuclear family is the only family that can do the job properly, so would argue that parents should be married and stay together for life.
More single parent families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Divorce Act in the 1960s made it easier for people to get a divorce and usually one parent gets custody of the children. There are more teenaged pregnancies than in the past, where the mother and father are unlikely to be in a long-term relationship. The availability of in-vitro-fertilisation (IVF) and sperm banks mean women can have children without needing to have a sexual relationship with a man. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feminists fought for the change to divorce law, as many women were in abusive marriages and couldn't get out of them. Therefore, they see divorce as a positive thing. However, they also point out that it is women who take on most of the childcare and are left with the burden of bringing up the baby on their own when relationships don't work out, which means more women are living in poverty. Functionalists do not think that a single parent family can perform all the important functions of the family (eg. gender role socialisation, financially providing for children etc.), so are against this type of family. The New Right are completely against

		<p>this type of family and see it as responsible for everything that is wrong with society (crime, yob culture, dependence on benefits etc.).</p>
<p>More Same Sex families</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are still only a very small number of same sex families, but these are now more socially acceptable. This is because of campaigns by gay rights groups and changes in laws, such as being allowed to teach about same sex relationships in schools and an equal age of sexual consent. • The introduction of civil partnership agreements, which are similar to marriage contracts, but open to same and opposite sex couples. • Gay couples are now allowed to adopt. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Functionalists say that the family and other institutions of society need to evolve in order to continue to be useful in society, so would view same sex families as positive providing that they continue to do what they are supposed to. • Feminists have mixed views on same sex families, because there is still economic inequality between men and women, which means that gay men are more likely to have more money, better jobs and higher status than lesbians. Therefore, same sex families should not be looked at as being all the same. • The New Right see same sex families as bad for society because they are socialising children the wrong way.
<p>Smaller household size</p>	<p>There are more single person households (a person living on their own) – this is due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women living longer than men, so they are more likely to be a widow with grown up children and grandchildren who do not live with them. • Younger women choosing a career over marriage and family. <p>Families also have fewer children than in the past:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some couples choose not to start a family at all for financial or career reasons. • There is more infertility than in the past (people can't have children of their own) but also more availability of contraception. • Less children die during childbirth and childhood because of better healthcare and living standards, so families do not need to have large numbers of children just in case some of them die. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feminists view these changes positively, as women have greater choice over their future and can use contraception to protect themselves from unwanted pregnancies whilst still being sexually active. It is more acceptable for women to choose a career rather than a family than in the past. • The New Right believe that a woman's role in society is to be a wife and mother, so would see these changes as having a negative impact on society. • Some Functionalists would see these changes as positive, because the population is increasing in size. Therefore smaller families ensure society does not become unstable. Other Functionalists would point out that the reason for the large population is because of immigration and therefore argue that we need larger British families and less immigration.
<p>More families from diverse cultural backgrounds</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the 1950s the government encouraged people to move to the UK to take up jobs that weren't being done. These families brought their culture with them, including different patterns of family life, often taking the form of the extended family. • Since the 1950s, more people have come to live in the UK, for many reasons, including needing asylum from war and violence, joining family members already living here and because of changes to European law that allows people to work anywhere within the European Union. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many Feminists see this change as positive, because women are moving away from countries where they have few or no rights, sometimes where rape is used as a weapon in civil wars. • The New Right are completely against immigration, because it waters down British culture and (they say) leads to higher unemployment. • Many Functionalists agree with the New Right opinion, but some point to the useful function served by immigration in the 1950s.
<p>Lots of different types of family existing at the same time.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For all the reasons above! 	

CHILDREN AND PARENTS

Children's Employment and Education

Society's attitude towards children has changed considerably over the past two hundred years or so. For example, in Victorian times (1800s) poor children worked in factories, mills and as chimney sweeps. These jobs were dangerous and low-paid and children had no employment rights.

People campaigned to protect children and in the early 1900s all children were entitled to an education, although again poorer children were the ones most likely to miss out on this completely, or left school between the age of 12 and 14 to get a job.

Since the introduction of the Welfare State after the Second World War, all children by law must attend to school to the age of 16, although children from traveller families are often unable to do this because of moving around with their families. Some children are home-schooled for many reasons, including psychological or medical difficulties, behavioural problems or because they have been permanently excluded.

These changes in employment and education of children have affected family life in many ways. Children are now financially dependent on their parents until at least the age of 16. Most children now stay at school or in college until the age of 18 and almost half go on to university. This means that parents are financially responsible for their children even when they reach adulthood.

Parent's Employment

It is common now for both parents to work full time, which means that other people are involved in caring for children, including grandparents and registered childminders / nurseries. This means that children's primary socialisation is not just performed by their parents, but by many other people.

Children's Rights

Other things have also affected parents and children, such as The Children Act in 1989, which gave children legal rights, including choice in who they live with after a divorce, schools being made responsible for reporting any suspicions of child abuse or neglect, children being protected from violence, including being smacked by parents or teachers etc. Another law – the Police and Criminal Evidence Act – finally allowed children to give evidence in court, which has ensured that abusing parents and carers can now be prosecuted.

Children have more rights than ever before, although they also have more stuff than ever before! Nowadays it is normal for children to have MP3 players, computers, games consoles etc. This often means that teenagers feel pressurised to get part time work so they can buy gadgets and clothes. Parents are also more protective than in the past because of 'stranger danger', so are more likely to stop their children going out. This is especially true for girls.

Divorce

One in three marriages end in divorce, many of which will mean the break-up of a family with children. This means that a lot of children find themselves living with one parent and only occasionally seeing the other parent. They might also be part of a reconstituted family, with a mix of biological, half and step brothers and sisters. Some parents get joint custody, so children spend half their time living with each parent. Some children are taken into care (looked after children) because the divorce was due to domestic violence or caused psychological problems for their parents. Grandparents may also take on the job of looking after the children on a full time basis.

EDUCATION

KEY TERMS

Below are the key terms / topics you need to know for education – you could be asked to define, explain or discuss any of these in the exam.

Term	Definition
The Marxist view on the role of education	Marxists view education as having a beneficial role for the powerful people in our society and brainwashing people to follow capitalist norms and values.
The functionalist view on the role of education	Functionalists believe that education is seen as performing a beneficial role in society.
The feminist view on the role of education	Feminists believe that education benefits men, ensuring that males remain more powerful in society by teaching patriarchal norms and values, such as women's role as carers and restricting access to certain subjects.
The history of the education system	Since the Second World War all children in the UK must attend school by law until at least the age of 16. However, the education system has changed during the past 60 years – these changes are summarised in the next section.
Types of schools (independent, selective, comprehensive)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independent schools are schools that are run privately and are not part of the state education system. These schools usually charge fees to parents and include boarding schools. Selective schools can be independent or state schools and are usually still called 'grammar' schools. These schools can select which pupils they accept at their school, based on ability, religion etc. Comprehensive schools are state schools run by the government and accept all children of all abilities and backgrounds.
The hidden curriculum	The hidden curriculum is a term Marxists and other critical sociologists use to describe the way that children are taught the norms and values of society through the culture of the school, the materials used and other things that are not part of the actual curriculum.
Streaming and setting	Streaming and setting are both ways of separating children into different groups according to their abilities.
Labelling and the self-fulfilling prophecy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Labelling is the term used to describe how pupils are given group labels based on behaviour, ability or disability. These labels include 'high flyer', 'low achiever', 'emotional and behavioural difficulties', 'moderate learning difficulty', 'trouble maker' and so on. The self-fulfilling prophecy is what happens when someone conforms to the label they have been given (eg. children told they are high flyers start to do better in class).
Ideal pupil	The ideal pupil is the child who does as they are told, complete all their work, turns up to lessons on time with all their equipment and gets their target grades or better in their exams.
Anti-school subcultures	Anti-school subcultures are the small groups that occur in schools that try to go against the main learning culture of the school, for example boys who escape from school at lunchtime, girls who hang around in the toilets instead of going to lessons, classes that deliberately misbehave or distract the teacher etc.
Material deprivation	Material deprivation refers to not having money and belongings that the majority of people have. This can change over time (eg. someone without a computer in 1980 would not be considered to be suffering from material deprivation, but they might be seen that way now).
Cultural deprivation	Cultural deprivation refers to not being able to access activities of society because of social factors such as poverty or discrimination (for eg. not being able to access homework websites due to lack of computer / internet).
Parental attitudes	In education, parental attitudes refers to how parents feel about the value of education and qualifications.
Gender and education	Sociologists look at the different experiences of males and females in education that are due to gender differences. These include different opportunities offered to boys and girls in subjects studied, differences in achievement in exams and differences in the gender of teachers at primary and secondary school.
Ethnicity and education	Sociologists look at the different experiences of people from different ethnic groups in education that are due to their cultural background. These include differences in achievement, attitudes of teachers, parents and pupils related to cultural background or racism, racism in school rules and educational policies made by the government etc.

CHANGES IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

The main change that has happened in schools in the past 60 years is the move from the *Tripartite System* to *Comprehensive Schools*.

Tripartite System

Up until the 1960s, high schools were divided into three types (tri-). Students were tested using the 11 Plus at the end of primary school to decide which type of school they should go to:

- *Grammar schools* – those who passed the Eleven Plus were sent to grammar schools, as they were seen as the most academic and intelligent.
- *Technical schools* – those who didn't pass the Eleven Plus but showed a strong ability for highly skilled technical work (engineering, science etc.) were supposed to go to technical college. Unfortunately there were very few of these colleges, because they were supposed to be paid for by local industry and the funding wasn't there.
- *Secondary Modern schools* – anyone who didn't go to grammar school or technical college went to a secondary modern school, where they would get a good basic education that would prepare them for less skilled jobs or managing the home.

There were two main problems with these schools:

1. Most students who failed the Eleven Plus ended up in Secondary Modern schools because of the lack of funding for technical schools. This meant that pupils with a strong ability in practical skills were not being given the opportunity to get higher level qualifications and go to university.
2. Labelling pupils according to ability resulted in a self-fulfilling prophecy. For example, researchers in the USA showed that when teachers were told some of their class were high flyers (even though some of them were not) those pupils went on to do much better than the rest of the class. This shows how the labelling affected both the way the pupils thought about themselves and how also how the teachers treated them.

Comprehensive Schools

In the 1960s the Labour Government started to open comprehensive schools. These were open to all children regardless of ability and by 1976 the Eleven Plus was abolished and the comprehensive school was the main type of school, although there are still a number of grammar schools around the UK, some of which are independent (privately funded). Existing grammar schools still select students on the basis of their academic ability.

GCSES

In the 1980s the Conservative Government changed the school leaving qualifications to the GCSE. Before this students would sit O' Levels if they were of higher ability or CSEs if they were of lower ability. The top grade on a CSE (grade 1) was the same as a grade C at O' Level.

The reason for the change to GCSEs was that it was supposed to give all students an equal chance to achieve. However, many GCSEs still have Higher, Intermediate and Foundation level papers, so this still means that students are entered for different exams depending on their ability – this is a problem because of labelling and the self-fulfilling prophecy (see the previous section about the effect of this).

Academies and the English Baccalaureate

At the current time the Coalition Government are encouraging all schools to change to academies, which will make them a cross between a state school and an independent school. This means that schools will have more control over how they spend their budget, but will still be monitored by government to make sure they are performing effectively.

The English Baccalaureate is a new qualification the government intend to introduce that consists of a range of GCSE subjects including English, maths, a science, a foreign language and history or geography. The government suggest that this qualification will ensure that all students get a good, rounded qualification.

SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO EDUCATION

The different sociological approaches have very different views on the role of the education system, but all see it as an institution of secondary socialisation, where students learn the skills and behaviours necessary to function in society.

Functionalists view this as a positive thing, ensuring the smooth running of society, whereas Marxists, Feminists and Anti-racists point to how society is structured in a way that keeps one group in power and oppresses others groups. Therefore, the education system makes sure that this power relationship goes unchallenged.

Below is a table summarising the key roles of the education system and what these different sociological perspectives have to say about this.

Role	Functionalism	Marxism	Feminism	Anti-Racist
The economic role – teaching skills for work	Functionalists believe that schools teach the key skills and knowledge necessary for a modern, technical society	Marxists believe that education reinforces the class system by ensuring children of the poor learn the skills for low-paid jobs.	Feminists believe that education reinforces patriarchy by ensuring that women learn the skills of lower paid jobs and unpaid work in the home.	The anti-racist approach believes that education reinforces the power of the ethnic majority by ensuring that children from minority ethnic backgrounds learn the skills for low-paid jobs.
The selective role – choosing the most able people for the most important jobs.	Functionalists see the education system as a sieve, grading students according to ability and placing pupils into their most appropriate role in society.	Marxists do not believe education provides equal opportunities for all.	Feminists believe that education provides different opportunities to girls and boys, pushing them into studying different subjects based on their gender.	Anti-racists believe that students from minority ethnic backgrounds are given less opportunity than white British children.
The socialisation role – teaching norms and values.	Functionalists believe education plays an important role in teaching the values and norms of society to each new generation.	Marxists see education as socialising individuals into accepting the values of the most powerful group.	Feminists see education as continuing the process of gender role socialisation, ensuring that boys and girls act they way they should.	Anti-racists also see education as socialising individuals into accepting the values of the most powerful group.
Social control – teaching acceptance of rules and authority.	Functionalists argue that for society to function smoothly there must be some regulation.	Marxists, Feminists and Anti-racists see social control in schools as reflecting social control in the wider society, which benefits the most powerful group.		
The political role – teaching people to be effective citizens.	Functionalists see education as learning about society - through education pupils will accept the political system.	Marxists, Feminists and Anti-racists believe only certain political opinions and ideas are tolerated in education. Many of these ideas are from the powerful group. Marxists – powerful group is the ruling class Feminists – powerful group is men Anti-racists – powerful group is White British (in the UK)		

SOCIAL CLASS AND EDUCATION

Middle class children do better in education than working class children. There are a number of reasons suggested for this:

- Cultural capital (i.e. the level of educational resources and knowledge provided by the family). This means that middle class students have more financial and practice support and encouragement than working class students.
- Better living conditions – middle class students are likely to have better diets, their own space to work in, access to computers and the internet. All of this means they are in a better position to study and learn.
- Higher level of aspiration – middle class students are more likely to aim for higher status jobs, such as becoming doctors, lawyers etc. This is because their parents are also more likely to work in these jobs.
- The halo-effect from (middle-class) teachers – middle class students are seen as being more intelligent because they share the same norms and values as their teachers and are able to use the same language. This leads to labelling and the self-fulfilling prophecy.
- A greater awareness of the benefits of deferred gratification – middle class students are aware that staying on at school and going to university might mean doing without in the short-term and getting better paid work in the long term.
- Peer values that encourage a more studious approach to schoolwork – students choose friends who are like them, so middle class children have middle class friends, who share the same norms and values. This is also true for working class students and their working class friends.

GENDER AND EDUCATION

On average girls do better than boys, although this was not the case in the past. In the 1970s boys did better than girls and feminist sociologists showed that one of the reasons was that girls had different ambitions to boys. When interviewed girls said they wanted to get married and have a family rather than a career. In the 1990s, the same researcher (Sue Sharpe) repeated her research and found that this had changed, with more girls saying they wanted a career.

Some other reasons for this change are:

- There is less restriction on the subjects that girls and boys can study. Nowadays it is more acceptable for girls to study resistant materials and go into engineering and for boys to study health and social care and go into nursing. However, the gender bias is not gone entirely.
- Girls are more likely to take greater pride in their work – this might be linked to the greater value that girls place on personal appearance, which is encouraged by other institutions such as the mass media.
- The sociologist Angela McRobbie identified the existence of a “bedroom culture.” There are many elements to this, but one consequence is that girls often disapprove of boisterous behaviour amongst other girls.
- Some sociologists suggest that boys have developed an anti-school culture, where it is seen as ‘cool’ to not do work. However, some girls are also part of this culture, which suggests that gender is not the only thing that matters.

ETHNICITY AND EDUCATION

Research has shown that even when teachers are not deliberately racist, they still discriminate against children from different cultural / ethnic backgrounds. This is because of their interpretation of differences in body language, speech, dress and styles of walking - some teachers may see this as a challenge to their authority.

- Not all ethnic minorities do badly in education, for example Indian pupils get very good exam results.
- The main ethnic minority groups who underachieve in education are Afro Caribbeans.
- Until recently Bangladeshi pupils also underachieved, but their performance at GCSE has improved in recent years.

Cultural Deprivation

There are two parts to the cultural deprivation explanation:

- **Family Life**
It has been argued in the past that Asian families are more supportive and encouraging of their children’s education than Afro Caribbean parents, although other studies have criticised this idea.
- **Language**
It has also been argued that some ethnic minorities underachieve as English is not their first language. However, this only accounts for a small number of ethnic minority children.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF SCHOOLS

There is much disagreement about which type of school is best. Below is a summary of some of the key arguments for and against comprehensive (state) schools and independent (private) schools:

Comprehensive Schools		Independent Schools	
For	Against	For	Against
They try to break down social barriers between classes, genders and ethnic groups.	They accept lower standards.	Smaller classes and better facilities resulting in better education for children.	Students have to travel very long distances to school.
Better facilities and resources because of more funding.	They offer parents a limited choice.	Better examination results.	Do not mix with people from different backgrounds.
Tried to improve the failings of the tripartite system.	More able students may be held back.	The school has more power to take action against disruptive pupils.	Only accessible to the rich.
Offer opportunities to all students regardless of background.	They are larger so more subjects and facilities can be offered.	Students are more likely to get places at high status universities.	Less able students may be held back.

PARENTAL ATTITUDES

The major difference that has been found in parental attitudes relates to social class.

Middle class parents are more likely to support their children with education.

In particular they are more likely to:

- Help with homework.
- Attend parents' evenings.
- Actively participate in school activities.

This does not mean that working class parents do not care about their children's education. Differences in employment mean that working class parents are more likely to work in jobs with longer hours, work shifts or work in part time jobs during the evening to top up low pay. This means they are less likely to have time to support their children.

However, differences in attitudes towards education have been found. Middle class families are more likely to see education as important and encourage their children to stay on at sixth form and go to university. Working class parents are more likely to encourage their children to take up an apprenticeship or find employment straight from school. These differences lead to what is called a 'self-perpetuating' pattern, because middle class careers require higher levels of qualifications than working class jobs and parents are encouraging their children to do as they did. Their children will grow up and do the same again.

HOW SCHOOLS ARE MONITORED

The government have come up with a number of ways to monitor schools to ensure that students are achieving the way they should. This includes:

- League tables for GCSE and A Level results which compare schools based on the percentage of A*-C grades.
- OfSted (the Office of Standards in Education) inspections.

Schools also compare the progress of their students to the known achievements of students from similar backgrounds to ensure that they are doing as well as they should. This requires frequent testing and reporting from teachers, keeping parents and carers up to date and providing support to students with specific learning needs to ensure they are not disadvantaged.

EXAM TIPS

1. Read the instructions!

On the front of the paper it tells you which questions to answer (you get a choice of long question for The Family and Education).

2. Look at the number of marks!

If the question is only worth one mark then keep your answer as short as possible – for eg if it asks you to give a result from a table or identify a research method then you don't need a full sentence – just give the answer.

3. Explain in detail and use PEC (Point Example Comment) or PEE (Point Evidence Explain)

If you are answering a 6 mark question it will ask you to do something like **identify... and explain...**

This is 3 marks for each part.

- When you 'identify' make sure you explain in detail – 1 sentence will get 1 mark, so you need to say 3 things.
- When you 'explain' use PEC / PEE to make sure you fully explain for 3 marks.

For example:

You have been asked as a sociologist to investigate the attitudes towards schooling amongst different ethnic groups.

Identify **one** primary research method you would use **and** explain why it is better than another possible primary method for obtaining the information you need (6 marks)

(1) I would use non-participant observations to investigate the attitudes towards schooling amongst different ethnic groups. (2) I would do this by sitting in lessons and watching how the students behave. (3) I would note down whether they are behaving well, if they are on task and their attitude towards the teacher.

(P) In this research, observation is better than a questionnaire, as it means I can watch exactly how the students behave. (E) If I used a questionnaire, then students might not be truthful because they want to come across as having a more positive attitude than they have in reality. (C) This means the information I collect will be more valid, although I would have to conceal the reason for me being in the room so they don't change their behaviour, so it may be less ethical.

You can also use PEC / PEE to make sure you fully discuss whatever the 12 mark questions ask. Don't forget that 'discuss' means you need to cover all sides of the argument.

Look at the question and part answer below. This answer would so far get 6 of the 12 marks, so you would need another couple of points that use PEC / PEE to get the full 12 marks.

Discuss how far sociologists would agree that living in a family tends to benefit men more than women. (12 marks)

(P) Feminists argue that the family benefits men more than women. (E) This is because women take on most of the responsibility of housework and caring for the children even if they are working full time. (C) This means that men are able to use the family as a place to rest and escape from the world of work, whereas women are still working but without pay.

(P) However, Marxists argue that the family does not directly benefit men or women, as it is there to maintain the power of the ruling class. (E) Marxists argue that working class men and women have no choice over their role within family because these are needed to maintain the capitalist system, with men going out to work for the ruling class and women staying at home to look after the workers and children. (C) In contrast to this, Functionalists argue that these different roles are needed to ensure that the family is able to serve its purpose of socialising children, caring for its members and keeping order in society. Therefore sociologists do not agree on who benefits from living in a family.