

Suggested Activities

In order to prepare for studying your A Levels, there are a number of activities that you could do to get you thinking 'Sociologically' and to get you used to using sociological language.

1. Who are you?



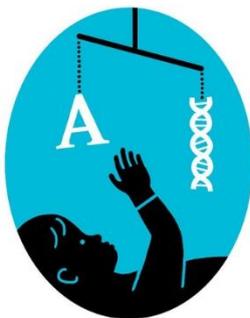
What makes up your identity? What makes you who you are? Identity is about how we see and define ourselves –our personalities – and how other people see and define us. Many aspects of our individual identity are influenced by agencies of socialisation. These are structures or groups of people. Individuals are like moulded putty, squished and squashed by society and its structures, but there are decisions we make that are driven by internal motivations. Behaviour that comes from within us – decisions we make in order to do things - is called agency. Agency behaviour is meaningful and a reflection of self-will. Sometimes we can challenge and oppose structures, and in this way we help construct a part of our identity.

BIG question – Does society create us as individuals, or do we create society? Write up your response, analysing points that go for and against the idea that we are created by society. Offer evidence where you can and come to a clear conclusion.

Other activities:

- Create a mind map showing all the influences on your identity.
- Suggest between 5 and 10 examples of social structures or groups of people that impact upon you (e.g. family, education, peers, media etc.)
- Which of these social structures or groups influence you most? Does it depend on your age as to when they are more influential? Does it depend on other factors such as your gender or social class? Explain your answers.

2. Nature Vs Nurture Debate.



Biologists think that people behave as they do because they are controlled by nature. Humans are compared to animals and seen to act on instinct. Sociologists believe that people behave as they do because they are taught how to behave. Nurture means the way you are brought up. It is also a reference to socialisation, the lifelong process by which we learn our culture, values, norms and how to behave. A Feral child is one that has spent time in their formative years away from social interaction with human beings, or very limited interaction. You can watch an example here <https://youtu.be/cymZq1VblU0>

BIG question – Are we controlled by our genes and biology or are we controlled by our interactions with other people? Write up your response, analysing points that go for and against the idea that we are created by society. Offer evidence where you can and come to a clear conclusion.

Other Activities:

- Write out what is meant by the Nature Vs Nurture Debate.
- Create a table that has evidence and arguments 'for' the Nature side and a second column 'for' the nurture side.

3. Norms and Values – What is normal?



Sociologists are interested in uncovering assumptions about everyday life. Through the process of socialisation, we learn to behave in appropriate ways in a wide variety of social situations, and these form the basis for patterns of behaviour. We are socialised into a particular culture - a whole way of life including norms, values and beliefs. What norms (accepted ways of behaving in everyday situations within a particular culture) of human behaviour are expected in the following social situations? You should notice that you do the things you mention, without thinking about them, yet they are not instinctive; you have spent years learning how to behave in different social situation

In a doctor's waiting room

In a lift

At a party

On the top deck of a bus

At a funeral

In a man/woman's public toilet

In a class room

BIG Question – Can you think of any ways in which our ‘norms’ have changed during the recent pandemic? What things are seen as ‘not normal’ anymore and why? Can you think of any values that might have changes as well? Do you think this will have an impact on our lives when the lockdown is eased?

Other activities:

- Look at other places around the world and see if you can find any interesting ‘cultural norms’ and explain what the values are surrounding them.
- Think back in time – have be changed our norms since your parents were young? What about their parents?

4. How do we explain the world?

When studying sociology, we will look at a number of sociological theories to see how they explain society. These are Marxism, Feminism, Functionalism, Action theories and Postmodernism. How you view society will influence your outlook on how it should be organised. Within each of the topic areas we will explore policies and how the government should be operating.

Look at the statements below and then write them out in a list which ranks them in order of the one you MOST agree with, to the one you LEAST agree with.

- a) Society works for the benefit of all.
- b) Women are systematically disadvantaged.
- c) We live in a democracy.
- d) Life is unfair.
- e) The world is run for the benefit of a very small group of people.
- f) Most people cannot see that they spend their entire lives being exploited.
- g) Structures in society exist to help people and the smooth operation of society.
- h) Men dominate.
- i) Gender inequalities exist.
- j) People are judged only in terms of their merit / skills / intelligence.

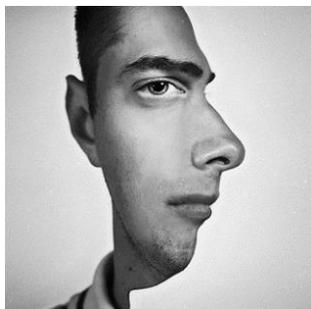
BIG Question – What is your political perspective? Try the online test to see how you view the world and which political perspective you align with most. <https://www.politicalcompass.org/test>

Other activities:

- Can you research what policies have been introduced in the UK relating to crime? DO you think these will work?
- Can you look at the government's current policy on the Coronavirus pandemic? Do you agree with it?

5. What is real?

Look at this photograph; not everything is as it seems!



There is usually another way of looking at things – and that is what we do as sociologists. We take normal, taken-for-granted life and turn it upside down, looking for meanings. And very often we end up seeing things very differently. **Create your own piece of art work that explains what Sociology is.**