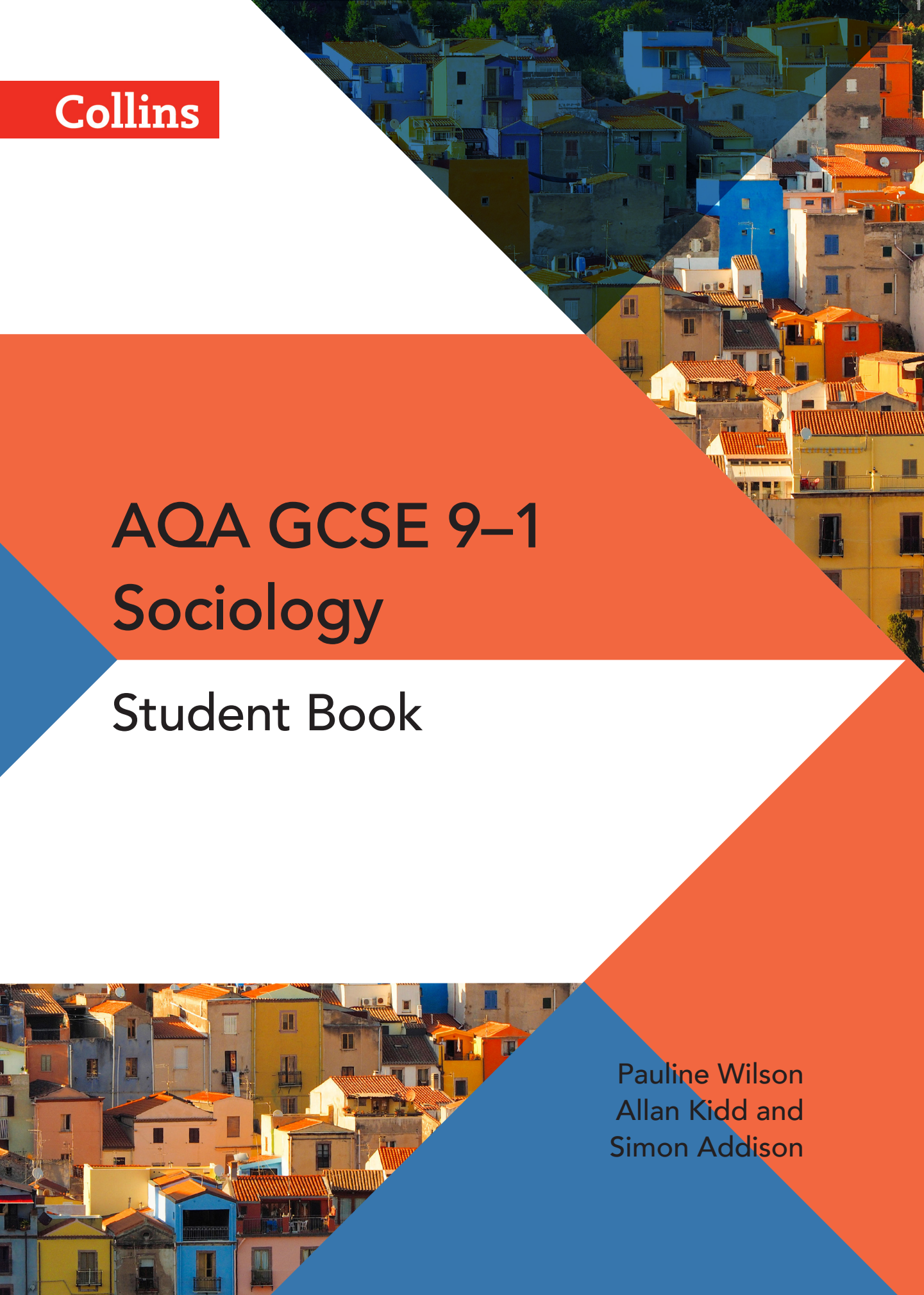


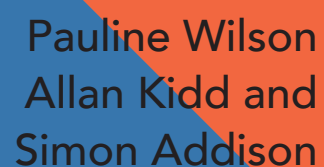
The Collins logo is a red rectangle with the word "Collins" in white, sans-serif font.

Collins

The cover features a vibrant, geometric design. Large triangles in orange and blue are layered over a background image of a colorful, densely packed town. The town's buildings are in various shades of blue, yellow, and orange, with red-tiled roofs. The text is centered on the orange triangle.

AQA GCSE 9–1 Sociology

Student Book

The authors' names are listed in a black, sans-serif font on a blue triangular background.

Pauline Wilson
Allan Kidd and
Simon Addison

The sociological approach

- 
- Topic 1:** What is sociology?
 - Topic 2:** What are social structures, processes and issues?
 - Topic 3:** What key concepts do sociologists use?
 - Topic 4:** What does the term 'socialisation' mean?
 - Topic 5:** What are the key ideas of Karl Marx?
 - Topic 6:** What are the key ideas of Emile Durkheim?
 - Topic 7:** What are the key ideas of Max Weber?
 - Topic 8:** What is the 'consensus versus conflict' debate?
 - Topic 9:** Focus on skills



What is sociology?

Objective

- Explain what sociology involves

Sociology is the study of human social life and social relationships. Sociologists investigate and explain the social world and our behaviour in it. This involves examining how people live together in **society** and how they interact with each other in small groups, communities and large organisations. Sociologists try to understand not only the ways in which society influences us in our daily lives but also the ways in which we shape society.

In Britain, people tend to think of themselves as unique individuals who make their own free choices about most aspects of their lives. For example, teenagers make choices about their friends, their clothes and the music they listen to. People also choose whether to marry and what career to pursue. Sociologists are interested in the ways our choices may be constrained (or limited) by factors such as our social class background, **gender** and **ethnicity**. They are also interested in the ways that our choices may be enabled (or helped) by such factors.

Glossary terms

ethnicity, gender, social policies, society, theory

Topics that sociologists study

Sociologists study a wide range of topic areas, as the diagram below shows.



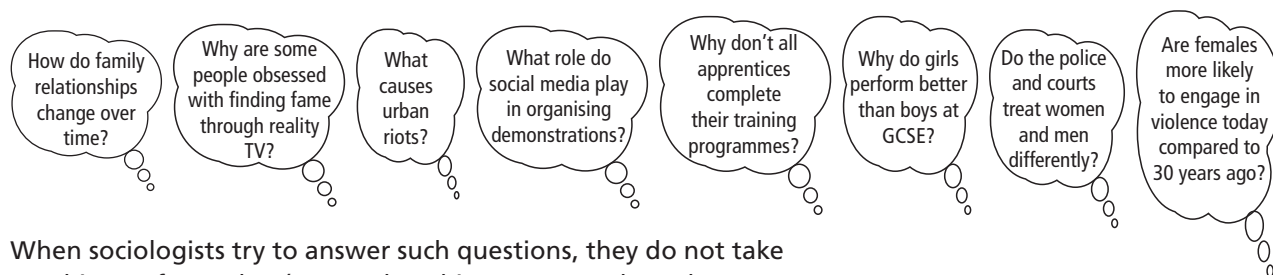
Making connections

Rather than seeing these topic areas as completely separate, sociologists always look for connections or links between them.

In pairs, choose two of these topics and discuss how they are connected. Then make brief notes to describe the connection.

The sociological approach

Sociology involves a distinctive way of seeing the social world. It focuses on how society influences our behaviour and the choices we make. In doing so, it asks important questions about human social life, groups and society. Here are some examples of these questions:



When sociologists try to answer such questions, they do not take anything at face value (accept that things are exactly as they appear to be). Instead, they undertake careful investigation to explore what is really going on beneath the surface. In trying to make sense of the social world, sociologists use:

- a body of terms (specialised vocabulary) and concepts (key ideas) that they have built up
- a body of **theories** about the relationship between the individual and society
- a tool kit of research methods such as questionnaires, interviews and observation to gather evidence in an organised and systematic way. As a result, sociology can provide factual information that is more reliable than information from other sources.

However, sociology is not just about carrying out research and contributing to our knowledge of modern society. Many sociologists believe that research should go much further than this by having a practical purpose. They argue that findings from research studies should feed into policy making, shape **social policies** (such as government policies on education) and make a difference to our lives.



Why do girls perform better than boys at GCSE?

FOCUS ON SKILLS: DISCUSSION ACTIVITY

Imagine...

In the 21st century, we take things such as television, computers, mobile phones, the internet, air travel, the education system and the National Health Service for granted. Our lives would probably be very different if we were born in another place or at another time.

- 1 Imagine that you were born 100 years ago. How would this shape who you are, what you know, what you can do, and the opportunities and choices open to you?
- 2 In a small group, discuss and compare your ideas.
- 3 Note down two points arising from your discussion.

Sociology, psychology and journalism

Sociologists study the social influences on human life and focus on group behaviour. Psychologists also study human behaviour but they focus on individuals rather than groups. Journalists sometimes research into social issues, but journalists' research is less thorough than that of sociologists, partly because they often have tight deadlines to meet.

Check your understanding

Identify and describe one possible use of sociological research.
(3 marks)

Key points

- Sociology is the systematic study of human social life, groups and societies.
- Sociologists ask questions about the workings of society; for example, how family relationships change over time.
- Through their research studies, sociologists contribute to our knowledge and understanding of society.

What are social structures, processes and issues?

Objective

- Explain the terms 'social structures', 'social processes' and 'social issues'

Social structures and processes

In investigating society and how it is organised, sociologists examine the various parts that make up society. They use the term '**social structures**' to refer to the parts of society such as families, the education system, the political system and the criminal justice system. Sociologists are interested in understanding the connections or relationships between the different structures (or parts) of society. They might study, for instance, the relationship between students' family backgrounds and their achievements at GCSE.

Sociologists are also interested in exploring **social processes** such as socialisation and social control.

The term 'socialisation' refers to the process by which we learn the culture or the way of life of the society we are born into. In exploring how this process operates, sociologists focus on how we learn the culture, who is involved in this learning and what role social structures such as families and schools play in the process.

The term 'social control' refers to the way our behaviour is regulated. In exploring how this process works, sociologists ask questions about:

- how control is exercised
- who exercises control
- how far individuals or groups resist or challenge the processes of social control
- in whose interests social control operates.

By studying these social processes, we can understand more about the workings of society. For example, we learn how such processes take place (the means or mechanisms) and why they take place.

Social issues

Social issues are the issues that affect communities, groups and people's lives. Contemporary social issues relating to education, for example, include academies and grammar schools. Issues relating to families include care of the elderly and forced marriage. Often, social issues are also **social problems**.

Social problems are the problems facing society such as racism, sexism, ageism, **poverty**, domestic violence and hate crime. Social

Glossary terms

poverty, social issue, social problem, social process, social stratification, social structure

Making connections

Choose two social structures from the table on the next page and identify one link or connection between them.



Families are social structures where social processes (such as socialisation) take place. They face social issues (such as care of the elderly).

problems are damaging to society and, as a result, they need to be tackled through social policies.

The table below gives some examples of social structures, social processes and social issues. As you read through the different chapters in this book, you will learn more about these key sociological themes.

Social structures	Social processes	Social issues
Families	Socialisation; Social control; The exercise of power	The quality of parenting; Forced marriage; Care of the elderly; Relationships between parents and children
The education system	Socialisation; Social control; The exercise of power; Labelling; Discrimination	Educational reform; Higher education funding; Academies
The criminal justice system	Social control; Social order; The exercise of power; Discrimination; Labelling	Violent crime; The media coverage of crime; The treatment of young offenders; The prison system
Social stratification systems	Discrimination; The exercise of power; Globalisation	Inequalities linked to class, gender, ethnicity, age, disability and sexuality; Racism, sexism and ageism; Homophobia; Poverty

FOCUS ON SKILLS: WRITTEN ACTIVITY

Government spending on benefits

One way in which governments can try to address social issues such as poverty is through spending on benefits. However, government spending is a controversial issue.

Study the table below, then answer the questions that follow.

Attitudes to government spending on different benefits, 2002–2015

Percentage who would like to see more government spending on benefits for:	2002	2015
People who care for those who are sick or disabled	82%	75%
Parents who work on very low incomes	69%	61%
Disabled people who cannot work	69%	61%
Retired people	73%	49%
Single parents	39%	36%
Unemployed people	21%	17%

Source: adapted from NatCen's British Social Attitudes 33, Welfare. Table 1. p. 5.

- 1 What percentage of those surveyed in 2015 would like to see more government spending on benefits for single parents?
- 2 Has this proportion increased or decreased over time?
- 3 For which group has support for more spending decreased by the biggest percentage?

Check your understanding

Identify and describe one example of a social structure. (3 marks)

FOCUS ON SKILLS: DISCUSSION ACTIVITY

Controversial issues

During this course, you will come across social issues such as the quality of parenting, reform of the education system, the causes of teenage crime and the treatment of young offenders.

- 1 In a small group, discuss why such issues cause public concern and debate.
- 2 How do you think sociologists could contribute to these debates?
- 3 Note down three points from your discussion.

Key points

- Sociologists focus on social structures, social processes and social issues.
- Many social issues are also social problems.

What key concepts do sociologists use?

Objective

- Explain the terms 'culture', 'values' and 'norms'

In Topic 1, you learned that sociologists draw on key concepts (ideas) in their work. These key concepts include **culture**, **values** and **norms**.

Culture

The term 'culture' refers to the whole way of life of a particular society. It includes the values, norms, customs, beliefs, knowledge, skills and language of a society. Sociologists appreciate that culture is not the same in different societies around the world. It varies according to place (where you are) and time (when). You can see this when looking at food and diet. For example, roast guinea pig is a traditional delicacy in Ecuador, while guinea pigs are often kept as family pets in the UK.

Glossary terms

culture, negative sanctions, norms, positive sanctions, sanctions, values

FOCUS ON SKILLS: DISCUSSION ACTIVITY

Living in Britain

The information below is for international students studying at a university in England for the first time. Read through the extract, then answer the questions that follow.

Cafés and bars

Bars and pubs are an important part of British culture, particularly with younger people and students. In the UK, it is quite acceptable for women to use bars, pubs and restaurants without male companions, and there is no pressure on anyone to drink alcohol. Soft drinks are always available.

Smoking

Smoking is prohibited in all enclosed public spaces. It is usual to ask, 'Do you mind if I smoke?' if you are socialising with other people, but do not be offended if you are asked not to.

Source: adapted from http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.550495!/file/Int-Living-in-Shef-16.pdf, pp. 17, 38.

- In a small group, discuss how useful this information is in describing aspects of British culture.
- What advice would your group give to international students on the following: respecting personal space, shaking hands, acceptable topics of conversation, saying 'please' and 'thank you', and humour?
- Make a note of your ideas.



New students need to learn the expected behaviour associated with university culture.

Values

Values are ideas and beliefs that people have about what is desirable and worth striving for. For example, privacy and respect for human life are highly valued by most people in Britain. Values provide us with general guidelines for conduct.

Not all societies or groups value the same things. Values vary cross-culturally, which means that they differ from one culture to another. In Western societies, for example, wealth and material possessions are often highly valued and considered worth striving for. In contrast, the Apache of North America gave away the property of relatives who died rather than inherit it. They believed that keeping this property might encourage the relatives who inherit it to feel glad when a person died.

Norms

Values provide us with general guidelines for conduct. Norms are more specific to particular situations. For example, we value privacy, and the norms or rules related to this include not reading other people's emails or text messages without permission. Norms tell us what is appropriate and expected behaviour in specific social settings such as classrooms, cinemas, restaurants or aeroplanes. They provide order in society and allow it to function smoothly.

Norms are enforced by **positive sanctions** and **negative sanctions**. This means that people are rewarded for conforming to (or following) the norms, for example, by getting promoted at work. People are punished for deviating from (or breaking) the norms, for example by being 'told off'. Norms and **sanctions** vary depending on time and place. For instance, among the Apache of North America, rule breakers were banished from the group.

FOCUS ON SKILLS: WRITTEN ACTIVITY

Norms

- 1 Think about the following social settings: a cinema, an aeroplane, a GP's waiting room.
 - a Choose one setting and identify two norms related to this setting.
 - b Identify two sanctions that might be applied to people who deviate from the norms in this setting.
- 2 Explain the norms for giving and receiving gifts such as birthday presents.

Check your understanding

Describe what sociologists mean by 'culture'. (3 marks)

Stretch and challenge

Values

Read through the examples of values below, then answer the questions that follow:

- acquiring more and more consumer goods
- honesty and truth
- respect for life
- respect for elders
- privacy
- educational success
- 'getting on' in life at any price
- helping the poor.

- 1 In your view, which of these values is most important to people in British society today? Briefly explain your answer.
- 2 Which is least important? Explain your answer.

Key points

- The term 'culture' refers to the whole way of life of a particular society, including its values and norms.
- Values provide general guidelines for conduct and norms define expected behaviour in particular social settings such as in cinemas.

What does the term 'socialisation' mean?

Objective

- Explain the term 'socialisation'

You have seen that culture varies between societies and historically. Sociologists argue that culture is based on learning rather than on instinct – it is not inborn. The term **socialisation** describes the process by which we learn the culture, norms and values of the society we are born into.

FOCUS ON SKILLS: WRITTEN ACTIVITY

Learning to hunt

The extract below describes an aspect of the socialisation of boys of the Hidatsa people of North America. Read through the extract, then answer the questions that follow.

'Widespread was the practice of boys being taught how to hunt and trap by their fathers, older relatives or a trusted family friend; their roles as hunters were thus conditioned from an early age. Typical are the experiences of the Hidatsa men, Wolf Chief and Goodbird...Wolf Chief told of his early use of the bow and arrow: "I began using a bow, I think, when I was four years of age...I very often went out to hunt birds for so my father bade me do." Armed with blunt arrows and snares, the Hidatsa boys learned skills they would need as hunters and warriors.'

Source: Taylor, C.F. (1996) *Native American Life*, London: Salamander Books, p. 87.

- 1 Identify one aspect of the Hidatsa culture or way of life.
- 2 Drawing on this example, explain one way in which the boys were socialised into their culture.

Glossary terms

agency of socialisation, established or state church, gender role, gender socialisation, political socialisation, primary socialisation, religion, secondary socialisation, secularisation, socialisation, status

Primary and secondary socialisation

Sociologists distinguish between primary and secondary socialisation and highlight the role of the different **agencies of socialisation**.

Primary socialisation refers to early childhood learning during which, as babies and infants, we learn the basic behaviour patterns, language and skills that we will need in later life. The agencies of primary socialisation are the groups or institutions responsible for primary socialisation. These are usually families and parents. Through interaction within their families, children acquire language and other essential skills.

Secondary socialisation begins later in childhood and continues throughout our adult lives. Through this process, we learn society's norms and values. The agencies of secondary socialisation are the groups or institutions that contribute to this process. Examples include: peer groups, schools, workplaces, religions, mass media.

Peer groups

Peer groups are groups of people who share a similar social **status** and position in society, such as people of a similar age or occupational status. They can exert pressure on their members to conform to group norms and values in settings such as schools or workplaces.

People who do not conform to the group's norms risk being rejected.



Individuals in a peer group may be similar in age and share a group identity.

Schools

During compulsory schooling, students learn how to interact in groups larger than the family. They develop important new skills. They also learn that they are expected to conform to rules and regulations – regarding punctuality and dress, for example. Some students, however, resist the rules and oppose their teachers' authority.

Workplaces

On starting a new job in an office, factory or hospital, for example, newly appointed employees must learn the culture of the workplace. They learn the formal rules regarding dress, punctuality, and health and safety. They may also pick up tips informally from colleagues on things such as how much work is expected and which of the bosses to avoid.

Religions

Religions provide guidelines for behaviour and sanctions when those guidelines are broken. Christianity, for example, provides the Ten Commandments as a guide to how followers should behave. Muslims are expected to put into practice the Five Pillars of Islam, including the alms tax (giving a proportion of one's wealth to the poor). However, some sociologists argue that a process of **secularisation** is taking place and the influence of religion is declining in society. For example, church attendance within the Church of England (the **established or state church**) is falling. If secularisation is occurring, it would suggest that religion has less of a role in the socialisation process today.

Mass media

The mass media, which include television, radio and newspapers, are a powerful source of information and knowledge about the world. Magazines, for example, often give advice on life and relationships. The media sometimes put forward messages about **gender roles** by, for example, showing women advertising washing-up liquid and men advertising cars. In this way, the media contribute to **gender socialisation**. The media (along with families and workplaces) also contribute to **political socialisation**, that is, the process by which people acquire their political views.

FOCUS ON SKILLS: DISCUSSION ACTIVITY

The influence of social groups

We are all members of groups such as families, religious, cultural, friendship or workplace groups.

- 1 Identify two groups that you are a member of.
- 2 In pairs, discuss how these groups have influenced you, your behaviour, your beliefs or your identity (how you see yourself).
- 3 Note down two points arising from your discussion.

Stretch and challenge

How far do you think human behaviour is learned and how far is it instinctive? Explain your thinking.

Key point

In studying society, sociologists draw on the concept of socialisation. This term refers to the process by which we learn the culture, norms and values of the society or group we are born into.

Check your understanding

Describe what sociologists mean by 'socialisation'. (3 marks)

What are the key ideas of Karl Marx?

Objective

- Describe the key ideas of Karl Marx

Three key thinkers – Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber – are seen as the founders of sociology as an academic subject. Marx wrote during the 19th century, while the work of Durkheim and Weber spanned the late 19th and early 20th centuries. They were all writing during times of rapid economic and **social change** (such as the development of **capitalism** and industrialisation) and their work attempts to make sense of these changes. Even today, their ideas are still discussed and debated in sociology.

FOCUS ON KEY THINKERS

Karl Marx (1818–1883)

Place of birth: Germany

Key contribution to the development of sociology: Karl Marx's ideas are linked to an important **theoretical perspective** – the Marxist approach, or **Marxism**. This perspective has inspired a lot of research on social class. Sociologists are still debating Marx's ideas today and many have adapted them to fit contemporary societies.

Karl Marx was writing at an early stage in the development of capitalism (an economic system in which private owners of capital invest money in businesses to make a profit). He wanted to explain the changes taking place in society at that time. In 1849, Marx moved to England and focused on the workings of capitalism in Britain.

Marx argued that in order to understand the development of societies in the past and today, we must begin by examining production. In other words, it is necessary to examine how people go about producing the things they need in order to subsist. Marx used the term 'mode of production' to describe how people produce the things they need to subsist. One example is the **capitalist** mode of production. Marx identified two key aspects of a mode of production: the means of production and the social relations of production.

- Means of production:** the materials, such as the raw materials or machinery, that people use in production. Under capitalism, these include capital, big businesses, machinery, factories and land.
- Social relations of production:** the relations between people as they engage in production. Under capitalism, there are two main social classes: the **bourgeoisie** and the **proletariat**.

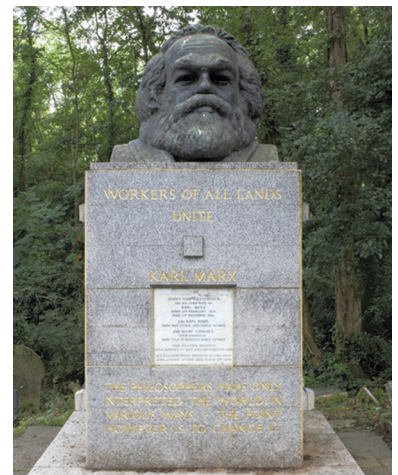
Social classes

Marx identified two main social classes under capitalism: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

- The bourgeoisie are the capitalist class who own the means of production and private property. Marx saw the bourgeoisie

Glossary terms

bourgeoisie, capitalism, capitalist, class struggle, classless society, communism, lumpenproletariat, Marxism, means of production, petty bourgeoisie, proletariat, social change, theoretical perspective



People from around the world visit London's Highgate Cemetery to see Karl Marx's grave.

as the ruling class in capitalist society. As owners, they have economic power and this gives them political power.

- The proletariat – the working class – own nothing but their ability to work as wage labourers and Marx saw them as the subject class.

Other classes under capitalism included:

- the **petty bourgeoisie**, who own small businesses
- the **lumpenproletariat**, the 'dropouts' who sometimes sell their services to the bourgeoisie.

Marx saw the relationship between the bourgeoisie and proletariat as based on exploitation. The bourgeoisie exploit the proletariat by profiting from their labour. The bourgeoisie aim to maximise their profits and do this by paying low wages. The proletariat's interests lie in ending exploitation. These different interests lead to conflict between the classes.

Marx argued that the gap in the resources of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat would get much wider over time. Members of the petty bourgeoisie would be unable to compete with bigger companies and would sink into the proletariat.

Over time, society would split more and more 'into two great hostile camps'. In Marx's view, the **class struggle** between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie is the key to bringing about social change. Eventually, members of the proletariat would come to see themselves as a social class with common interests and they would take action to overthrow the capitalist class. This would lead to a period of social revolution and the move to **communism**. Under communism, the means of production would be held communally rather than by a small minority. In this situation, there would be no private ownership, no exploitation and a **classless society**.

FOCUS ON THEORY: WRITTEN ACTIVITY

Social classes

Identify and describe two social classes that did not benefit from the capitalist mode of production, according to Karl Marx.

Criticisms of Marx

- Marx analysed class but overlooked other social divisions such as gender and ethnicity.
- He saw social class as based on economic divisions. However, critics argue that class is also based on status (social standing or prestige) differences between groups.

Check your understanding

- 1 Describe what sociologists mean by the term 'bourgeoisie'.
(3 marks)
- 2 Identify and explain one difference between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.
(4 marks)

Stretch and challenge

Karl Marx argued that philosophers interpret the world but the point is to change it.

What do you think he meant by this?

Key points

- Karl Marx developed his ideas during the 19th century, when capitalism was at an early stage of development.
- He identified two main classes under capitalism: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The bourgeoisie own the means of production and exploit the proletariat.
- Marx believed that eventually the proletariat would overthrow the bourgeoisie and build a classless, communist society.

What are the key ideas of Emile Durkheim?

Emile Durkheim is one of the founders of sociology as an academic subject. His **worldview** or perspective is very different from that of Marx in important respects.

FOCUS ON KEY THINKERS

Emile Durkheim (1858–1917)

Place of birth: France

Key contribution to the development of sociology: Durkheim was a main figure in the origins of **functionalism**, an important perspective in sociology. This approach was popular, particularly among North American sociologists in the mid-20th century. Durkheim made a major contribution to sociologists' understanding of the **functions** of crime, education and religion. He also showed how individual actions such as suicide are shaped by the wider society.

The functionalist perspective

The functionalist approach explains social institutions (such as families, education systems and social stratification systems) in terms of the functions they perform for the wider society.

To understand functionalism, a biological analogy (or comparison) can be used. In other words, we can compare society to the human body. If we want to understand the human body and how it works, we could start by identifying the vital organs such as the heart, lungs or liver. We might then focus on one organ such as the heart and look at its job or function in pumping blood around the body. Next, we might examine how the heart is connected to other parts of the body such as the blood vessels. Finally, we could look at how the heart contributes to the survival of the body as a whole.

In the same way, functionalism views society as made up of different parts that interlock and fit together. The different social institutions such as the family, education and religion are important organs in the body of society. Functionalism examines these institutions in terms of their functions, that is, the job they perform to help society run smoothly. The different social institutions meet the needs of society by performing functions to ensure its survival.

Durkheim studied crime, religion and education by focusing on the functions they fulfil in meeting the needs of society. For example, he argued that the punishment of criminals has an important

Objective

- Describe the key ideas of Emile Durkheim

Glossary terms

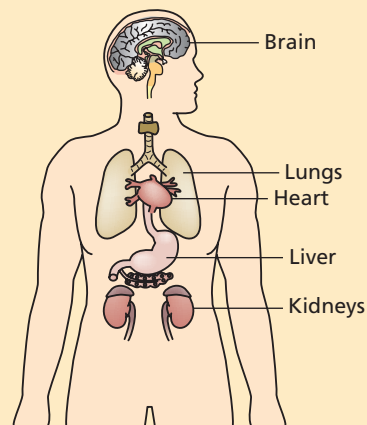
function, functionalism, social cohesion, structural approach, worldview



Durkheim was a key thinker behind functionalism.

FOCUS ON SKILLS: WRITTEN ACTIVITY

Comparing society to the human body



The different parts of the body each have a function.

- 1 Identify one similarity between society and a human body.
- 2 How useful do you think it is to compare society to a living body?

function in helping to bring people together. Punishment reinforces the values and beliefs that the majority of people in society hold. By binding people together in this way, crime can contribute to **social cohesion**.

Stretch and challenge

How far do you think that religion binds people together? Explain your ideas.

FOCUS ON THEORY: WRITTEN ACTIVITY

Durkheim and Marx

Durkheim focused on the functions of crime and the way crime can bind people together and contribute to social cohesion.

Did Marx focus more on social cohesion or on conflict between social groups? Write a sentence to explain your thinking.

Similarities between functionalism and Marxism

Although functionalism and Marxism are different in important ways, they are both **structural approaches**. This means that they focus on the structure of society and how this influences and directs human behaviour.

However, not all sociologists agree with structural approaches. Critics argue that these approaches view people as being like puppets who are at the mercy of social forces beyond their control.

FOCUS ON SKILLS: DISCUSSION ACTIVITY

Are people simply puppets?

One debate between sociologists focuses on how far society moulds us and controls our behaviour and how far we create and influence society.

To what extent do you agree that society influences us and directs our behaviour? Can you think of ways in which we can influence, challenge or change society?

Make a note of your ideas.

Criticisms of functionalism

The functionalist approach focuses on the positive functions that things such as crime and religion perform for society. However, critics argue that functionalism overlooks their dysfunctional (or negative) aspects. In reality, crime and religion do not always perform positive functions for society. For example, knife crime can have devastating effects on individual victims and on communities; religion can cause long-term conflicts between different social groups such as Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland.

Check your understanding

- 1 Describe what sociologists mean by the term 'function'. (3 marks)
- 2 Identify and explain one criticism of functionalism. (4 marks)

Key points

- Durkheim is one of the founders of sociology and a key figure behind the functionalist perspective.
- Durkheim made an important contribution to sociologists' understanding of the functions of crime, education and religion.

What are the key ideas of Max Weber?

Objective

- Describe the key ideas of Max Weber

FOCUS ON KEY THINKERS

Max Weber (1864–1920)

Place of birth: Prussia (now Germany)

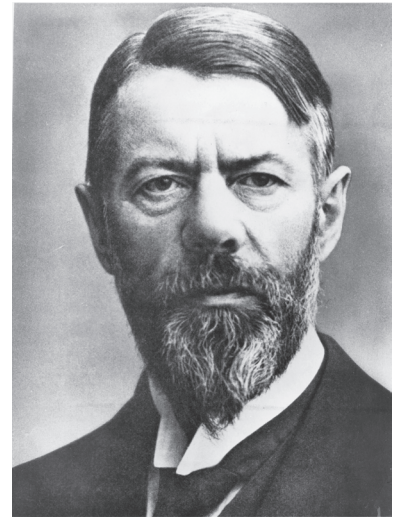
Key contribution to the development of sociology: Weber made a major contribution to a range of sociological topics, including **social class**, **status** and **power**.

Glossary terms

power, social class, social stratification, status

Social class

Both Marx and Weber were interested in issues such as the development of capitalism and social class. Marx saw social class as the key division in society and he defined class in terms of economic factors. Weber agreed with Marx that ownership and non-ownership of property is the most important basis of class divisions. However, Weber argued that class divisions are not just based on economic factors; they are also linked to the skills and qualifications that people have. These skills and qualifications affect the sorts of occupation or job that people get. People with high-level qualifications (such as university degrees) and specialised skills (such as those held by surgeons or architects) are more marketable than people without these qualifications and skills.



Weber is one of the founders of sociology.

Status

Weber identified other aspects of **social stratification** (the way society is structured or divided into strata or layers) in addition to class. One of these is status. Status refers to how much prestige or social standing a group has. There are differences between groups in terms of how much status they have. Some groups, such as surgeons and judges, have high status in the UK today. They also have relatively high incomes. However, Weber argued that status does not always go hand-in-hand with income.

There are groups who earn high incomes but have relatively low status in society. For instance, some second hand car dealers earn much more money than junior doctors, nurses or teachers but have less status. There are other groups, such as religious leaders, who have high status but low incomes.

Power

Weber made a key contribution to the study of power. He argued that an individual or group exercises power when they can get what

they want, despite any opposition from other individuals or groups. In Weber's view, people have power in so far as they can get other people to behave as they want them to.

FOCUS ON SKILLS: WRITTEN ACTIVITY

Power

Read through the information below and then answer the questions that follow.

One way of exercising power is through force or coercion. A bully, for example, might use physical force – or the threat of it – to get someone to do what they want. Another way of exercising power is through authority. Politicians, managers, police officers and judges, for instance, are authorised to exercise power over people because of the position they hold within an organisation. The authority of a religious leader might be based on their charisma, that is, the exceptional qualities they have to inspire people.

- 1 Which form of power (coercion or authority) do you think is likely to be more effective in influencing other people's behaviour? Briefly explain your answer.
- 2 Choose two groups who have power in the UK today and briefly explain what their power is based on.

FOCUS ON SKILLS: DISCUSSION ACTIVITY

Changing use of language

In the past, Marx, Weber and Durkheim were sometimes referred to as the 'Founding Fathers' of sociology. Some sociologists also used terms such as 'man' or 'mankind' in their writing when referring to people or humankind.

In a small group, discuss why these terms are less likely to be used today. How far does our use of words such as 'man' and 'mankind' matter? Can you think of any similar examples of words that are less likely to be used today compared to the past?

Make a note of the main points arising from your discussion.

Making connections

Weber and Marx focused on class divisions in society but they did not explore inequalities based on gender, ethnicity or age in detail.

How important do you think it is for sociologists today to examine gender, ethnicity and age?

Explain your thinking.

Check your understanding

Identify and explain one similarity between Weber and Marx's approach to social class. (4 marks)

Key points

- Weber agreed with Marx that ownership and non-ownership of property is the most important basis of class divisions.
- However, Weber argued that class divisions are not based just on economic factors; they are also based on people's skills and qualifications.
- Weber also highlighted the importance of status. Groups differ in how much status they have. A particular group may have high status but no wealth and a low income.

What is the consensus versus conflict debate?

Objectives

- Describe the consensus versus conflict debate in sociology
- Describe feminist approaches in sociology

Sociologists disagree about how they see the social world and this means that there are different theoretical perspectives in sociology. A perspective is a particular way of seeing society and explaining how it works. Examples include functionalism, Marxism and **feminism**.

One key difference between these perspectives is whether they see society as based on **consensus** (agreement) or conflict. This is often referred to as the consensus versus conflict debate.

Glossary terms

consensus, discrimination, feminism, feminist perspective, patriarchy, value consensus

The consensus approach

In places such as airports, hospitals and prisons throughout the UK, complex activities take place every day. Much could go wrong. At airports, for example, aeroplanes could be delayed or baggage could go missing. Yet airports are generally ordered places where things usually run smoothly.

Similarly, in wider society, social life is usually ordered and stable. According to the consensus approach, order and stability in society depend on cooperation between individuals and groups who work together for the common good. Generally, this cooperation happens when people believe they have shared interests and goals.

Sociologists who work within the functionalist approach see society as based on **value consensus**. In other words, people agree with society's norms and values. This consensus arises from the process of socialisation (see Topic 4), during which we learn and come to share the norms and values of our society. According to the functionalist perspective, social order is based on consensus and it is maintained over time because most people support the rules and agree to stick to them.

The conflict approach

Some approaches argue that the way society is structured gives power to some groups over others. Marxism and feminism are examples of conflict theories that see society as based on conflicting interests between groups rather than on consensus.

The Marxist perspective sees capitalist societies as based on conflict between two social classes: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Marxists focus on class struggle. They argue that there is conflict between powerful and less powerful groups in capitalist society based on their opposing interests. However, social order is maintained over time partly because the bourgeoisie have the power to enforce order. They are able, for instance, to influence the type

of laws that are passed and to ensure that the legal system works in their interests.

Feminist perspectives in sociology

Feminist perspectives explore gender inequality and **discrimination** in society. They see sex and gender as different categories. The term 'sex' refers to biological differences between males and females (for example, their roles in reproduction). Gender refers to the different cultural expectations, ideas and practices linked to masculinity and femininity.



Feminists demand an end to male violence against women. The 'Reclaim the Night' marches in London and elsewhere are annual women-only marches against sexual violence and for gender equality.

FOCUS ON SKILLS: WRITTEN ACTIVITY

Masculinity in different cultures

Read through the extract and then answer the questions that follow.

'In some cultures, men wear long, flowing garments as a matter of course, but in some the idea of a man in a "dress" is viewed with alarm; in some cultures, men who are good friends walk down the street holding hands, but in others that behaviour is considered a violation of masculinity norms; there was a time in North America when the now-familiar mantra that "pink is for girls, blue is for boys" was reversed and pink was considered a strong, "masculine" colour.'

Source: Lips, H.M. (2013) *Gender: The Basics*. Abingdon: Routledge, p. 14.

- 1 Identify two examples to show that what is seen as appropriate masculine clothing and behaviour varies between cultures.
- 2 How far does this information suggest that masculinity is closely linked to biology?

FOCUS ON SKILLS: DISCUSSION ACTIVITY

Nature versus nurture

The nature versus nurture debate concerns how far the differences between men and women are based on biology (nature) and how far they are linked to socialisation and culture (nurture).

In a small group, discuss how far it is possible to separate out the influences of nature and nurture. Note down your ideas.

Gender and power

Some feminist approaches argue that society is patriarchal. In other words, it is based on male power over women. These approaches explore the workings of **patriarchy** within social structures such as families, education, the workplace and the criminal justice system. They see family life, for example, as based on male dominance and this can be seen in men's control of decision-making and in domestic violence.

Check your understanding

Identify and explain one difference between consensus and conflict approaches. (4 marks)

Key points

- The consensus approach is linked to functionalism and argues that society is based on broad agreement about norms and values.
- The Marxist and feminist perspectives view society as based on conflict. Marxism emphasises class conflict and struggle, while feminism emphasises conflict based on gender.

Focus on skills

Using statistical data

You will come across many examples of statistical tables and charts in this book and throughout your study of sociology. It is important for you to be able to make sense of this information.

When you are examining statistical **data**, bear in mind the following checklist:

- What do the statistics refer to?
- What year or years do they refer to?
- Where do they refer to?
- What unit of measurement is used?
- When were they published?
- What is the source of the statistics?

The following activities are designed to give you some practice at making sense of statistical data.

Glossary terms

data, trend

FOCUS ON SKILLS: WRITTEN ACTIVITY

Births outside marriage

Study the information below and then answer the questions that follow.

Live births outside marriage, England and Wales, 1970–2015 (percentages)

1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015
8.3%	9.1%	11.8%	19.2%	28.3%	33.9%	39.5%	42.8%	46.8%	47.7%

Source: Office for National Statistics (2016).

- 1 What percentage of live births were *outside* marriage in 1990?
- 2 What percentage of live births were *inside* marriage in 2000?
- 3 Briefly describe the **trend** in the proportion of live births outside marriage between 1970 and 2015.
- 4 Write down two of your own questions based on these statistics, along with the answers.
- 5 In pairs, take it in turns to ask each other the questions you have devised.

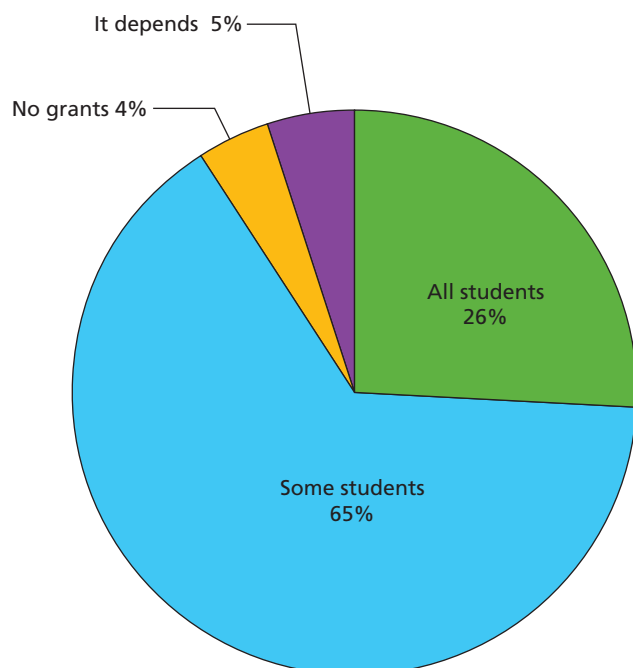
FOCUS ON SKILLS: WRITTEN ACTIVITY

Attitudes to higher education

As part of the British Social Attitudes survey, the respondents (the people answering the questions) were asked for their views on whether students in higher education (for example, at universities) should get grants to help cover their living costs. Study the pie chart on the next page and then answer the following questions:

- 1 What percentage of respondents thought that all students should get grants to cover their living costs?
- 2 Which response received the most support?
- 3 What response did 5 per cent of respondents give?
- 4 In which year did this survey take place?

Views on higher education grants, England, 2014



Question: Should students get grants to help cover their living costs?

Source: adapted from NatCen's British Social Attitudes 32, Table 3, p. 7.

FOCUS ON SKILLS: WRITTEN ACTIVITY

Child poverty

Sometimes, statistics are presented within the body of written text rather than in a table or chart. The information below is an extract from a publication produced by the Child Poverty Action Group. Read the extract and then answer the questions that follow.

Child poverty in the UK: a few facts

- There were 3.7 million children living in poverty in the UK in 2013–14. That's 28 per cent of children, or nine in a classroom of 30.
- Work does not provide a guaranteed route out of poverty in the UK. Two-thirds (64 per cent) of children growing up in poverty live in a family where at least one member works.
- Children in large families are at a far greater risk of living in poverty. 35% of children in poverty live in families with three or more children.

Source: Child Poverty Action Group.

- 1 What percentage of children was living in poverty in the UK in 2013/14?
- 2 What proportion of children growing up in poverty live in a family where at least one member works?
- 3 Write down two of your own questions based on the statistics in this extract, along with the answers.
- 4 In pairs, take it in turns to ask each other the questions you have devised.

Check your understanding

- 1 Describe what sociologists mean by the term 'data'. (3 marks)
- 2 Describe what sociologists mean by the term 'trend' in relation to statistical data. (3 marks)