



DIXONS
SIXTH FORM
BRADFORD

SUMMER WORK

**A LEVEL
SOCIOLOGY**

STUDENT NAME:

20
26

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About the Summer Work

This booklet contains a number of tasks that students are expected to complete to a good standard in order to be able to be enrolled in this subject.

Please complete this work on A4 paper using black ink. You should bring your completed summer work with you to your first Sociology lesson in September. Please make sure you take pride in the presentation of your work and make a great first impression.

The work handed in should be:

- written in black or blue ink on A4 lined paper
- written in full sentences with no copying and pasting from external sources
- have all compulsory tasks completed
- have students full names on each sheet
- multiple sheets should be connected together

This booklet also contains significant additional information. You must complete all the tasks to fully prepare for Sixth Form study.

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Welcome to Sociology

Subject outline

Sociology is, in essence, the study of people in society. It examines the values, attitudes, culture and organisation of the society in which we live and explores how these influences impact on our social behaviour.

Students study 5 content topics over two years.

- **Topic 1 – Education and Methods in Context**
- **Topic 2 – Health and Illness**
- **Topic 3 – Stratification and Differentiation**
- **Topic 4 – Crime and Deviance**
- **Topic 5 – Theory and Methods**

100% Examination; three exams at the end of the course.

- Paper 1 - Education, Methods in Context and Theory and Methods - 2 hours, 33.3%
- Paper 2 – Health and Illness and Stratification and Differentiation - 2 hours, 33.3%
- Paper 3 - Crime and Deviance and Theory and Methods - 2 hours, 33.3%

The complete specification can be viewed on the AQA website. www.aqa.org.uk

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Careers & Higher Education

Students who have studied sociology have gone on to a vast variety of degree courses and have accessed a full range of top institutions including Russell Group universities. Sociology can lead to a variety of careers such as:

- Counselling • Crime scene investigator
- Solicitor • Human resources officer
- Social worker • Policy officer
- Social researcher • Special educational needs coordinator

Sociology and the Local Labour Market

Students who study Sociology at A Level or university level often go into Health and Social Care, Education, the Criminal Justice System, Research or Professional Services. Sociology students are well suited to many professional roles vital across different institutions: management, human resources, leadership and marketing. There is significant demand for these roles in Bradford, particularly within the headquarters of major businesses such as Morrison's, Yorkshire Water, Hallmark and the Yorkshire Building Society.

Within Bradford, 10.7% of the employed population work in management and 9.3% work in the care sector- both figures are slightly higher than the national average. The main sectors predicted to grow in the future are within health and social care, professional services and retail. Sociology is the ideal course to prepare you for these sectors.

Useful resources:



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2026 SUMMER WORK



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Sociology summer work

Please complete this work on A4 paper using black ink. You should bring your completed summer work with you to your first Sociology lesson in September. Please make sure you take pride in the presentation of your work and make a great first impression.

Task 1: Introducing Theory and Methods (reading and comprehension)

There are numerous different perspectives and theories in Sociology. Each perspective will approach and study society using different methods and develop contrasting conclusions based on their own



theoretical stance. The first widely recognised sociologist is Auguste Comte (1798 – 1857), who believed that traditional scientific methods of study can be applied to the study and explanation of a society. He believed that external forces (often regarded as ‘**social facts**’) influence all human behaviour. By remaining **objective** and studying large numbers of people, the external forces can be identified and

general laws and principles of human behaviour can be established. This approach to studying society is described as a **positivism**. However not everyone agreed with Comte’s ideas about studying society. Other sociologists such as Alfred Schutz (1899 – 1959) disagree that all behaviour is influenced by external forces and suggests that humans have **free-will**. Schutz suggests that to accurately study society we must research small groups of people to understand how each individual interprets and understands actions and behaviours. By doing this we can develop a more accurate and detailed explanation of society. This approach is described as **interpretivism** or **interactionism** based on the emphasis on understanding action and behaviour.



Sociologists are often ‘pigeon-holed’ into belonging to a perspective or theory based upon their methods of studying society and/or their views and conclusions. Although this is a controversial matter within the subject. Ronald Fletcher famously stated that “*Schools of sociology (perspectives) are an invention of the writers of textbooks*” (Fletcher 1966). The process of ‘pigeon-holing’ and categorising sociologists has led to divisions and disputes between sociologists being created or overemphasised when no division or dispute exist. However by categorising sociologists into the various perspectives and approaches, students can organise their notes and ideas much more clearly and consolidate their understandings of the sociological theories covered at A level in a much shorter period of time.

The various approaches we must consider for the A level are:

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- *Consensus Theories*
- *Conflict Theories*
- *Social Action*
- *Postmodern*
- *Late Modern*

In relation to confusing nature of the different approaches and issue of categorising a sociologist or their work, it is understandably difficult for a new Sociology student to understand what is expected of them when writing theory-based essays. The chief examiners for AQA are looking for *“a display a consciousness of the intellectual development of the discipline as a whole, some conception of theories and approaches popular at different points in time, the reason for their popularity and their status today in the light of more recent developments”*. In a nutshell you want to approach sociology holistically and demonstrate you understand that each theory or idea is not independent of one another.

As mentioned earlier, each sociological perspective adopts its own methodology in order to study society and develop its theories. The simplistic way to distinguish between the methodologies used in sociological research is to split each perspective into adopting a **positivist methodology** or an **interactionist methodology**. In the following pages we'll consider how each believes society should be studied and reference some of the methods used in their research. However, these pages will not consider the use of the research methods in detail. In order to provide some context for the positivist/interactionist debate we'll consider the topic of suicide.

Positivism

Positivist sociologists believe that society can and should be studied as a natural science (just like chemistry or physics). Positivists believe that all human behaviour is influenced by external forces, what they describe as **social facts**. When researching society it is therefore extremely important that the methods used try to identify these social facts in order to understand why we behave the way that we do. This is why positivists endorse a **macro** (large scale) approach to the study of society. If social facts exist and influence all our behaviour, then we must study large groups of people to identify similarities in their behaviour and ultimately the social facts that are effecting behaviour.

The positivist approach was largely endorsed by **August Comte** (who we earlier described as the 'founding father' of sociology). Comte first published his views in a book entitled *'The Positive*

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Philosophy' (1853) in which he placed an emphasis on **objectivity** (remaining neutral/unbiased) and its importance to understanding how society was organised and structured. Comte rejected the notion of allowing personal experience to influence the interpretation of the 'social facts'. He also suggested that **empirical evidence** (actual physical/observable evidence) must be collected in order to support a theory. This is generally why positivists prefer using official statistics to support their theories. Comte's ideas are concisely summed up by Keat and Urry (1975) who state; *"Positive science is concerned only with observable phenomena and it consists of the establishment of law-like relations between them through the careful accumulation of factual knowledge. This occurs by means of observation, experimentation, comparison and prediction."*

Modern-positivists have generally moved away from the traditional 'inductive reasoning' that early positivists such as Comte suggested. Instead, modern positivists suggest using a 'hypothetic-deductive' method of reasons developed by Karl Popper in the 1930's. This method accepted that controlled observations and experiments should be used in order to develop knowledge and theories about the world we live in. Karl Popper's view was that for a body of knowledge to be considered scientific the knowledge must be able to be disproved (what he called falsified). This is a major problem with regards to sociological theory and knowledge and therefore sociology should not be considered scientific. For example, earlier we criticised Marxist theory for not being able to falsify the ideas of Marx. However, modern-positivists argue that although their theories cannot be falsified, they can go through the process of **verification**. This is where evidence collected supports a theory and potentially 'fine-tunes' the theory allowing more accurate predictions to be made in the future. As we'll establish once we have discussed interactionism, the Positivist approach has many issues. The most concerning issue is the potential lack of validity (accuracy) for any positivist findings. Having high levels of control and remaining objective when conducting research would normally produce results that are considered high in validity (in natural sciences). However, when studying humans this causes two major problems. The first relates to control. If a researcher has too much control over the collection of data, then how realistic is the data to everyday life where there is no control? A second problem relates to the objectivity. If you are completely neutral and detached from research, can you empathise with the individuals you are studying and truly understand their perspective? Interactionists would argue that this is a fundamental flaw in the positivist approach and therefore this approach should be abandoned as a result.

Methods preferred by Positivists:

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- **Questionnaires** – can collect large amounts of data objectively. Closed questions would be preferred as the researcher does not need to interpret the participant’s response.
- **Structured Interviews** – allow an element of objectivity and increases the reliability because each participant is asked the same question.
- **Experiments** – allows high levels of control and causal relationships to be established objectively.
- **Official Statistics** – Positivist view official statistics are real. They can be analysed objectively and due to the large scale of the data. Historical trends and national patterns can also be analysed.
- **Comparative Methods** – often using official statistics, this is where a researcher would use secondary sources to make comparisons and establish differences.

Reflection questions:

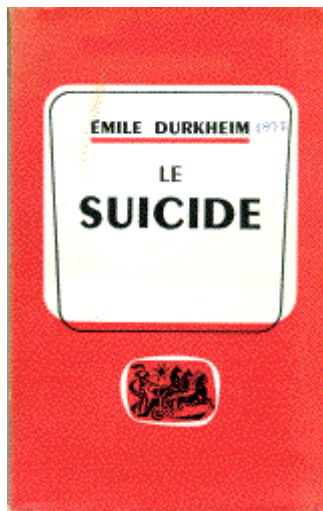
1. What do positivist sociologists mean by “social facts,” and why are they important in studying society?

2. Why do positivists prefer using large-scale (macro) research methods such as questionnaires and official statistics?

[Type here]

3. What is one criticism of the positivist approach raised by interactionists? Explain briefly.

An example of Positivist research:



One of the most famous examples of a Positivist approach to studying society is Durkheim's study on suicide in Paris. He used the official statistics recorded by the police/coroner's office and correlated the suicide rates with other facts such as how socially integrated a person was and how morally regulated they felt (he used religious belief as a guide). Durkheim believed that he established the social facts that could predict the likelihood of a person committing suicide and even the 'type' of suicide they would commit. He even created a scale (Typology of Suicide) to help with the predictions. This study was heavily criticised by interactionist sociologists as we shall see below.

Interactionism:

Interactionism (Interpretivism) is a sociological approach that focuses on how individuals create and shape society through their everyday interactions. Unlike positivists, who believe behaviour is governed by external social facts, interactionists argue that people actively interpret the world around them and act based on the meanings they give to situations.

These meanings are not fixed. Instead, they are developed and modified through social interaction, particularly through language and communication. For example, a gesture such as eye contact or a

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smile can carry different meanings depending on the context. This reflects the interactionist view that society is constantly being constructed and reconstructed through human action.

A key thinker, George Herbert Mead, argued that humans use shared symbols (such as language) to communicate and that this allows individuals to reflect on their own behaviour. This process helps people to understand how others may perceive them and guides their actions. Building on this, Herbert Blumer suggested that people act based on meanings, that these meanings arise through interaction, and that individuals interpret these meanings before responding.

Interactionism forms the basis of labelling theory, which suggests that behaviour is not inherently deviant, but becomes so when others label it as such. This highlights the importance of social reactions in shaping identity.

A major strength of interactionism is that it provides a detailed understanding of individual experiences. However, it has been criticised for ignoring wider social structures, such as class and inequality, which may also influence behaviour.

Methods preferred by interactionists;

- **Questionnaires (open-ended)** – allow a participant to respond to a question in any way they feel. The detached nature of a questionnaire also allows participants to feel more comfortable giving honest answers without feeling judged.
- **Unstructured Interviews** – gives the researcher the freedom to ask additional questions and build a rapport with the participants.
- **Participant Observation** – by participating in the behaviour you are observing a researcher gets a more accurate understanding of why people do what they do.
- **Ethnographic Methods** – by fully immersing themselves into the culture and life of the participants they are studying, the research collects more valid data the research could be more organic and lead to research findings that were not intended.

An example of interactionist research:

[Type here]

JACK D. DOUGLAS

Social Meanings of Suicide

PRINCETON LEGACY LIBRARY

In response to Durkheim's Positivist approach to studying suicide, Jack Douglas conducted an interactionist assessment. He was very critical of Durkheim's method of merely accepting the official statistics as valid and real. Douglas argues that the creation of any official statistic is merely the result of interactions between different agencies. In this case, it was the police or coroner's who decided that the death was suicide. Douglas believes that we must first consider if the deceased intended the death to be a suicide. Many suicides are cries for help with no intention of actually resulting in a death, should these be considered as suicide? What about potential accidental deaths or murders that were covered up by leaving a suicide note?

Douglas argues that to assume that official statistics are accurate is a poor method of investigation and complex behaviour like suicide is not that simple to study

Reflection questions:

1. According to interactionists, how and why do individuals behave differently in different situations?

2. What does labelling theory suggest about deviance and how it is created?

3. Why did Jack Douglas criticise Durkheim's use of official statistics when studying suicide?

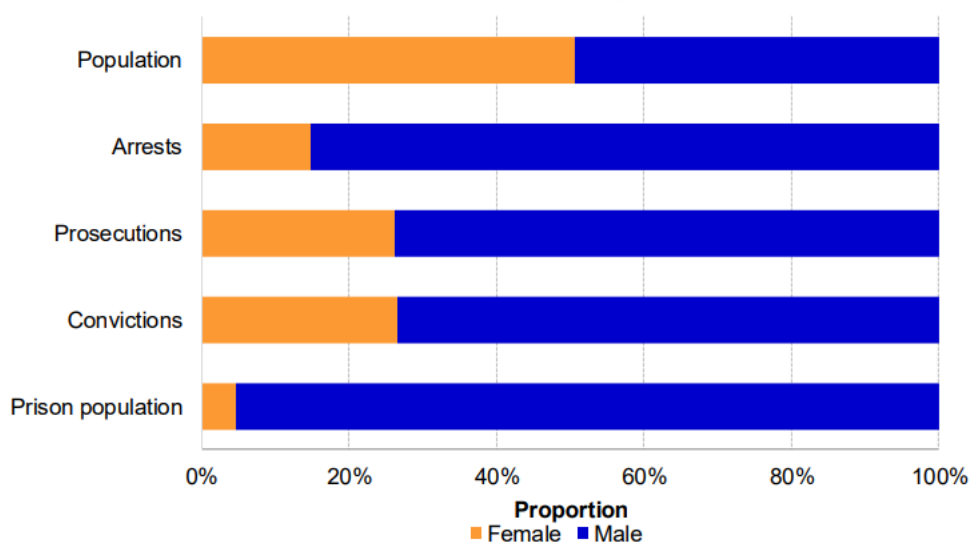
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Section 2 – Using data

In sociology we often use official statistics as a starting point. We then look to use theory to explain why patterns exist.

Gender and the Prison Population

Figure 1.01: Proportions of males and females throughout the CJS, 2017



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Using the information above and your own research, write detailed responses to the following questions.

- a) Roughly what percentage of the prison population is female?

- b) Women make up around a quarter off all prosecutions, but disproportionately few of these prosecutions end in prison sentences. Outline and explain 3 reasons.

- c) In recent years the number of women committing crimes has risen. Why might this be?

- d) Is there a difference between the type of crime committed by men and women? How can this be explained?

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Summary –

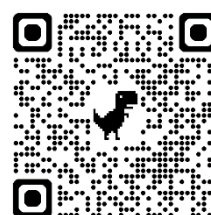
Summarise your overall conclusions about the difference in male and female offending and prison rates.

Section 2 – Inequality and Education

Task 1

Watch the following video clip and complete the questions below.

<https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x6bybk9>



1. In 2011 how many children were living in poverty in the UK?

-
-
2. How much do additional credit interest and higher fuel charges cost poor families each year?
[Type here]

3. How many times less likely are poor children to have access to safe outdoor space compared to other children?

4. One fifth of low income families report skipping meals. How much more likely is this amongst the children of single parents?

5. How much more likely are poor children to suffer chronic illness than other children?

6. What percentage of children grow up in poverty in the Gorbals in Glasgow?

[Type here]



7. What percentage of children living in deprived housing suffer breathing problems?

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Read the BBC article below:

By Hannah Richardson
BBC News education reporter

© 3 August 2017

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Extension task: Identify any strategies that the government have put in place to try to tackle this issue.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

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Section 4 – Key Sociological Perspectives

Functionalism

Feminism

Marxism

The three perspectives listed above each have unique ideas about how society works. Complete the table below with the key ideas for each perspective. You may wish to include theorists, but this is not compulsory.

Starting points:

- What are their main beliefs about society?
- Do they believe that society is fair? Why/why not?
- Where did the perspective originate? What was the context?

	Define the key terms associated with each theory.	Summary (use the questions on the left to help)
Marxism What are their main beliefs about society? Do they believe that society is fair? Why/why not? Where did the perspective originate? What was the context?	<u>Capitalism</u> <u>Communism</u> <u>Conflict theory</u>	
Feminism What are their main beliefs about society? Do they believe that society is fair? Why/why not? Where did the perspective originate? What was the context?	<u>Patriarchy</u> <u>Double standards</u> <u>Conflict theory</u>	

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Functionalism What are their main beliefs about society? Do they believe that society is fair? Why/why not? Where did the perspective originate? What was the context?	<u>Consensus theory</u> <u>Value consensus</u> <u>Norms and values</u>	

Which theory do you think is most successful in explaining how society functions? Explain why.

Which theory do you think is the last successful in explaining how society functions? Explain why.

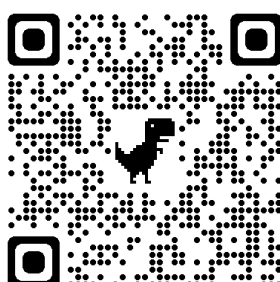
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Reading list

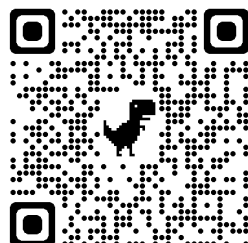
Subject specification:



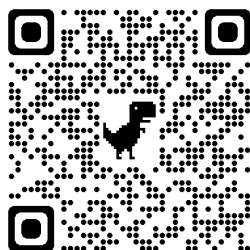
Watch this:



Read this:



Listen to this:



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