

SOCIOLOGY

BRIDGING WORK

NAME:

A-Level Sociology

We study the AQA specification, and study the following topics:

1. Education
2. Families
3. Beliefs
4. Crime and deviance
5. Theory and Methods

Quick check: find and write out the definitions of the following word in the text above, or online.

Sociology	
Sociologist	
Social institutions	
Norms	
Values	
Sanctions	
Primary socialisation	
Secondary socialisation	
Social control	
Class	

In Sociology, there are three main different sociological perspectives, or ways of looking at society:

1. **Functionalists:** these sociologists believe society runs smoothly, and is made up of different parts which all work together to keep society stable. They believe people agree on what is important (there is a value consensus) and people generally conform to the norms of society. They tend to focus on the positive functions of different parts of society. Watch this video to find out more:



2. **Marxists:** based on the ideas of Karl Marx, they focus on inequalities based on social class (how much or little money someone has). They believe this is the main inequality in society. They argue there are two main classes: the working class (proletariat) and ruling class (bourgeoisie) and believe the ruling class own and exploit the workers, treating them badly and giving them low pay so they can make more money for themselves. Watch this video and find out more:



3. **Feminists:** see gender inequality, inequality between men and women, as the main inequality in society. They argue women are treated badly and exploited by men, and that society is patriarchal (male-dominated). Watch this video to find out more:



Complete the table to summarise the different perspectives:

	Summary	Image
Functionalism		
Marxism		
Feminism		

Key question: is Britain fair?

Two babies are born on the same place. Do they have an equal chance of...

... being healthy?

... going to university?

... getting a well-paid job?

... avoiding prison?

... succeeding in school?

- One third (30%) of children in Britain live in poverty
- People born into the most deprived (poor) areas of the UK are likely to live, on average, 10 years less than those in affluent (well off) areas
- Only 30% of those receiving Free School Meals (FSM) (low family income) achieve a pass in English and Maths at GCSE compared to 60% of those who do not receive FSM
- Only 7% of the population go to fee-paying schools, but they make up 42% of students at Oxford and Cambridge and dominate top jobs in law, journalism, politics and health
- Last year, there was a 13% increase in food bank use

These statistics paint a bleak picture of whether or not Britain is a fair society. Before we engage in the debate of whether or not Britain is fair, we must define what we mean by this.

In Sociology, a 'fair' society is a society where everyone has equality of opportunity - everyone has an equal chance of achieving success and their background does not determine this. Sociologists call this a 'meritocracy' - a society where status is based on merit (hard work and talent) rather than the position you are born into. In a meritocracy, effort should be the only factor determining the position someone gains in life.

Functionalists believe contemporary (modern) Britain is a meritocracy and that success is determined only by hard work.

Quick check: look at the following cartoons and reflect on the statistics above. In your opinion, does everyone have an equal chance to succeed? Why or why not? Write your response in the box provided.

Marxists
disagree
with

functionalists, arguing society is not a meritocracy. They believe those born into the working class (poorer members of society) have less chance of succeeding in life. They believe the upper class (the rich) have a much higher chance of succeeding and dominate the top positions in society.

Feminists also disagree, arguing women have less chance of succeeding than men. They argue society is patriarchal, meaning that men have an inbuilt advantage compared to women, and that women are disadvantaged and oppressed.

Other sociologists believe people from ethnic minority backgrounds are disadvantaged, due to individual and institutional (embedded) racism.

Is the education system fair?

- Education policy institute found disadvantaged children were 18 months behind their peers by the time they took their GCSEs
- More affluent (advantaged) students have heard 30 million more words than disadvantaged students by the time they are 5

Table 13: Attainment 8 and Progress 8 for FSM eligible and all other pupils

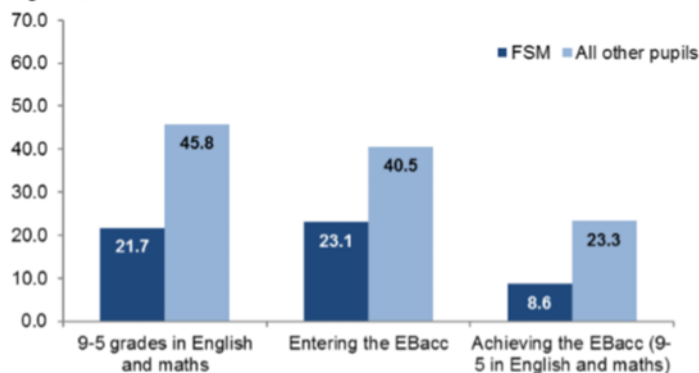
England, state-funded schools, 2017

	Number of pupils at end of key stage 4	Average Attainment 8 score	Average Progress 8 score	Progress 8 lower confidence interval	Progress 8 upper confidence interval
FSM	69,261	35.0	-0.48	-0.49	-0.47
All other pupils	458,598	48.0	0.04	0.03	0.04

Source: Key stage 4 attainment data

Figure 17: Attainment in threshold measures for FSM eligible and all other pupils (including grades 5 or above in English and maths)

England, state-funded schools, 2017



Source: Key stage 4 revised attainment data

Pupils can claim Free School Meals if their household income is less than £16,000, so it is used as a measure of social class or poverty.

1. What percentage more students not on FSM achieve a grade 5 in English and Maths compared to students on FSM?
2. What does this show about which students do better in education?
3. Can you think of any reasons for this?

At school, children from different backgrounds receive very different outcomes in education. Here are some of the main reasons:

1. Material deprivation – students may lack the physical resources they need to study, like books and internet access. How might this impact their exam results?
2. Labelling – students may be labelled as lower achieving by teachers. This is when teachers attach a label to students and treat them differently. They may see working class students as less motivated, less able and less hard working. How might this impact their results?
3. Parental attitudes – parents from working class backgrounds may be less involved and less engaged in their children’s education, possibly because they had a bad experience of school themselves.

Many wealthy parents can afford to send their children to independent schools too.

Some sociologists also argue ethnic minorities have a worse experience of education, because they experience racism and institutional racism. Some also argue these inequalities are due to differences in the family structures of different ethnicities.

Research task: read the articles and watch the documentaries and listen to the podcast to get a better understanding of the inequalities in education. Use the information to write 500 words explaining why education in contemporary Britain may not be fair, including which groups may be more disadvantaged.

Source	Key points
Documentary: Too Poor for Posh School? 	
Clip: Should we abolish private schools? 	

Is family life fair?

If we were to rewind to the 1950s, we would see that family life used to be very unequal. Women were expected not to have a paid job, but to complete all the housework and childcare, whilst men would go out and work. Look at this page from a home economics textbook in the 1950s:

Housekeeping Monthly 13 May 1955

Housekeeping Monthly 13 May 1955



Advertising Archives

The good wife's guide

- Have dinner ready. Plan ahead, even the night before, to have a delicious meal ready, on time for his return. This is a way of letting him know that you have been thinking about him and are concerned about his needs. Most men are hungry when they come home and the prospect of a good meal (especially his favourite dish) is part of the warm welcome needed.
- Prepare yourself. Take 15 minutes to rest so you'll be refreshed when he arrives. Touch up your make-up, put a ribbon in your hair and be fresh-looking. He has just been with a lot of work-weary people.
- Be a little gay and a little more interesting for him. His boring day may need a lift and one of your duties is to provide it.
- Clear away the clutter. Make one last trip through the main part of the house just before your husband arrives.

- Gather up schoolbooks, toys, paper etc and then run a dustcloth over the tables.
 - Over the cooler months of the year you should prepare and light a fire for him to unwind by. Your husband will feel he has reached a haven of rest and order, and it will give you a lift too. After all, catering for his comfort will provide you with immense personal satisfaction.
 - Prepare the children. Take a few minutes to wash the children's hands and faces (if they are small), comb their hair and, if necessary, change their clothes. They are little treasures and he would like to see them playing the part. Minimise all noise. At the time of his arrival, eliminate all noise of the washer, dryer or vacuum. Try to encourage the children to be quiet.
 - Be happy to see him.
 - Greet him with a warm smile and show sincerity in your desire to please him.
 - Listen to him. You may have a dozen important things to tell him, but the moment of his arrival is not the time. Let him talk first - remember, his topics of conversation are more important than yours.
 - Make the evening his. Never complain if he comes home late or goes out to dinner, or other places of entertainment without you. Instead, try to understand his world of strain and pressure and his very real need to be at home and relax.
 - Your goal: Try to make sure your home is a place of peace, order and tranquillity where your husband can renew himself in body and spirit.
 - Don't greet him with complaints and problems.
 - Don't complain if he's late home for dinner or even if he stays out all night. Count this as minor compared to what he might have gone through that day.
 - Make him comfortable. Have him lean back in a comfortable chair or have him lie down in the bedroom. Have a cool or warm drink ready for him.
 - Arrange his pillow and offer to take off his shoes. Speak in a low, soothing and pleasant voice.
 - Don't ask him questions about his actions or question his judgment or integrity. Remember, he is the master of the house and as such will always exercise his will with fairness and truthfulness. You have no right to question him.
- A good wife always knows her place.**


1. What does this show about the role of women in the family?
2. What would feminists think about this?
3. How has this changed?

Today, men and women are more equal. Women are likely to have a paid job as well as men, and men and women are both likely to contribute to family life and tasks. However, there are still inequalities between men and women in the family. Men are usually paid more than women, and so have more power, and women often still complete up to 60% more housework and childcare than men.

Many women must perform the 'double shift' - which means doing two shifts of work, one in their paid role, and one at home. Some sociologists also argue that women perform more emotional labour - remembering birthdays, comforting people when they are upset, scheduling appointments and so on.

In your opinion, should women do more housework and childcare than men? Why/ Why not?

Research task: read/ watch/ listen to the sources below and record the key points. Then write 500 words explaining whether or not family life in the UK is fair in your opinion. Try to use evidence and examples where possible.

Source	Key points
<p>Article: Why is there still a housework inequality gap?</p> 	

Clip: Sociologist Arlie Hoschild
[discussing the second shift](#)



I am so looking forward to seeing you in September!

If you have any questions, concerns or want any documentaries
to prepare yourself please email me!

sclark@devizes.wilts.sch.uk