

## Bridging Work | Sociology A-level (1)

An enormous welcome to you all to Sociology!

If you've not studied sociology before, be prepared for an awakening educational experience.

Our course studies the UK society today, the society we all live in and are a part of.

Sociology isn't simply about studying society because it is interesting or even fascinating.

Many sociological research projects investigate 'social inequality', these are examples of social groups being discriminated against in all sorts of different ways. Many sociologists aim to make a valuable contribution to changing our society for the better, making it more equal, making a difference to people's lives.



Amongst the inequalities questions that we will examine in our sociology course are:

- Why do children from working class backgrounds continually under-achieve in education compared to children from middle-class backgrounds?
- Why do some sociologists strongly believe there is a right type of family structure for today's society: the nuclear family, with married hetero-sexual parents, where the wife stays at home to look after the children?

- Is childhood in the UK getting better and better, or has it become toxic for many?
- Why are cohabitating, same sex, and lone parent families considered dysfunctional?
- Why do black people make up only 3% of the UK population and yet over 13% of the prison population?
- Why do some newspapers make front page headlines of working class benefit frauds, yet ignore crimes committed by those multinational corporations exploiting impoverished workers in much poorer, powerless, developing countries?
- Why are the death rates from 'corona virus' amongst the poor, elderly, and ethnic minority groups, so much higher than those for other social groups in the UK?



Now you're more aware of some of the issues that you will be investigating as an A-level sociology student, let's see how you can prepare for beginning this experience.

**Below are three tasks for you to complete by September.**

You can complete them on a slide show presentation, or a report (approx. 750 words), or a podcast etc., and they should take you at least three hours or so.

1. In what ways do you think the Sociology A-level course could benefit you as a young person, now, and for your future?
2. Choose 3 or more of the 'social inequality' issues listed in the 7 bullet points above, and for each one **briefly** investigate and explain in your own words:
  - which social group(s) is being disadvantaged, and
  - explain in what different ways that group is being disadvantaged, eg how their life chances are affected by the disadvantage, and

- propose what you feel *should* be done to overcome this inequality, and explain what difficulties you feel there might be with overcoming this injustice
3. The following famous sociologists have made tremendous contributions to research
- Emile Durkheim (1858-1917)
  - Karl Marx (1818-1883)
  - Anne Oakley (1944 - )
  - Max Weber (1864-1920)
  - Becky Francis (1969 - )
  - Howard Becker (1928 - )

Investigate **two** of these sociologists, and outline and explain the contribution each one has made to sociology, and include:

- Their views on *how* society should be studied
- The main *research studies* they completed
- *Your views* on their work and contributions

You can complete your investigation by researching 'online'; or contacting online public libraries, many now have newspapers and periodicals you can access; accessing sociology textbooks your family may have; and listening to podcasts eg Thinking Allowed

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/profiles/43q7Pf5pYnfkpYQzwxfdBFF/laurie-taylor>

## **Bridging Work | Sociology A-Level Research (2)**

Your final activity for this covid19 Bridging work is to carry out an original piece of research.

This will have tremendous benefits for your A-level course, as it will give you first-hand experience of designing and conducting a small piece of research. It will also produce valuable original data to enrich your understanding of educational inequalities.

Choose an educational issue to research from one of the two below: (you may choose a different education topic to research, but clear it first).

### **1. Comparison of schooling in the UK today, with schooling in the past**

For this research you should interview (skype, phone, over the garden fence) several adults (more the better) who went through schooling in 1960s, 1970s, 1980s etc.

Ask them what experiences they had, have a list of questions but you don't need to stick to it. Listen and record what they say, and let them decide the things they want to raise, as long as it's helping you make a comparison.

Try to find out the different subjects taught in the past, how boys/girls treated differently, the discipline systems, caning etc.

Collect your material together and produce a report comparing schooling in the past with today, include the similarities, the differences, when they left school compared with today.

### **2. Comparison of the different experiences of 'boys' and 'girls' to school and education.**

For this research you should produce a questionnaire with 10-12 questions and distribute it to a minimum of 10 girls and 10 boys.

You should then compare the responses of boys and girls for each question, draw graphs/pie charts etc.

Your questionnaire should contain around 12 questions, each one should help you discover for example:

- how much the pupils like and enjoy school
- what subject options they prefer, and why
- what their ambitions are to achieve qualifications
- whether they know what they want to do when they leave education eg have a career, get married have a family
- whether they have got in to trouble at school, or never got into trouble
- how much time do they spend completing homework etc

Once you have produced your data, summarise the responses for each question, clarifying whether there were significant differences between the responses of boys and girls.

Finally, for both research projects:

- say who you chose to include in your research, and why
- produce a conclusion, bringing together overall what you discovered
- identified responses/findings that surprised you
- parts of the project that went well and parts that didn't go well
- what *further research* on your chosen topic would you like to do, in the future

The results of your project must be presented to the class (eg slides), during lesson time, in our first week back in September.

