

Sociology induction activities

Please bring completed work to your first sociology lesson in September

Theory and perspectives

Sociology understands society through different theoretical view points. In this activity you are asked to explore four theories and to complete a summary .

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: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-83vVeSC2_g

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: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RhU57_nP3zM

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: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D6DI-9pSW-4>

4. Interactionists: focus on understanding the meaning people give to their behaviour. They focus in small scale interaction such as labelling. Watch this video to find out more: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Dqcr0GFzl8>

Complete this summary table to help you identify the different theoretical views

Theoretical view	Key ideas	(create or select) an image to illustrate this view
Functionalism		
Marxism		
Feminism		
Interactionism		

Families and Households:

One of the topics you will study in year one of the course is families and households. This will raise questions such as, 'What is the role of the family in society?', 'How are family structures and roles changing?', 'How does social policy shape the family?'

Activity:

Watch the C4 documentary '21 kids and counting':

<https://www.channel4.com/programmes/21-kids-and-counting> (free to view; C4 login needed).

Write a sociological review of this programme, including: What is unusual/surprising about the Radford family? Are they what you expected? Why/why not? What can we learn from them about family life in modern Britain? What pressures do the family face and how do they manage these? Is this a 'functional' family, where everything works smoothly for the benefit of the whole, or a 'dysfunctional family'? Explain your view.

Education:

One of the key considerations in this topic is why there are differences in achievement between social groups. Please read the article below and answer the questions which follow.



Only one in 20 pupils in some of the country's poorest postcodes progress to higher education, according to new analysis by Teach First.

The charity has called for the government to improve entry rates by writing off student debt to get better teachers into challenging schools. It has also called on universities to start offering university access programmes at primary level.

According to Teach First's research, on average only one in five young people born in the country's poorest postcodes progress to university, while half of those born in the

wealthiest postcodes do so.

However, the gap is even more stark between some areas.

Big differences

For example, in some parts of Derbyshire, as few as one in twenty students go to university, while in parts of Buckinghamshire it is more than 80 per cent. This means that those born in some of the richest areas are up to 18 times more likely to attend university than those in some of the poorest areas.

Teach First also found big differences between the choices made by disadvantaged young people when it came to university compared to their more privileged peers.

A ComRes poll of 18-25 year olds found that 41 per cent of the most advantaged students said they chose their university because it was the best for what they wanted to study, compared to only 31 per cent of the least advantaged.

Similarly, the reputation of a university was important to 53 per cent of the most advantaged students, but it only was for 46 per cent of the most disadvantaged.

Disadvantaged students are also more likely to choose an institution close to where they live, with 29 per cent saying they chose their university on this basis, compared to 24 per cent of the most advantaged.

Of the most disadvantaged pupils who did not go to university, only 12 per cent said this was because their grades weren't good enough.

'More must be done'

To ensure students were able to make more informed choices when it came to university, Teach First said there should be a trained careers middle leader in every school to develop and lead a careers strategy. It suggested this could be paid for out of money councils and academies are required to set aside for the apprenticeship levy.

Teach First says the government should offer student loan forgiveness to attract the best possible graduates into teaching, where they can help young people from deprived communities achieve their potential.

It suggests 20 per cent of student debt could be cleared for those working for two years, increasing to 50 per cent for those who remain in certain geographic or subject areas for five years.

The charity also says that universities' access work is coming too late, with programmes frequently aimed at pupils aged 16-18 "by which point much of the effects of disadvantage have already played out".

Instead, it argues that access work should start at primary school to give pupils "the best possible opportunity to make informed and supported decisions about their futures at an earlier age".

Brett Wigdortz, Teach First's chief executive and founder, said "there are still far too few disadvantaged pupils getting to university".

"They're simply not given the same chance to reach their full potential, with less access to brilliant teaching and less guidance on how they can turn their aspirations into reality. "

He added: "More must be done by the government, universities and society as a whole to break down the barriers to social mobility that are preventing too many of our young people reaching as far as their potential allows".

Please answer the following questions in the space on the next page:

What is a meritocracy?

Does this article suggest we live in a meritocracy?

Why is it important that 'poor' students go to university?

