Sociology

Studying Human Society: the Sociological Approach (H)

4084
Sociology

Studying Human Society:
the Sociological Approach
Higher

Support Materials
CONTENTS

Guide to teaching and learning pack

Statement of standards

Introduction to unit

Teaching and learning materials on:
- Sociological study
- Sociological vs. common sense explanations
- Theory
- Structural theories
- Consensus theories
- Conflict theories
- Action theories
- Feminist theories
- Research process
- Methods

Resources
GUIDE TO TEACHING AND LEARNING PACK
GUIDE TO TEACHING
AND LEARNING PACK

This teaching and learning pack is designed to aid the practitioner in the delivery of Sociology at Higher level. This pack includes:

- a general introduction to the unit
- a suggested programme of work
- a handout and/or material for overhead transparencies with accompanying tutor notes on each area covered in the unit *
- a student activity with accompanying tutor notes on each area covered in the unit *
- suggested reading lists, which will cover the main areas in the unit, and which are based on six basic sociology textbooks. #

* Please note that these materials will not cover the full ‘hourage’ of the whole unit nor every aspect of each outcome, PC or range statement: it is assumed that teachers and lecturers will want to use some of the time for exposition and discussion, and will supplement this pack with materials devised for specific groups.

# Suggested reading for the unit is taken from 6 major sociology textbooks. Material in these textbooks is designed for new students of sociology, A-level students and 1st year degree students. For this reason some material may provide greater depth than is covered in the curriculum and tutors should be selective in their recommendations for essential reading. The suggested texts are:

Contemporary British Society (2nd edition)
Abercrombie and Warde
Polity Press

Sociology (3rd edition)
Anthony Giddens
Polity Press

Sociology An Interactive Approach
Jorgensen, Bird, Heyhoe, Russell & Savvas
Harper Collins

Introductory Sociology (3rd edition)
Bilton, Bonnet, Jones, Skinner, Stanworth & Webster
Macmillan
The material contained in this pack is based on the Arrangements document and advice given in the Subject Guide. It has been designed to fill a particular niche in the Sociology curriculum and tries to avoid overlap with Intermediate 2, Advanced Higher and HN units in Sociology. Lecturers and teachers may wish to amend some of the material to suit their particular requirements, however, in doing so issues of overlap should be kept firmly in mind.

In accordance with good teaching practice, the pack contains a range of learner-centred activities with which to engage the student. These are suggested activities only and can be adapted to suit individual age and group requirements.

The term 'student' will be used throughout this unit to denote the learner. This is because this level of the curriculum will be undertaken by post-16 learners whether this be in a school or college situation.
STATEMENT OF STANDARDS
STATEMENT OF STANDARDS

OUTCOME 1
Explain how key sociological theories contribute to an understanding of human social behaviour.

Performance criteria
a. Key sociological theories are identified correctly.
b. The principal features of the main sociological theories are explained clearly, using relevant illustration.

Note on the range of the outcome
Key sociological theories:
• structural theories:
  - consensus structuralism
  - conflict structuralism
• action theories
• feminist theories.

Evidence requirements
PC (c) Written or oral evidence that the candidate can identify two contrasting structural theories, one action theory and one feminist theory.
PC (d) Written and/or oral explanation, which describes those features of structural theories (consensus and conflict), feminist and action theories which make them distinct. The evidence should include appropriate reference to the sociologists who developed the theories and should demonstrate an ability to illustrate how the theories explain human social behaviour.

OUTCOME 2
Analyse sociological theories.

Performance criteria
a. The similarities and differences between consensus and conflict structuralism are described clearly.
b. The similarities and differences between structural and action Sociology are described clearly.
c. The strengths and weaknesses of structural and action Sociology are analysed in a balanced way, using relevant illustration.
d. Conclusions drawn from the analysis of sociological theories are valid.

Evidence requirements
Written or oral evidence which covers the performance criteria.
OUTCOME 3
Evaluate the main methods and research strategies used by sociologists.

Performance criteria
a. The distinction between common sense and sociological knowledge is correct and clear.
b. The research strategies used by sociologists are explained clearly.
c. The main quantitative methods used by sociologists are described correctly.
d. The main qualitative methods used by sociologists are described correctly.
e. The relative advantages and disadvantages of qualitative and quantitative methods are explained clearly.

Note on the range of the outcome
Research strategies: theory/hypothesis/operationalisation (choice of research technique, definition of concepts, setting measurements and sampling)/fieldwork/processing of results.

Quantitative methods:
• postal questionnaires and structured interviews
• use of secondary sources - official statistics.

Qualitative methods:
• observation, participant observation and unstructured interviews
• use of secondary sources - personal documents (diaries, letters and personal accounts).

Evidence requirements
Written or oral evidence which covers the performance criteria and range.
INTRODUCTION TO UNIT & LEARNING AND TEACHING APPROACHES
INTRODUCTION TO THE UNIT &
LEARNING AND TEACHING APPROACHES

Introduction to Unit

This unit is designed to introduce students to sociological theory and the methods which sociologists employ when undertaking research. It aims to characterise Sociology as a particular discipline within the Social Sciences and to lead students to an understanding of the difference between Sociological explanations and other types of explanations. In particular it is hoped that this unit will help the student towards gaining ‘the sociological imagination’ which makes the subject both interesting and stimulating.

The unit provides the framework for understanding the sociological perspective on society. This will be achieved by the student studying the main theoretical perspectives which either historically or currently form some of the main ideas within the discipline. The rigorous nature of sociological enquiry is highlighted through the coverage of the methods of research which will give the student an understanding of how theories may be tested and supported or refuted.

Armed with this knowledge and understanding the student then has the main tools for applying theories to specific topics which they may study in other contexts. The aim of the unit is to make the introduction of theories and methods as exciting as possible and thereby interesting the student in further study in Sociology.

Learning and teaching approaches

Theories and methods tend to have the reputation of being ‘dry’. This does not have to be the case if sufficiently interesting and interactive approaches are used in delivery. By nature theory tends to be conceptual rather than practical but there are activities which can help the student relate theories to their own experience.

It is suggested that for the main theories that a mixture of group and pair exercises be used for some of the delivery and that this should be balanced with tutor exposition and individual work on handouts and textbooks. In particular it may be necessary to help students towards the comparison of perspectives and evaluation of theories, as initially similarities, differences, strengths and weaknesses can be difficult to identify.

A similar approach may be used for methods although there is opportunity here for students to do some practical work. For example, they could undertake a practical exercise where they have to find one piece of qualitative data and one piece of quantitative data; they could be given an example of a postal questionnaire and asked to identify its strengths and weaknesses; or they could try a small (and unscientific) piece of research which could act as a discussion point for how sociologists go about research.
The contents of the pack attempt to reflect this approach to learning and teaching with the main aim of bringing this unit and the subject ‘alive’.

Concurrent with the advice given in the 1998 Spring Supplement of the Subject Guide, the following sequence of teaching is suggested for this unit with approximate time scales. Please note that out of a notional 40 hours, 32 hours have been allocated for teaching and learning and the remaining 8 for induction, assessment, reassessment and evaluation. The activities, handouts and exercises in this teaching and learning pack reflect the ‘hourage’ given to each part of the curriculum. However, this is NOT MANDATORY and time allocation, sequence of delivery and use of teaching materials are completely at the discretion of the practitioner and centre.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main area and related outcome/pcs</th>
<th>Essential elements</th>
<th>Time allocation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Common sense vs. sociological approach Outcome 3 PC (a)</td>
<td>• Examine why we study sociology using notion of ‘the sociological imagination’. • Examine the special nature of sociological study.</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural theories Outcome 1 PC (a) &amp; (b) and 2 PC (a)</td>
<td>• Examine consensus theory. • Examine conflict. • Look at similarities and differences.</td>
<td>7 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strengths and weaknesses of structural theories Outcome 2 PC (c)</td>
<td>• Strengths. • Weaknesses.</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
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<tr>
<td>Action theories Outcome 1 PC (a) &amp; (b) and 2 PC (b)</td>
<td>• Examine action theories. • Compare Action and Structural theories.</td>
<td>7 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengths and weaknesses of action theories Outcome 2 PC (c)</td>
<td>• Strengths. • Weaknesses.</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminist theories 1 PC (a) &amp; (b)</td>
<td>• Look at 3 types of Feminist theory. • Criticisms of ‘traditional’ theories.</td>
<td>6 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research process Outcome 3 PC (b)</td>
<td>• Sequence. • Stages.</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods Outcome 3 PC (c) (d) &amp; (e)</td>
<td>• Qualitative methods. • Quantitative methods. • Advantages and disadvantages.</td>
<td>6 hours</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY
**Suggested reading on Sociological study:**

*Contemporary British Society (2nd edition):*  
Abercrombie and Warde  
Polity Press  

*pp 1-3 ‘Approaching Sociology’*

*Sociology (3rd edition):*  
Anthony Giddens  
Polity Press  

*pp 5-6 ‘Studying sociology’*

*Introductory Sociology (3rd edition):*  
Bilton, Bonnet, Jones, Skinner, Stanworth & Webster  
Macmillan Press  

*pp 4 - 6 ‘Introduction’ & ‘Human History, Human Societies and Human Beings’*

*Sociology Themes and Perspectives (4th edition):*  
Haralambos and Holborn  
Collins  

*pp 1-3 ‘The Sociological Perspective: Introduction’*
TUTOR GUIDE TO STUDENT HANDOUT ON
‘THE SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION’

The purpose of this handout is to introduce the learner to a number of concepts using the classic work of C. Wright Mills, ‘The Sociological Imagination’. It is not intended that the learner read this text as it is too advanced for this level of study. Nevertheless, the ideas and concepts in Mills’ book is one of the best introductions to understanding the basis of sociological study and for this reason this condensed form is suitable for Higher students. It may be necessary to explain some terms such as ‘milieu’ before students read the handout - although the explanations in the handout and class discussion should clarify any technical terms.

The handout should take approximately 10 mins to read individually and this can then be used as the basis for discussion. The ideas explored in this handout relate to other aspects of the Unit (common sense vs. sociological explanation and structural and action theories) and also of the Course (topics explored in Understanding Human Society 1 and 2). For the purposes of this activity some of the ideas and concepts which could be explored are as follows:

- The need to understand the society we live in rather than simply describe it. One could draw on examples of differences between description and explanation. For example, one could describe composition of the class group but that would not explain gender, class, ethnic, age mix, why people may be dressed differently, why they are doing Sociology, and so on.

- What do we mean by social structure? Perhaps here the notion of social institutions could be introduced.

- Why historical perspective is important to some sociologists. One could use the example of Marx and why he used a historical perspective to develop his notions of class.

- Are people the same or different? Is there anything that is essentially human? How does society affect how humans are shaped or is it that individuals shape society?

- One could introduce notion of individual experiences and social structures. How do these interact? The examples given in the handout are on unemployment and marriage but these could be expanded in discussion using the students own ideas and how distinctions could be made between ‘private troubles’ and ‘public issues’. This should help students to realise that although they may experience a particular phenomenon in a personal way, that experience may be part of a much wider process taking place in society.
‘The Sociological Imagination’

The sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society. That is its task and its promise.  
(1959 C. Wright Mills)

If you are new to sociology, one question you may wish to ask is: ‘why study sociology’? Well, one reason is to understand the world around us and why things happen the way they do. Another is to understand ourselves as part of that world. But how do we understand the world we live in? We could simply observe what we see but that in itself would not provide any explanation of how society works or the way we interact with our society.

In 1959 the American sociologist C. Wright Mills published a classic sociological text called ‘The Sociological Imagination’. This book discusses all the important aspects of sociological study and has been both an inspiration and guide to many sociologists.

In his book, Mills suggests all sociologists must ask three crucial questions in the study of any society. These are:

1. ‘What is the structure of this particular society as a whole?’
   In other words, what are main components of each society? How does the structure of a particular society differ from structures in other societies? Also, In what ways has the structure of this society changed or has it stayed the same?

2. ‘Where does this society stand in human history?’
   What historical factors have affected the development of any particular society? In what way does this tell us about that society or the whole of the human race?

3. ‘What varieties of men and women prevail in this society and in the coming period?’
   What type of people do we observe in our society? How has society influenced their behaviour and what can we learn about human nature as a whole from the observing those in any particular society?

According to Mills, if we can answer these three questions then the individual will be able to make sense of his/her own experience in relation to the society in which he/she lives. This will involve the way in which society shapes the individual but will also look at how the individual contributes to the development and change in his/her society. Answering these questions will also enable the individual to know about his/her life chances and will tell us something about the whole of human nature and the extent of human behaviour whether this be for the good of society or otherwise.
Another important aspect of Mills’ book was the distinction he made between ‘personal troubles of milieu’ and ‘public issues of social structure’. This distinction is one of the essential features of the study of sociology and one which is worth remembering throughout your study of this subject.

‘Private troubles of milieu’. Milieu simply means the environment, background or surroundings within which people find themselves. When Mills talks about ‘Private troubles of milieu’ he is referring to the situation an individual might find himself/herself in which affects him/her and others he/she knows in a personal way. These situations are in social settings of which the individual has personal experience and the situation may be to some extent of his/her own making.

‘Public issues of social structure’. This refers to matters which go beyond the individual’s own experience and environment. They refer to the way society as a whole is organised and works. Public issues cannot be explained in terms of what happens to the individual. Instead explanations must be found by examining the ‘social institutions’ of a society such as the law, education, religion and family. It is only by examining the way in which these social institutions have developed, interact and even contradict each other that we can understand how our society works.

Mills gives many examples of the distinction between ‘personal troubles’ and ‘public issues’ such as unemployment, marriage, war, urbanisation and the economy. We shall consider the first two to illustrate his ideas:

1. Unemployment. We probably all know someone who is unemployed, or we may have been in that situation ourselves. If there are only a few people in society who are unemployed then we may explain this by saying a particular person lacked a specific skill, or that they were not really trying to find a job, or that they preferred to stay on benefit because it paid more than working. However, if in society 2 million people are unemployed these individual factors are not sufficient to explain why unemployment is occurring on such a scale. In other words, unemployment is a ‘public issue’ and sociologists must look at other explanations such as the changing structure of employment, decrease in industrialisation, and competition with developing economies. It is only by examining the wider aspects of society that we can give a sociological analysis of a phenomenon such as unemployment.

2. Marriage. You may know someone who is divorced. If so you may consider the reasons for that person divorcing to be personal. For example, perhaps they did not like their partner or perhaps they wanted different things in life than their spouse. This may be the case but in itself it does not explain marriage and divorce as a ‘public issue’. The reason that it is a public issue is that divorce statistics now indicate that more marriages end in divorce in the UK than in most other European countries. This would suggest that divorce is not just something ‘personal’ but in fact is a much wider issue in society. If this is the case then other factors need to be considered such as change in divorce laws, attitudes of society, and increasing economic independence for women.
These are only 2 examples of how ‘the sociological imagination’ should work. It is not to deny the importance of personal experience, but it is an attempt to understand that experience through a sociological framework by analysis which places experience within particular contexts and structures.
SOCIOLOGICAL VS. COMMON SENSE EXPLANATIONS
TUTOR GUIDE TO STUDENT ACTIVITY RELATED TO SOCIOLOGICAL VS. COMMON SENSE EXPLANATIONS

The purpose of this activity is to enable the student to detect differences between sociological and common sense explanations. Subsumed within the notion of common-sense explanations are individualistic or naturalistic explanations. This activity does relate to the ideas explored in the previous section ‘sociological study’ and the handout on C. Wright Mills. However, it is also designed as a ‘stand alone’ activity provided some suitable explanation is given beforehand on the particular nature of sociological explanation. Three OHTs with general definitions of different type of explanations are provided and have been designed to be used at the end of the activity, although some tutors may prefer to start with these by way of introduction.

Students are required to read the explanations given for divorce and poverty and to answer the questions. The activity is best carried out in a small group or pairs with one person providing the feedback at the plenary session. The 2 OHTs with some of the factors involved in sociological explanations of divorce and poverty can be used as a summary of these examples. The plenary session can also be used to explore other examples such as women’s position in society, suicide, political or industrial unrest.

It is envisaged that the exercise will take 15 - 20 mins with 15 - 20 mins for feedback. The accompanying OHTs can be used at the end to summarise the main points/differences between individualistic, naturalistic and sociological explanations. It should be stressed that some individualistic explanations MAY be true or ‘feel’ as if they are true, but these are not necessarily sociological. In particular, the notion of objectivity and the use of research evidence to support sociological theory is essential to sociological explanation.

Exploring ‘naturalistic’ explanations can also help students to think about the ethnocentrism inherent in ‘naturalistic’ explanations. For example, the example of love and marriage as ‘natural’ can be challenged by evidence from cultures where marriage has a different raison d’etre.

If, for any reason, the examples of divorce and poverty, prove to be sensitive or contentious for a particular group then the same idea could be explored using different examples.
Sociological vs common sense explanations

Worksheet

Read the following passages each discussing the topic of divorce but written by different people. With others in your group, discuss each of the questions which follow and prepare a set of answers which can be discussed with the whole class.

Example 1. A recently divorced woman.

“I just couldn’t live with all his silly habits. He never put his clothes away and insisted on wearing suede shoes which made his feet smell. He never put something back in the same place but always expected to find something when he was looking for it. The thing that really finished it for me was the sweeping brush. He insisted on stacking it with the handle on the ground. I couldn’t believe he was so stupid. Of course, there were other things like money and me going out with my friends and in the end I just couldn’t take any more.”

Example 2. Part of a sermon from a religious service.

“We should be worried about the state of marriage today. We are faced with a rising divorce rate and more people living in sin before they get married. This is not a good state of affairs and moral people everywhere should be asking why it is happening. It is enough to look at where divorce occurs and note that it goes hand in hand with a lack of faith, decrease in church attendance and people straying from the true path where love and fidelity are valued above self interest and ambition. Marriage is a natural state and it is the duty of religious people everywhere to uphold its principles.”

Questions

1. Which parts of the stories relate to people’s own experience?

2. Would you consider any parts of the stories to be ‘true’?

3. In what ways are the stories trying to explain divorce.

4. Can you think of ways in which a sociologist might explain divorce.

5. Can you identify any differences in the way the 2 stories explain divorce and how a sociologist might explain divorce.
SOCIOLOGICAL EXPLANATIONS
OF INCREASE IN DIVORCE RATE

• Divorce laws have changed.

• Attitudes to divorce have changed.

• Value of marriage has changed.

• Changing role of women in society.

• Economic independence of women through work or benefits.
Sociological vs common sense explanations

Worksheet

Read the following passages each discussing the topic of poverty but written by different people. Discuss each of the questions which follow with others in your group and prepare a set of answers which can be discussed with the whole class.

Example 1. Letter sent to the ‘letters’ page of a newspaper

Dear Sir

We all feel sorry for those who don’t have enough to eat. I mean the people who live on the streets and have to beg. However, if recent statistics are correct then poverty affects far more people than those who have to live on the streets. But whose fault is this? I’ve had to work all my life and keep my family and that has meant budgeting for everything and going without the luxuries in life. Why can’t others do the same? I see people cash their allowances and then go and buy a packet of cigarettes. Why should I waste my sympathies on them? Beer and cigarettes are the downfall of the poor. People don’t have to be poor if they would only try harder.

Yours sincerely

DMK

Example 2. Speech from a politician

“Poverty should not exist in a civilised society. It is a shame on our country and the people who run it. The reason people are poor is because there is no incentive to get out of the poverty trap. It is the government’s fault that this is the case. They are responsible for running the country and should set in place measures which will motivate people to leave this condition behind and fully participate in society.”

Questions

1. Which parts of the stories relate to people’s own experience?
2. Would you consider any parts of the stories to be ‘true’?
3. In what ways are the stories trying to explain poverty?
4. Can you think of ways in which a sociologist might explain poverty.
5. Can you identify any differences in the way the 2 stories explain poverty and how a sociologist might explain divorce.
SOCIOLOGICAL EXPLANATION OF POVERTY

• Low pay.

• Low benefit levels.

• Unemployment.

• Unfair tax laws which benefit the rich.
NATURALISTIC EXPLANATIONS

These explanations assume that ‘natural’ (and sometimes God-given) reasons for behaviour can be identified.

One example would be:
It is only ‘natural’ that two people should fall in love, get married, live together and raise a family.
INDIVIDUALISTIC EXPLANATION

An explanation which tries to explain a situation solely in terms of the individual or persons involved in it. There is no attempt to understand the situation in terms of wider social forces.
SOCIOLOGICAL EXPLANATIONS

Explanations which attempt to explain social behaviour in terms of wider social forces, processes and structures, using evidence from objective research to support these explanations.
THEORY
TUTOR GUIDE TO STUDENT HANDOUT ON THEORY

This handout is designed to introduce the student to the notion of theory in the study of sociology. If students have undertaken Sociology at Intermediate level then they will be familiar with concepts such as stratification and socialisation but not with the notion of competing theories which help to explain social phenomena. This handout provides a simple introduction to the theory component of the unit and can be used as a basis for discussion and exposition by the tutor.

It is envisaged that the reading and discussion/exposition would take no more than 20-30 minutes.

The main sociological theories are mentioned in the handout but it would be worth emphasising to students which ones, structural, action and feminist theories, will be covered in the unit and which ones, structuration and post-modernism will be left to Advanced Higher or other courses they may take such as HN or degree courses. It may also be worth pointing out that some names and sub-theories are used synonymously e.g. consensus and functionalism, conflict and Marxism, action and symbolic interactionism. In this unit a ‘broad brush’ approach is taken to give the learner sound generalist knowledge.
Introduction to Sociological Theory

What is a theory?
A theory is a framework for understanding things about the world in which we live e.g. physical, economic, spiritual, or social. Any theory stems from ideas which have been or could be tested by some type of research. Although personal experience can be used to support a theory this must be ‘testable’ in some form. In social sciences theories are only seen as having significance if they are backed up by objective research and how well they explain aspects of social life. Each theory has its own ideas, concepts and language.

What is Sociological theory?
Sociological theory is a particular framework for explaining how society works. It attempts to explain social behaviour in terms of the relation between individuals, groups and society. Social behaviours, processes and structures found in society are analysed using theory and this helps to explain how society develops and changes.

Is there only one Sociological theory?
No there are many sociological theories which have been developed since the inception of Sociology as a discipline. One way of distinguishing between different theories is to put them into broad categories. Thus a distinction is often made between structural theories and social action theories. However, in recent times other theoretical perspectives have been developed which have added to these broad categories. So now we also have feminist theories, structuration and post modernism as other broad theories which we can use to explain our social world.
STRUCTURAL THEORIES
### Suggested reading on Consensus theories:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pages/Authors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anthony Giddens</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polity Press</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociology: An Interactive Approach</td>
<td>pp 274 Summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jorgensen, Bird, Heyhoe, Russell and Savvas</td>
<td>pp 277-279 Durkheim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collins</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Introductory Sociology (3rd edition):</td>
<td>pp 80-84 Durkheim</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bilton, Bonnet, Jones, Skinner, Stanworth &amp; Webster</td>
<td>pp 90-91 Talcott Parsons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macmillan Press</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociology Themes and Perspectives (4th edition):</td>
<td>pp 7-9 Functionalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haralambos and Holborn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collins</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sociology in Perspective</td>
<td>pp 17-20 Durkheim and functionalism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirby, Kidd, Koubel, Barter, Hope, Kirton, Madry, Manning and Triggs</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Heinemann</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Suggested reading on Conflict theories:

*Sociology (3rd edition):*  
Anthony Giddens  
Polity Press  
p 566 Marxism

*Sociology: An Interactive Approach*  
Jorgensen, Bird, Heyhoe, Russell and Savvas  
Collins  
pp 274 Summary  
pp 279-282 Marx

*Introductory Sociology (3rd edition):*  
Bilton, Bonnet, Jones, Skinner, Stanworth &  
Webster  
Macmillan Press  
pp 84-88 Karl Marx

*Sociology Themes and Perspectives (4th edition):*  
Haralambos and Holborn  
Collins  
pp 9-12 Conflict perspective

*Sociology in Perspective*  
Kirby, Kidd, Koubel, Barter, Hope, Kirton,  
Madry, Manning and Triggs  
Heinemann  
pp 26-31 Marxism and neo-Marxism
TUTOR GUIDE TO ACTIVITY ON STRUCTURAL THEORIES - ‘WHAT IF THE TITANIC HAD NOT SUNK!’

Although theory may excite the experienced sociologist, newcomers to the subject may find this aspect rather ‘dry’ and for most, difficult to grasp. The purpose of this exercise is to help the student think about how society is or could be organised and structured and some of the factors which influence the way social institutions evolve, change and develop. If carried out properly by students the exercise should highlight a range of factors and issues and these can be ‘tapped into’ by the tutor in any subsequent discussion or exposition of structural theories - both consensus and conflict.

It is envisaged that this exercise will take about 20 - 30 minutes with possibly another 30 minutes for feedback in a plenary session. The activity can be undertaken as a ‘stand alone’ exercise but the OHTs which cover the main features of consensus and conflict theories do contain the elements covered in this exercise. The salient features which should be brought out/discussed are:

- Does society have prerequisites that are necessary for survival?
- Is there general agreement on priorities?
- How does organisation affect which tasks are to be done and who undertakes these tasks?
- Are there any shared values in society?
- Who holds power in society?
- Is there agreement on who holds power?
- Who decides on resource allocation?
- Over what issues does conflict arise?
- Is conflict inevitable or are there ways of resolving conflict?

It is clear from this list that having discussed these factors the student will have thought about the main aspects of consensus theories and conflict theories of society, and of social structures and processes.
Structural theories

Worksheet

WHAT IF THE TITANIC HAD NOT SUNK!

Just imagine that the Titanic didn’t sink. Instead it went on its way past all those icebergs and ended up as a cruise ship. Now imagine you are a passenger on the Titanic, on an exotic cruise in the Pacific Ocean. During a violent storm the ship loses direction and capsizes. Luckily, you and all the passengers manage to swim ashore to a nearby island although most belongings are lost in the storm. The island is deserted and has a natural water supply.

1. What would be the immediate tasks the group would have to consider and how might you go about deciding what needed to be done and who would do which tasks?

2. What might the priorities be in the medium term? What factors would affect decisions on what these priorities might be?

3. What might change in the long term? Would priorities change as time goes by and if so why and who would decide? Would you expect things to get simpler or more complex? Why?

4. Over what things would you expect people to co-operate and what things would you see as causing conflict?
TUTOR GUIDE TO OHTs
ON STRUCTURAL THEORIES

These OHTs have been designed to highlight the main elements of structural theories and to help the learner to evaluate and compare different structural perspectives.

The OHTs have been organised as follows:
- Structural theories - what we mean by this term
- Consensus - Key theorists
- Consensus - Key features
- Consensus - Strengths and weaknesses
- Conflict - Key theorists
- Conflict - Key features
- Conflict - Strengths and weaknesses
- Similarities and differences between Conflict and Consensus perspectives.

These OHTs need to be used with guided reading from textbooks. Reading relevant sections on theory could be done before using the OHTs, thus using them as a summary of the main points. On the other hand, the OHTs could be used by way of introducing and breaking down the main points, thus making the text more accessible.

The key theorists are only a tiny sample of who could be included and have been chosen because of their significant contribution to these perspectives. Similarly, the key features, strengths and weaknesses are not exhaustive lists and tutors may wish to make up their own OHTs using these as a model.

Tutor exposition will, of course, be based round the OHTs and this will depend on tutor’s own reading, knowledge, preferred emphasis and examples. It may be, that if taught as part of the Sociology Higher Course, these theories will be exemplified through the topics in Understanding Human Society 1 and 2.
Structural theories

Within the broad category of structural theories there are 2 types of theories. These are:

• Consensus theories. These include Functionalism which makes up the bulk of these theories.

• Conflict theories. These include Marxism and neo-Marxism.
CONSENSUS THEORIES

Key theorists:

Emile Durkheim  
Suicide  
Deviance  
Religion

Talcott Parsons  
Family  
Roles

Robert Merton  
Deviance
CONSENSUS THEORIES

Key features:

• Assumption that there is a certain pattern to behaviour.

• Explain behaviour through notion of social structure.

• Emphasise:- Integration
  Harmony
  Stability
  Continuity.

• Tend to use biological or mechanical analogies to explain theories.

• Functional prerequisites (Functionalism)

• Value consensus (Functionalism)
CONSENSUS THEORIES

Strengths:
• Look at society as a whole.
• Refer to social structure when analysing social behaviour.
• Good at explaining persistence of social phenomena.

Weaknesses:
• Ignores individual or group interaction.
• Finds it difficult to explain conflict and change.
• Makes assumptions about value consensus.
CONFLICT THEORIES

Key theorists:

Karl Marx  Capitalism  Class conflict

Gramsci  Capitalism  Hegemony

Goldthorpe  Class conflict
CONFLICT THEORIES

Key features:
- Sees society as a structured whole.
- Structure of society is based on inequality of distribution or production.
- Struggle for power between different groups in society.
- Society is therefore characterised by conflict.
- Within Marxism ownership and relations of production are the cause of inequality and oppression.
- Within Marxism, society is made up of infrastructure and superstructure.
- In other conflict perspectives, inequality of power and wealth may arise from differences in such things as education. This produces conflict in society.
CONFLICT THEORIES

Strengths:
• Looks at society as a whole.
• Recognises power interests of different groups.
• Good at explaining conflict and change.

Weaknesses:
• Finds it difficult to explain persistence of certain phenomena.
• Individual and small group interaction plays little part in these types of explanations.
TUTOR GUIDE ON HANDOUT ON SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN CONFLICT STRUCTURALISM AND CONSENSUS STRUCTURALISM

This handout gives a summary of the similarities between Consensus Structuralism and Conflict Structuralism. This could be used either as a ‘trigger’ for discussion of each of the points, or as a summary after a ‘brainstorming’ session where the learners attempt to identify similarities and differences. This latter option is probably better in terms of enabling the student to develop critical abilities, but some students/pupils find this difficult when first undertaking Sociology and may need help with this.

It would be useful if tutors could illustrate some of the similarities and differences by drawing on practical examples. If this part of the unit is taught as part of the Sociology Higher Course then there will be many examples from the topics covered.
Consensus and Conflict Theories: Similarities and Differences

Consensus and Conflict Theories within Sociology both come under the broad perspective known as the Structural Perspective. This is because both types of theory place a lot of importance on the structural aspects of society such as the law, family, economy, etc. They tend to view these structures as shaping the way individuals and groups in society think and behave. For this reason they see society as a whole and would consider society to be more than the sum of its parts. In other words there is more to society than simply a collection of individuals who make it up. Structural theorists, therefore, tend to look at the wider aspects of society such as the economy, government, power, etc. However, this is where the similarities between Consensus and Conflict theorists ends. Although they are both interested in how structures operate they also have very different ideas about these structures.

Some of the differences between Consensus and Conflict theories are:

1. Consensus theorists view society as being made up of social institutions which are all dependent on each other and are important for maintaining order in society as a whole. Conflict theorists (especially Marxists) tend to view society as having an infrastructure, and a superstructure (law, religion, etc.).

2. Conflict theorists do acknowledge the interdependence of social institutions but do not necessarily see relations between institutions as harmonious, whereas Consensus theorist stress the necessity for co-operation and harmony between social institutions.

3. Consensus theorists consider there to be a functional unity between the different social institutions, but Conflict theorists highlight conflict and contradictions.

4. Consensus theorists argue that there is a ‘value consensus’ which holds social institutions and society together. In other words, they think there is general agreement in society about which things are important and how things should be done. The Conflict theorists disagree with this and argue that values are often imposed by powerful groups in society, even though everyone may not agree with these values.

5. Within Consensus theory, Functionalists explain everything in terms of the function it performs in society especially the way in which it keeps the social system as a whole in good order. Conflict theorists are more interested in explaining society in terms of causes and development. For this reason, Conflict theory is seen as more dynamic.

6. In general, Consensus theory emphasises harmony, integration and stability whereas Conflict theory puts more stress on conflict, struggle and change.
SOCIAL ACTION THEORIES
Suggested reading on Action perspectives:

*Sociology (3rd edition):*  
Anthony Giddens  
Polity Press  
pp 564-565 Symbolic Interactionism

*Sociology: An Interactive Approach*  
Jorgensen, Bird, Heyhoe, Russell and Savvas  
Collins  
pp 275 Summary  
pp 282-284 Weber  
pp 287-289 Social Action

*Introductory Sociology (3rd edition):*  
Bilton, Bonnet, Jones, Skinner, Stanworth & Webster  
Macmillan Press  
pp 88-90 Max Weber  
pp 92-93 Symbolic Interactionism

*Sociology Themes and Perspectives (4th edition):*  
Haralambos and Holborn  
Collins  
pp 12-14 Interactionism  
pp 15-16 Social Action perspectives

*Sociology in Perspective*  
Kirby, Kidd, Koubel, Barter, Hope, Kirton, Madry, Manning and Triggs  
Heinemann  
pp 37-41 Symbolic Interactionism
TUTOR GUIDE TO STUDENT WORKSHEET
ON WEBER’S SOCIAL ACTION THEORY

The worksheet is designed to be used as an introduction to Weber’s concept of Social Action. In particular it focuses on Max Weber’s idea of verstehen. By using the worksheet students will be introduced to the notion of verstehen without being put off by the term itself. In this way they will have discussed and understood the concept and will then make the association with the technical term.

This exercise could be undertaken individually or in small groups with a plenary session to emphasise particular points. The exercise should take approximately 10 - 15 mins with 10 - 15 mins for the plenary. Tutors may wish to make amendments to suit any specific points they wish to draw out. The ‘stories’ are on the following page.

Possible points for discussion:
Story 1
1. Think of as many reasons as possible why the man may be behaving the way he is?
   • angry
   • chopping wood for fire
   • chopping wood for money
   • forester

2. What other clues would help you decide his reasons for behaving the way he is?
   • does he seem angry e.g. is he shouting?
   • facial expression
   • uniform, truck, etc. to identify who he is
   • knowing his background, etc.

3. What would be the only way to really know why he is behaving the way he is?
   • by asking him

Story 2
1. Think of as many reasons as possible why the couple may be behaving the way they are?
   • arguing
   • woman may be deaf
   • man may have a mental illness
   • they have just won the lottery
   • she has just told him she is going to have a baby
2. What other clues would help you decide their reasons for behaving the way they are?
   • if you could hear what they were saying
   • facial expressions
   • if you knew their background, etc.

3. What would be the only way to really know why they are behaving the way they are?
   • by asking them

4. From both these examples what do you think are the important factors in understanding the actions of others?
   • context
   • motives of people involved in a particular action
   • meaning actors bring to the situation
Social action theories

Worksheet

Read the 2 ‘stories’ below and using your own ideas answer the questions as fully as possible.

Story 1
You are walking in a forest one day when you hear the sound of wood being chopped. You look through the trees and see a man with an axe with which he is hitting a fallen tree trunk.

1. Think of as many reasons as possible why the man may be behaving the way he is?

2. What other clues would help you decide his reasons for behaving the way he is?

3. What would be the only way to really know why he is behaving the way he is?

Story 2
You are in a tenement flat sitting at the window reading a Sociology book. You look out of the window and can see into the flat across the street. A man and woman are in the room. The man seems animated and is walking up and down occasionally waving his arms about. The woman is standing quietly but her eyes follow the man about the room. They are both engaging in conversation.

1. Think of as many reasons as possible why the couple may be behaving the way they are?

2. What other clues would help you decide their reasons for behaving the way they are?

3. What would be the only way to really know why they are behaving the way they are?

4. From both these examples what do you think are the important factors in understanding the actions of others?
TUTOR GUIDE ON HANDOUT
ON SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM

This handout and set of questions are designed to introduce the student to the main features of symbolic interactionism and the work of George Herbert Mead. His work is an excellent analysis of the essential social nature of the human being and of behaviour. His notion of role-taking and significant others is fundamental to Action approaches.

This exercise should be undertaken on an individual basis although answers could be fed back in a plenary session. This would allow the tutor to explore and clarify particular issues arising from the reading, and would give some indication to the tutor how well students are grasping the concepts discussed.

It is envisaged that the reading and answering of questions would take approximately 30-40 minutes with a further 20 minutes for a plenary session.
George Herbert Mead and Symbolic Interactionism

Read the following passage and answer the questions on the following page.

George Herbert Mead was an American philosopher and psychologist. His work is also seen as significant by sociologists because he offered insights into the social nature of the human being and his contribution to this has been called Symbolic Interactionism.

Mead’s starting point was to make a clear distinction between the human being and animals. The actions of animals tends to be concrete, focusing on their immediate needs such as food, shelter, safety from predators. Some animals such as chimpanzees and dogs do display ‘intelligence’ and can even make associations between events. For example, if you have a dog it might know that at particular times of the day it will be going for a walk. However, it seems at this point that there is a limit to the capacity and capability of animals to think in the same way as humans.

Humans on the other hand have the ability to symbolise. Symbolising simply means that we can make one thing represent another. The best way to understand this is to take the example of language. If I say to you ‘I bought a table’ you will have some idea about the object I bought. You don’t have to see the table in front of you to imagine what it might be like. Of course, you don’t know its exact shape, colour, height, etc, but you have enough information to get the right idea. So language is a symbolic system and it is the human ability to use language that makes us different from animals and also allows us to engage in unique social behaviour.

The important thing about a symbolic system is that it must be shared. I can say ‘I bought a table’ because all those who have learned the English language share a common notion of what ‘table’ symbolises. If I went to France or China I would have to use a different word to symbolise ‘table’ because there is a different agreement on what the word for ‘table’ should be.

The ability to use language, to symbolise the world around us, opens up huge possibilities for social behaviour and interaction. It enables us to explain our thoughts to another person. It enables us to discuss aspects of life such as politics and religion without necessarily agreeing with a particular viewpoint or being part of a political or religious group.

Mead was also interested in the way in which the ability to symbolise allows the human being to be ‘self conscious’. In other words you can imagine or describe yourself in a particular situation without actually being there. We can also put ourselves in the place of another person and think about how they might feel or act. This is known as empathy.
Another important aspect of Mead’s theory was the concept of role-taking. This means we are able to see ourselves from another person’s point of view. For example, you can put yourself in your mother’s place and think how she might see you as a daughter or son. Or, you can think of how your tutor sees you as a student. You, of course, are the same person but you are able to stand outside yourself and see how you fulfill particular roles in society. In the same way you can think about other roles you might fill in the future. For example, you might think of yourself as a parent or in a particular occupation.

The way we learn roles in life is through ‘significant others’. Significant others are those people who surround the individual and from whom he/she learns social behaviour. In early childhood this will come from the main carers, and as the individual matures, friends, peer group, teachers and workmates will become the significant others. What Mead is suggesting, here, is that the way we learn to behave is through others. In other words the way we learn about, and interact with, society comes from those around us. This includes the image we have of ourselves. If other people are positive towards us, then we will have a positive image of ourselves, whereas if people are negative, this can lead to low self esteem.

If Mead is right, then the society we live in, the environment we grow up in, and the interactions we have are all important factors in explaining our social behaviour.

**Questions**

1. What is the main way in which Mead distinguishes animals and humans?

2. Explain what is meant by a ‘symbolic system’ and what is the most important feature of this system?

3. In terms of social behaviour and interaction what does language allow humans to do?

4. In what way does ‘symbolising’ allow us to develop empathy?

5. What does Mead mean by ‘role taking’?

6. Who are ‘significant others’?

7. What is Mead suggesting about social behaviour?
TUTOR GUIDE ON OHTs
ON ACTION THEORIES

This set of OHTs identifies some key theorists, key features and strengths and weaknesses of Action theories. These could be used to summarise the main points of the Action perspective after the student has undertaken guided reading, or used before the student undertakes such a task. They can be used in conjunction with the previous two activities which introduce the student to the ideas of Weber and G.H. Mead.
ACTION THEORIES

Key theorists:

Max Weber  Meaning
Social Action
Bureaucracy

G.H. Mead  Social nature of the human being
Role taking
Significant others

E. Goffman  Social actors
Life as drama
ACTION THEORIES

Key features:

• Social action is a result of individual or group interaction.
• Society is made up of the individuals who live in it.
• Social roles, social actors and social processes are important.
• Analyses society in terms of individuals and groups.
• To understand any social behaviour, one must look at meaning and interpretation.
ACTION THEORIES

Strengths:
• Emphasises the role of human agency.
• Good at explaining small scale interaction.
• Important in explaining the meaning attached to social behaviour and the interpretation of social behaviour by others.

Weaknesses:
• Analysis tends to be of individuals or groups.
• Tends to be lack historical perspective.
• Emphasises meaning without necessarily investigating the origins of meaning.
• Can be seen as subjective.
TUTOR GUIDE ON ACTIVITY ON SIMILARITY AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN STRUCTURAL AND ACTION PERSPECTIVES

This activity is designed to explore the similarity and differences between Structural and Action perspectives by using the student’s knowledge gained in covering each of the perspectives. The student is given a blank grid and a set of statements which have been photocopied and cut into squares. The student should then fit the appropriate statement to either the Structural or Action sections.

On completion answers can be compared in a plenary session which offers the opportunity for elaboration and clarification of points. A completed grid (page 3) can be given out at the end. This activity would be suitable as an individual or pair activity and should take approximately 20 minutes to complete with a further 15 minutes for a plenary session.
Similarity and differences between Structural and Action perspectives

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</table>
Both interested in explaining and interpreting social life.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Society shapes the individual.</th>
<th>Individuals and groups shape society.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Society is more than the individuals that make it up.</td>
<td>Society is comprised of the individuals and groups who live in it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starts with society as a whole and then analyses specific social institutions, social structures, social groups, etc.</td>
<td>Starts with individuals and groups and then generalises about society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interested in trends, structures and social forces.</td>
<td>Interested in meaning, processes and interactions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gives more emphasis to social structures.</td>
<td>Gives more emphasis to the role of human agency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tend to use particular methods of research i.e. quantitative methods.</td>
<td>Most often use qualitative methods of research to investigate meaning and interactions.</td>
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Similarity and differences between Structural and Action perspectives

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<th>ACTION</th>
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<td>Most often use qualitative methods of research to investigate meaning and interactions.</td>
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FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES
Suggested reading on Feminist perspectives:

*Contemporary British Society (2nd edition):*  
Abercrombie and Warde  
Polity Press  
pp 209-212 Introduction and theories.

*Sociology Themes and Perspectives (4th edition):*  
Haralambos and Holborn  
Collins  
pp 592-594 Gender inequality - different theoretical perspectives

*Sociology in Perspective*  
Kirby, Kidd, Koubel, Barter, Hope, Kirton, Madry, Manning and Triggs  
Heinemann  
pp 34-36 Feminism  
pp 169-172 Varieties of feminism
TUTOR GUIDE TO QUIZ ON
EXPLORING GENDER CATEGORIES
AND OHT ON DIFFERENCES
BETWEEN SEX AND GENDER

This exercise is a good starting point for making the learner think about issues of gender. It is likely that responses to the questions will elicit some stereotypical answers which can then be explored. It is also likely that Questions 4, 5, and 8 will elicit positive attributes whereas Questions 6 and 7 may prove to be more negative and even offensive. For this reason tutors must be sensitive to those who may feel offended. However, this exercise is an excellent opportunity to challenge some of the stereotypes by exploring why we attribute characteristics according to gender. Examples from other cultures and historical changes in attributes in the UK can also be used to demonstrate the SOCIAL nature of gender categories.

This exercise then leads on to the OHT which details the difference between sex and gender. The point to make here is that although sex is biological/genetic, gender is a social attribute and therefore constructed socially. This allows the tutor to discuss why sex and gender have been made the basis for inequality between men and women. In particular it would be worthwhile discussing with students why biological differences have led to inequality. Sociological argument acknowledges that biological differences do exist but does not see this as a justification for inequality. The point that needs to be emphasised is that inequality is socially constructed. This can then lead into the discussion of feminist perspectives.

The completion of the quiz should take about 10 - 15 mins but the discussion will probably take a further hour.
Feminist theories

Worksheet

Answer the following questions.

1. Would you describe yourself as a boy/man or girl/woman?

2. On what did you base your answer?

3. Write down a list of words you would associate with a woman you thought was ‘feminine’.

4. Write down a list of words you would associate with a man you thought was ‘masculine’.

5. Write down a list of words you would associate with a woman you thought was ‘masculine’.

6. Write down a list of words you would associate with a man you thought was ‘feminine’.

7. Write down a list of words you could associate with either men or women.

8. What do you notice about the words which describe feminine women and masculine men?

9. What do you notice about the words which describe masculine women and feminine men?

10. What do you notice about the words which describe both men and women?

11. How do we learn to use the words identified above, and where do they come from?

12. Look at the words you have identified in Questions 3 and 4. What influence do you think they may have on the way men and women behave?

13. Look at the words you have identified in Questions 5 and 6. Why do you think we use such words, and what effect do you think they have on the person they are describing?
SEX AND GENDER

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<tr>
<th>SEX</th>
<th>GENDER</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Man/woman</td>
<td>Masculine/feminine</td>
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<td>Genetic inheritance -</td>
<td>Social categories</td>
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<tr>
<td>xx or xy</td>
<td>Definitions imposed by others in society</td>
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<tr>
<td>Biological characteristics e.g. sexual organs</td>
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</table>
TUTOR GUIDE TO OHTs
ON FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES

This set of OHTs sets out the main features, perspectives, strengths and weaknesses of feminist theory. It does not include main theorists as there are a plethora of feminist sociologists writing from different perspectives within the broad feminist framework and tutors may prefer to discuss those with whose work they are familiar.

Within the feminist perspective there are many branches. For the purposes of this pack only 3 have been selected - Radical, Marxist and Liberal. These are in no way mandatory and tutors are free to discuss as many or as few as they wish.

It will probably be necessary in covering this material to lead students through notions of patriarchy and to discuss the development of feminism as a social movement, and its distinction or relation to the development of feminist perspectives by sociologists.
FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES

MARXIST: Concerned with dominance of men related to capitalist system.

RADICAL: Concerned with patriarchy.

LIBERAL: Concerned with equal rights for men and women.
FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES

Developed because:

• Need to raise gender issues.
• Dominance of male-stream sociology.
• Invisibility of women in sociology - both in terms of the sociological subject and perspectives.
• Issues relating to women subsumed within studies of ‘the family’.
• Desire to balance study of societal issues to reflect the fact that half the population is made up of women.
FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

Strengths:
• Gave women a voice.
• Raised awareness of gender issues.
• Balanced perspectives by seeing things from a women’s point of view.
• Enabled women to write about women.

Weaknesses:
• May be ignoring wider factors such as class.
• Ignores other social categories such as ethnicity.
TUTOR GUIDE TO ACTIVITY ON STRUCTURAL, ACTION AND FEMINIST THEORIES

This activity is designed as a revision exercise and formative assessment which demonstrates the student’s overall grasp of the theories covered in the unit. The student is given a blank grid and a set of cards (photocopied and cut from the following pages). The student then fits the appropriate card to the correct square in the grid.

This activity can be undertaken by individuals and pairs and answers can be discussed in a plenary session. This gives the tutor the opportunity for elaboration and clarification. A completed grid can be given at the end of this activity. It is envisaged that it will take about 10 - 15 minutes to complete the grid with a further 15 minutes for class discussion.
### Sociological theories

#### Worksheet

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<tr>
<th>Consensus</th>
<th>Conflict</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Feminist</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Key theorists</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Key features</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Weaknesses</strong></td>
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<td>Durkheim - work on suicide and religion.</td>
<td>Marx - capitalism and class.</td>
<td>Max Weber</td>
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<td>Parsons - work on the family.</td>
<td>Gramsci</td>
<td>George Herbert Mead</td>
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<td>Merton- work on deviance.</td>
<td>Goldthorpe</td>
<td>E. Goffman</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Assume value consensus.</td>
<td>Struggle for power between groups.</td>
<td>Can only understand society in terms of the individual and groups who live within it.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Emphasise harmony, integration and stability.</td>
<td>Society characterised by conflict.</td>
<td>Social roles, social actors, meaning and interpretation are important.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Look at social structure.</td>
<td>Conflict and inequality arise from distribution or production.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Functional prerequisites necessary for survival of society.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Looks at social structure.</td>
<td>Recognises power interests in society.</td>
<td>Emphasises human agency.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Good at explaining continuity.</td>
<td>Good at explaining conflict and change.</td>
<td>Good at explaining meaning and interpretation.</td>
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<td>Poor at explaining conflict and change.</td>
<td>Difficult to explain why certain aspects of social life have not changed.</td>
<td>Analysis excludes wider social structures and processes.</td>
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<td>Assumes a value consensus.</td>
<td>Ignores individuals in society.</td>
<td>May be seen as subjective.</td>
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<td>Ignores individual in society.</td>
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<td>Does not always look for origins of meaning and interpretation.</td>
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**Sociology: Studying Human Society: the Sociological Approach (H)**
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<th>Consensus</th>
<th>Conflict</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Feminist</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Completed worksheet</strong></td>
<td><strong>Key theorists</strong></td>
<td><strong>Key features</strong></td>
<td><strong>Strengths</strong></td>
<td><strong>Weaknesses</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td>• Can be seen as too narrow by excluding other factors.</td>
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<td>• Ignores other social categories such as ethnicity.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Key theorist**
- Durkheim - work on suicide and religion.
- Parsons - work on the family.
- Merton - work on deviance.
- Marx - capitalism and class.
- Gramsci
- Goldthorpe
- Max Weber
- George Herbert Mead
- E. Goffman
- Spender
- Oakley
- Ehrenreich

**Key features**
- Assume value consensus.
- Emphasise harmony, integration and stability.
- Look at social structure.
- Functional prerequisites necessary for survival of society.
- Struggle for power between groups.
- Society characterised by conflict.
- Conflict and inequality arise from distribution or production.
- Can only understand society in terms of the individual and groups who live within it.
- Social roles, social actors, meaning and interpretation are important.
- Need to raise gender issues.
- Attempt to balance research and issues.
- Response to dominance of ‘male-stream’ sociology.

**Strengths**
- Holistic approach.
- Looks at social structure.
- Good at explaining continuity.
- Holistic approach.
- Recognises power interests in society.
- Good at explaining conflict and change.
- Good at explaining small scale interactions.
- Emphasises human agency.
- Good at explaining meaning and interpretation.
- Raised awareness of gender issues.
- Introduced more balance to studies.
- Gave better representation to half the population.

**Weaknesses**
- Poor at explaining conflict and change.
- Assumes a value consensus.
- Ignores individual in society.
- Difficult to explain why certain aspects of social life have not changed.
- Ignores individuals in society.
- Analysis excludes wider social structures and processes.
- May be seen as subjective.
- Does not always look for origins of meaning and interpretation.
RESEARCH PROCESS
Suggested reading on the Research Process:

*Sociology (3rd edition):*  
Anthony Giddens  
Polity Press  
pp 539-542 Research process

*Introductory Sociology (3rd edition):*  
Bilton, Bonnet, Jones, Skinner, Stanworth & Webster  
Macmillan Press  
pp 100-107 Sociological questions

*Sociology Themes and Perspectives (4th edition):*  
Haralambos and Holborn  
Collins  
pp 827-828 Research process.
TUTOR GUIDE TO STUDENT WORKSHEET
ON THE RESEARCH PROCESS

This worksheet is intended as a revision tool for the stages of the research process which will have been covered by other teaching/learning approaches. It would be useful as a way of ascertaining the extent to which students have grasped the stages and types of activities involved at each stage of the process. It would also be useful preparation for the internal assessment of the unit, or the external assessment if the unit is taken as part of the course.

The activity could be undertaken in pairs and then feedback and discussion could be given during a plenary session. This will allow for any misunderstandings to be clarified. The activity should take about 15 mins with 10 mins for the plenary session. Students could write answers on a separate sheet of paper or tutors could cut stages and statements out and these could be ‘rearranged’ by the student.

Answers would be as follows:

**Task 1**
*Theory*
*Hypothesis*
*Operationalisation*
*Fieldwork*
*Processing of results*

**Task 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Statement/s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theory</td>
<td>h)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesis</td>
<td>i)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operationalisation</td>
<td>e) + sub-stages a), b), g), d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fieldwork</td>
<td>f)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processing of results</td>
<td>c)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Research Process

Worksheet

Task 1:
Listed below are the five main stages involved in the research process. Discuss these with your partner and rearrange the five stages in the correct order.

FIELDWORK
THEORY
PROCESSING OF RESULTS
OPERATIONALISATION
HYPOTHESIS

Task 2:
Listed below are a series of statements which explain each of the stages, and the sub-stages in operationalisation. Match each statement to the correct stage including the sub-stages of operationalisation.

a) The sociologist chooses a suitable method to test the ideas he/she wishes to explore.
b) The sociologist defines each concept being used in the research e.g. if a sociologists is exploring class they might define class according to occupation.
c) Once the researcher has completed their research they must analyse the data gathered and present their findings. This analysis might involve statistical analysis. Presentation of their results might be in the form of a journal article, conference paper or book.
d) As it is impossible to carry out research on large numbers of people, researchers will sample from the relevant population and generalise the results from this sample.
e) In order to test a particular hypothesis the researcher must choose a method of research, define the concepts used, decide if any specific measurement will be used and decide how they will find a sample of subjects to use for their research.
f) This is when the researcher carries out the actual research by implementing the chosen method e.g. by carrying out a questionnaire.
g) The sociologist may decide to use a specific measuring technique in which case setting measurements must be done before the actual research takes place.
h) Most sociologists usually start their own research by looking at existing ideas and explanations which have been formulated by other sociologists carrying out research into the same subject area.
i) This is a particular idea which the sociologist wants to explore and is set out as a statement or series of statements which he/she then tests by carrying out research.
METHODS
**Suggested reading on Research Methods:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Authors/Editors</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Pages</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Sociology (3rd edition):</em></td>
<td>Anthony Giddens</td>
<td>Polity Press</td>
<td>542-548</td>
<td>Research Methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sociology: An Interactive Approach</em></td>
<td>Jorgensen, Bird, Heyhoe, Russell and Savvas</td>
<td>Collins</td>
<td>293-305</td>
<td>Methods of obtaining data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sociology Themes and Perspectives (4th edition):</em></td>
<td>Haralambos and Holborn</td>
<td>Collins</td>
<td>833-855</td>
<td>Primary and secondary sources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sociology in Perspective</em></td>
<td>Kirby, Kidd, Koubel, Barter, Hope, Kirton, Madry, Manning and Triggs</td>
<td>Heinemann</td>
<td>90-107</td>
<td>Covers a variety of research methods.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These OHTs have been designed to introduce the student to the differences between quantitative and qualitative data, and between primary and secondary sources of data. Also, included is an OHT highlighting the importance of sampling in research. These could be used as an introduction to specific methods of research used by the sociologist.
QUANTITATIVE DATA

• Tends to deal with numerical data.

• Low involvement of researcher, e.g. in terms of time, face to face contact.

• High number of people being researched.

• Examples include: postal questionnaires and official statistics.
QUALITATIVE DATA

• Tends to deal with descriptive data.

• High participation by researcher in terms of time, face to face contact.

• Low number of people being researched.

• Examples include: in-depth interviews and participant observation.
PRIMARY SOURCES

• This is when new data is gathered by the researcher.

• This would include Participant Observation, Case Studies, Interviews and Questionnaires.
SECONDARY SOURCES

• This is when the researcher uses existing sources of information.

• This would include official statistics, newspapers, historical documents, literature, diaries.
SAMPLING

• Is a representation of the group you wish to study.

• In large studies it is impossible to carry out research on everyone involved.

• It is important to remember that samples must be representative and adequate in size.
TUTOR GUIDE ON ACTIVITY ON TESTING SOME RESEARCH METHODS

One way of allowing students to experience the pros and cons of various research methods is to set up a mock study with different groups in the class exploring the same topic but using different research methods. Once completed each group reports back to the whole class on such aspects as time, difficulties and the actual information they elicited using their particular research method.

This exercise could be quite time consuming and therefore it may be necessary for students to undertake this as part of study time. Planning and plenary sessions would have to be allocated class time.

Two suggested topics for research are Smoking and Poverty or if this unit is taken as part of the Sociology Higher Course then a relevant topic from Understanding Human Society 1 and 2 could be used.

5 methods which would be suitable for either Smoking and Poverty would be:
- Statistics - from Social Trends, etc.
- Observation - could observe people’s behaviour.
- Structured interviews - using pre-set questions.
- Unstructured interviews - using broad areas of concern.
- Questionnaire - although the unit discusses postal questionnaire, this would not be possible within the time scale of the unit and therefore self administered questionnaires given to respondents would be a possible substitute.

Once this exercise has been carried out the experience and knowledge gained can be used to discuss each of the methods identified in the range statement of the unit. The exercise would not cover participant observation or personal documents and tutors would have to ensure they were also discussed.
TUTOR GUIDE ON
METHODS FACT SHEETS

These fact sheets are designed to cover the main features, advantages and
disadvantages of the main methods in the range statement in Outcome 3 and which it
is mandatory to cover. There are, of course, other methods of research which tutors
may wish to cover and similar sheets could be designed using this model.

The suggested use of these sheets is to use them either as ‘trigger’ to discuss each
methods in turn, or as a summary sheet once each methods has been discussed in
class. Another suggestion would be to do a ‘brainstorming’ exercise on each method
and then distribute each sheet in turn to ascertain ‘correct’ answers. This might be
quite effective in helping students detect differences between methods.

If students have carried out the Methods Activity (see previous activity) and have tried
out some of these methods themselves, then this would be the ‘springboard’ for the
introduction of these fact sheets. Alternatively, if this is being taught as part of the
Sociology Higher Course, these sheets may be introduced through the methods used in
the studies related to specific topics.
Postal questionnaires

**Key features:**
- An example of quantitative data.
- It is a primary source of data.
- Involves a pre-set of questions which respondent answers and returns to researcher.
- Questions will most likely be ‘closed’ questions.
- Answers will be limited to such responses as ‘yes’, ‘no’, ‘sometimes’, ‘unsure’, or may take the form of factual information e.g. how many rooms do you have in your house.

**Advantages:**
- Can cover a wide sample e.g. by selecting from postal code areas.
- Relatively cheap to administer - cost of stamps, questionnaire publication, etc.
- Low cost as can cover a large number of people for small amount of money.
- Only need minimum involvement of researcher. Time only needed in drawing up questionnaire, sending it and analysing results.
- Responses are usually easy to quantify because of questionnaire construction. This is especially the case with pre-set questions.
- Good for obtaining factual information.
- Respondents may like the anonymity of a postal questionnaire and therefore may be more honest in giving answers to questions.

**Disadvantages:**
- Can get a poor response rate because people forget to send it back or lack motivation to do so.
- Postal questionnaires are usually limited in terms of length of questionnaire and type of questions that are asked. If too lengthy or too complex then respondents will not take time to complete it.
- No way of exploring issues.
- Respondents are unable to clarify any points they are unsure about.
- Relying on respondents ability to read and write.
- Relying on respondents ability to understand the questions.

**Examples of use:**
- Attitude surveys e.g. into TV violence.
- Lifestyle surveys e.g. to ascertain people’s consumption habits.
Methods Fact Sheet 2

Structured interviews

Key features:
• Quantitative data.
• It is a primary source of data.
• Carried out face to face by a researcher.
• Researcher asks a set of pre-set questions.
  Questions will tend to be ‘closed’ so as to demand a limited response.

Advantages:
• Ensures a good response rate as questions have to be answered there and then.
• If questions are pre-set then the results are easy to quantify.
• Good for gaining factual information.
• Respondents would not have to be able to read or write to take part in any study.
• Respondent can ask for clarification if they have not understood something.

Disadvantages:
• Can be costly as it involves face to face contact.
• Need the researcher to be there to carry out the interview.
• Can be time-consuming for researcher and respondent.
• If pre-set questions are used these cannot be explored (only clarified if something is not understood).
• People may not answer honestly. This may because they are too embarrassed, or they give an answer which they think the researcher wants to hear.

Examples:
• Socio-economic status and political views.
• Ethnicity and attitudes to ‘stop and search’ policing.
Methods Fact Sheet 3

Official statistics

Key features:
- Quantitative data.
- Secondary source as the researcher is using existing data.
- Statistics used would be those gathered by government, police, health authorities, etc.
- Often used to analyse trends in social behaviour
- Statistics must be treated with care as all statistics require interpretation.

Advantages:
- Good for quantitative studies e.g. how many crimes are reported each year.
- Can save researcher a lot of time as information has already been gathered.
- Low cost.
- May be a good indicator of a general trend of a particular social behaviour.
  Some statistics gathered from a wide representation of the population.

Disadvantages:
- May be biased because of the way information was gathered. The researcher has no control over this.
- People may lie in official statistics. For example, it is estimated that 1 million people did not complete Census forms in 1991 because of Poll tax issues.
- It may be difficult to use statistics for comparison between different time periods. This is because indicators and criteria may change between time periods. For example, statistics on socio-economic status.

Examples:
- Trends in violent crimes.
- Socio-economic status and health care.
Observation

Key features:
- Qualitative method.
- Primary source.
- The researcher observes the social behaviour of others.
- Records what he/she observes either at the time or as soon as possible after the event.
- The researcher has to take what she/he sees at face value and interpret what is observed.

Advantages:
- Good for describing ‘natural’ behaviour - if the individual/group being observed is unaware of the researcher’s presence.
- Good for gaining an in-depth picture of social behaviour.

Disadvantages:
- Needs a high input from the observer in terms of time.
- Costs are high as researcher needs to be there all the time.
- Difficult to quantify behaviour.
- No way of checking details or exploring issues further.
- There may be bias on the part of the researcher in what he/she sees.
- Ethical considerations related to individuals/groups being observed without their knowledge.

Examples:
- Social behaviour in public places e.g. racial prejudice on public transport.
- Sharing behaviour of children in playground at school.
Methods Fact Sheet 5

Participant observation

Key features:
- Qualitative data.
- Primary source.
- Researcher becomes a participant in the group/situation he/she wishes to observe.
- Researcher’s presence will probably be unknown to those being observed or may only be known to one or two key individuals.
- There are 3 stages to participant observation - ‘getting in’, ‘staying in’, and ‘getting out’.

Advantages:
- Gives an in-depth picture of social behaviour.
- Can give a realistic picture of social behaviour.
- Is good for exploring issues of feelings, meanings, interactions and processes.

Disadvantages:
- High involvement of researcher in terms of time. Researcher has to be in the situation.
- Costs are high because of high involvement of the researcher.
- Can be biased.
- ‘Hawthorne effect’. The presence of the researcher may change the situation or the behaviour of those he/she is studying.
- Can be dangerous. For example, participant observation into gang behaviour.
- Can be biased because researcher becomes part of what he/she is studying.
- Difficult to quantify results. Data tends to be descriptive.
- Difficult to record. If researcher is part of a group, writing down details may be impossible.
- May difficult to generalise findings. Findings may apply to a particular situation or group.

Examples:
- Behaviour of drug users.
- Classroom behaviour.
Methods Fact Sheet 6

Unstructured interviews

Key features:
• Qualitative data.
• Primary source.
• Researcher has a number of broad topics/general areas to cover with interviewee.
• Questions would be ‘open’ questions.
• Respondent is allowed to elaborate on any of the areas covered.

Advantages:
• Allows researcher to explore issues in an in-depth way.
• Researcher is not restricted to a set of pre-set questions.
• Researcher can clarify points and explore particular points.
• Good for ascertaining meaning, feelings, motives, etc.

Disadvantages:
• Can lose track of purpose of the interview.
• Interviewee may digress into irrelevant information.
• Can be difficult to quantify results as much of the data may be descriptive.
• Can be time-consuming for researcher and respondent.
• High cost because of high researcher involvement.
• May be difficult to compare answers given by different individuals.

Examples:
• Studies which explore causes of marital breakdown.
• In-depth studies of poverty and how it affects people on a personal level.
Methods Fact Sheet 7

Personal documents

Key features:
• Qualitative data.
• Secondary source.
• Uses existing data such as diaries, letters, personal accounts.
• May be found in personal collections, published form, government archives, libraries or museums.
• Provide evidence for in-depth accounts, case studies, or to give a historical perspective to a particular study.

Advantages:
• Can give insight to a particular situation or period in time.
• Good for looking at society from a particular individual’s point of view.
• May be the only source of information about a particular society, event, etc.
• May support other evidence. For example, statistics on disease in the early part of the century may be supported by personal documents from physicians of the time.

Disadvantages:
• May be biased. For example, the author may be aware that someone would read his/her account.
• If person is no longer alive, then there is no way of checking his/her account.
• Personal accounts only say what the person wanted others to know - they do not tell you what is missed out.
• If some documents are in private collections it may be difficult to get permission to use in research. This may also be the case with government documents which may be subject laws regarding confidentiality and time lapses before disclosure.
• The authenticity of some documents may be questioned if authenticity cannot be proved. For example, the case of the ‘Hitler diaries’ which proved to be a hoax.

Examples:
• Studies showing the changing role of women throughout the centuries.
• Studies which examine changing social structures e.g. between feudalism and capitalism.
RESOURCES
RESOURCES

Sociology: Themes and Perspectives (3rd edition)
Haralambos and Holborn
Harper Collins

Contemporary British Society (2nd edition)
Abercrombie and Warde
Polity Press

Sociology (3rd edition)
Anthony Giddens
Polity Press

Introductory Sociology (3rd edition)
Bilton, Bonnet, Jones, Skinner, Stanworth & Webster
Macmillan

Sociology An Interactive Approach
Jorgensen, Bird, Heyhoe, Russell & Savvas
Harper Collins

Sociology in Perspective
Kirby, Kidd, Koubel, Barter, Hope, Kirton, Madry, Manning and Triggs
Heinemann

Sociology Explained
Andy Bernard and Terry Burgess
ISBN 0521426715

Fundamentals of Sociology
McNeill and Townley
Hutchinson Publishers
ISBN 009161513

Making Sense of Society
Marsh, Keating, Eyre, Campbell, McKenzie
Longman publishers
ISBN 0582228956

An Introduction to Sociology Feminist Perspectives (2nd edition)
Pamela Abbot & Claire Wallace
Routledge
Think Sociology
P. Stephens et al.
Stanley Thomas

Sociology Review A level Resource Packs
b) Family and Education. J. Garrod.
c) Stratification, Culture and Identity. W. Kidd
Philip Allan Publishers