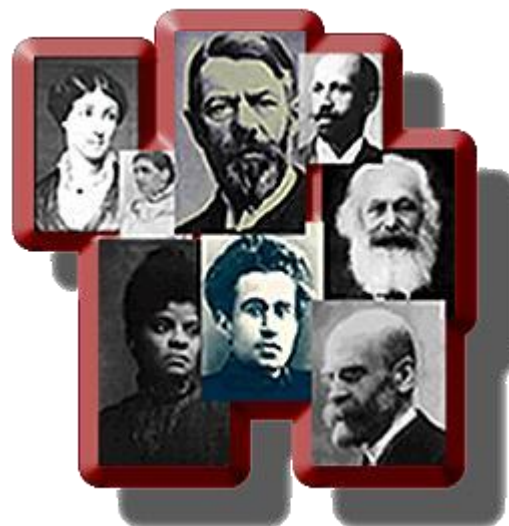
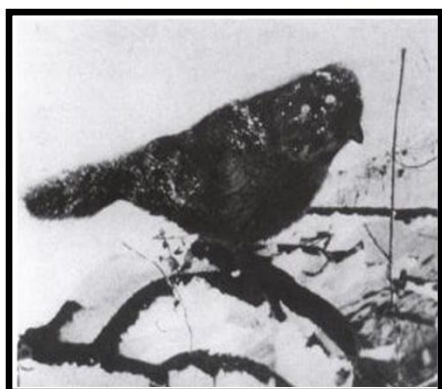


An Introduction to AS Sociology

Sociology is the study of human social life. There are many different aspects of Sociology to address, so you must be curious and attentive to looking at the world in a different way!



There is usually another way of looking at things - and that is what we do as sociologists. We take normal, taken-for-granted life and turn it upside down, looking for meanings. And very often we end up seeing things very differently.



Look at this photo the other way - not everything is as it seems!

Social Change

The social world is changing. Some argue it is growing; others say it is shrinking. The important point to grasp is: society does not remain static over time; it constantly changes - through decades, centuries; and across countries, societies.

Task 1: a) Think of three different ways society has changed over the last 100 years

Society 100 years ago:	Society now:

Task 1: a) Think of three different ways British society is different to another (e.g. Italian society, USA etc)

British society:	_____ society:

Why has society changed? Why are societies different?

Sociological Imagination

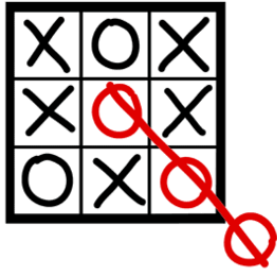
We are all sociologists at heart; we can all identify changes between people, cultures, and social institutions. Much of it is common sense, but in Sociology you will learn to use theory and research to support your opinions.

It is useful to start with what **C. Wright Mills** (1959) labelled the **sociological imagination**.

Mills suggests the sociological imagination can help individuals cope with the world by enabling them to step outside of their personal worldview and see events and social structures that influence their behaviour, attitudes, and culture.



**THINK
OUTSIDE
THE BOX**



**THINK OUTSIDE OF THE
BOX!**

Task 2

Look at the following pictures. Write down what you see, and what you don't see, and make a list of possible scenarios for the image - what could be going on? What is it about? Who are they?





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Political and Social Awareness



You may think that politics is for old boring men who rant and rave and do little for the country; **BUT** it doesn't have to be like that. If you have an opinion about something, then you are involved in the politics of it.

For Sociology, it is important to have some idea of what is going on around you: politically and socially; in the UK and globally.

If you don't know left wing from right wing (or think they live on a KFC menu) it's time to get clued up!



Task 3: Political Parties in the UK.

Look at the logos of the UK political parties. Can you identify them all? Write their names next to the logo.

Who is the British Prime Minister?



Which political party is he the leader of? _____

Write down one of the aims or beliefs of this political party.

Which is the biggest opposition party in the UK? _____

Who is their leader?



The SNP want to see a big change to happen in British politics soon, what is it?

If you were in government, what would be at the top of your agenda?
Write down the top 4 most important issues facing British society
and the world today and what you hope to achieve.



1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

What's Going On?

BE AWARE

It is always useful to know what is going on in society around you; locally, nationally and globally.



Task 4: What important events have happened in the last 3-5 years? They could be either positive or negative.

Try to think of at least one local, national, and global event.

Local		National		Global	

Choose one of the events listed above: _____

How have the media reported this event? Has it been largely positive or negative?

What impact do you think the media coverage has had on people in the UK / and around the world?

Identity

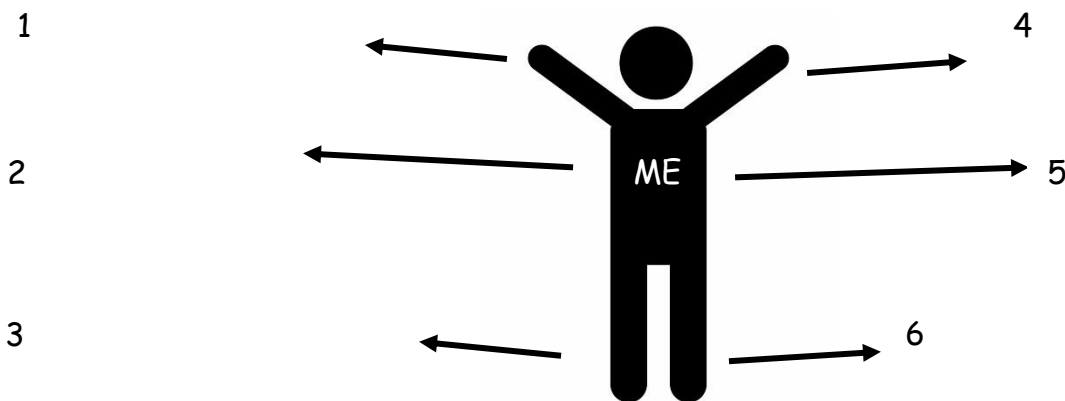
Who are you? Are you part of a group, an individual, a student, a sister, a brother?

Identity is about how we see and define ourselves - our personalities - and how

other people see and define us. Many aspects of our individual identity are influenced by **agencies of socialisation**. These are structures or groups of people. For example, one group might be your friends, one structure or organisation that influence you might be your school.



Task 5: Write down six examples of structures or groups of people that influence you.



Some sociologists believe that individuals are like moulded putty, squished and squashed by society and its **structures** or institutions. For example, many think that the Media plays a large part in how we see ourselves and how we interact with others.



But other sociologists argue that we can make our own choices and have **free will**. There are decisions we make driven by internal motivations (how we feel and think). This behaviour that comes from within us is called **agency**. Sometimes we can challenge and oppose structures, and in this way, we help construct a part of our identity.



List three agency decisions you have made or will make today.

1.
2.
3.

When trying to understand human behaviour, Sociologists often focus on the following four aspects of our identities:

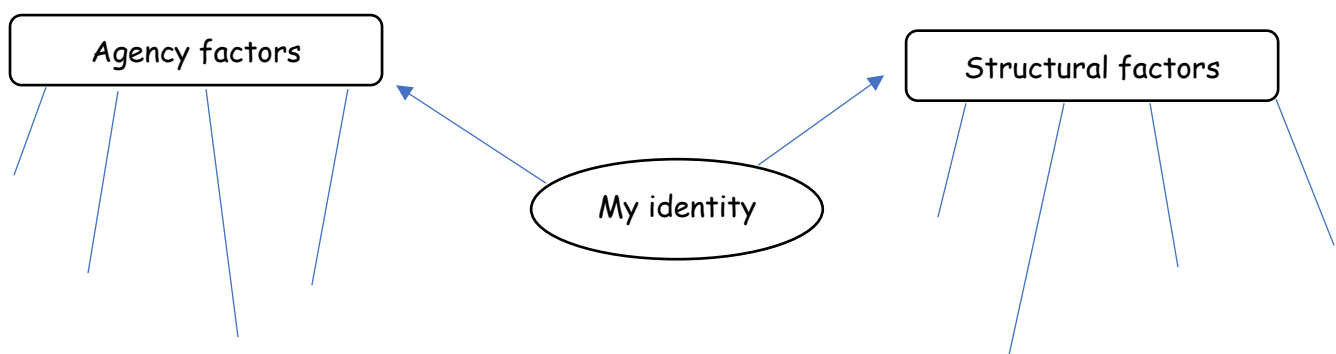
Class	Age	Gender	Ethnicity
C	A	G	E

Which of these do you think has the greatest influence on your identity and why?

Make a poster of how your identity is shaped by factors in your life.

Consider **agency** factors and **structural** factors.

Mindmap some ideas first on what you can include in your poster below:



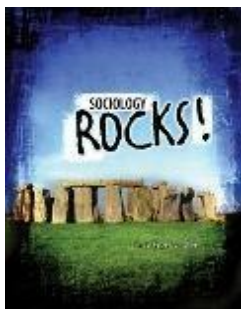
Nature vs Nurture – The Big Debate

There are many ways of explaining why certain people do things in certain ways. For example, biologists think that people behave as they do because they are controlled by nature. This is known as **Nature theory**. Humans are compared to animals and seen to act on **instinct**.



"I've tried raising my son with patience, honesty and manners, but he still grew up like his dad."

Sociologists believe that people behave as they do because they are taught how to behave. For example the sociologist **Michael Haralambos** states: 'human beings learn their behaviour and use their intelligence whereas animals simply act on instinct'. This is known as a **Nurture theory** of human behaviour. Nurture means the way you were brought up. It is also a reference to **socialisation**, the lifelong process by which we learn our culture, values, norms and how to behave. For example, when we are growing up, our parents might emphasise the importance of doing well at school, being polite to others or looking after our family.



Task 6

Write down a list of things that you were taught by other people about how to behave.

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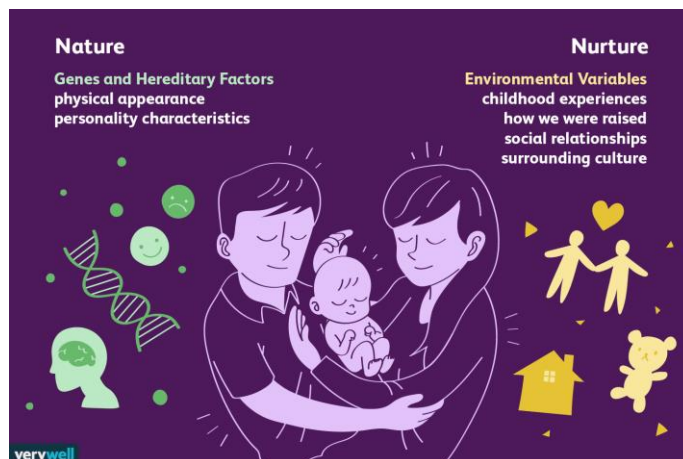
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Sociologists reject nature theories for two reasons. If people behaved as they do because of nature, they would all act the same as each other. We know that people do not all act the same:

1. **History:** people acted differently in the past from the way that they do today. They had different ideas and different beliefs.



Think of two ways in which we are different from people in the past:

- 1.....
- 2.....

2. **Anthropology:** this is the study of different societies and their cultures. Whilst human societies often share similarities, there are also often some differences. For example, in the UK we traditionally eat with knives and



forks at a table, whereas in China it is traditional to eat with chopsticks and sit on the floor. In China it is respectful to wait for the eldest people to begin eating.

Think of four ways in which people in other countries are different from people in Britain:

- 1.....
- 2.....
- 3.....
- 4.....

Social behaviour and culture

Sociology is the study of human groups and social life in modern societies.

Sociology recognises that as members of society we have to learn social behaviour and this is done through a variety of social institutions and social groups right throughout our lives.



Task 7



Imagine a newborn human infant cast adrift on a desert island, we will assume that it doesn't become an instant snack for some passing predator!

Can you think of anything that would enable it to survive?

Explain why you think the baby would either survive or not survive.

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It should have become clear as you thought about the chances of our baby's survival that humans, more than most other animals, are dependent upon other humans for the most basic needs such as food and shelter.



Unlike animals, we do not arrive in this world with instincts inherited from our parents that will enable us to survive in a potentially hostile environment. For example, the green turtle lays eggs on a desert island and when the baby turtles hatch, they instinctively make their way to the ocean and swim hundreds of miles to join the adult turtles without their mother's presence. Human babies cannot do this!

But do humans have some instincts? Which of the following are instincts and which are learned? Label them **I** (instinct) and **L** (learned).

1. breathing	2. dancing	3. smiling
4. sleeping	5. eating	6. flinching when someone hits you
7. athletic ability	8. academic success	9. crying

Can you think of any other instincts?

Look back at the list you have made and see how many of the things must be learned. If they have to be **learned** they are not really instincts.



Many people believe that women have a 'maternal instinct' to look after and care for their child when it is born. However, mothers do not 'instinctively' know how to act as a mother. Little girls learn about mothering via a range of 'learning' experiences (called **socialisation**) such as

how their mother behaves towards them or younger brothers and sisters, toys such as dolls and other related influences.



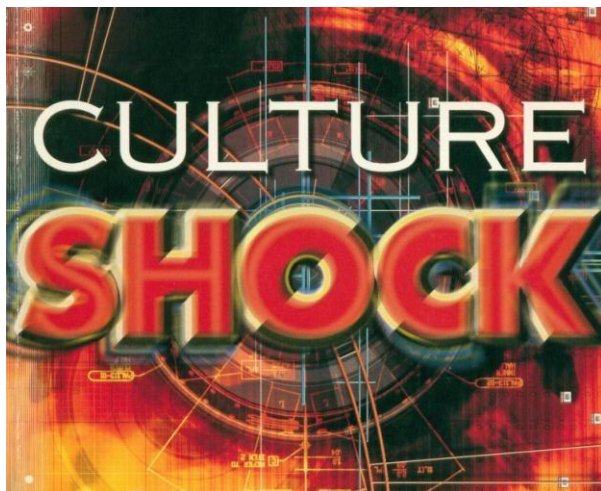
What is Culture?

Almost all the things that we do have to be learned from others, for example walking, speaking, or knowing what to eat.

We have now established an important principle: human behaviour is largely learned through a process called **socialisation**. So, when we learn all these things, we are learning our **culture**, our whole way of life, which includes amongst many things:

- the clothes we wear
- the language we speak
- the food we eat and how we eat it
- the homes we live in
- to the things we believe about the origins of life
- what is good or bad
- or the ways in which we should be governed.

The above is all passed on to us from other people.



It is through our membership of social groups that we gain an understanding of the ways in which behaviour is patterned and organised and of the **values**, customs, **norms** and **roles** of our society. Culture is a guide for living. It refers to all the aspects of human behaviour that are learnt rather than genetically transmitted.

The following activity shows you the importance of culture.

The Shirbít Tribe

The Shirbit culture believes that the human body is ugly and that it is naturally prone to feebleness and disease. The Shirbit therefore carry out rituals and ceremonies designed to avoid this, and every household has a shrine devoted to the body. The rituals associated with the shrine are private and secret. Adults never discuss the rituals, and children are told only enough for them to be successfully initiated. The central point of the shrine is a box built into the wall, in which are kept charms and magical potions for the face and body. These are collected from the medicine men who write down the ingredients in an ancient secret language, which is only understood by the herbalist who prepares the potion. These potions are kept in the charm-box for many years. Beneath the charm box is a small font (bowl with water in). Every day, twice a day, every member of the family enters the shrine room and bows his or her head before the charm-box, and mixes together different sorts of holy water in the font before washing his or herself.

The Shirbit have a horror of and fascination with the mouth. If they didn't have their rituals of the mouth, they believe that their teeth would fall out, their friends would desert them and their lovers would reject them. Finally, men and women engage in horrific acts of self-mutilation. Men engage in a daily body ritual of scraping and deeply cut their faces with a sharp instrument, whilst women bake their heads in a small oven once a month.

1. What are your first thoughts and reactions to the Shirbit culture?

2. What aspects of Shirbit cultural behaviour seem strange to you?

3. Are there any aspects of Shirbit behaviour that are similar to British culture?

4. What does it tell us about culture?

SOCIALISATION

The process of
learning the
norms and values
of a society.

Socialisation is the term that sociologists use to describe the life-long process of learning the culture of any society. Culture is socially transmitted from one generation to the next through the process of socialisation. The American sociologist Charles Cooley

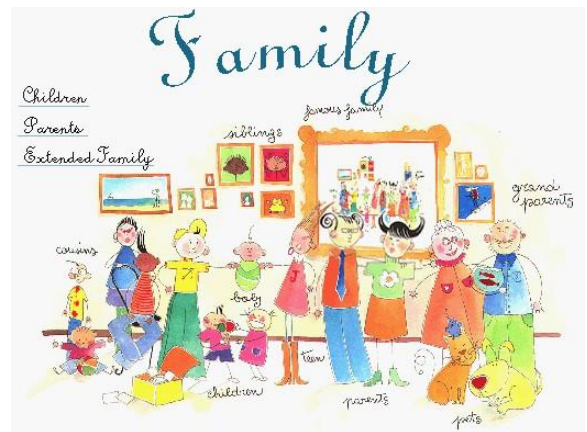
(1864-1929) distinguished two types of socialisation: **primary** and **secondary**. These two forms of socialisation are defined partly in terms of the particular groups or 'agencies' in which they occur:

- Primary socialisation

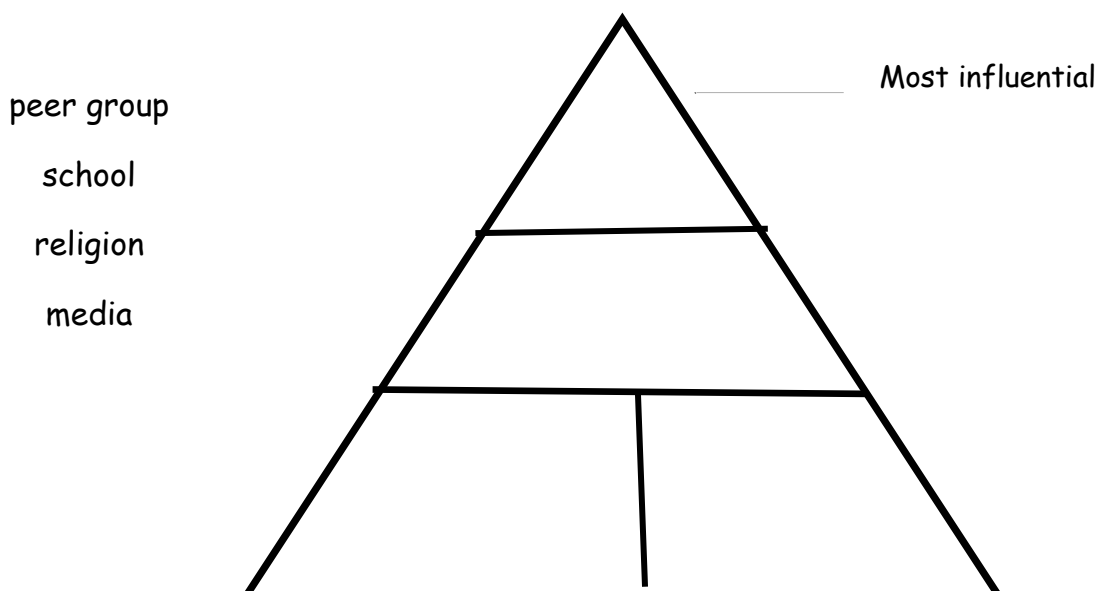
The Family is the main agency where an individual learns many of the basic lessons for life such as language, how to act as a boy or a girl, how to share and how to love.

- Secondary socialisation

Later on in our lives as we grow up, other social institutions and groups become influential in shaping our ideas and identities. The secondary agents of socialisations include school, peer group (friends), the media, religion and work.



Task 9: Which of the following agents of secondary socialisation have the greatest influence upon you and your identity and behaviour? Place them in the pyramid below.



SOCIAL CONTROL

Socialisation is not only the process by which we learn the culture of our society; it is also a mechanism of **social control**.

This refers to methods used to persuade or force individuals to conform to those values, norms and patterns of behaviour which the culture of their society requires. Social control involves the use of rewards and punishments. Sociologists refer to these as sanctions.

These may be either positive sanctions (rewards) or negative sanctions (various types of punishment):

- **Positive sanctions** may range from gifts of sweets from parents to children, to merits and prizes at school, to promotion at work or to knighthoods and medals.
- **Negative sanctions** may range from expressions of disapproval, physical punishment, being ridiculed or gossiped about, dismissal from work to being fined or imprisoned.



Task 10

List and briefly explain three positive and three negative sanctions which affect the way you behave in your daily life:

POSITIVE

1.
2.
3.

NEGATIVE

1.
2.
3.

Key Concepts in Socialisation and Culture

Norms

Norms are social rules which define correct and acceptable behaviour in a society or social group to which people are expected to conform. They are essential to human society. They guide and direct our behaviour and allow us both to understand and predict the behaviour of others.

Norms exist in all areas of social life. In Britain, being late for work or an appointment; jumping queues in supermarkets; laughing during funerals; walking through the streets naked or never saying hello to friends are likely to be seen as rude, annoying or odd because they are not following the norms of accepted behaviour.

Norms are usually enforced informally—by the disapproval of other people, embarrassment, or a 'telling off' from parents.



Task 11

Think of one thing that you do which is normal for each of these situations.

School:

Home:

Friend's house:

Values

Values are less specific than norms. They are general guides for behaviour. Values are ideas and beliefs about what is 'right' and 'wrong' and about standards which are worth maintaining and achieving in any society. In Britain, values include beliefs about respect for human life, privacy and private property, about the importance of marriage and the importance of money and success.

There are official legal rules, concerning values, which are formally enforced by the police, courts and prison and involve legal punishment if they are broken. For example, laws against murder enforce the value attached to human life in our society.



Task 12

Think of two ideas that are really important to you as a person. You may have strong views about animals or children.

1.....

.....

2.....

.....

Status

Sociologists use the term 'status' to refer to a position in society, for example father, doctor, son, bank manager, teacher. **Statuses** may be ascribed or achieved.

Ascribed statuses are fixed, often at birth and are largely unchangeable. For example, gender and race are fixed characteristics usually given by others.

An **achieved** status involves some degree of choice and results partly from individual achievement. For example, a person achieves his or her job as a teacher, doctor or scientist on the basis of ability and effort.



Task 13

Give some examples of what might give a 16 year old status (both positive and negative)

Positive:

.....

Negative:

.....

Role

Each status has an accompanying role. A **role** is a set of norms which defines appropriate and expected behaviour for those who occupy a particular status.

A role can be compared to that of an actor on the stage following a 'script'.

Roles are patterns of behaviour which are expected from people in different positions in society. People in society play many different roles in their lifetimes, such as those of a boy or girl, a child and an adult, a student, a parent, a friend and work roles like factory worker, police officer or teacher. People in these roles are expected by society to behave in particular ways. The police officer who steals or the teacher who is drunk in the classroom, show what these expectations of behaviour are!



Task 14

List some of the roles you play and briefly outline what others expect of you in each of these roles. For example, how are you expected to behave as a student/pupil and what activities are you expected to carry out which you wouldn't have to if you were not a student?

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One person plays many roles at the same time. For example, a woman may play the roles of woman, mother, worker, sister and wife at the same time. This may lead to **role conflict**, where the successful performance of two or more roles at the same time may come into conflict with one another, such as the conflict between the roles of full-time worker and mother which some women experience. For example, what happens if a child is ill? (**Note:** consider why women are referred to and not men.)

From your list of roles, try to pick out two examples of those which conflict with each other. Give a brief explanation of each example of role conflict.

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And finally

This Introductory Toolkit has covered information to help you prepare for this course and develop your understanding of key aspects of the subject of sociology.

But there is much more to uncover and learn.

From now on your 'sociological voyage' begins; we are sure you will enjoy it and hope the year is a worthwhile and interesting one.

The first module for AS is the compulsory core; Culture and Socialisation, followed by Family and Households. Now read on and 'Bon Voyage!'

