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STUDENTS

GCSE sociology revision checklist Paper 2

Unit 4 – Social Inequalities

- What is social inequality and stratification? []
- Different examples of stratification []
- Sociologists explanations of social class []
- Unequal division of wealth, income, status and power []
- Inequalities based on gender, ethnicity religion and age []
- Life chances []
- What is poverty? []
- Structural explanations for poverty []
- Cultural explanation for poverty []
- How poverty is measured []
- Which groups most likely to experience poverty? []
- Does class matter today (Classless society) []

Unit 5 - Power

- Defining power legal rational, coercion, authority []
- What is a democracy and views of it []
- Threats to democracy. []
- What is the state and views of it []
- Participation in the political process []
- Age, gender, ethnicity, region, religion and voting patterns. []
- What are pressure groups? []
- Tactics used by pressure groups []
- Pluralist and conflict view of pressure groups []
- Barriers to political participation []
- Social status of MPs (Power distribution) []
- Volunteering []
- How the government has tackled poverty, unemployment and discrimination []
- Power relationship between parents and children, in classrooms and schools and the public and work []

Unit 6 – Crime and deviance

- Difference between crime and deviance []
- Deviance as relative []
- Formal and informal social control []
- Functionalist and Marxist views of social control []
- Measuring crime (statistics) []
- Problems with measuring crime (statistics) []
- Non-Sociological views of crime []
- Sociological views of crime []
- Subcultural theory []
- Labelling theory []
- Media and crime []
- Gender and crime []
- Age and crime []
- Ethnicity and crime []
- Location and crime []
- Victims and crime []
- Communities and crime []
- Types of crime/social class []
- Youth crime as a social problem []
- Racially motivated crime as a social problem []

GCSE Sociology Unit 2 Revision Notes

Within this pack you will find:

Revision Notes

Useful Websites

(sample exam papers will be given out later)

In Unit 2 you have studied:

- Social Stratification: Compulsory
- Research Methods: Compulsory
- Crime and Deviance: Option 1
- Power and Politics: Option 2

In the exams you have an hour and a half. Unit 2 is 50% and will have to answer short questions that incorporate and Social Stratification and Research Methods (unit 2). You will then answer 3 essays, two 10 marks and one 20 mark. In Unit 2 you choose from Crime and Deviance or Power and Politics. You only answer ONE topic and you must answer all 3 questions for that topic.

If you have any questions then come and see me!

Good Luck,

Miss Cadman!

What is stratification?

Stratification describes the way in which different groups of people are placed within society. The status of people is often determined by how society is stratified - the basis of which can include;

- Wealth and income - This is the most common basis of stratification
- Social class
- Ethnicity
- Gender
- Political status
- Religion (e.g. the caste system in India)

The stratification of society is also based upon either an open, or closed, system.

<i>OPEN</i>	<i>CLOSED</i>
Status is achieved through merit, and effort. This is sometimes known as a meritocracy. The UK is a relatively open society, although disadvantaged groups within society face a glass ceiling.	Status is ascribed, rather than achieved. Ascribed status can be based upon several factors, such as family background (e.g. the feudal system consists of landowners and serfs). Political factors may also play a role (e.g. societies organised on the basis of communism), as can ethnicity (e.g. the former apartheid regime in South Africa) and religion.

Structure of inequality

The power of the elite within society is based upon;

- Income
- Wealth
- A network of social connections – sometimes known as the ‘old boys network’

In contrast the least powerful within society have few opportunities to escape from poverty. There are different explanations for this. For example the New Right sociologist Charles Murray argued that the poorest members of society had become too reliant upon welfare benefits. This had led to a gradual loss in the ability of the poor to adopt values that would take them out of poverty; such as self-reliance and personal initiative. Most people within society are neither rich nor poor. They form part of the middle-class –which is the most numerical social class within society.

During your revision, you need to be aware that life chances are determined by factors such as;

- Social class
- Gender

- Schooling
- Ethnicity, etc.

You also need to explain why such differences in life chances exist. For example ethnic minorities often face a glass ceiling at work due to discrimination upon racial grounds; which can be either overt (or obvious), or covert (in other words, hidden). Women also face the same problem.

You should also be aware of the existence of an “underclass”. Members of the underclass form norms and values that often differ to the rest of society. They are caught in a poverty trap (or cycle) from which they find very difficult to escape from. This is despite changes to the welfare and benefits system designed to get welfare claimants into work.

Social Change and stratification

You should be aware of recent changes to the class structure of British society. There are several points to consider;

- Society has become more open in recent years as people have found it easier to move from one social class to another. This most common trajectory is the movement of people from the working-class to the middle-class. Some sociologists describe this movement as *embourgeoisement*
- The life chances available to women have improved since the 1970s. One explanation for this is the impact of feminism.
- The life chances available to people from ethnic minorities have also improved in recent years, in part due to legislation designed to prevent discrimination. Changing attitudes within society should also be considered
- A small minority of people still gain a position within society via ascribed status (e.g. the royal family)

You also need to identify changes to the distribution of wealth and income within society since the 1970s. For example due to changes to the tax and benefits system, the rich have gained in wealth and income. Britain now has a relatively low level of income tax for those on a high level of income.

You also need to explain why such changes have occurred to the distribution of wealth and income. For example during the 1980s the number of people in poverty doubled. This was partly due to changes to the welfare state which included;

- Reducing the value of welfare benefits
- Encouraging people to take more responsibility for their own (and their families) needs, rather than relying upon the state. The aim of such changes was to tackle the dependency culture – an idea influenced by the New Right

Since 1997 the Labour government has attempted to reduce the level of poverty by;

- Increasing the level of public expenditure on the welfare state
- The welfare to work programme
- An ideological commitment to helping those less advantaged within society

Whilst the gap between rich and poor has continued to grow, there has been a decline in the rate of child poverty since Labour came to power. The government's target is to end child poverty by the year 2020.

Welfare State

You need to understand changes within the welfare state since the 1970s. There are three main eras you need to be aware of;

<i>Era</i>	<i>Changes made</i>	<i>Influenced by</i>
Golden age of the welfare state (1945 – 1979)	The scope and scale of the welfare state expanded under governments of both main parties	The Beveridge report which aimed to combat the 5 evils facing society (want, ignorance, disease, squalor and idleness)
Conservative government (1979 – 1997)	The level of benefits was reduced, and the availability of many welfare payments was restricted. The level of taxation was also lowered in an attempt to reduce the role of the state.	The New Right argued that the welfare state created a dependency culture in which welfare claimants had little incentive to return to work. The New Right had a major impact upon the Conservative governments of the 80s and 90s
Labour government since 1997	Taxation has been raised in order to fund an increase in the level of public expenditure. Benefits have also been targeted towards those who are less able to provide for themselves; such as pensioners and children.	An ideology called the Third Way. The most prominent sociologist associated with the Third Way is Anthony Giddens.

You need to distinguish between the two main types of welfare benefits; universal and selective.

<i>UNIVERSAL</i>	<i>SELECTIVE</i>
Universal benefits are provided to all regardless of a claimant's financial status. One example is child benefit, which is paid out to all families with children regardless of income and wealth.	Selective benefits are provided on the basis of a claimant's income and circumstance. An example of a selective benefit is the Child Tax Credit.

Welfare benefits and services are usually provided by the state, but an increasing range of services are also provided by the third sector, and private firms.

<i>The STATE</i>	<i>The THIRD SECTOR</i>	<i>The PRIVATE SECTOR</i>
The government provides both selective and universal benefits via the welfare state	The third sector consists of Charities and not-for-profit organisations; such as the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust.	Private hospitals are sometimes used to treat NHS patients. The government also works with the private sector in schemes funded by the Private Finance Initiative.

There is a debate amongst sociologists over the desirability of welfare provision. Those who defend the welfare state in terms of providing basic wants and needs, and for ensuring some degree of equality within society, tend to be on the left of the political spectrum. In contrast, the main criticisms of the welfare state in recent years tend to derive from the New Right, who argue that the welfare state;

- Is inefficient.
- Undermines personal initiative.
- Creates a culture of dependency.
- Leads to high levels of taxation, which damages the economy.

The New Right has itself been criticised for blaming the poor for their own problems. However, the arguments put forward by the New Right were highly influential during the 1980s and 1990s under the Conservative governments of Mrs. Thatcher and John Major. Since Labour gained power in 1997, the influence of the New Right has declined.

You also need to be aware that since 1997 the government has provided a substantial increase in resources for the welfare state. They have also attempted to;

- Encourage people to gain employment and move off welfare.
- End child poverty by the year 2020.
- Create a more just society where opportunities are held by the many, not the few.

The Labour party, and the Liberal Democrats; are more supportive of the welfare state. In contrast, the Conservatives are more critical of the welfare state. However in 2006 the Tories signed up to the government's target of ending child poverty (by 2020)

Poverty

Whilst it is difficult to measure poverty, there are two widely accepted methods;

- **Absolute poverty** – This is when a person cannot provide for his/her basic needs such as food and shelter. Homeless people suffer from absolute poverty.
- **Relative poverty** - The government's official statistics define the poverty level as those earning below 60% of average earnings.

There are other measurements of poverty; such as subjective poverty and environmental poverty, but they are less widely used.

You will need to refresh your knowledge of the poverty cycle. This occurs when those living below the poverty level find it difficult to escape from their circumstances. There are several reasons for this;

- Welfare claimants either lose benefits, or experience a decline in the level of benefits received; when they return to work. They may therefore be worse off if they gain a job.
- Welfare claimants adopt a 'culture of poverty' which consists of a set of norms and values that differ to those of mainstream society. This makes it very difficult for them to re-enter the labour market.
- New Right theorists argue that welfare payments undermine personal initiative, thus trapping many people into poverty. As such, the poor become more and more dependent upon the welfare state – and therefore find it very difficult to escape.

The impact of poverty can be hugely significant. This can include a;

- Loss of status and income (if the person was previously in employment).
- A decline in self-esteem.
- A decline in personal health.
- A feeling of social exclusion.

There are also implications for society. For example, a wide gap between rich and poor within society can result in social conflict.

Inequality based on Gender

- Feminist approaches explore gender inequalities in society. Over the last 40 years, reforms in areas such as education and employment have addressed aspects of gender inequality. The government have introduced anti-discrimination laws such as the Equal Pay Act (1970) to reduce gender inequalities.
- Today women are increasingly likely to achieve high level educational qualifications, high status jobs and good salaries. Despite this, feminist approaches argue that gender remains the most significant social division in contemporary society.
- Some Feminist sociologists see society as patriarchal. This is where men have a lot of power within families, politics and the workplace. Men also generally receive a bigger share of the rewards such as wealth and status.

Inequality based on ethnicity

- Over the last 40 years, reforms and policies have addressed inequality based on ethnicity in areas such as education, employment and criminal justice. For example, ethnicity in areas such as education and criminal justice.
- Many employers have equal opportunity policies to support equality and diversity.
- The 1976 Race Relations Act outlawed discrimination based on ethnicity.

- The Equality and Human Rights Commission has powers to enforce the equality laws and to shape public policy on equality issues.
- As a result of such changes, sociologists believe that ethnic inequality is less significant now, although others argue that there has been little change in the fields of employment, education and criminal justice.
- Unemployment rates in England and Wales are higher among people of Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Black Caribbean heritage than among White British or White Irish people.
- Research has also found that men and women of Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage have much worse chances of getting professional and managerial jobs than their white peers of the same age and educational level.

Inequality based on Age

- Sociologists argue that age is socially constructed. This means that society decides how age will be interpreted. This can be seen in historical and cross-cultural differences in expectations surrounding age.
- Child Labour is now illegal in Britain, it was the norm among working-class families in the 19th Century and exists in some parts of the world today.
- The status of older people can also vary between cultures. In some cultures, getting old is seen as something to be avoided. In other cultures, older people are seen as having a high status in society as their experience is valued and appreciated.
- The term ageism describes a situation where someone is treated differently because of their age. In Britain, there are now two regulations against age discrimination in employment and training.

Deviance and crime

You need to distinguish between deviant behaviour and criminal behaviour.

<i>Criminal behaviour</i>	<i>Deviant behaviour</i>
Crime consists of behaviour that breaks the law (e.g. murder, theft)	Deviancy consists of behaviour that differs from the norms and values of wider society

Those who exhibit deviant behaviour act and dress in a way that differs to the norms and values of wider society. One example of a deviant group is goths. Most cases of deviant behaviour are legal, but in some cases their behaviour can result in criminal activity. A group of people who exhibit deviant behaviour share their own norms and values that form a distinct subculture.

The Media

Deviant groups are often labelled by the media in a negative manner. Tabloid newspapers tend to take a more overtly biased approach towards labelling deviant groups, although labelling is not simply confined to the 'red-top' press. TV also plays a role in labelling certain groups.

Deviancy amplification occurs when the media focuses upon the negative aspects of behaviour amongst deviant groups. One example would be the recent focus upon young people who wear hoods, who are often associated with causing trouble and engaging in criminal activity. The media's portrayal of certain groups can even create a moral panic within society, which can result in those groups becoming modern-day 'folk devils' – groups that become a scapegoat for problems within society (e.g. asylum seekers).

When groups are labelled, society will expect certain forms of behaviour from a particular group, such as people from an ethnic minority. These labels are often based upon stereotypes, and can be either positive or (in most cases) negative. For example negative labels of certain ethnic groups can be based upon racism. You also need to be aware of the potential impact of labels, such as a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Social Control

The behaviour of most people conforms to the norms and values of society. Our behaviour is heavily influenced by agents of social control; which can be classified as either formal or informal.

<i>Agents of formal control</i>	<i>Agents of informal control</i>
Agents that enforce the rules of society, such as the police and the judiciary.	Includes most agents of secondary socialisation, such as peer groups and religious institutions. Parents are also a significant agent of informal control.

Sociological Approaches to Crime

Functionalism and the New Right	Inadequate socialisation within your family can cause crime. Children's whose parents fail to take responsibility for socialising them correctly are prone to crime. Single parent families produce the most criminal and deviant as socialisation can be inadequate.
Marxism	This approach links crime to the social inequalities that are built into capitalism. In a Capitalist society, not everyone can access wealth and status so some people commit crime to acquire the consumer goods and material possessions that others have and that the media promote. According to the Marxist approach, the legal system operates in favour of the rich. Rich people who commit fraud or tax evasion are less likely to be convicted than working-class people who commit benefit fraud. White collar crime is a key concept to learn – this refers to middle class individuals committing crime. Corporate crime refers to a company committing crimes, for example, not adhering to health and safety laws at work.
Labelling	Labelling theory looks at how some people are labelled as deviant or criminal. A delinquent is someone who is labelled as such. Being labelled as criminal or deviant may be the result from the reaction of other people (such as the police) and may not be entirely due to an individual's actions or behaviour. Labelling someone as deviant may help to create a self-fulfilling prophecy by pushing someone further towards deviance. A master status is when someone is labelled as deviant or criminal and this becomes the most powerful label. For example, they may be a father or husband – but society would only see them as criminal or deviant.
Sub-Cultural	A subculture is a collection of people who have the same norms and values and these may differ from the rest of society. Vandalism and joy-riding are carried out by subcultures. Young males are the most likely group to join a subculture and may be because of status frustration. This means that they are fed up with their situation and are angry about it. They may also join a subculture because of peer pressure and material deprivation. Albert Cohen argues that working class boys joined delinquent subcultures to gain status with their peer group.

Causes of Crime

You need to know about the causes and impact of criminal behaviour. For example, people may commit crime for several reasons;

- Peer pressure
- Criminals have not been taught the difference between 'right and wrong.' This argument is closely associated with the New Right
- Mental illness. The majority of prisoners have mental health problems
- A failure to rehabilitate ex-offenders back into society
- The sociologist Bauman argues that criminals steal status items in order to appear 'normal' within such a materialistic society

The peak age of criminal activity is during the years 16-25. This may be due to the following factors;

- Boys often have to 'prove' their masculinity which can, at times, result in criminal activity
- The likelihood of a young person belonging to a subculture is high, and *some* subcultures engage in criminal behaviour
- Young people may have few legitimate means available of acquiring material goods
- Less responsibilities
- Teenage rebellion can lead to people breaking the law

There are several negative impacts of crime upon an area. They include;

- Depopulation, particularly in urban areas
- High levels of crime may damage community spirit and result in less neighbourliness. People may simply want to 'keep themselves to themselves' for fear of harassment
- High crime levels can contribute to environmental poverty
- Once a region with a high level of crime is labelled as a bad area, it might become a ghetto

There are several causes of deviant behaviour that you also need to be aware of;

- People may feel alienated from society. This is a particular problem amongst the underclass and young people
- Deviant behaviour may simply be the product of teenage rebellion
- Some people seek acceptance from a particular group, and therefore act in a deviant manner in order to conform to the subculture of that group

You also need to consider the impact of deviant behaviour. Some sociologists argue that there is little significance to a person adopting deviant behaviour for a short period of time. Indeed in many cases, it is little more than a phase in someone's life, usually during his/her teenage years. However, some people within a deviant group face a great deal of negative peer pressure which can result in criminal activity. This latter point is common amongst gangs.

Crime Statistics and the British Crime Survey

For the examination you will need to know about crime statistics. Since the mid – 1990s, the level of crime has gradually declined. However, some types of crime have increased sharply in recent years; such as youth crime.

Official crime statistics fail to reflect the true level of crime. The existence of a hidden (or dark) figure of crime is due to several factors;

1. Some victims of crime might fear a reprisal if they go to the police
2. The public lacks confidence in the criminal justice system due to low clear-up rates, and lenient sentencing
3. There may be a time lag where people fail to realise that they have been a victim of crime (e.g. ID fraud)
4. In cases of petty theft, victims may feel there is little point contacting the police
5. Some victims of crime might be too embarrassed to report a crime. This is often the case amongst victims of domestic abuse

Self-report and victim studies (such as the British Crime Survey) provide a *more* accurate portrayal of the true level of crime. However, there is always a hidden figure of crime that fails to show up on the official statistics.

The Social Distribution of Crime

Age and crime	Younger people, particularly men, are more likely to engage in crime than older people. Explanations include peer group pressure and sub-cultural influences.
Gender and crime	<p>Official statistics suggest that men are more likely to commit crime than women. Possible explanations include the gender socialisation process, gender differences in opportunity to commit crime and the chivalry effect that operates during reporting, police response, trial and sentencing. The chivalry thesis argues that women are more likely to be treated leniently by the courts.</p> <p>The number of female offences does appear to be increasing. This may be due to social movements such as Feminism that have changed the social position of women. Men and women now have similar social positions and because of that women may have more opportunity to commit crime. Another explanation is that the courts have had a shift in attitude and no longer treat women leniently.</p>
Ethnicity and crime	Official statistics show that some ethnic groups are over-represented in prisons relative to their proportion in the population. Black people are around five times more likely to be in prison than white people. At face value, such figures could suggest that members of some ethnic minority groups commit more crimes than others.

	<p>Many sociologists believe that crime statistics exaggerate crime among some ethnic groups. The statistics are socially constructed by the police services and the institutional racism that exists in the criminal justice system. Research shows that black people are more likely to be stopped and searched, prosecuted and convicted than any other ethnic group.</p>
Social class and crime	<p>There is evidence that working class people are overrepresented in prisons. One view is that working-class people have fewer opportunities to succeed via legal routes such as education. As a result, they are more likely than middle class people to resort to crime for financial gain. Another view suggests that working class subcultures stress deviant and criminal behaviour as a way of achieving status among peers.</p> <p>Working class people may also be over represented because of bias within the criminal justice system. Some sociologists believe that the law is created and enforced in favour of the middle class – and crimes such as tax evasion and corporate manslaughter are hard to prosecute.</p>
Locality and crime	<p>Crime rates are higher in urban areas than in rural areas and is also the highest in deprived areas. One view is that urban areas have higher levels of unemployment and poverty, which means that more people may commit crimes such as theft.</p> <p>Another view is that there are more opportunities to commit crime in urban settings such as city centres.</p> <p>The statistics may however reflect the differences in policing levels and methods between urban and rural areas.</p>

Power and Politics

Decision-making and citizenship in British Politics

In a democracy the people participate in the decision-making process in several ways. You may have already voted in a school election, or even been elected as a representative for your form / school. Many people also showed their support for the Make Poverty History Campaign in 2005 by wearing a wristband.

There are many other ways that a citizen can participate in the political process. They include;

1. Signing a petition
2. Writing a letter / Sending an E-mail to an MP
3. Joining a pressure group
4. Joining a political party

Democracy means rule by the people, and Britain is a good example of a democratic society. Almost all countries in Europe and the Americas are democratic. However, several countries in Africa and Asia are undemocratic, such as North Korea and Zimbabwe. They are more commonly known as dictatorships.

You will need to state and explain what makes a country democratic. There are four main factors to consider;

1. Free and fair elections in which everyone is entitled to vote
2. The government is held to account by elected representatives
3. People hold a series of civil liberties, such as freedom of speech and association
4. Society consists of several conflicting beliefs, such as pro-animal testing and those who campaign against testing on animals. The existence of many different demands and beliefs is an essential element of a democracy

In a democracy, all citizens should take an active role in politics. However in the UK political participation is dominated by white, middle-aged, middle-class men. The young, women and ethnic minorities are less likely to participate in politics. These groups are also underrepresented in the House of Commons. For example, barely 1 in 5 MPs are women.

Many people also feel disillusioned with the political process. This is because;

- They think that politicians just say what they want the people to hear, rather than saying what they would actually do if elected

Certain groups are underrepresented and often therefore feel that their views are being ignored. For example, very few MPs are under the age of 30.

Political socialisation

Political socialisation is the method by which we acquire political norms and values, and we experience political socialisation throughout our lives. For example, our early political views are usually influenced by our parents. This may take the form of identifying with a particular party, or taking a negative view of an opposing party. As we leave home, our political views will be further influenced by peer groups, particularly in the workplace. The area we live in can also be a factor in determining voting behaviour, but perhaps the most important agent of political socialisation is the media.

The media impacts upon political socialisation in three ways;

1. Politicians must present a favourable media image, otherwise they will fail to win votes. One of the reasons the Conservative party elected David Cameron as their leader was his positive media image
2. The media can often determine an agenda that politicians tend to follow. For example, recent Home Secretaries have been criticised for imposing lenient sentences against criminals
3. Newspapers can reinforce their readers to vote for a particular party. However, it is debatable as to how much impact the press really has upon voting behaviour.

The media often shows political bias, particularly newspapers (e.g. the Daily Mail supports the Conservatives, and the Daily Mirror favours the Labour party). However, the TV is more objective. For example the BBC is officially neutral. Other TV stations do occasionally show a slight bias, such as Sky news.

Political change

You will need to describe and explain changes to the distribution of political power since the 1970s. The main changes have been as follows;

- Britain joining the European Union (EU) in 1973. One impact of British membership of the EU has been an erosion of national sovereignty
- A decline in the power of the trade unions
- A rise in new social movements campaigning for issues such as protection of the environment, and the rights of gay people
- Devolution to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. This means that Westminster deals with issues that affect the whole of the UK (e.g. defence and foreign policy), whereas regional parliaments deal with local issues such as health and education.

Voting behaviour

You need to know the various influences upon voting behaviour, and their impact. They include;

- Parents
- Social class
- Occupation
- Ethnicity
- The area of the country a person lives in, etc.

<i>LABOUR voters</i>	<i>CONSERVATIVE voters</i>
More likely to be working-class, live in the north and in the inner-cities. There is also strong support for Labour in Scotland and Wales. Ethnic minorities and the young are also more likely to vote Labour.	More likely to be white, middle-class and living in either the suburbs or a rural area. The Conservatives do particularly well in the South of England, although in the 2005 General Election they gained more votes in the whole of England than the Labour party.

Voter turnout has declined in recent years due to apathy – where voters are not motivated to vote for any political party. There are several causes of apathy you need to be aware of;

1. Disillusionment with politicians – this is a particular problem amongst younger voters
2. A widespread feeling that politicians do not listen to the people
3. There is little ideological difference between the two main parties
4. A feeling that one vote can make little difference. Since 1997 this has been a particular problem in safe Labour seats, where turnout has declined significantly

In recent years, political parties have tried to target their message to the 100,000 or so floating voters in marginal constituencies (seats in the House of Commons that can change from one party to another). This is because this small group of voters effectively decides the result of a General Election. The modern-style of campaigning, with its emphasis upon focus groups and sound-bites, has also contributed to apathy amongst the electorate (i.e. in the 2005 election, only 61% of the electorate bothered to vote).

Political Participation

- Participation in the political process has changed significantly in the UK over the past 50 years.
- In general traditional forms of participation – such as voter turnout in general elections and membership of political parties – are declining.
- However, this does not necessarily mean that people are politically apathetic (not interested in politics).

- For instance, many people participate in the political process by signing petitions, joining protest marches and supporting consumer boycotts.

Pressure Groups

Pressure groups are groups of people or organisations that try and campaign or lobby to influence government in some way. Examples of pressure groups are Fathers for justice.

The chance of pressure group activity being successful depends on several factors, such as whether the group is an insider or outsider group.

- Insider groups such as the Automobile Association, The Natural Choice and the CBI have close links with government networks and they are consulted by government departments, civil servants, and ministers when policy proposals are being prepared. So they are in a strong position to influence government.
- By contrast, outsider groups such as Greenpeace are not consulted automatically. This may be because their aims or their tactics are not recognised by government,
- Other factors include:
 - Resources: such as finances and staffing
 - The size of the groups membership
 - Public opinion and whether there is public support.

Social Movements

Social Movements are a type of group action. They are large informal groupings of individuals and/or Organisations focused on specific political or social issues, in other words, on carrying out, resisting or undoing a social change.

Interest Group

A Special Interest Group (SIG) is a community with an interest in advancing a specific area of knowledge, learning or technology where members cooperate to effect or to produce solutions within their particular field, and may communicate, meet, and organize conferences. They may at times also advocate or lobby on a particular issue or on a range of issues but are generally distinct from Advocacy groups and pressure groups which are normally set up for the specific political aim; the distinction is not firm however and some organizations can adapt and change their focus over time.

Power

- **Authority:** this is power exercised over people when they willingly obey to the individual – for example your teacher, or boss at work.
- **Coercion:** this is power that involves a threat of force or violence to make people obey them.

- **Charismatic authority:** exercise power based on their charisma.
- **Legal rational authority:** power that they hold because of their job, for example a policeman or the prime minister.
- In everyday life, holding and exercising power is about being able to make your own interests count, achieve your aims and influence the behavior of others.

Power in the family

- Parents are expected to operate power over their children.
- This has changed over the last 50 years. There has been a shift of power and attention towards children in working-class families.
- Parents are now less strict and have started having democratic and equal power relations.
- In 2004 legal changes were introduced and any punishment that left physical marks or caused harm was outlawed.

Power in education

- Teachers have the power to enforce rules, but their power is limited to school contexts.
- Relationships between teachers and students have changed over time. They have now become more informal and democratic.
- Some teachers can use charismatic authority to exercise power over students.
- During the 1960's many schools routinely used physical punishment as a last resort to discipline students.
- Today – teachers are no longer able to use corporal punishment.
- Recent educational policies can be seen as reflecting a shift in thinking about the balance of power between teachers and students. For example, by law, schools must now take students' views into account when deciding on policies that affect the.

Police and the Public

- The police are an agency of social control. The police play a part in enforcing authority over people.
- They exercise power in the form of legal and rational authority. For example they have powers to stop and search arrest and detain members of the public.
- They may resort to coercive power as a last resort.

Employers and Employees

- Functionalists believe that employer and employee relationships are based on legitimate authority and operate through formal rules.
- Marxists believe that unequal power relations operate in the work place and that employers exploit employees in the workforce through poor wages and poor working conditions.

Social Problems

- Social problems are situations or behaviours that are viewed as undesirable and need to be solved.
- The Beveridge Report (1942) found the main social problems to be:
 - Poverty
 - Discrimination
 - Unemployment
 - Ageing society

Poverty and Unemployment

- Alcock (2008) Believes poverty to be a major concern for policy makers.
- One way to help people in poverty is to introduce means-tested benefits. This is good as people who need help can get it – however it may miss people who are living just above the poverty line.
- In 1999 Labour introduced a National minimum wage.
- Deacon (2008) believes that this has not had a significant impact on wage inequality.
- In 2006 half of the children experiencing poverty lived in households which one adult was working. In these cases, paid employment does not necessarily provide a route out of poverty.
- The government introduced the New Deal program to try and improve people skills and motivation. This helps unemployed people on benefits find employment and includes training and preparation for work.
- Evaluation:
 - Benefit levels are inadequate to meet people's basic requirements and should be increased to ensure that people can afford basic necessities.
 - Successive governments have failed to significantly reduce the high levels of poverty in Britain.

Discrimination

- Discrimination occurs when people are treated differently and less favourably. Governments have tried to tackle discrimination by introducing new equality and anti-discrimination legislation. As a result, it is now unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of gender, race, age, religion, belief, disability or sexual orientation.
- Britain's ageing population means that older people are an important focus of social policy. Age discrimination in the labour market is a key social policy issues affecting older people today. In 2006, the government introduced regulations against age discrimination in employment and training. Although these regulations cover the whole age range, they are more likely to benefit older people.