

Activity answers

Chapter 5: Sociological theory

Unit 1: What is sociological theory?

Activity 1 (pages 255–256)

1a) What reasons does Galileo give for believing his model of the universe?

Galileo supports his model of the universe in two main ways: **1** He argues it is based on the systematic (telescopic) observation of the behaviour of the planets. As he argues, 'a single glance at the stars themselves and my own notes makes the phenomenon evident'. **2** His recorded observations demonstrated planetary behaviour that was inconsistent with the established explanations for such behaviour. A new explanation was therefore required.

b) What reasons do the court scholars give for rejecting this model?

The court scholars cite a range of reasons for rejecting Galileo's model:

1 They suggest that, based on a traditional understanding and explanation of the stars as fixed objects in the sky ('there can be no stars which turn round centres other than the earth'), Galileo's model is questionable. **2** They appeal to an 'established authority' as evidence of Galileo's error. In the universe described by Aristotle the planetary motions Galileo observed would not only be impossible, they would also falsify Aristotle's argument – and since Aristotle could not, according to the court scholars, be incorrect, Galileo's observations must be wrong. **3** The reliability of Galileo's measuring instrument (the telescope) is questioned; if the instrument on which Galileo's observations are based is unreliable, then so too are his conclusions. **4** Finally, they suggest Galileo is guilty of fraud – that he had deliberately falsified his observations ('painted the Medicean stars on the lens') to support his argument.

2 When sociologists evaluate theories are they likely to draw upon the type of evidence Galileo uses or the type of evidence the court scholars use? Give reasons for your answer.

To evaluate theories sociologists usually draw on the type of evidence used by Galileo, for two main reasons.

1 Sociologists use various forms of **empirical data** in their work – from personal observation to asking people questions about their behaviour. Sociologists, in this respect, look for evidence that will confirm or falsify their hypotheses.

2 Sociologists also use **logical evaluations** of evidence. Just as Galileo argued that traditional explanations of the solar system were inconsistent with his empirical

observations, sociologists present new evidence that is not only inconsistent with traditional explanations but which, because it explains more about the nature of human behaviour than any previous model, is logically more likely to be a superior (in terms of ideas like reliability, validity and representativeness) form of explanation.

However, sociologists do sometimes use the sort of evidence used by the court scholars. For example, some functionalists believe that all the institutions of society must be functional for society because the functionalist theory of social change argues that all institutions develop for a purpose. If they have no purpose they will disappear. This is similar to the arguments put forward by the court scholars in that it is based upon theoretical reasoning rather than observation or other forms of empirical evidence. There is a danger that sociologists sometimes allow their theoretical assumptions to override evidence in the same way as the court scholars do.

Unit 2: Classical sociology and the advent of modernity

Activity 2 (pages 258–259)

1 Read Items A and B. How do they portray the relation between the individual and society?

Item A sees the relationship in functionalist terms, using the analogy of society being like a human body. 'Society' consists of individuals and groups ('classes' of people who share a common occupation) with each class of individual performing a particular function for society (such as defence or tilling the soil). Each individual, therefore, performs an important role that contributes to the overall functioning of society. In this respect the relationship between the individual and society is seen as one where the interests of society are more important than the interests of individuals. For a society to function properly every individual must perform their allotted role in life. Furthermore, those who contribute more to society deserve higher rewards, and this inequality should be accepted, even by those who get lower rewards, because it is for the good of society as a whole.

Item B suggests a similar, functional relationship between the individual and society. Each 'part' of society exists in precise relationship to all other parts in that if something should happen to one part ('If the head of the body aches') it will have an effect on another part ('will not the heart be greatly grieved and every part feel his part of the pain of it'). Like Item A, this item also suggests that social inequality (in

this case between the King and his subjects) is necessary and desirable if society is to function properly.

2 Read Item C. How does the relation between the individual and society change with the rise of modernity?

In **pre-modernity** 'society' was considered more important and significant than the individual. Society was seen as existing over and above the individual – the individual's place within society being anchored in a variety of traditions and structures. Ideas like status, rank and position were an integral part of the 'great chain of being' – the secular and divine order of things – and, as such, were seen to be of much greater importance than 'the individual'. In terms of the relationship between society and the individual, therefore, society was placed at the centre of things – its maintenance, persistence and survival were considered of primary importance.

In **modernity** the reverse is true in that the idea of the 'sovereign individual' comes to take centre stage. In other words, the individual (in terms of their needs, wants and rights, for example) is the focus of attention; everything – social order, action and change – can be traced back to the individual rather than 'society'.

3 Read Item D. How does this Enlightenment model of society differ from that presented in Items A and B?

The model of society presented in Items A and B is one in which the needs of 'society' are considered to be more important than those of the individual. The role of the individual was to 'do their duty' by performing their socially allotted roles, which enabled society to function in an orderly and little-changing way. In other words, according to Rousseau, people were 'everywhere in chains', by which he meant they were subordinated to the will and requirements of society. This situation, as the items make clear, is one founded on inequality – different classes (or ranks) of individual existed in relations of domination or subordination to one another, a situation that was itself based on the idea that such relationships were divine or 'God given'.

The Enlightenment challenged this model by changing the relationship between the individual and society. As Rousseau argues, this change involved the idea that there was a balance of rights and responsibilities between the individual and the collective (society). Originally, individuals enjoyed certain privileges (obeying no one but themselves and individual freedom of thought and action). However, free individuals could choose to give up some of this freedom in a 'social contract' whereby citizens decided to accept a system of government which helped to protect their fundamental rights. Thus, whereas in Items A and B the individual is obliged to behave as 'society' sees fit, in Item C the relationship between the two is one of equality, secured by a 'social contract' under which individual citizens live under the same conditions and enjoy the same rights. This is a fundamental change because while the former sees the

social order as 'God given', fixed and based squarely on inequality, the latter sees social order as man-made, fluid and based on individual equality. If the 'social contract' failed to respect the rights of individuals, then they could decide to change or end it, but this was not possible if social order was 'God given'.

4 Briefly comment on the painting of Sir Isaac Newton in the light of Items A to D.

The painting is an ironic comment on the kinds of ideas and changes outlined in Items A to D. Items A and B, for example, describe a world that is created and ordered by God; it is a world where science plays a peripheral or non-existent part and the individual is seen as subservient to society and the divinely created and sanctioned social order. Items C and D, however, show a changing world – one in which science and technology (personified by people like Newton) come to be increasingly significant and where challenges to the 'divine order' increase in frequency. In this type of society the individual, rather than God, is brought to the fore as the 'centre of the universe'. In terms of the picture, therefore, Blake is suggesting that in modern societies science has become a new and different form of religion – where people 'worship' technology rather than a divine being.

Activity 3 (page 263)

1 Read Items A to H. What similarities can you detect in these statements by postwar British Prime Ministers? How would Marx account for these similarities?

The major similarity between the statements is the idea that the ruling class are not in control of the state, in direct contradiction of Marx's view that in capitalist societies the state is run in the interests of the bourgeoisie. None of the items sees the government or the state as 'the executive committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie'. However, they provide different types of justification for this claim. The Labour Prime Ministers Clement Attlee and Harold Wilson in Items A and C both argue that Labour governments are able to rule in the interests of everybody, whereas Conservative governments had ruled in the narrow interests of higher classes. On the other hand, the Conservative Prime Ministers, Harold Macmillan, Margaret Thatcher and John Major, in Items B, E and F, all argue that Britain is, or is about to become, a classless society. Harold Macmillan claimed that there was no longer any conflict between classes. Margaret Thatcher denied that there were any class divisions, arguing that 'We are all working people who basically want the same things'. John Major claimed that Britain was becoming a society in which everybody had similar opportunities and class background therefore had no effect on life chances. Although Ted Heath in Item D makes no explicit reference to class, the idea of 'one nation' implies that neither class nor any other social division divided society into groups with different interests. In Item G, the Labour Prime Minister Tony

Blair also implies that there is no fundamental difference of interest between classes, arguing that the free market benefits everybody. This directly contradicts Marx's view that the free market benefits the bourgeoisie at the expense of the proletariat.

Marx would account for these similarities by arguing that the state (in the shape of governments in this example) as part of the superstructure promotes ruling class ideology. In all these statements by Prime Ministers it is implied that there is no need for the proletariat to struggle to achieve justice or equality because British society is already fair and just. To Marxists, this can be seen as a way of promoting false class consciousness in a society which is still based upon class exploitation. Ultimately, therefore, such statements help to maintain ruling class power by discouraging revolution.

From this point of view, it matters little who is in government in capitalist societies – in this instance the Labour or Conservative Party – since both see their primary role as that of protecting the interests of the bourgeoisie.

2 Look at Item I. How does this poster illustrate a similar ideology to that in Items A to H?

The poster illustrates a similar ideology in terms of the idea of 'the nation' being more important than class divisions. In this instance – a First World War recruiting poster – the ideological appeal is for everyone to put aside the things that divide them in order to unite against a common enemy. It is perhaps most similar to Ted Heath's idea of 'one nation' in Item D, but it also reflects the idea in all the items that it is possible to act in the interests of society as a whole rather than just those of a ruling class.

Activity 4 (page 266)

1 What social facts influenced Robinson Crusoe?

It is possible to identify a number of social facts that influenced Robinson Crusoe, both before and after his shipwreck. Prior to his shipwreck, for example, Crusoe was influenced by his **family background**, in terms of being born into a relatively affluent family who could afford to pay for his **education**, which led him to consider law as a future career. His family background also influenced his decision to travel in that being the third son 'and not bred to any trade' he was free to fill his head 'with early rambling thoughts' – to go 'out from England to make his fortune'. This idea, in turn, reflects the need for Crusoe to **work** in some way.

Once shipwrecked, Crusoe was influenced by his **religion** in that he was quickly able to both come to terms with his new situation and try to make the best of it. **Language** was a further influence because upon meeting Friday they were unable to communicate through speech. Crusoe's **educational background** allowed him to teach Friday aspects of his **language**, and his **cultural background** determined that their relationship should be one of master

and servant, as opposed to equals. The fact that Crusoe could not leave the island without external help was another social fact that influenced Crusoe's life, as did the fact that his eventual rescue was by the hands of others.

2 Is there an argument for combining social and individual explanations to understand Robinson Crusoe's behaviour?

Item F identifies a range of ways that **social explanations** can be used to understand Crusoe's behaviour. His family and cultural background, for example, helps to explain why his relationship with Friday was, at least initially, one of master and servant. His educational background helps to explain his resourcefulness on the island, helping him to physically survive under extreme conditions. His religious background – his faith in God – similarly helps to explain his mental resourcefulness. In this respect there is an apparently compelling case to assume that Crusoe's social background alone can explain his behaviour.

However, it is also important to consider the idea of **intentional action** – the idea that people's behaviour is influenced by the meanings they give to certain things. The meaning Crusoe gave, for example, to his shipwreck was one of making the best of the resources he had – to choose, for example, to go on living in the hope of being rescued – while simultaneously thanking God 'for my present condition'.

In other words, while social explanations of behaviour can paint a broad picture – to explain, for example, why Crusoe automatically saw himself as 'the master' in his relationship with Friday – **individualistic explanations** can help us understand the finer details of that behaviour, such as how and why he befriended Friday. In this respect, both social and individual explanations can help us understand behaviour – the former in terms of the range of choices available to someone like Crusoe and the latter in terms of the exact choices he made.

Activity 5 (page 269)

1 How do Items A, B and C illustrate Weber's belief that rationalisation is resulting in disenchantment?

If we assume that by 'disenchantment' Weber was referring to both secularisation and the progressive removal of non-rational elements from all spheres of life, the items illustrate this belief in a number of ways. Item A, for example, argues that technical reason has opened up a wide range of new choices – but has left people unable to explain why they should choose one set of goals, ends or values over another. Rationalisation has also 'dismantled a world in which larger virtues held sway' (notions of good and bad, for example) and made ideas like 'success' and 'self-expression' ends in themselves rather than means towards an end. One consequence of this is that the values that once held communities together are no longer relevant in modern society, and Weber suggested that rationalisation risked

driving out the very things that give meaning to human existence – the warmth and humanity of social life.

In Item B disenchantment is illustrated in two ways: firstly, the idea that consumerism has replaced religious activity – attendance at the shopping mall, for example, far exceeds church attendance each week. Secondly, declining religious congregations have made many church buildings obsolete. They are no longer used for religious services and are instead sold off and turned over to secular uses (such as the restaurant in the item). The buildings have lost any sense of being sacred or special.

In Item C disenchantment is revealed in terms of a change in the way people see and experience the world. Rationalisation (in the sense of imposing a logic and practicality on the world) drives away beauty, magic and joy from people's lives – replacing these things with a dull, cynical and clinical uniformity.

2 Judging from Item A, what similarities and differences are there between Weber's picture of modernity and those of Marx and Durkheim?

One similarity between the three is the sense that the social changes introduced by the development of modern societies are not necessarily 'good' (in the sense of beneficial) nor are they always experienced as producing an improvement in social life.

For example, Weber sees material prosperity as having the potential to be an 'iron cage' – an end in itself that would destroy the warmth and humanity of social life that he felt gave meaning to human existence. From a Marxist point of view, the decline of religion and its replacement with capitalist commercialism removed a source of comfort for the exploited masses trying to cope with their own oppression. For Durkheim, social changes that eroded the bonds of loyalty and love which religion supported have left people increasingly alone in an impersonal economic and social system. With an increasingly specialised division of labour, the collective conscience, which bound members of society together, has declined, leaving a situation of normlessness, or anomie, in which individuals have lost their moorings in social life.

In terms of the above, therefore, the similarities between the three writers lie in the fact that each, in their different way, realised that the rationalisation implicit in the development of modern societies was painful for individuals and destructive of social bonds.

Unit 3: The establishment of sociological theory

Activity 6 (page 273)

1 From a functionalist view, which activities in Items A to D would be seen as functional and which as dysfunctional?

Item A: Functional

Item B: Dysfunctional

Item C: Functional

Item D: Dysfunctional

2 Explain your answers in terms of functionalist theory.

Item A: This activity is functional for two main reasons.

1 The street party is an example of pattern maintenance in that this activity is related to value commitment (to the monarchy and the political/economic institutions that it represents). **2** It represents a form of social integration whereby society's values (in the shape here of a respect for and celebration of the monarchy) are internalised into the personalities of individual actors.

Item B: This behaviour is dysfunctional because it threatens the stability of the economic and political systems on which a society depends. If this type of behaviour were to succeed in its aim (the removal of a capitalist economic and political system), goal attainment would be seriously threatened since the legal and economic framework that regulates and directs the pursuit of various goals would cease to function.

Item C: This activity is functional because it represents behaviour that brings people together for a common purpose. This type of activity reinforces shared values which are required to meet the functional prerequisite of pattern maintenance. It also strengthens social bonds as large numbers of individuals celebrate their shared love of music and other activities together.

Item D: In terms of the family as an institution this behaviour is dysfunctional in the sense that if it were repeated across all families it would threaten the stability of this institution. Women, for example, might become unwilling to live in families if they could expect to be physically assaulted by their partner. In functionalist theory the interconnectedness of social institutions (such as the family, work and education) means that any disturbance in one area impacts on the stability of all parts of the social system. If the family failed to perform its functions, therefore, this would have serious consequences for other institutions such as work.

Activity 7 (pages 276–277)

1 Read Items A to E. What common themes appear in the reactions from the press, the judiciary and the politician?

The items have a number of common themes, based around the idea of violent crime, its perpetrators, extent and solution. The items generally see violent crime in terms of 'street violence' perpetrated by 'violent youth'. The

latter, in particular, are different from the 'decent citizens' who are portrayed as the main victims. Such criminal behaviour is not only increasing but evolving into new and more dangerous forms (such as 'mugging') which, in turn, creates a crisis for 'law and order'. The 'solution' generally proposed to rid society of this 'problem' is that of punitive jail sentences designed to punish offenders and act as a deterrent to potential offenders.

2 Look at Items F and G. How might they indicate a crisis in hegemony?

For neo-Marxists such as Gramsci hegemony represents the way the bourgeoisie seek to maintain their domination by propagating certain ideologies in order to win people's consent. A crisis of hegemony occurs, therefore, whenever the leadership and 'consent to govern' enjoyed by this class are threatened.

Item F provides evidence of a crisis of **political hegemony** (the right to rule the country in a particular way) in two ways. **1** In a general sense the actions of the IRA suggest a breakdown in the consent to lead enjoyed by the British bourgeoisie. **2** Bourgeois hegemony is most effective when there is an ideological acceptance of such leadership. When the state uses force to try to control the behaviour of its own citizens this can be taken to indicate a breakdown in such leadership and therefore represents a crisis in hegemony.

Item G, on the other hand, provides evidence of a crisis of **economic hegemony** – the ability of the bourgeoisie to make profits in whatever way they see fit. In this particular instance the miners' strike represented a crisis in hegemony in the sense that a large group of workers rejected bourgeois hegemony because they went on strike for more money than the government was prepared to pay them. Because coal was such an important source of energy at that time, the strike also threatened the profitability of businesses which relied upon a ready supply of energy to continue operating.

3 Why did the state respond to this crisis by focusing attention on the seemingly trivial issue of 'mugging'?

The state responded by focusing on the 'mugging crisis' because it wanted to use this as a way of distracting people's attention away from the crisis of hegemony it was experiencing (according to neo-Marxists at least). In other words, the argument here is that the state (and its various institutions) latched on to a way of re-establishing its hegemonic role by focusing people's attention on some aspect of society where it could display strong leadership, focused on a common enemy ('violent youth'), and about which there could be clear agreement amongst all classes in society. Since few, if anyone, in Britain would take the side of 'violent criminals' against 'decent citizens' by arguing that 'violent youth crime' was something to be encouraged, this was an issue that could be safely and successfully used by the bourgeois state to demonstrate its hegemony.

Activity 8 (pages 282–283)

1 Make a list of the ways in which meanings are transmitted in the situation described above.

Meanings are transmitted in the following ways:

Appearance – how people look or dress (the men were 'dark, lithe-looking').

Demeanour – how people act or behave. 'Three men' on the street 'coming towards him' may transmit a sense of danger. They 'had crossed to their side of the street with what looked like more urgency'. This change of demeanour appeared threatening because Henderson interpreted the behaviour as threatening – in his mind the only reason the men would deliberately cross the street was because they intended to rob him.

Behaviour and facial expressions – Henderson, for example, looked round 'in what he hoped was an unconcerned natural way'. He ran away after throwing his wallet in the direction of the three men.

Language – telling people what you mean (for example, yelling 'You can have it, you bastards!' after throwing his wallet at the 'muggers'). Another example is the men explaining who they were to Henderson.

Social context – the situation in which the individual finds themselves. Being on the streets late at night ('after midnight') is a social context in which crime might be considered more likely. People are therefore more sensitive to the idea they might become a victim of crime and, in consequence, more likely to interpret the behaviour of others as being threatening.

Expectations – how certain situations may be associated with particular events. When three men suddenly appear in a social context that has been defined as dangerous it creates the expectation that they are dangerous.

Reconstructions – the meaning of a situation can be understood 'after the event' when all possible/available interpretations have been considered.

2 How does this extract illustrate the view of one symbolic interactionist, W. I. Thomas, that 'if men define situations as real they are real in their consequences'?

The fact that Henderson Dores convinced himself the three men were muggers who intended to rob him and his girlfriend meant that he behaved in that situation as if it were real. He had defined the situation as a real mugging and since he believed he was about to be robbed he responded in the only way he felt he could to escape from the situation – by throwing his wallet at the 'muggers' and running away. This clearly illustrates Thomas' view since by defining the situation as a mugging Henderson responded to it as if it were real and the situation became 'real in its consequences' (if the men hadn't decided to run after Henderson, explain who they were and return his money, then Henderson would have believed he had just escaped a mugging).

Unit 4: Structure and action in sociology

Activity 9 (pages 285–286)

Interpret the ideological significance of Items A, B and C.

The ideological significance of Item A is that it offers a feminist interpretation of the art contained within the Metropolitan Museum. This is expressed by the observation that while over 95 per cent of artists exhibited in the modern arts sections are male, 85 per cent of the naked forms exhibited are female. This textual juxtaposition is designed to highlight both the patriarchal nature of the art and artists exhibited and the 'double-standard' that operates within the museum: while female artists are not considered good enough to exhibit their art they are considered good enough to be the subject of male art – in a form that makes an object of the female body.

The ideological message underpinning Item B is one that associates a willingness to enlist in the army and fight in the war with masculinity. This message operates on a number of levels: for example, it makes an appeal to male self-concepts (wars are something fought by men), it places social pressures on men to see enlisting as their 'duty', and it suggests that the war is being fought to protect 'defenceless' women and children.

The ideological significance of Item C relates to a number of ideas. **1** The idea that Britain is a great empire, as evidenced by the number of colonies it possesses. **2** It suggests this empire is united (in the willingness of colonial soldiers to fight on Britain's side). **3** The idea that the colonies are Britain's 'allies' suggests there is at least a rough equality between Britain and her colonies. **4** The use of a Black soldier in the poster suggests that racial discrimination plays no part in the war – every soldier is equal in the fight against a common enemy.

Activity 10 (page 288)

1 Read Item A. In what ways does this experiment demonstrate the documentary method?

The experiment demonstrates the documentary method in the following ways. **1** The situation was defined for the students – they were told they were talking to a human counsellor who would attempt to help them solve a personal problem – and this created certain behavioural expectations on their part. They assumed, for example, the questions they asked would be considered and answered by a trained human counsellor.

2 The responses to the students' questions, although generated randomly, were interpreted by the students in the light of their assumptions about the situation; in other words, they tried to make sense of the (random) responses by using their definition of the situation to provide evidence for an underlying pattern to the answers. They gave the situation a

rough structure even where, in reality, none actually existed. In this respect, therefore, the fact that the students expected the 'counsellor' to offer sensible and helpful advice about their problem led them to interpret the random responses as sensible and helpful – even though some of the random answers contradicted previous answers.

2 Item B is a picture of a stalker. How does this statement illustrate Garfinkel's concept of indexicality?

Indexicality refers to the way our interpretation of something (in this instance, a naked man) is coloured by the social context (and, by extension, the interpretive rules that operate in that context). In other words, the meaning of an action is not derived from intrinsic features of that action.

In Item B the behaviour in question could potentially be interpreted in different ways (as someone sunbathing, as someone getting changed, as someone who has been stripped naked by their friends 'for a laugh' and so on). However, we interpret it as 'streaking' when it fits this pre-defined category by obeying the rules governing such a classification (which may include ideas like deliberately choosing to remove one's clothes in public, running purposely to avoid being caught, and so forth). If the behaviour in question doesn't conform to the rules of what is defined as 'streaking' then such behaviour will be interpreted in a different way (according to some other category of rules).

Unit 5: Challenges to sociological theory

Activity 11 (pages 292–293)

1 How do the pictures in Item A illustrate globalisation?

Globalisation is illustrated by Item A in three main ways: **1 Cultural homogenisation** is evident in terms of companies such as McDonald's selling much the same type of product in different countries around the world (the store pictured in China is similar in design and product range to McDonald's restaurants everywhere). Similarly, Hollywood films (such as *Daywatch* and *Jurassic Park*) are available to a global audience. This suggests the development of a uniform global culture where people of different societies consume much the same kind of food, in much the same kind of way while watching the same kind of films. At the same time, however, the fact that films (and their advertising posters) are translated into national languages such as Russian and Japanese points to a continued cultural differentiation (since cultural homogenisation would suggest the vast majority of people would understand and speak English).

2 In terms of **cultural identities** Item A illustrates the development of new identities that fuse different cultural traditions. The experience, for example, of ordering and eating American fast-food in a society (China) where this type of food has only recently become available impacts

on the identities of those who consume both the food and, more significantly perhaps, the kind of lifestyle it symbolises. Similarly, by watching American films people in societies as diverse as Russia and Japan are increasingly exposed to different ideas and lifestyles that impact in some way on their cultural identities. In addition, cultural icons transcend cultures; the *Jurassic Park* logo, for example, is well-known and recognised around the globe, not just in the country (America) that originally produced it.

3 Globalisation enables organisations to develop in ways that **transcend national boundaries**. Both the media companies that produced films such as *Jurassic Park* and *Daywatch* and fast-food chains like McDonald's had their origins in American society. Their products, however, are now marketed and sold to people around the globe.

2 How do Items B and C suggest that we live in a global 'risk society'?

Beck (1992) suggested that the 'risk society' involves, in part, the idea that the survival of the planet is threatened by technological developments – or, as Giddens puts it, our social and physical environment 'is structured mainly by humanly created risks'. The idea of a 'global risk society', in this respect, refers to the balance between the benefits and drawbacks involved in certain types of behaviour – something clearly illustrated in Item B. The over-fishing of the world's seas is man-made (fuelled, according to the item, by greed and the use of hi-tech supertrawlers) and a potential disaster in terms of its effect both on marine wildlife and on the people who depend on fishing for their livelihood, or even to avoid starvation. However, the 'risk' here is the delicate relationship between the detrimental effects of commercial fishing (on fish stocks and wildlife) and the benefits it brings to developing countries (in terms of food and jobs).

Item C also illustrates the idea of 'global risk' in the sense that nuclear power brings many potential benefits (a relatively cheap, plentiful and 'clean' source of power) while at the same time generating huge risks (such as the contamination of the human and physical environment that occurred with the Chernobyl disaster).

3 Globalisation requires institutions for global government. Discuss with reference to Items B and C.

[This is a potentially wide-ranging topic and there are a number of questions you should consider in any extended discussion.]

1 There are various global economic, political and cultural trends that extend across nation-states and, to some extent, beyond the ability of single nations to control. In terms of trade, for example, companies may operate across many different countries and questions arise about how and by whom they are regulated, taxed and so on. Politically, questions arise about relationships between individual nations – how, for example, are primarily economic alliances (such as the EU, or NAFTA in North America) to

be politically regulated? In terms of cultural globalisation, questions here relate to the various ways indigenous cultures may be affected by powerful global cultures – and whether or not they need some form of protection that can only be coordinated on a global basis.

2 The speed of change in global societies makes it difficult for individual nations to respond quickly and adequately to global challenges. Political and economic decisions made in one part of the world may also have serious impacts on other, unrelated, parts of the world. The Chernobyl disaster, for example, illustrates the idea that the world is increasingly interconnected – what happens in one country under one set of laws, for example, may have important (and devastating) consequences for other countries. Similarly, as Item B demonstrates, where commercial activities take place on a global scale it requires concerted efforts by a range of governments – through the setting up of institutions that have a global scope and reach – to regulate such activities. In addition, this item also demonstrates the fact that decisions affecting commerce, the environment and so on need to be taken in the context of a wide range of possible interests.

3 The interconnected nature of much economic, political and cultural activity means that global risks may require global institutions to assess and manage such risks (balancing, for example, the need for environmental conservation against the need to ensure that people do not starve).

4 Finally, it is sometimes argued that the individual nation-state is a product of the peculiar conditions and needs of modern societies. If this is the case and we are now moving into a different type of (postmodern) society that exists under different conditions and which has different requirements it may be that different types of governmental structures are required.

If globalisation effectively breaks down the economic and cultural barriers that underpinned and surrounded the idea of a nation-state then it is possible that government itself – through the development of global institutions that represent the interests of various nation-states – has to become globalised in order to cope with new situations and demands. On the other hand, of course, it is possible to argue that individual societies with their own forms of government can still exist within the framework of a global society. They are still recognised as societies by their members and they contain a variety of cultural behaviours that are unique and valuable – both to the individual and to society.

Activity 12 (pages 296–298)

1 What does Stuart Hall in Item A mean by 'detached identities'?

Hall's argument is that in a pre-global society people's sense of identity ('who they are') was embedded in certain cultural

times, places, histories, practices and traditions. In other words, a sense of identity was secured (or centred) around a particular set of cultural ideas – such as what it meant to be ‘a man’ or ‘a woman’ in 19th-century Britain. These identities were constructed around a greater or lesser range of ideas that gave people little or no choice about how to behave (a woman in 19th-century Britain, for example, was expected to behave in a particular way, drawing on a very limited set of behavioural guidelines).

In global society identities become ‘disembedded’ in the sense that they are no longer wholly and necessarily anchored to a specific set of cultural ideas, customs, traditions and pressures associated with a specific place and time. They become, in Hall’s words, ‘free-floating’ because people are presented with a huge range of different identities from which to choose (there are, for example, a wide range of different ways to be ‘a man’ or ‘a woman’ in contemporary Britain because we are exposed to different ideas about gender behaviour drawn from numerous societies across the globe), and by exercising such choice people’s identities become detached from the particular culture in which they live.

2 What support do Items B to F provide for the view of postmodern society given by Stuart Hall in Item A and described in the preceding text?

The view of postmodern society given by Hall and described in the text is one in which people are increasingly freed from constraint – whether this be the constraints imposed by conditions of time and space (Item C, for example, suggests that the possibility of international travel is a reality for many people in postmodern society) or those imposed through customs, traditions, cultural beliefs and values.

Hall suggests, for example, that in postmodern society people are increasingly able to shop in the ‘cultural supermarket’ for ideas and identities. This is illustrated by Item E which suggests that in postmodern society people have more opportunity to construct their own identities and more options from which to choose – female body shape, for example, may become for some a matter of personal choice rather than cultural compulsion. Similarly, Item D suggests a further refinement in that where people are presented with a range of identity choices it is relatively easy to change identities, or to have several identities which are ‘put on and taken off’, depending on individual preferences and social situations. Although Item B suggests a possible drawback to identity choice (people may find it difficult to categorise themselves in ways that are consistent with both their own socialisation and the cultural beliefs of the societies in which they live), there are also clear advantages in the sense that people are relatively free both to choose how they construct their own sense of identity (‘I feel ... very unique’) and to ignore ‘cultural categories’ with little or no consequences to the individual (‘Now I will only agree to being *me*’).

Finally, a further example of ‘cultural shopping’ is evident in Item F with the idea that people not only mix-and-match personal identities – they are also able to mix different cultural forms (such as musical genres) to create fusions (or cultural hybrids) that offer something new and different, something that is greater than the sum of the individual parts and which expresses the creativity of individuals.

3 What criticism of this view of postmodern society is suggested by Item G?

Item G offers a criticism of this particular view of postmodern society in the sense that the freedom to construct identities, choose consumption patterns and select lifestyles is not open to all, for two reasons. **1** People living in poverty simply don’t have the money to buy the kinds of products that are frequently required to construct a postmodern lifestyle. **2** This suggests that ‘postmodern society’ is not as culturally detached as its proponents may suggest. The kinds of choices detailed in the previous items are not open to all since such choices are constrained by both economic factors (poverty and deprivation, for example) and cultural factors (the range of choices to which people are exposed may be severely limited). The children in Item G, for example, may not be aware of the range of ‘lifestyle choices’ supposedly available to them.