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By Harry Jivenmukta

RELIGION

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Religion is universal in that it has developed in every society, even in cases where some societies never came into contact with the outside world. There are two different aspects of religion:

- ⌘ Ones which seek out the meaning of life. These are the traditional religions including; Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism and Judaism
- ⌘ Ones which try to make life meaningful. These are the modern religions and include the scientology type of religion. There are literally thousands of these types

Religions can be very personal where the individual pursues his or her own set of goals, or they can be very large and inclusive organisations like the Catholic Church where there is a set of moral and ethical codes to live by and regular meetings and sessions of congregating together. From a sociological viewpoint it is interesting to note how religion is used:

- To keep society together
- To determine morality
- To determine ethics

Religion is sometimes so close to the State that it becomes part of the State apparatus. This is clear in the UK with the Anglican Church. In some countries, the religion is actually also the law of the land. This is seen in many Islamic countries. The influence of religion in society varies but can be said to be universal. Even in the former USSR it is believed by many that the Communist Party played a similar role to a religion, requiring citizens to follow its rules and guidelines and be loyal to it and defend it against other systems.

EXERCISE

1. In your own words define Religion.
2. What does 'morality' and 'ethics' mean?
3. What is the difference between morality and ethics?
4. How does religion help to maintain the society, community and families?
5. What is the future of religion as a socializing factor?

The UK is a multi-cultural country. This means that there are many cultures which exist side by side in this country. Culture is a word used to describe the way people live, their beliefs, and their ways. When we talk about someone's culture we refer to and include things like:

Language

Food

Music

Art

Literature

Religion

Beliefs

Family Structure

Way Of Life

You might be able to expand this list further. Can you make a list of the different countries that people you know come from, and find out about their culture?

Multi-culturalism has many implications for a nation because it means the State has to try to both maintain its own main culture and also accommodate the other cultures. There is always a difficulty when the various cultures begin to merge because some people prefer to keep their own culture apart from the others, whilst for other people the merging of cultures cannot come too soon.

Today, some people argue that the American culture is spreading across the world through the use of television, magazines, and computer software applications. They argue that soon there will only be one culture; of burgers and fries, American English and soap operas.

EXERCISE

1. Trace how the UK has become a multi-cultural nation.
2. List the advantages and disadvantages of multi-culturalism.
3. Select one culture other than your own, (not British culture), and write about how it has adapted to the UK system of living.
4. Find examples of multi-culturalism in your town. Make a list and include:
 - Religious centres
 - Foodstuffs
 - Shops and clothes

In almost all societies it is now compulsory for children to attend school. In the past the choice of attending or not attending school helped to maintain class divisions and define roles for people in society. In the 20th century the compulsory aspect of school attendance has meant that there is now much more opportunity for people of all backgrounds to advance into careers of their choice.

Education serves many purposes including:

- ⌘ It is a major factor in occupational socialization. This means that it prepares young people to understand what is required of them in the world of work and allows them to fit in with the requirements of society in this area of life.
- ⌘ It influences social class structure. As mentioned above it can be used to help the spread of opportunities for all. On the other hand it can help to keep people in their place. Some educational systems offer different teaching to boys and girls, preparing girls for domesticated lives. It was only 20 years or so ago that the UK taught boys woodwork and metalwork, whilst girls learned domestic science and childcare.
- ⌘ It informs people about their rights and responsibilities in society. This political training is usually indirect and concentrates on areas like citizenship. But, inadvertently, it also supports the status quo and encourages support of the political system in place in that particular society. Whilst many people were upset at the so-called political brain washing of soviet children in the former USSR, the Soviets were equally disappointed at American children having to sing patriotic songs in their assemblies, (and still do).
- ⌘ Education also helps young people to learn about wider subjects and has an enlightening role. Besides fulfilling the requirements of society, the educational system has to prepare people for the future in order to maintain the society in changing technological times.

EXERCISE

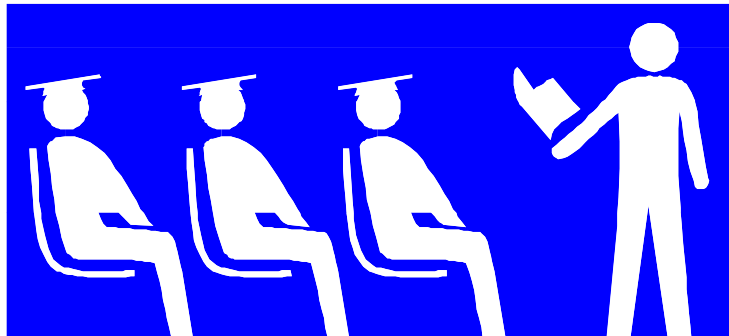
1. Is education designed mainly for maintaining the society or for wider purposes?
2. Who decides what an educational system should teach? What effect does this have on society?
3. What alternative systems of learning are there in the UK?
4. How do you think education will develop in the future? Consider things like; increase in technology, the global market, etc.

I think that education is the wrong word for what we get. It should be called propaganda, or brainwashing. You see, education is designed to make you an obedient member of society and not to be able to think for yourself. It is designed by the government to maintain the things the way they are so that the people who are in control can maintain their grip on power and the rich can keep their wealth.

For example, we are taught that the free market economy is the best way to run the affairs of the country, that Christianity is the best religion, and that the British political system is the fairest of all. I don't think that we get the real story about how other people live and work.

Take the example of history. Traditionally we were taught that the British and other Europeans went to Africa and Asia and helped the 'savages' to live better lives. Although it is true that many societies were improved by the Europeans, the reason was mainly because the Europeans needed better transport and communications to exploit these nations more effectively. Today, the type of history taught is different and more fair. I wonder, are we now getting a better picture of what really happened in history or just a more acceptable lie?

I think education would be better taught if it were not centrally controlled and communities could make up their own mind what they wanted to teach their children. Some areas in the UK have different needs and types of employment. I don't see why there should be a uniform educational system.



EXERCISE

1. Define 'propaganda'.
2. Does education inform and teach without bias, or is it inevitable that all educational systems must be one-sided?
3. If you could design the education you receive how would you change it? Remember, you are looking from a sociological point of view.
4. Compare the education timetables from 20 years ago with the ones today. How have they changed? What does this tell you?

Thomas Malthus was one of the first to recognise the enormous significance to human welfare of population increase; there were no foreseeable limits to growth of population and such growth, he stressed, could only upset the traditional balance:

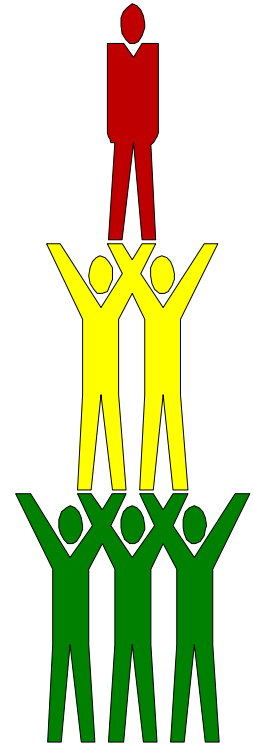
- ⌘ Between population, which Malthus described as growing at a geometrical rate and
- ⌘ Food supply, which he declared could grow only at an arithmetical rate

Not all sociologists took the pessimistic view of the matter that Malthus did but most were concerned at the impact of the increase in population on economy, government, and society.

Few aspects of human societies are as important as the size, make up, and rate of change of their populations. Such factors affect economic prosperity, health, education, family structure, crime patterns, language, culture; in fact virtually every aspect of human society is touched upon by population trends.

Population growth and increasing population density represent, in particular, demographic forms of social change. Population growth may lead to:

- ⌘ Geographical expansion of a society through military conflicts
- ⌘ The intermingling of cultures
- ⌘ Stimulate technological innovations to cope with the growing demands, which may increase division of labour
- ⌘ Economic stagnation and increasing poverty, as may be witnessed in several Third World countries



EXERCISE

1. Trace the increase in the world population since 1900. Consider continents separately.
2. Make a list of the advantages to society of a large population.
3. What are the main disadvantages of a rapid population increase?
4. How does population decrease affect society? Consider the dropping birth rates in many European nations.

We all make statements such as “All people are equal” without thinking too deeply about the justification for the claims. We should try to understand what equality means and in what terms are people equal or unequal. Consider the types of equality listed below as examples of the different types of equality:

Racial equality - the struggle for equal treatment for people of all creeds, cultures, colours.

Reverse discrimination - Is it acceptable to favour blacks for jobs and enrolment in universities and colleges because they had been discriminated against in the past and were generally so much worse off than whites? Or is this, too, a form of racial discrimination and unacceptable for that reason?

Sexual equality - Does equality here mean ending as far as possible all differences in the sex roles, or could we have equal status for different roles?

Some women think that matters like abortion and sexuality, (homosexuality, lesbianism, transsexuality), also matter in equality debates. Others believe that especially with abortion, the unborn child has rights and should be able to expect equal treatment to life.

Equality of access - some people who have disabilities feel they should have equal access to all buildings, and should suffer no discrimination when applying for jobs etc.

The inequality in wealth between the affluent nations (and their citizens) and those living in countries subject to famine. What are the obligations of those who have plenty when others are starving?

People tend to talk about equality in a very general sense without looking at what equality means. There are usually also implications for others in demanding equality for oneself. Abortion is a good example of this. Some women see that an essential requirement for equality with men is having the right to choose an abortion. But others argue that the unborn child has an equal right to life as anyone else.

EXERCISE

1. Is it possible to make general definitions of terms like equality and inequality?
2. Does equality in one area of life often mean creating inequality elsewhere?
3. Does equality really exist in anything? Should we be talking rather of the equality of opportunity, (giving people an equal chance but realising that at the end of this some will necessarily not be equal)?

A social class is a group of people within a society who possess the same socioeconomic status.

The upper class in modern western societies is distinguished above all by the possession of largely inherited wealth. In the United States, more than 30 percent of all wealth is concentrated in the hands of the top 1 percent of property owners. The percentage in many Western nations is similar.

The middle class may be said to include the middle and upper levels of clerical workers, people engaged in technical and professional occupations, supervisors and managers, and self-employed workers including shopkeepers, business people, and farmers. At the top the middle class merges into the upper class, while at the bottom, where routine and poorly paid jobs in sales, distribution, and transport are concerned, it merges into the working class.

The working class traditionally consisted of manual workers. Given the vast expansion of the service sector in the world's most advanced economies, it is necessary to broaden this definition to include in the working class those persons who hold:

- ⌘ low-paid jobs
- ⌘ low-skilled jobs
- ⌘ often temporary or fixed contract work

There are considerable differences within the working class, however, and a useful distinction exists between skilled, semiskilled, and unskilled workers that broadly corresponds with differences in income level. What characterizes the working class as a whole is lack of property and dependence on wages. Associated with this condition are relatively low living standards, restricted access to higher education, and exclusion, to a large extent, from the spheres of important decision making.

It seems clear that rising living standards in Western industrial societies has resulted in significant changes in the class system. A general reduction of class differences has resulted from higher standards of living, greater social mobility, and a limited redistribution of wealth and income.

EXERCISE

1. Write your own short definitions of what you understand the Upper, Middle, and Working Classes to mean.
2. What effect has modern working practices had on these traditional definitions?
3. Is anyone in the UK really working class any more? Does working class mean more than simply the job that someone does?
4. Is the UK a classless society, as some politicians claim it is?

CLASS - THE MARXIST VIEW



According to Marx, what distinguishes one type of society from another is its mode of production, (the way things are produced and the relationship between the owners of the means of production and the workers). Each mode of production results in a particular class system in which one class controls and directs the process of production while another class or classes are the producers and the providers of services to the dominant class.

The relations between the classes are always one of conflict since they are in disagreement over the ownership of what is produced. Sometimes a new class challenges the dominance of the existing rulers of society.

The dominant class controls not only material production but also:

- ⌘ the production of ideas
- ⌘ cultural style
- ⌘ a dominant political doctrine, and a particular type of political system

Lower classes grow in strength and influence over time and as the way things are produced change, develop their own political theory and cultural values in opposition to the ruling class.

Marx pointed to examples in history of:

- ⌘ Master and slave
- ⌘ Lord and serf
- ⌘ Bourgeoisie and proletariat

It is always the case that eventually the relationship changes between these classes, and the ones who were once dominated become the rulers themselves.

EXERCISE

1. Summarise Marx's view of the class system.
2. Why is it important to know about Marx's theories?
3. Do you agree that the relationship between classes is always based on economic factors? Why?
4. Have Marx's theories ever been proved as being accurate? Explain your answer.

The State is a territorial association that may range in size from America to Luxembourg, in population from China to Tonga, and that claims supremacy over all other associations within its boundaries. In a State:

Membership is compulsory for its citizens

It claims a monopoly of the use of armed force within its borders

Its officers, who are the government of the state, claim the right to act in the name of the land and its people

Citizenship is a relationship between an individual and the State in which an individual owes allegiance and in turn is entitled to its protection. Citizenship implies the status of freedom with accompanying responsibilities. Citizens have certain rights, duties, and responsibilities that are denied or only partially extended to aliens and other non citizens residing in a country. In general, full political rights, including the right to vote and to hold public office, are dependent upon citizenship.

Citizenship is a privileged form of nationality. There are various relations between an individual and a state that might not necessarily confer political rights but do imply other privileges, particularly protection abroad. It is the term used in international law to denote all persons whom a state is entitled to protect.



EXERCISE

1. Explain what The State is and list its main functions.
2. What is citizenship?
3. Compare how the benefits of citizenship vary in different types of political state, (e.g. between liberal democracies and one party states.)
4. What is the difference between citizenship and nationality?

Asking someone what sort of work he or she does tells us more about the person than simply the job that they do. It tells us about or suggests:

The level of education the person has

An idea of that person's income

The type of lifestyle the person has

Work involves more than the use of tools and techniques. Nationally, the type of the work processes which dominate help determine the character of a civilization, and, in turn, a society's economic, political, and cultural characteristics shape the form and nature of the work process as well as the role and status of the worker within the society.

Work is usually a means to an end, allowing people to earn money and then spend it on the things they want. For some people their work becomes their life. Work can be categorised in several ways:

Legal work, paying taxes and insurance contributions

Illegal work, or the 'Black Market'

Unpaid work, housework (mainly for women), or voluntary work (done for reasons other than money)

The development of automated work devices and processes and the introduction of the computer into the service trades, especially in offices, has led people to speak of a "post industrial society". This vision has not happened, however, with the spread of industrial production to developing nations. New demands have been placed on educational systems in the developing nations as they attempt to train their workers for industrial production. Similarly, new demands have been placed on the educational systems of the developed nations, as the old assembly-line routine of specialized work has been taken over by "smart" machines.

EXERCISE

1. How much does the job someone does tell us about other aspects of their life?
2. Give examples where work does not tell us much about the person.
3. How does society decide which types of work are more valuable than others?
4. How should society view unpaid work? Does it have equal value with paid work?

Industrialization shows two faces of modernity:

- ⌘ One is dynamic, forward-looking, progressive, promising unprecedented abundance, freedom, and fulfilment.
- ⌘ The other shows the dark side of modernity, the new problems that modernity brings in its wake by virtue of the very scale and novelty of its achievements. Social progress is matched by social pathology.

The historic achievement of becoming able to feed a large population brings with it crowding, pollution, and environmental destruction. Quiet, privacy, and space become scarce and increasingly treasured commodities. Massed together in cities, seeking rest and recreation, the populations of industrial societies force open the whole world to tourism. Soon every rural haven, every sunswept coast, is turned into an administered holiday camp, each a uniform replica of the rest. The industrial principle of mass production and distribution can readily be turned from the production of goods to that of services, including those of leisure and entertainment.

Urban-industrial life offers unprecedented opportunities for individual mobility and personal freedom. It also promises the attainment of dazzling prizes, in wealth and honours, for those with the enterprise and talent to reach for them. The other side of the coin is the loneliness of the city dweller and the desolation of failure for those many who cannot win any of the prizes. As Durkheim analysed it, the individual experiences "the malady of infinite aspirations." The decline of religion and community removes the traditional restraints on appetite, allowing it to grow morbidly and without limit. At the same time the competitive modern order that stimulates these unreal expectations provides insufficient and unequal means for their realization. The result is an increase in suicide, crime, and mental disorder.

EXERCISE

1. How does increased mobility affect the relationship between individuals and the State?
2. How does increasing economic independence affect the individual's relationship with society?
3. Does the desire for wealth have any negative effects on society? Explain further.
4. Compare 'a day in the life of' a person living in a highly industrialized society with someone who lives in a rural area.

Modernization and industrialisation has put a number of new political and cultural problems on the agenda:

- ⌘ The decline of local communities, and the great growth in the scale of all social institutions and especially the acceleration of political centralization, has put a strain on civic loyalties and the willingness of people to participate in political life.
- ⌘ As mass political parties come to monopolize civic life, individual citizens retreat increasingly into private life. Political apathy and low turnouts at elections become matters of serious concern.
- ⌘ A similar concern centres on the spread of mass communications, which in the 20th century has come to dominate the cultural life of modern societies. The uniformity and conformity bred by the press, radio, and television threaten the pluralism and diversity on which liberal society prides itself.
- ⌘ Together, political and cultural uniformity are interpreted as evidence of the creation of a "mass society." Individuals lacking strong intermediate institutions with which to identify become atomized and in their anonymity and powerlessness might look to the protection of strong men and strong governments.
- ⌘ The small nuclear family offers, to a greater extent than ever before, the opportunity for intense privacy and emotional fulfilment. But the very intensity of these relationships seemed to put an intolerable burden on it.

EXERCISE

1. Write a list of the advantages of industrialization and modernization.
2. What are the disadvantages?
3. How does industrialization affect the relationship between:
 - Nations
 - Rich and poor areas within a nation
 - Small rural areas which are unlikely to see too much industrialization?

Many countries are characterized by a long-standing system of unequal distribution of wealth, a system likely to continue and in many people's opinion increase in the future. Increasingly, a global market place for production means that the levels of unemployment can increase more rapidly and unexpectedly. For example, a recent financial crisis in South Korea caused great discomfort in some parts of the UK which were hoping to attract Korean companies to their area.

Unemployment can cause many problems in a community, especially if the community is in a high unemployment area. These include:

- ⌘ Low self esteem
- ⌘ Poverty
- ⌘ Lack of confidence and ambition
- ⌘ Communicating the idea of unemployment and low expectation to children and dependants
- ⌘ Distancing people from some activities of society because unemployed people cannot afford to take part

The nature of work patterns are also changing. Only twenty or so years ago the idea of leaving school or college and having a job for life in one organisation was commonplace. Today, it is widely accepted that people may spend as little as two or three years in one job before moving on. Associated with this state of affairs is the understanding that people will need to re-skill throughout their life, perhaps returning to college or re-training every few years. This is especially visible in high technology work areas.

The uncertainty which arises with such work patterns affects people in many ways including; preventing good planning for the future, varying levels of income between jobs, or reduction or increase in income, having to move areas to find work, etc.

EXERCISE

1. How have work patterns changed in industrialized nations in the last 30 years?
2. What effect does unemployment have on:
 - The family
 - The wealth of the nation
 - The feeling of belonging that the individual has with society?
3. How does the prospect of the uncertainty of employment affect people individually, and in relation to other people and society?

POVERTY

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Poverty is the state of one who lacks a usual or socially acceptable amount of money or material possessions. Poverty exists when people lack the means to satisfy their basic needs. The identification of poor people first requires a determination of what constitutes basic needs. These may be defined as narrowly as "those necessary for survival" or as broadly as "those reflecting the standard of living in the community." The first criterion would cover only those people near the borderline of starvation or death from exposure; the second would extend to people whose nutrition, housing, and clothing, though adequate to preserve life, do not measure up to those of the population as a whole.

The problem of definition is further complicated by the non economic dimension that the word poverty has acquired. Poverty has been associated with:

- ⌘ Poor health
- ⌘ Low levels of education or skills
- ⌘ An inability or an unwillingness to work
- ⌘ High rates of disruptive or disorderly behaviour

While these attributes have often been found to exist with poverty, their inclusion in a definition of poverty would tend to obscure the relation between them and the inability to provide for one's basic needs. Whatever definition one uses, people usually assume that the effects of poverty are harmful to both individuals and society.



Most people would not see this image as a fair illustration of poverty in an industrialized country but might agree it is a good image for poverty in the Third World

EXERCISE

1. What is poverty?
2. Define what poverty means to someone living in a third world country.
3. How does poverty in a third world country differ from poverty in a highly industrialized country?
4. Is it possible that poverty can ever be eradicated? Why?
5. How does the definition of poverty change as nations become richer?

TYPES OF DATA COLLECTION - QUESTIONNAIRES

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Data collection is effected in many different ways, from simple observation to sophisticated measurement through special instruments. Some of the basic problems of data collection concern such matters as the most efficient use of terminology, the definitions of units to be measured, and the classifications to be used. In general it is necessary to consider the nature of a specific problem in order to choose the most appropriate unit.

There are occasional obstacles to direct observation. In such cases indirect indicators may provide crude but useful substitutes. For example, if people were reluctant to indicate which magazines they read, the indirect approach could be to monitor sales of magazines in local newsagents.

Questionnaires are convenient for obtaining information from large numbers of respondents but involve many methodological problems:

- ⌘ Wording of questions must be intelligible to uneducated and uninterested people
- ⌘ Wordings must have standard meanings to people of varying backgrounds
- ⌘ The questionnaire must avoid topics that arouse resistance and refusal to complete the questionnaire
- ⌘ The questionnaire must avoid being too complex or difficult so that returns are insufficient or constitute a biased sample

Since it is known that slight alterations in the wording of questionnaire items may produce considerable variations in the pattern of responses, the precise wording becomes a matter of some art as well as science.

It is vital for sociologists to make sure that any research methods they use are scientific so that the results obtained have a value.

EXERCISE

1. Why is data collection important for sociological study?
2. How does questionnaire design affect the type and quality of information gathered?
3. Design your own questionnaire. Pick a topic which might be used in sociological study. Make a list of the main problems you faced.
4. How valuable is information? Can't we simply estimate or intelligently guess what people are thinking?

TYPES OF DATA COLLECTION - INTERVIEWS

In interviews it is necessary to control such variables as:

- ⌘ The appearance, manner and approach of the interviewer
- ⌘ The specific manner in which questions are asked
- ⌘ Ways of avoiding interviewer influence on the responses
- ⌘ The tendency of some respondents to refuse to answer questions or to discontinue the interview

To meet the problems of resistance on sensitive subjects and lack of communication about some feelings, various indirect or projective devices may be employed so that a respondent in answering one question provides information he or she may not realize he or she is giving about other questions.

Scaling may also be provided by statements to which a respondent is asked whether he or she:

- ⌘ "strongly approves"
- ⌘ "approves"
- ⌘ is "undecided"
- ⌘ "disapproves"



EXERCISE

1. How important is the attitude of the interviewer in obtaining relevant information?
2. Why do some people deliberately lie or give false information in interviews even if it does not matter if they told the truth?
3. How useful are interviews in obtaining information?
4. Is interviewing a more or less scientific method of collecting information than questionnaires?

Sociologists usually give emphasis to public opinion as a product of social interaction and communication. According to most sociological views, there can be no public opinion without communication among members of the public who are interested in a given issue.

- ⌘ A large number of persons may hold quite similar views, but these will not become a public opinion as long as each person remains ignorant of the opinions of the others.
- ⌘ Communication may take place by means of the mass media of the press, radio, and television or through face-to-face discussions. Either way, people learn how others think about a given issue and may take the opinions of others into account in making up their own minds.

There may be many different public opinions existing on a given issue at the same time. One body of opinion may be dominant or may be reflected in governmental policy, but this does not mean that other organized bodies of opinion do not exist. The sociological approach also sees the public opinion phenomenon as extending to areas that are of little or no concern to government. Fads and fashions are appropriate subject matter for public opinion, as are public attitudes toward movie stars or corporations.

Four factors are involved in public opinion:

- ⌘ There must be an issue
- ⌘ There must be a significant number of individuals who express opinions on the issue
- ⌘ There must be some kind of a consensus among at least some of these opinions
- ⌘ This consensus must directly or indirectly exert influence

EXERCISE

1. Write your own definition of what public opinion means.
2. Is public opinion an important factor in the life of a community or society? Why?
3. How is public opinion formed? Who decides which issues are important?
4. Sometimes the government of the day deliberately decides against public opinion. An example of this is the overwhelming desire of the British public to see the return of the death penalty for some crimes. Does this mean that the public opinion is wrong, or that the government is out of step?
5. Can public opinion be wrong?

PROJECT WORK - SOME GUIDANCE NOTES

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Sociology examinations usually require students to do some type of project work or assignment. Below is a guide for students.

AIMS

Explain the topic you have chosen and what you aim to investigate. Say what you hope to find out about. Remember, do not state what you expect to find. Sociology, like many other subjects, is about finding out and then drawing conclusions, not deciding what you want to find and then finding it.

METHODOLOGY

You will be expected to make use of many methods in your investigations possibly including:

- questionnaires
- interviews
- surveys
- direct observation
- indirect observation
- facts and figures from official sources

PRESENTATION

The findings should be presented in a logical format:

- contents
- introduction
- clear division of chapters or sections
- good use of illustrations and graphs
- a conclusion
- bibliography, if relevant

EVALUATION

Your conclusions should:

- be arrived at logically
- clearly expressed
- based on facts and scientific investigation