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UPSC Mains 2025 Sociology Paper 1

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<https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains/sociology/gs-1/2025/>

Q1(a) · 10 marks

What is common sense? How are common knowledge and sociology related to each other? Explain.

Sociology GS 1 · 2025 · Sociology

Revision summary

Common sense is everyday, untested knowledge that naturalises custom and blame.

Sociology is related to it because it studies the same lifeworld of meanings.

It differs by using systematic concepts, comparison and evidence.

Durkheim on suicide and Mills's sociological imagination show private acts as public patterns.

Indian illustrations such as dowry as custom versus patriarchy and property make the contrast concrete.

The task is interrogation of common knowledge, not contempt for ordinary people.

Introduction

Common sense is the stock of everyday beliefs that people treat as obvious without asking how those beliefs were produced, or whose interest they serve. Sociology is the systematic study of social relationships, using concepts, comparison and evidence rather than proverb. Auguste Comte named the discipline as a science of society, and **Emile Durkheim** insisted that social facts must be treated as things, not as household wisdom. The two kinds of knowledge are related, but they are not the same.

Body

Common sense as unexamined knowledge

Common knowledge is practical, local and morally loaded. It tells a person how to greet an elder, whom to marry, and why poverty is "laziness" or "fate". Alfred Schutz called this the taken-for-granted lifeworld: we act first and theorise later. Peter Berger argued that sociology begins by making that lifeworld strange. C. Wright Mills's sociological imagination asks how a private trouble is also a public issue. Common sense rarely makes that move. It naturalises caste endogamy, women's unpaid care, or the idea that a government job is the only respectable work.

How sociology is related, and how it differs

Sociology does not float above ordinary life. It starts from common knowledge, because that is where meanings live. Max Weber's interpretative method takes actors' reasons seriously. What sociology adds is method. It compares cases, names structures, and allows evidence to embarrass a proverb. Durkheim's study of suicide showed that a highly personal act varies with religion, family and crisis, which no folk saying about "weak character" can explain. Karl Marx treated "hard work brings success" as ideology when property and class set the odds. Robert Merton distinguished manifest functions that people announce from latent functions they do not see.

In India, common sense may say that dowry is custom. A sociological account follows property, hypergamy and the marriage market, as Uma Chakravarti does with Brahmanical patriarchy. Common knowledge is the raw material; sociology is its disciplined interrogation.

Flow diagram

Common sense -> Taken-for-granted lifeworld
Sociology -> Concepts comparison evidence
Common sense -> Sociology
Sociology -> Questions the obvious
Questions the obvious -> Structure and public issues

Conclusion

Common sense and sociology share the same social world, but only sociology treats that world as a problem to be explained. The examiner wants the distinction of method, not a sneer at ordinary people. Good sociology respects everyday meaning and then tests it against structure and evidence.

Open WRAP page — <https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/sociology-gs-1/2025/what-is-common-sense-how-are-common-knowledge-and-sociology-related-to-each-other-explain/>

Q1(b) · 10 marks

What is the relationship (similarities and differences) between sociology and history in terms of their area of study and methodology? Discuss.

Sociology GS 1 · 2025 · Sociology as Science

Revision summary

Sociology and history both study power, class, belief and the state in time.

Marx and **Weber** already worked historically inside social theory.

History typically takes unique events and archival narrative.

Sociology typically takes recurrent relations and comparative or survey methods.

Windelband's idiographic-nomothetic contrast still organises the syllabus point.

Historical sociology shows the overlap without erasing the division of labour.

Introduction

Sociology and history both study human beings in society, and both refuse to treat the present as a natural fact. **Karl Marx** made history the method of social theory when he tracked modes of production. **Max Weber** wrote historical sociology of religion, bureaucracy and the city. The resemblance is real. The difference lies in what each discipline treats as its typical object and in the methods it trusts.

Body

Similarities of area

Both ask how power, belief, class and the state have been made. A caste census, a famine, or the making of a middle class is at once a historical episode and a sociological structure. Marc Bloch's history of feudal society and **Weber's** The Protestant Ethic sit on the same shelf. C. Wright Mills said that sociology without history is empty, and history without sociology is blind. The Annales school and later historical sociologists such as Barrington Moore and Theda Skocpol used archives to explain revolutions and agrarian class.

Differences of area and method

- **History classically takes the unique event:** a reign, a war, a statute, a particular famine year. Wilhelm Windelband called this the idiographic interest. Sociology classically seeks types and regularities: bureaucracy, anomie, patriarchy, the informal sector. That is the nomothetic interest. The historian's area is often a time and a place with proper names. The sociologist's area is a set of relations that may recur in other times and places.

Method follows that split, though practice overlaps. History leans on archives, chronicles and source criticism, then narrates sequence. Sociology uses comparison, survey, ethnography and explicit theory. **Durkheim** wanted social facts measured like things. **Weber** combined both: historical cases become ideal types, neither a full chronicle nor a law of physics. In India, the same peasant movement can be a narrative of 1857 or a type of agrarian mobilisation, as A. R. Desai and later subaltern historians differently did. Historical sociology blurs the line; the examination distinction still holds: situated sequence versus structured comparison.

Flow diagram

Society in time -> History
Society in time -> Sociology
History -> Unique event archive narrative
Sociology -> Types comparison theory
Weber historical sociology -> History
Weber historical sociology -> Sociology

Conclusion

The two disciplines meet in the study of social life over time. They part in typical object and typical method: the unique, sourced event versus the comparable pattern. Weber's historical sociology is the best reminder that the border is a division of labour, not a wall.

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Q1(c) · 10 marks

What is a variable in social research? What are their different types? Elaborate.

Sociology GS 1 · 2025 · Works and Economic Life

Revision summary

A variable is a property with more than one value across cases.

Independent, dependent, intervening and control names mark their role in a design.

Stevens's nominal, ordinal, interval and ratio levels mark how they are measured.

Qualitative categories differ from quantitative counts and scales.

A worked example is women's education, fertility, age at marriage and wealth as control.

Indian large surveys such as NFHS use this same grammar.

Introduction

A variable is a property that can take more than one value across persons, groups or times. Age, caste category, years of schooling, income, religiosity and vote choice are variables; a proper name is not. In social research the point of naming variables is to state a relationship that can be observed, compared and, where appropriate, measured. Without that step, a hypothesis remains a slogan.

Body

Role in the research design

The **independent variable** is the presumed condition or cause that the researcher treats as input. The **dependent variable** is the outcome to be explained. An **intervening** or mediating variable sits on the path between them. A **control** or extraneous variable is held constant, statistically or by design, so that a spurious link is not mistaken for a cause. Paul Lazarsfeld's elaboration model taught sociologists to introduce a third variable and see whether the original association survives.

Take literacy and fertility. Education of women may be independent; number of children dependent. Age at marriage and knowledge of contraception may intervene. Rural or urban residence, caste and household wealth are controls. If the education-fertility link vanishes after wealth is controlled, the first story was incomplete.

Types by measurement and nature

Variables are also typed by how they are scaled. S. S. Stevens's levels remain the classroom kit: **nominal** (religion, gender as categories), **ordinal** (class self-placement, Likert agreement), **interval** and **ratio** (income, years of schooling, age). Qualitative or categorical variables sort cases; quantitative variables number them. Discrete counts (number of rooms) differ from continuous measures (income). Dummy variables turn a category into 0/1 for regression.

In Indian survey practice, NFHS and NSS/PLFS live on this vocabulary. A researcher who confuses a control with a dependent variable, or treats caste as a ratio scale, has not yet begun valid analysis. Variables are the grammar of hypothesis, sampling and table-making.

Flow diagram

Independent -> Intervening

Intervening -> Dependent

Control -> Dependent

Independent -> Dependent

Conclusion

A variable is a varying social property placed in a design as cause, effect, path or control, and scaled as category or number. The examiner wants types with a worked relation, not a dictionary list. Clear variables make reliability and hypothesis testing possible.

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Q1(d) · 10 marks

Can Merton's reference group theory be relevant in understanding 'identity making' in digital world? Explain.

Sociology GS 1 · 2025 · Sociological Thinkers: Karl Marx

Revision summary

Merton distinguishes membership groups from non-membership reference groups used as standards.

Anticipatory socialisation is rehearsal for a group one hopes to join.

Relative deprivation is discontent from comparison, not from absolute want.

Digital feeds supply global, curated others for identity performance.

Indian caste and coaching publics online show membership and aspiration at once.

The theory stays relevant because platforms multiply comparative audiences.

Introduction

- **Robert K. Merton's reference group theory asks a simple question:** with whom do people compare themselves when they judge who they are and what they deserve? The group need not be one they belong to. In a digital world the comparative other is often a feed of strangers, influencers and curated peers. Identity making online is therefore a Mertonian process of selection, anticipation and relative deprivation, not only a story about gadgets.

Body

Merton's kit

- **A membership group is one the person actually belongs to:** a college, a caste association, a workplace. **A non-membership reference group is one used as a standard anyway: the civil-service batch one hopes to join, a global lifestyle class seen on Instagram.** **Anticipatory socialisation** is the rehearsal of that group's tastes and morals before entry, which Merton linked to mobility. **Relative deprivation**, developed with the American soldier studies and later with W. G. Runciman, is discontent produced by comparison, not by absolute lack. Positive reference groups attract; negative ones are the "not us" against which identity is drawn. George Herbert Mead's significant others and Erving Goffman's presentation of self sit beside Merton: identity is always audience-facing.

Digital identity making

Platforms multiply audiences and collapse them. A student in a small town can take a Korean pop fandom, a Delhi coaching-centre aesthetic, or a Silicon Valley founder as a non-membership reference group. Filters, follower counts and "stories" are props for anticipatory socialisation into a desired class or gender performance. Relative deprivation becomes chronic when the comparison set is global and edited. Caste and religious WhatsApp groups work as membership references that police honour, marriage and rumour. Hashtag publics can be negative reference groups for those who define themselves against "woke" or against "tradition".

- **Merton already warned that the wrong reference group can produce anomie:** goals are copied without the legitimate means. Digital identity making shows that pattern at speed. The theory remains relevant because it names the comparative mechanism; the platforms only enlarge the menu of others.

Flow diagram

Self -> Membership group
Self -> Non-membership reference
Non-membership reference -> Anticipatory socialisation
Non-membership reference -> Relative deprivation
Digital feed -> Non-membership reference

Conclusion

Merton's reference groups, anticipatory socialisation and relative deprivation travel well into the digital world. Identity online is made by choosing audiences and measuring the self against them. The screen did not abolish the social psychology of comparison; it intensified it.

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Q1(e) · 10 marks

Is the social stratification theory gender-blind? Elucidate.

Sociology GS 1 · 2025 · Stratification and Mobility: Concepts

Revision summary

Marx, Weber and Davis-Moore mapped class, status, power and function, usually with a male default.

Gender-blindness means treating the household as a unit and unpaid care as non-economic.

Hartmann, Walby, Oakley and Acker made patriarchy a structure of stratification.

Crenshaw's intersectionality warns against adding gender as an afterthought.

Indian work on Brahmanical patriarchy and Dalit feminism shows caste and gender as one field.

The elucidation is critical but not a dismissal of class analysis.

Introduction

- **Social stratification theory explains structured inequality:** who gets resources, honour and power, and how that pattern is reproduced. **Karl Marx** organised the map around class and property. **Max Weber** added status and party. Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore asked what functions inequality serves. For a long time this canon treated the household as a unit and the worker as male. Feminist sociology calls that gender-blindness, and the charge is largely just.

Body

Where the classical theories look away

Marx's classes are owners and labourers. Women's unpaid domestic labour, reproduction and the wage gap inside the working class are not central to Capital. **Weber's** status groups can include honour and lifestyle, which could have opened a door to gender, but his political sociology still writes citizens and officials in a masculine default. Davis and Moore speak of functionally important positions as if recruitment were sex-neutral. Even Pierre Bourdieu's later capital theory, which is richer on taste and embodiment, was criticised for underplaying gender until feminist readers pushed habitus toward the patriarchal household.

- **Heidi Hartmann described Marxism and feminism as an unhappy marriage:** class analysis needs a theory of patriarchy, and gender analysis needs a theory of capitalism. Sylvia Walby listed structures of patriarchy, including paid work, household production, the state and culture. Ann Oakley and later Joan Acker showed that "job" and "organisation" are already gendered. Kimberlé Crenshaw's intersectionality, though born in legal studies, matters for sociology: caste, class and gender do not add as separate columns.

Indian elucidation

In India a class-only map misses how endogamy, dowry and honour reproduce hierarchy. Uma Chakravarti's Brahmanical patriarchy and Sharmila Rege's Dalit feminist standpoint argue that stratification is sexed at the foundation. The canon is not wholly blind: Weberian status helps. As a tradition, though, it explained public class and forgot private gender.

Flow diagram

Stratification canon -> Class Marx
Stratification canon -> Status and party Weber
Stratification canon -> Function Davis-Moore
Stratification canon -> Gender often missing
Feminist theory -> Gender often missing
Caste-gender India -> Gender often missing

Conclusion

Classical stratification theory is gender-blind when it takes the male public actor as the unit and treats the family as a black box. Feminist and Indian caste-gender work show that sex and kinship are structures of inequality, not side topics. A full account of stratification has to hold class, status, caste and gender together.

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Q2(a) · 20 marks

What is positivism? Critically analyze the major arguments against it

Sociology GS 1 · 2025 · Sociology as Science

Revision summary

Positivism treats sociology as a science of observable regularities, after Comte and Durkheim.

Its strength is accountability to data, comparison and replication.

Weberian understanding, phenomenology and ethnomethodology deny that meanings are mere residuals.

Critical theory and feminist standpoint theories deny the neutrality of the observer.

Giddens's double hermeneutic states that people already interpret the world sociologists study.

Indian field studies show why census categories cannot replace meaning, even when counts remain essential.

Introduction

Positivism in sociology is the claim that society can be known by the methods and spirit of the natural sciences: observation, comparison, measurement, and the search for laws or stable regularities. Auguste Comte placed sociology at the summit of the sciences. Emile Durkheim told students to treat social facts as things and to explain them by other social facts, as in the statistical study of suicide. The project professionalised the discipline. It also attracted a century of argument about meaning, values and power.

Body

What positivism asserted

In its strong form, positivism holds that only observable, preferably quantifiable, statements count as knowledge; that the observer can stand outside the object; and that explanation is causal and general. John Stuart Mill's canons of experiment, later survey statistics, and operational definitions of attitudes all belong to this family. In research practice it became questionnaire items, scales, significance tests and the hope of replication. Karl Popper's falsification is sometimes folded into a looser "scientific" culture, though Popper himself attacked naive verification. The merit was real: sociology stopped being sermon and started being accountable to data.

Major arguments against it

Max Weber's Verstehen was the first great internal dissent. Social action is meaningful; a rate without a motive is incomplete. Values shape what we choose to study, even if we then proceed with disciplined honesty. Alfred Schutz and phenomenological sociology argued that the "things" Durkheim counted are already interpreted by actors. Harold Garfinkel's ethnomethodology showed that survey categories rest on everyday methods that positivism does not inspect. The Frankfurt School, especially Adorno and later Habermas, charged that positivism is not neutral: it can become an instrument of administration, counting in order to manage. Thomas Kuhn's paradigms weakened the picture of a single accumulating science. Feminist standpoint theorists such as Dorothy Smith and Sandra Harding argued that a view from nowhere usually hides a view from male, white, professional power. Anthony Giddens's

double hermeneutic states the decisive logical point: sociologists interpret a world that is already interpreting itself, unlike atoms.

In India, M. N. Srinivas's field view of caste and village could not have been produced by census columns alone, even though the census is indispensable. Positivist tools remain necessary for poverty counts and election studies. The critique is that they are not sufficient, and that they can reify official categories such as "household head" or "labour force" which already encode gender and class.

Flow diagram

Positivism -> Comte Durkheim measurement
Positivism -> Critiques
Critiques -> Weber Verstehen
Critiques -> Phenomenology ethnomethodology
Critiques -> Feminist standpoint
Critiques -> Giddens double hermeneutic

Conclusion

Positivism gave sociology evidence, comparison and a check on speculation. The major arguments against it are that meaning, values, standpoint and power cannot be expelled from the study of society. A critical analysis keeps the tools and drops the pretence of a view from nowhere.

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Q2(b) · 20 marks

Highlight the main features of historical materialism as propounded by Marx. How far is this theory relevant in understanding contemporary societies? Explain

Sociology GS 1 · 2025 · Sociological Thinkers: Karl Marx

Revision summary

Historical materialism explains social change from production, property and class struggle.

Base and superstructure name the constraint of material life on law, politics and ideas.

Capitalism is defined by wage labour, surplus value and contradiction.

The theory remains relevant for global accumulation, gig work and India's informal labour.

Weberian status, feminist unpaid labour and culture mark its limits.

Use it as a diagnostic of inequality, not as a total theory of society.

Introduction

Historical materialism is **Karl Marx's** theory of how societies change. It holds that the way people produce their material life-forces of production and relations of production-sets the broad conditions for law, politics, religion and ideas, which he called the superstructure. History moves through contradiction and class struggle, not through the march of spirit that **Hegel** had imagined. The question is whether this map still helps us read contemporary societies, including India.

Body

Main features

The **mode of production** joins technology and labour (forces) to property and surplus extraction (relations). Ancient, feudal and capitalist modes are successive, though not a smooth ladder. In capitalism the bourgeoisie own the means of production and the proletariat sell labour power. Surplus value is pumped from the working day. **Class struggle** is the motor: classes in themselves may become classes for themselves. Ideology, including religion, often naturalises the existing relations; this is why **Marx** called religion the opium of the people in a precise, not merely abusive, sense. The legal and political superstructure is not a puppet in every hour, but in the last instance it is constrained by the economic base. Dialectics means change through contradiction: socialisation of production versus private appropriation, for example.

Friedrich Engels later emphasised that the superstructure can react on the base. **Antonio Gramsci's** hegemony and later Marxist cultural theory stretched the original preface of 1859 without abandoning production.

Relevance now

Global capitalism still organises life around wage labour, commodity production and crises of over-accumulation. Platform firms extract value from gig workers who look like independent contractors, a form **Marx** would have recognised as real subsumption of labour. India's vast informal sector, circular migration and agrarian distress are intelligible as combined and uneven development, not as a lag of "tradition". Ecological crisis can be read as a rift in the metabolism between society and nature, a theme John Bellamy Foster recovered from **Marx**.

Caste does not vanish, but class analysis still explains who owns land, factories and platforms.

Limits are equally part of a critical answer. **Max Weber** showed that status, party and religious ethics can steer economic action, as in the Protestant-ethic thesis. Gendered unpaid labour is not a footnote, as Marxist feminists argued. The twentieth-century socialist states complicated the prediction of proletarian emancipation. Culture, nationalism and digital identity are not mere reflections. Relevance, then, is diagnostic: historical materialism remains a powerful theory of accumulation and inequality, not a complete sociology of every institution.

Flow diagram

Forces of production -> Mode of production
Relations of production -> Mode of production
Mode of production -> Economic base
Economic base -> Superstructure
Mode of production -> Class struggle
Class struggle -> Historical change

Conclusion

Marx's features are mode of production, base and superstructure, class struggle and dialectical contradiction. The theory still illuminates global capitalism, informal labour and crisis. It is less sufficient alone for gender, caste honour and meaning, which is why contemporary sociology uses it with, not instead of, other tools.

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Q2(c) · 10 marks

What do you mean by reliability? Discuss the importance of reliability in social science research.

Sociology GS 1 · 2025 · Sociology as Science

Revision summary

Reliability is the consistency of a measure across time, items and raters.

It differs from validity, which asks whether the right concept is being measured.

Types include test-retest, split-half or alpha, and inter-coder agreement.

Durkheimian rates and modern surveys both depend on stable classification.

Qualitative work still needs transparent, repeatable coding.

Without reliability, comparison, replication and policy use of data collapse.

Introduction

Reliability means that a research instrument yields consistent results when the same thing is measured again under comparable conditions. If a scale of religiosity, a census occupation code, or two interviewers' classifications jump about without a real change in the world, the finding is noise. In social science this matters because our objects-attitudes, class, stigma-are already slippery. Unreliable measures cannot support comparison, theory or policy.

Body

What reliability is, and is not

A reliable measure is stable and internally coherent. Classic types are **test-retest** consistency over time, **split-half** or Cronbach's alpha for items on a scale, and **inter-rater** or inter-coder agreement when observers classify open material. Reliability is about the instrument and the procedure, not yet about whether we are measuring the right concept. That second question is **validity**. A clock that is always ten minutes fast is reliable and invalid. A one-item question on "are you modern?" may be unreliable and invalid at once.

Emile Durkheim's suicide rates already depended on the reliability of official classification. If coroners in one district hide suicides as accidents, the social fact is distorted. Survey research on caste discrimination, domestic violence or vote intention faces the same problem of consistent wording, consistent probing and consistent coding. In qualitative work, reliability is sometimes recast as auditability and transparent coding rather than a coefficient, but the underlying demand for trustworthiness remains.

Importance follows directly. Without reliability, replication fails, trends cannot be read, and hypotheses cannot be fairly tested. Policy uses of NFHS or crime statistics inherit every coding inconsistency. Reliability is therefore not a statistical luxury. It is a condition for treating sociological statements as evidence rather than as one more opinion.

Flow diagram

Instrument -> Reliability consistency
Reliability consistency -> Test-retest
Reliability consistency -> Inter-rater
Reliability consistency -> Internal coherence
Reliability consistency -> Validity needs reliability
Validity needs reliability -> Right concept

Conclusion

Reliability is consistency of measurement across time, items and observers. It is necessary for valid inference but not the same as validity. Social research needs it because official categories and attitude scales are otherwise too unstable to explain society.

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Q3(a) · 20 marks

Compare capability deprivation approach with that of social capital deprivation in understanding chronic poverty

Sociology GS 1 · 2025 · Stratification and Mobility: Concepts

Revision summary

Sen's approach defines poverty as capability deprivation, not income shortfall alone.

Functionings are beings and doings; capabilities are the real set of lives one can choose.

Social capital is networks, trust and norms in Coleman, Putnam and Bourdieu, unequally held.

Chronic poverty lasts because freedoms stay contracted or because bridges to work and credit stay closed.

Dense caste bonding can coexist with capability failure.

Indian SHGs, migration networks and multidimensional poverty measures illustrate the comparison.

Introduction

Chronic poverty is poverty that lasts across years and often across generations, not a short shock after a drought. Two influential approaches try to say what is missing in such lives. **Amartya Sen**'s capability approach looks at the real freedoms people have to be and to do what they value. Social capital approaches look at the networks, trust and norms that help people get jobs, credit, care and political voice. They are not rivals in every respect, but they diagnose deprivation differently.

Body

Capability deprivation

Sen, later with **Martha Nussbaum** in a related philosophical register, shifted poverty studies from income baskets to **functionings** (being nourished, literate, mobile, respected) and **capabilities** (the set of lives one could actually choose). A person may have rupees and still be capability-poor if stigma, disability, unsafe streets or missing public health convert money poorly into living. The human development index and the Alkire-Foster multidimensional poverty index operationalise this spirit. Chronic poverty, on this view, is a durable contraction of the capability set: bonded labour, undernutrition of girls, exclusion from school, or living with a disability without assistive public goods. Income poverty lines miss those conversions. Gender and caste enter because conversion factors are social, not only metabolic.

Social capital deprivation

James Coleman treated social capital as obligations, information channels and norms that make action possible. Robert Putnam stressed trust, associations and civic engagement. Pierre Bourdieu treated social capital as actual or potential resources linked to a durable network, unequally distributed like other capitals. Deprivation here means thin or stigmatised networks: migrants without urban kin, Dalit households excluded from dominant-caste labour gangs, women whose mobility is policed so that SHG and market ties never form. Chronic poverty persists when people cannot convert effort into opportunity because the bridges are missing. India's SHG-bank linkage and Kudumbashree try to manufacture social capital; the limits show when groups remain trapped in low-return activity.

Comparison for chronic poverty

• **Capability deprivation is broader and more ethical:** it names what a just society owes as freedoms, including health and education as public goods. Social capital deprivation is more relational and can be conservative if "community" is caste closure. A household may have dense bonding capital and still be capability-poor, as in a tightly knit but malnourished hamlet. Conversely, a person with a government job has capabilities partly because of institutionalised social capital. For chronic poverty in India, Sen explains why land, school and clinic matter as freedoms; social capital explains why two equally poor villages diverge when one has ties to a contractor, a party, or a women's group. A full account uses both: missing freedoms and missing connections.

Flow diagram

Chronic poverty -> Capability deprivation

Chronic poverty -> Social capital deprivation

Capability deprivation -> Functionings and freedoms

Social capital deprivation -> Trust networks norms

Capability deprivation -> Public goods conversion

Social capital deprivation -> Exclusion and bonding traps

Conclusion

Sen locates chronic poverty in lasting unfreedom to live a valued life. Social capital theory locates it in missing or exclusionary networks. They complement each other when networks are treated as one conversion factor among others, not as a substitute for rights, wages and public goods.

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Q3(b) · 20 marks

Are pressure groups a threat to or a necessary element of democracy? Explain with suitable illustrations

Sociology GS 1 · 2025 · Politics and Society

Revision summary

Pressure groups influence policy without ordinarily taking office.

Pluralists treat them as necessary vehicles of interest articulation.

Critics note unequal organising power, capture and majoritarian or caste intimidation.

Olson explains why concentrated interests beat diffuse majorities.

Indian farmers' protests, chambers of commerce and caste associations show both voices and capture.

- **The answer is conditional:** necessary, and dangerous without equality and transparency.

Introduction

Pressure groups, or interest groups, are organised associations that seek to influence public policy without themselves usually forming the government. Business chambers, farmers' unions, professional bodies, caste associations, student unions and environmental campaigns all belong here. Arthur Bentley and David Truman made them central to the empirical study of democracy. The sociological question is not whether they exist, but whether they deepen popular rule or quietly replace it.

Body

Necessary element

In a complex society the citizen cannot speak on every technical file. Almond and Powell called interest articulation a function of the political system. Pressure groups supply information, mobilise members, and check a remote bureaucracy. Robert Dahl's pluralism pictured power as dispersed among competing groups, so that no single class monopolises the state. In India, the farmers' movements that culminated in the 2020-21 protests, trade unions in industrial belts, the Narmada Bachao Andolan, and disability-rights groups have put issues on the agenda that parties had delayed. Caste associations have also been vehicles of political education and reservation claims. Without such groups, democracy shrinks to a periodic vote.

Threat

Elite and Marxist critics reply that groups are not equal. E. E. Schattschneider wrote that the pluralist heaven sings with an upper-class accent. Mancur Olson showed that small concentrated interests organise more easily than large diffuse ones: a tariff for a few firms beats a quiet loss for millions of consumers. Regulatory capture, "iron triangles" and black money turn pressure into privatisation of the state. Caste and communal organisations can polarise, intimidate, and hollow out citizenship. Business houses fund think tanks and media while informal workers remain weakly unionised. Feminist and environmental groups may win law on paper and lose implementation. Mosca and Michels, though writing of elites and parties, warn that organisation itself tends toward oligarchy: the office-bearers of a union or an NGO may cease to represent the base.

The balanced sociological judgement is therefore conditional. Pressure groups are necessary for a living democracy and dangerous when resources, media and coercive honour are unequal. Law on lobbying, transparency of political funding, and the capacity of poor people's organisations decide which face appears. Illustrations should always pair a democratic gain with a capture risk, not preach a single slogan.

Flow diagram

Pressure groups -> Necessary articulation
Pressure groups -> Threat of capture
Necessary articulation -> Pluralism Dahl
Threat of capture -> Unequal resources Olson
Threat of capture -> Oligarchy of organisers
Pressure groups -> Indian unions farmers caste chambers

Conclusion

Pressure groups are a necessary element of democratic interest articulation and a possible threat when organisation follows wealth, caste and oligarchy. The examiner wants both faces, with theory and Indian examples. Democracy needs associations; it also needs them to be contestable and relatively equal.

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Q3(c) · 10 marks

What is hypothesis? Critically evaluate the significance of hypothesis in social research

Sociology GS 1 · 2025 · Research Methods and Analysis

Revision summary

A hypothesis is a testable claim about relations among variables.

It guides measurement, sampling, statistical tests and evaluation studies.

Mertonian middle-range theory prefers such claims to total systems.

Grounded theory and exploratory ethnography warn against premature locking.

Bad hypotheses reify official categories and cannot be falsified.

Significance is high when the statement can be shown to be wrong.

Introduction

A hypothesis is a provisional, testable statement about the relation between two or more variables. It is not a guess thrown into the air, and it is not yet a finding. William Goode and Paul Hatt treated it as the working tool that turns a vague interest into a researchable question. Robert Merton's middle-range theory lives on hypotheses that can meet evidence, rather than on total systems that explain everything in advance.

Body

Significance in social research

A clear hypothesis names independent and dependent variables, and often the direction of the link: "higher years of women's schooling are associated with lower completed fertility, controlling for household wealth." That sentence decides what to measure, whom to sample, and which table or model is relevant. It allows a null hypothesis to be stated and, in quantitative work, statistically assessed. It also disciplines the literature review: one reads to derive and refine the claim, as in **Durkheim's** derivations about integration and suicide. In applied work, a hypothesis makes evaluation possible: did a sanitation campaign change reported open defecation, or only slogans?

Critical limits

Not all good sociology begins with a hypothesis. Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss's grounded theory builds concepts from data precisely because premature hypotheses can force the field into official boxes. Exploratory ethnography of a new platform labour market may need sensitising concepts, not a locked prediction. A badly theorised hypothesis reifies census categories-"modernisation reduces caste"-and then "confirms" them. Qualitative case studies test hypotheses differently, through pattern matching and deviant cases, not only p-values. Hypotheses can also smuggle values: what counts as "development" is already political.

The critical evaluation is therefore that the hypothesis is indispensable for explanatory and survey research, and dangerous when it becomes a cage. Significance is highest when variables are sociologically real and the statement can be wrong. A hypothesis that cannot fail is not a hypothesis.

Flow diagram

Research question -> Hypothesis

Hypothesis -> Variables

Variables -> Design and sample

Design and sample -> Evidence

Evidence -> Hypothesis

Grounded theory -> Hypothesis

Conclusion

A hypothesis states a testable relation and organises measurement, sampling and inference. Its significance is real for scientific sociology. Its limits appear in exploratory and interpretive work, and whenever categories are taken uncritically from the state or from common sense.

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Q4(a) · 20 marks

Give an account of the recent trends of marriage in the Indian context. How are these different from traditional practices?

Sociology GS 1 · 2025 · Systems of Kinship

Revision summary

Traditional Indian marriage was typically early, arranged, caste-endogamous and family-led.

Regional and religious diversity always qualified the textbook joint-family model.

Recent trends include later age, schooling, online matching, dual earners and more public exit options.

Endogamy and parental ratification persist inside modern forms such as matrimonial apps.

Inter-caste, live-in and queer unions are visible but still minority or legally incomplete.

The story is hybridisation of alliance, not a clean replacement by Western companionate marriage.

Introduction

Marriage in India is still a central institution of kinship, property and honour, but the ways people enter, delay and exit it have shifted. Traditional practice, especially among Hindus of the Sanskritic belt, meant early, arranged, caste-endogamous and patrilocal unions that joined two families rather than two individuals. Recent trends do not abolish that grammar. They stretch it: later age, more education, online matching, some love-arranged hybrids, and a small but visible rise in separation, live-in arrangements and public debate on same-sex unions.

Body

Traditional pattern

Classical ethnography and family sociology described marriage as alliance and as a rite that completed adult status. Endogamy of caste and often of sub-caste, hypergamy in some regions, dowry or bridewealth, and the daughter's departure to the husband's house organised the system. The joint household ideal, even when the empirical household was smaller, placed elders as matchmakers. M. N. Srinivas's Sanskritisation showed how marriage rules carried status. Patricia Uberoi and others stressed that the "Indian family" was always regional and religiously diverse: matriliney in parts of Kerala and the Northeast, consanguineous patterns in the South, Muslim and Christian personal laws. Still, the dominant public model was arranged, early and family-led.

Recent trends and how they differ

Age at marriage has risen with schooling, especially for women, though child marriage has not vanished in some states. The arranged-love binary has softened into "arranged love" and parental ratification after dating, as several urban studies show. Matrimonial sites and apps industrialise caste and class filters; they modernise the search without dropping endogamy, a point that matches André Béteille's caution that the middle class may secularise style faster than it secularises marriage. Dual-earner urban households renegotiate residence and care, yet patrilocal pressure and the second shift remain. The **Special Marriage Act** offers a civil route that still meets social sanction. Live-in relations have some legal recognition for protection, not full kinship equivalence. Divorce and separation are more speakable,

especially in cities, but stigma and economic dependence keep rates modest by global standards. Inter-caste and inter-religious marriages exist and are politically charged; surveys such as IHDS still find them a minority. Same-sex intimacy is decriminalised, while marriage equality remains legally unsettled.

The difference from tradition is therefore greater individual say, later timing, more mediated markets, and more legal pluralism-not the death of caste, dowry or family control. Continuity of honour killings and wedding spectacle sits beside change.

Flow diagram

Traditional marriage -> Caste endogamy early arranged

Traditional marriage -> Patrilocal family alliance

Recent trends -> Later age education

Recent trends -> Love-arranged online

Recent trends -> Divorce live-in debate

Recent trends -> Caste endogamy early arranged

Conclusion

Recent Indian marriage is later, more mediated by education and markets, and slightly more open to exit and self-choice. Traditional caste alliance, patrilocality and family ratification still structure the majority pattern. Sociology should map that mix, not announce a simple shift from custom to contract.

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Q4(b) · 20 marks

What would you identify as the similarities and differences in the elite theories of Mosca, Michels and Pareto? Discuss their main/crucial issues

Sociology GS 1 · 2025 · Politics and Society

Revision summary

- **Mosca:** an organised ruling class justified by a political formula.
- **Michels:** organisation produces oligarchy even in egalitarian parties.
- **Pareto:** elites circulate; lions and foxes name styles of rule.
- **Similarities:** minority power, scepticism toward literal popular rule and toward Marxian class monopoly of explanation.
- **Differences:** political formula versus party oligarchy versus psychological residues.
- **Crucial issues:** accountability, recruitment and whether democracy can discipline elites.

Introduction

Gaetano Mosca, Robert Michels and Vilfredo Pareto are the classical elite theorists. Writing against both simple democratic optimism and Marx's class dichotomy, they argued that every society is run by a minority. The examiner wants the similarities of that claim, the differences in how each explained it, and the crucial issues that still matter for parties, bureaucracies and Indian democracy.

Body

Three statements

Mosca, in *The Ruling Class*, held that a organised minority always dominates an unorganised majority. The rulers justify themselves with a **political formula**-a moral or legal story such as divine right, popular sovereignty, or merit. Recruitment may be relatively open or closed, but the fact of a ruling class remains.

Michels, in *Political Parties*, studied socialist organisations that preached equality. He derived the **iron law of oligarchy**: organisation requires specialised leaders, expertise and control of communication; the base cannot govern daily. Democracy inside large associations therefore tends to oligarchy. The party secretary becomes a new elite.

Pareto distinguished governing and non-governing elites and explained history as the **circulation of elites**. Using his language of residues, he contrasted "lions" (force, conservation) and "foxes" (cunning, combination). When a governing elite grows rigid or over-cunning, another elite replaces it. Psychology and the distribution of talents, not only property, drive the cycle.

Similarities and differences

All three reject the idea that the people rule in any literal sense. All treat elites as a necessary minority, and all are sceptical of Marxist reduction of politics to economic classes, even when they admit wealth matters. All see organisation, not only ownership, as a source of power.

- **They differ in mechanism. Mosca is the most political-sociological:** organisation plus formula. Michels is the organisational ironist of mass parties and unions, empirically closer to later bureaucracy studies. Pareto is the most psychological and cyclical, closer to a theory of character types and social equilibrium. Mosca allows a degree of renewal through a relatively

open ruling class; Michels is bleaker about inner-party democracy; Pareto emphasises replacement rather than representation.

Crucial issues

The live issues are whether universal suffrage changes the fact of minority rule, whether bureaucracy (**Weber** sits nearby) is the modern elite form, and whether circulation can occur without revolution. C. Wright Mills's power elite and later Indian debates on the IAS, business houses and party high commands still speak this language. The democratic hope is not that elites vanish, but that they remain accountable, permeable and plural.

Flow diagram

Elite theory -> Mosca ruling class formula
Elite theory -> Michels iron law
Elite theory -> Pareto circulation lions foxes
Mosca ruling class formula -> Organised minority
Michels iron law -> Organised minority
Pareto circulation lions foxes -> Organised minority

Conclusion

Mosca, Michels and Pareto agree that a minority governs and that organisation beats the crowd. They differ on formula, oligarchy of parties, and psychological circulation. The crucial issue for democracy is not the disappearance of elites but their recruitment, division and public control.

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Q4(c) · 10 marks

Critically analyze the sociological significance of informal sector in the economy of developing societies

Sociology GS 1 · 2025 · Sociology

Revision summary

Hart and the ILO named unregulated, unregistered work as the informal sector.

It is a relation to the state and to formal firms, not a separate traditional economy.

- **In India most workers remain informal:** vending, construction, home-based and farm labour.

Sociological significance lies in livelihood, gender, migration and incomplete citizenship.

- **Critique:** growth has not dissolved informality; capital often depends on it.

COVID-19 migrants showed the welfare gap inside this structure.

Introduction

The informal sector is the large zone of work that is unregistered or weakly regulated, where labour law, tax and social security barely reach. Keith Hart coined the term from urban Ghana; the ILO then made it a development category. In developing societies, including India, it is not a leftover. It is how most people earn, and that fact has sociological, not only economic, significance.

Body

What it is

Informal work includes street vending, home-based piecework, small workshops, domestic service, construction gangs and much of agriculture and allied labour. Alejandro Portes and others stressed that informality is a relation to the state and to formal firms, not a separate "traditional" economy. Formal capital often puts out work to informal units to cut costs. Jan Breman's fieldwork on circular migrants in western India showed footloose labour moving between farm, brick kiln and city without a stable contract. Women are over-represented in the least visible home-based and care work, as SEWA's organising and the NCEUS reports documented. PLFS figures still place the vast majority of Indian workers outside secure formal jobs.

Sociological significance and critique

- **Significance first:** the informal sector absorbs surplus labour, cushions unemployment, and builds urban livelihoods when industry does not create enough formal jobs. It shapes class without looking like a factory proletariat: self-employment can hide disguised wage labour. It structures gender, because unpaid household work and paid informal work blur. It structures the city: slums, street economies and police discretion. It also limits citizenship: no PF, no paid leave, weak unions, high accident risk.

The critical side is that celebrating "entrepreneurship" can romanticise precarity. Dualist models that expect informality to vanish with growth have been disappointed. Global value chains often need the informal tail. During COVID-19 the migrant crisis made the missing welfare architecture visible. Sociologically, the informal sector is therefore the normal form of labour in many developing societies, a site of both survival and exploitation, and a challenge to theories that still take the Fordist worker as the type.

Flow diagram

Informal sector -> Livelihood absorption
Informal sector -> Gendered home-based work
Informal sector -> Circular migration
Informal sector -> Linked to formal capital
Informal sector -> Weak social security

Conclusion

In developing societies the informal sector is the main organisation of work, not an exception. It matters for class, gender, migration and the reach of the state. A critical view refuses both contempt for street livelihoods and the myth that unregulated work is freely chosen enterprise.

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Q5(a) · 10 marks

In what way is the scope of sociology unique? Explain.

Sociology GS 1 · 2025 · Sociology

Revision summary

Scope means the distinctive object and questions of a discipline.

Sociology's object is social relationships, institutions and emergent social facts.

Durkheim's sui generis social facts and Simmel's forms of interaction name that uniqueness.

Contrast with psychology, economics, history and common sense clarifies the vantage.

Topics such as family or class are shared; the relational cut is not.

Indian events can be shared objects; sociology asks how groups and institutions make them.

Introduction

The scope of a discipline is the set of questions it can legitimately ask and the kind of object it treats as real. Sociology's uniqueness is not that it alone studies human beings. Psychology, economics, political science and history do that too. Sociology is unique in taking **social relationships, institutions and emergent social facts** as its centre, rather than the isolated mind, the market choice, the office of the state, or the unique event.

Body

The social as a distinctive object

- **Auguste Comte claimed a new science of society. Emile Durkheim made the claim precise:** social facts are external, constraining and general, and they are not reducible to individual psychology. Suicide rates, a currency, a language, or a caste rule exist as a reality sui generis. Georg Simmel located the unique scope in the **forms of interaction**-conflict, exchange, sociability-that can be compared across contents. Anthony Giddens later said that sociology studies the constitution of society: how structure is produced in action and how action is made possible by structure.

This scope includes family, class, religion, law, education, work, gender and social change, but the uniqueness is the relational question: how are these patterned, reproduced and transformed together? C. Wright Mills's sociological imagination is a method of using that scope, linking biography to history.

Uniqueness by contrast

Psychology asks about cognition and personality; sociology asks how those are socially distributed and labelled. Economics often models a rational chooser; economic sociology, after **Weber** and later Granovetter, puts choice back into networks and meanings. History narrates unique sequences; sociology compares types, though historical sociology shares the archive. Common sense naturalises the same world that sociology treats as constructed. The unique scope is therefore a vantage, not a fence around a few topics. In India, a riot, a marriage or a factory strike can be studied by many disciplines; sociology's cut is group relations, institutions and the production of order and conflict.

Flow diagram

Human life -> Psychology mind
Human life -> Economics choice
Human life -> History unique event
Human life -> Sociology relations institutions
Sociology relations institutions -> Social facts forms

Conclusion

Sociology is unique because it studies society as a level of reality made of relations and institutions, not because it owns a list of chapters. **Durkheim**'s social facts and Simmel's forms still name that scope. Other sciences overlap the terrain; they do not replace the relational question.

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Q5(b) · 10 marks

Does the structural-functionalist perspective on social stratification promote a status quo? Give reasons for your answer.

Sociology GS 1 · 2025 · Stratification and Mobility: Concepts

Revision summary

Davis and Moore treat unequal rewards as devices to fill important positions.

Parsons ties ranking to a shared value system and role allocation.

That logic easily sanctifies the present hierarchy as necessary.

Tumin asked who defines importance and why talent and reward match so neatly.

Unpaid gendered labour and caste inheritance expose the payoff story.

Merton's dysfunctions qualify equilibrium but do not make functionalism a conflict theory.

Introduction

Structural-functionalism treats society as a system of interrelated parts that tend toward order. Its theory of stratification, especially Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore, asks what inequality does for the system. The question is whether that perspective quietly defends the status quo. The honest answer is that it often does, because it reads existing rewards as functional necessities rather than as outcomes of power.

Body

The functional claim

Davis and Moore argued that some positions are more functionally important and more scarce in talent. Unequal rewards are the device that places the right people in those positions and motivates them to train. Talcott Parsons added that stratification expresses a shared value system: achievement, universalism and the ranking of roles in a modern society. Inequality, on this view, is not an accident and not mainly exploitation. It is a mechanism of allocation.

Why this promotes a status quo

If high pay and honour measure functional importance, then the present hierarchy looks deserved. The theory underplays inheritance, caste, gender and the political making of "importance". Melvin Tumin asked who judges functional necessity, why talent is assumed scarce, and why the less rewarded must find the system legitimate. The argument can become a sociology of consolation: the poor are where the system needs them. Conflict theorists, from **Marx** to later critics of Davis-Moore, reply that surplus is extracted, not allocated by consensus. Feminist readers add that unpaid care is functionally vital and poorly rewarded, which already breaks the payoff rule.

- **Robert Merton's functions and dysfunctions slightly open the door:** a hierarchy may stabilise one group and injure another. Classical functional stratification still leans toward equilibrium. In India, a functional story of caste as division of labour served the status quo until Dalit sociology named graded inequality. Reasons for the "yes" are theoretical and political: it naturalises winners. Mertonian dysfunctions do not make Davis-Moore a theory of radical change.

Flow diagram

Structural functionalism -> Davis-Moore unequal rewards

Structural functionalism -> Parsons value consensus

Davis-Moore unequal rewards -> Status quo justified

Tumin conflict feminism -> Status quo justified

Merton dysfunction -> Status quo justified

Conclusion

The structural-functional perspective on stratification tends to promote a status quo because it treats unequal rewards as system needs. Tumin and conflict theory show the circularity of that claim. Functional analysis can still describe order; it is a weak theory of injustice and transformation.

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Q5(c) · 10 marks

Do you think that the formal workspaces are free of gender bias? Argue your case.

Sociology GS 1 · 2025 · Sociology

Revision summary

Formal organisations claim impersonal merit; gendered sociology shows otherwise.

Acker's gendered job, Kanter's tokens and Hochschild's second shift are core arguments.

Pay gaps, glass ceilings and care penalties persist inside contracts and appraisals.

POSH law in India is evidence that formal offices were not automatically safe.

Formalisation can reduce some arbitrary power but also bureaucratises male defaults.

The argued case is that formal workspaces are not free of gender bias.

Introduction

- **Formal workplaces present themselves as rule-bound, meritocratic and impersonal:** the office, the factory with contracts, the civil service, the corporate firm. Max Weber's bureaucracy promised office without regard to person. The sociological record is that formality has not abolished gender bias. It has often reorganised it as recruitment filters, career clocks, occupational ghettos, pay gaps and cultures of the ideal male worker.

Body

Bias inside the rules

- **Joan Acker argued that organisations are gendered:** the abstract "job" assumes a body without care burdens and a life without pregnancy. Rosabeth Moss Kanter showed how tokens and skewed sex ratios produce stereotyped roles. Arlie Hochschild described the second shift at home and emotional labour at work, both of which fall more on women. The glass ceiling, glass cliff and sticky floor name patterns that formal appraisal systems still generate. Occupational segregation concentrates women in nursing, teaching, clerical and care-adjacent jobs even inside the formal sector, while boards and shop-floor technical grades remain male-heavy.

Harassment, pregnancy discrimination and the motherhood penalty show that a standing order is not a sex-neutral order. India's Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013 (POSH) exists because formal offices were not safe by virtue of being formal. Female labour-force participation has been stubbornly low, and even salaried women cluster in certain services. Dalit and Muslim women face a compounded filter at the gate. LGBTQ workers may be formally employed and informally closeted.

A contrary claim that markets and HR manuals dissolve patriarchy ignores unpaid care as a tax on women's time, after the Time Use Survey, and ignores client-facing emotional rules that still code authority as male. Formalisation can help: written pay, unions, maternity benefits, internal complaints committees. It does not, by itself, equalise. The case to argue is therefore that formal workspaces are not free of gender bias; they are arenas where bias is bureaucratised and sometimes contested.

Flow diagram

Formal workplace -> Ideal male worker
Formal workplace -> Occupational segregation
Formal workplace -> Care and motherhood penalty
Formal workplace -> Harassment despite rules
POSH unions benefits -> Formal workplace

Conclusion

Formal workplaces are organised by gender even when their handbooks deny it. Bias sits in the ideal worker, in care penalties, in segregation and in harassment. Law and unions can check it; formality alone does not erase it.

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Q5(d) · 10 marks

How does Weber's Verstehen address the objectivity-subjectivity debate in sociology?

Sociology GS 1 · 2025 · Sociology as Science

Revision summary

Verstehen is interpretative understanding of meaningful social action.

Ideal types help compare cases without pretending to be full copies of reality.

Value relevance selects topics; value freedom forbids twisting evidence to preach.

This rejects naive positivist objectivity as a view from nowhere.

It also rejects the idea that interpretation is only the scholar's private feeling.

Actors' meanings remain checkable through comparison, documents and consequences.

Introduction

Max Weber placed sociology as a science of social action, that is, behaviour to which actors attach meaning. Verstehen is the method of interpretative understanding of those meanings, not guesswork and not empathy as a mood. The objectivity-subjectivity debate asks whether the sociologist can know society as a detached observer or only as a participant in values.

Weber's answer is a disciplined middle path.

Body

What Verstehen does

Understanding may be direct, as when we grasp a burst of anger, or explanatory, when we place an act in a motive context-the Protestant's worldly asceticism, the official's career calculus. Ideal types are constructed concepts that one-sidedly accentuate features so that a historical case can be compared with a clear standard. They are neither photographs nor arbitrary stories. Because action is meaningful, a purely external count of rates, in the strongest Durkheimian mood, is incomplete. Because meanings can be typical, they are not locked inside one unique soul. That is why **Weber** could still seek adequate causation, not only anecdotes.

Objectivity and subjectivity

- **Naive positivism claims a view from nowhere:** facts without values. **Weber** denied that the choice of problem is value-free. **Value relevance** (Wertbeziehung) means our cultural interests select what is worth knowing. **Value freedom** (Wertfreiheit) in the narrower sense means that once the problem is chosen, we should not cook the evidence to preach. The researcher's subjectivity is admitted at the door of topic choice and then constrained by method, logic and honesty about one's standpoint.

Pure subjectivism would say that every reading is only the sociologist's projection. Verstehen rejects that too: actors' reasons are empirical claims that can be checked against documents, comparison and consequences. Alfred Schutz later deepened the phenomenological side; the Weberian core already blocks both the laboratory fantasy and the collapse into opinion. In Indian research, understanding why a farmer refuses a cash crop, or why a voter treats a caste association as a moral community, requires Verstehen without abandoning checks against what people actually do.

Flow diagram

Meaningful social action -> Verstehen
Verstehen -> Ideal types
Value relevance -> Choice of problem
Choice of problem -> Value-free analysis of evidence
Naive positivism -> Verstehen
Pure subjectivism -> Verstehen

Conclusion

Verstehen addresses the debate by making meanings the object of a rigorous science, not by abandoning science. Objectivity, for **Weber**, is disciplined analysis after a value-relevant question, not valueless perception. Subjectivity of actors is data; subjectivity of the scholar is a bias to be controlled, not a licence.

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Q5(e) · 10 marks

To what extent can education and skill development be an agent of social change? Critically analyze.

Sociology GS 1 · 2025 · Social Change in Modern Society

Revision summary

Durkheim and Parsons treat schooling as moral and role socialisation, a force of change.

Human capital and capability approaches link skill to productivity and freedom.

Bourdieu and correspondence theorists show reproduction of class through the school.

Indian expansion of education has created new aspirations and some mobility.

Coaching, English, caste and credential inflation limit the equalising effect.

- **The extent is partial:** necessary for change, insufficient as a sole agent.

Introduction

Education and skill development are among the most trusted official levers of social change. They are supposed to spread knowledge, create a labour force, and open mobility. **Emile Durkheim** saw the school as a moral community for a differentiated society. Human-capital theory treated skill as investment. A critical analysis asks how far these processes actually transform structure, and how far they reproduce class, caste and gender under a language of merit.

Body

As agents of change

Schools socialise strangers into shared codes, which Parsons read as pattern maintenance and role allocation. Literacy and numeracy expand capability in Sen's sense. Technical skill can shift a household from farm labour to a trade or to urban services. In India, the expansion of IITs, medical colleges, IT services and, more unevenly, industrial training has created new middle-class fractions. The Right to Education Act and campaigns for girls' schooling have changed aspirations even where quality lags. **Skill India** and apprenticeship talk try to link education to employability. Social movements of oppressed groups have used degrees and English as weapons of status, not only as job tickets. In that limited but real sense, education is an agent of change.

Critical limits

- **Pierre Bourdieu showed cultural capital:** the school rewards the already cultured child and calls it talent. Bowles and Gintis linked schooling to workplace hierarchy. Credential inflation means more certificates chase the same scarce jobs. In India, coaching, English gates and unequal schools channel change toward those who already have resources. Caste in hiring and the steering of girls toward "safe" courses blunt mobility. Skill programmes that ignore demand produce certificates without change.

The extent is **partial and stratified**. Education changes some biographies. It rarely, by itself, equalises property or elite networks. Treating skill as a substitute for decent work is policy rhetoric, not a finding.

Flow diagram

Education and skill -> Change mobility capability

Education and skill -> Reproduction cultural capital

Change mobility capability -> RTE Skill India

Reproduction cultural capital -> Coaching English gates

Education and skill -> Partial stratified extent

Conclusion

Education and skill can be agents of social change through socialisation, capability and mobility. They also reproduce inequality through cultural capital and uneven provision. The extent in India is real for some groups and overstated when policy treats certificates as a solvent of class and caste.

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Q6(a) · 20 marks

What is science? Do you think that the methods used in natural sciences can be applied to sociology? Give reasons for your answer

Sociology GS 1 · 2025 · Sociology

Revision summary

Science means systematic, public, criticisable knowledge, not only lab hardware.

Positivists apply observation, measurement and comparison to social regularities.

Limits include meaning, ethics of experiment, values and the double hermeneutic.

Kuhn and feminists complicate even the natural-science side of the contrast.

- **The judged answer is qualified yes:** use the tools, drop the closed-system fantasy.

Sociology remains a science of an open, interpreted world.

Introduction

Science is a public method of producing knowledge that is systematic, open to criticism, and in principle testable against the world. It is not a pile of laboratory instruments. The question is whether the methods that worked for physics and biology-controlled observation, measurement, comparison, law-seeking-can be applied to sociology. Auguste Comte and **Emile Durkheim** answered largely yes. **Max Weber** and later interpretive and critical traditions answered: only in part, and never as a copy of the natural-science laboratory.

Body

Why the methods can be applied

Society shows regularities. Birth, death, crime, voting and prices can be counted. Comparison across groups, as in **Durkheim**'s Suicide or in contemporary NFHS tables, is a cousin of Mill's methods. Hypotheses, sampling, reliability and replication are not the property of chemistry. Karl Popper's demand that claims be criticisable travels well. Without some natural-science discipline, sociology collapses into essayistic common sense. Demographic transition, network models and survey experiments in political sociology show that controlled reasoning is possible even when a full laboratory is not.

Why they cannot be copied wholesale

Human beings interpret the investigation, change their behaviour, and live inside values and power. The double hermeneutic, in Anthony Giddens's phrase, has no analogue in the study of stones. Experiments on people raise ethics and artificiality; the classic laboratory of physics is rarely available. Meanings require Verstehen. Standpoint feminists and phenomenologists add that the knower is socially located. Thomas Kuhn reminded even natural science that paradigms are historical, so the contrast is not between a perfect physics and a failed sociology.

The reasoned conclusion is **qualified applicability**. Measurement, comparison, models and public criticism should be used wherever the object allows. Participant observation, historical interpretation and critique of categories are still scientific in a broad Weberian sense if they are systematic and honest. What cannot be applied is the fantasy of value-free prediction of a closed system. A village study that names its method and its limits is more scientific than a

questionnaire that pretends to be physics. Sociology is a science of an open, meaningful world, not an inferior laboratory discipline.

Flow diagram

Science as public testable method -> Apply counts comparison hypotheses

Science as public testable method -> Cannot copy closed laboratory

Apply counts comparison hypotheses -> Durkheim surveys

Cannot copy closed laboratory -> Verstehen reflexivity

Qualified science of society -> Apply counts comparison hypotheses

Qualified science of society -> Cannot copy closed laboratory

Conclusion

Natural-science methods of comparison, measurement and public testing can and should be used in sociology. They cannot be the whole method, because social objects interpret back and are value-laden. Science here means disciplined inquiry, not a borrowed laboratory coat.

Open WRAP page — <https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/sociology-gs-1/2025/what-is-science-do-you-think-that-the-methods-used-in-natural-sciences-can-be-applied-to-sociology-give-reasons-for-your-answer/>

Q6(b) · 20 marks

What do you understand by gender-based domestic division of labour? Is it undergoing a change in the wake of increasing participation of women in formal employment? Clarify your answer with illustrations

Sociology GS 1 · 2025 · Sociological Thinkers: Karl Marx

Revision summary

Gender-based domestic division assigns unpaid household and care work mainly to women.

Oakley, Hartmann and Hochschild made that work theoretically central.

Women's formal employment has produced dual burdens more often than equal sharing.

Outsourcing to paid domestic workers relocates rather than ends gendered care.

India's Time Use Survey shows a large unpaid-work gap by sex.

Change is lagged and class-specific, not automatic with a salary slip.

Introduction

A gender-based domestic division of labour is the patterned assignment of unpaid household and care tasks according to sex, not according to taste alone. Cooking, cleaning, childcare, eldercare and the management of kin relations are still, in most societies, women's work in the last instance. The question is whether women's rising presence in formal employment is rewriting that script or merely adding a second shift to the first.

Body

The pattern and its theory

Ann Oakley made housework visible as work. Heidi Hartmann treated the domestic division as a pillar of patriarchy allied to capitalism: men as a group benefit from unpaid services that reproduce labour power. Arlie Hochschild's *The Second Shift* showed dual-earner couples in which the woman's paid job did not equalise the evening. Sylvia Walby listed household production among the structures of patriarchy. The arrangement is moralised as love and nature, which is why it is so sticky.

Is it changing with formal employment?

It is changing **unevenly**. In urban dual-earner professional households some men cook, some couples hire a cook or a nanny, and some delay fertility. Outsourcing transfers the gendered burden onto poorer women, often migrant and informal, rather than abolishing it. "Help" from husbands is still framed as favour, not duty. Time Use Survey 2019 in India found women spending several more hours a day on unpaid domestic work than men, a gap that employment status narrows only partly. Rural and small-town formal jobs for women, where they exist, often sit beside unchanged kin surveillance and the honour of a "good wife". Maternity, unsafe transport and the motherhood penalty push some women out of formal jobs, which then restores the old division.

- **Comparative research speaks of lagged adaptation:** fertility and women's employment move faster than men's unpaid hours. Nordic policy shows that public childcare and paternal leave can shift the pattern; their absence in much of India keeps the domestic gender contract intact. So formal employment is a necessary pressure for change, not a sufficient cause.

Illustrations should include both the new urban kitchen and the continuing dawn routine of unpaid work that makes the office possible.

Flow diagram

Gendered domestic labour -> Unpaid care
FE Women's formal employment -> Second shift dual burden
FE -> Outsource to paid domestic workers
FE -> Partial male sharing
FE -> Gendered domestic labour

Conclusion

The domestic division of labour remains gendered even when women hold formal jobs. Change is real in some dual-earner settings and largely a dual burden or a shift onto poorer women in others. Employment without a reorganisation of care and male time will not complete the revolution at home.

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Q6(c) · 10 marks

How can you assess the significance of social movements in the digital era? Explain

Sociology GS 1 · 2025 · Politics and Society

Revision summary

Social movements now use platforms for recruitment, framing and witnessing.

Connective action personalises protest and lowers coordination costs.

Significance is high for speed, scale and agenda setting.

Limits include digital divide, surveillance, rumour and weak staying power.

Older resource and opportunity theories still explain durable success.

Indian protests and relief campaigns show amplification, not replacement, of the street.

Introduction

Social movements are organised, extra-institutional efforts to promote or resist change. In the digital era they recruit, frame and protest through platforms as well as streets. Manuel Castells wrote of networks of outrage and hope. The sociological task is to assess significance: what digital tools add, and what they cannot replace.

Body

What changes

Lance Bennett and Alexandra Segerberg distinguished **connective action**, based on personalised sharing, from older collective action based on dense organisations. Hashtags lower the cost of showing up, at least online. Images travel faster than pamphlets. Diasporas, students and informal workers can coordinate across cities. Zeynep Tufekci has shown how easy mobilisation can outrun the harder work of decision-making and staying power. In India, campaigns around sexual violence, farmers' legislation, citizenship protests and disaster relief have all used phones, livestreams and WhatsApp chains. Significance is real for agenda setting, for documenting state violence, and for forming weak-tie publics that older unions never reached.

Limits of the assessment

The same infrastructure is used by rumour, hate and surveillance. A digital divide by class, gender and region means "the people online" are not the people. Slacktivism can substitute a like for a strike. Algorithms fragment publics. States and platforms can shut down the net. Resource mobilisation and political opportunity, in the older theories of McCarthy, Zald and Tilly, still decide whether a trend becomes an organisation with demands. Digital tools amplify; they do not abolish leadership, money or repression.

A balanced assessment is that the digital era has changed the **ecology** of movements-speed, visibility, personalised frames-without making organisation, risk and inequality obsolete. Significance is high for diffusion and narrative, mixed for durable institutional change.

Flow diagram

Social movements -> Digital infrastructure

Digital infrastructure -> Connective action speed scale

Digital infrastructure -> Divide surveillance slacktivism

Digital infrastructure -> Still need organisation opportunity

Conclusion

Digital media have become a normal infrastructure of contention, expanding who can speak and how fast frames spread. Their significance is greatest at the stage of mobilisation and witnessing, and weaker where long organisation and offline power are required. A movement that exists only as a feed is easy to start and easy to disperse.

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Q7(a) · 20 marks

What is sampling in the context of social research? Discuss different forms of sampling with their relative advantages and disadvantages

Sociology GS 1 · 2025 · Research Methods and Analysis

Revision summary

Sampling selects units so researchers can speak carefully about a population.

Probability samples give known chances of selection and estimable error.

Stratified designs aid comparison; cluster designs save cost and inflate error.

Non-probability samples help exploratory and hidden-population work.

Convenience and quota designs are often misused as if they were random.

- **Match the sampling form to the claim:** national rates versus theoretical cases.

Introduction

Sampling in social research is the selection of a subset of persons, households, organisations or events from a defined population so that we can say something disciplined about the whole. A census is rarely possible. The quality of a survey on caste, voting or nutrition stands or falls with how the sample was drawn. Different forms of sampling trade representativeness against cost, access and the need for depth.

Body

Probability sampling

In probability designs every unit has a known, non-zero chance of selection, which allows sampling error to be estimated.

Simple random sampling gives each unit equal chance. It is unbiased in theory and clumsy in practice when no complete list exists, as in an unlisted slum. **Systematic sampling** takes every kth unit from a list; it is convenient but dangerous if the list has a hidden period. **Stratified sampling** divides the population into strata-region, caste group, rural/urban-and samples within each. It improves precision for comparisons and needs good stratum information. **Cluster and multistage sampling**, used by NSSO and NFHS, select villages or blocks first, then households. They cut travel costs and raise design effects: people in a cluster are alike, so effective sample size shrinks. Advantages of probability samples are generalisability and honest margins of error. Disadvantages are cost, non-response, outdated frames, and ethical or political difficulty of listing stigmatised populations.

Non-probability sampling

Convenience samples of students or online volunteers are cheap and weak for inference. **Purposive** samples choose theoretically important cases, essential in ethnography and case comparison. **Quota** samples mimic margins of sex or age without random selection; they look representative and hide interviewer bias. **Snowball** samples follow networks and are often the only way to reach hidden populations-drug users, undocumented migrants, queer networks-but they over-represent the well connected.

No single form is best. A national poverty estimate needs a probability design. A study of a new sect may need snowballing. Mixed designs are common. The sociologist's duty is to match

form to claim: do not generalise a campus convenience sample to "Indian youth."

Flow diagram

Population -> Probability
Population -> Non-probability
Probability -> Simple systematic stratified
Probability -> Cluster multistage
Non-probability -> Purposive quota
Non-probability -> Snowball convenience

Conclusion

Sampling is the bridge from studied cases to a population. Probability forms support statistical inference at a price; non-probability forms support access and theory at the price of unknown bias. Advantages and disadvantages are not abstract: they decide whether a sociological statement is a finding or an anecdote.

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Q7(b) · 20 marks

How do theories of Marx, Weber and Durkheim differ in understanding religion? Explain

Sociology GS 1 · 2025 · Sociological Thinkers: Karl Marx

Revision summary

Marx treats religion as ideological consolation and mystification in class society.

Durkheim treats religion as the sacred form of social solidarity and classification.

Weber treats religion as meaningful ethic that can steer economic and political action.

Differences follow the questions of critique, function and interpretation.

Marx expects unmasking; **Durkheim** expects the sacred to migrate; **Weber** traces disenchantment.

Do not flatten the three into a single sentence about the importance of faith.

Introduction

Karl Marx, **Max Weber** and **Emile Durkheim** all took religion seriously, and they took it as a social fact, not as a matter of private taste. They did not ask the same question. **Marx** asked whose power religion conceals. **Durkheim** asked how religion makes a society possible. **Weber** asked how religious meanings steer action and, sometimes, economic history. The differences are the syllabus point.

Body

Three theories

For **Marx**, religion is part of the superstructure. In a class society it offers consolation and inverted consciousness: the opium of the people soothes suffering that is produced by exploitation, and it can bless the earthly order as divine. Critique of heaven is therefore a step toward critique of earth. Religion is not the root of oppression, but it often mystifies the root.

Durkheim, in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, studied Australian totemism to find the elementary: the **sacred** set apart from the **profane**, and the rite in which the group experiences **collective effervescence**. God is society transfigured. Religion's function is to bind and to classify, to make moral community. Even in secular dress, national ceremonies can be religious in this sociological sense.

Weber began from meaning. People need a theodicy of fortune and suffering. The Protestant ethic essay linked inner-worldly asceticism to the spirit of capitalism, without saying that religion was only a mask for class. He compared prophets, priests, virtuosi and masses, and he traced **disenchantment** as rationalisation drains magical gardens. Religion can be a switchman of history, directing the tracks that material interests also lay.

How they differ

- **Marx is critical and historical-materialist**: look through belief to production. **Durkheim** is functional and morphological: look at rite and belonging. **Weber** is comparative and interpretative: look at ethic, organisation and unintended consequence. **Durkheim** downplays inner faith as sociology's object; **Weber** requires it. **Marx** expects religion to fade with emancipation; **Durkheim** expects the sacred to migrate; **Weber** expects a tension between vocation, bureaucracy and leftover charisma. Indian illustrations can be used lightly: a temple

festival as Durkheimian solidarity, a reformist ethic as Weberian, and a landlord's dharma as Marxist ideology-provided the theories stay distinct and are not mashed into "all three said religion is important."

Flow diagram

Religion -> Marx ideology opium
Religion -> Durkheim sacred cohesion
Religion -> Weber meaning ethic
Marx ideology opium -> Class
Durkheim sacred cohesion -> Group
Weber meaning ethic -> Action and rationalisation

Conclusion

- **Marx, Durkheim and Weber differ in the question they put to religion:** ideology, cohesion, or meaningful action. A good comparison keeps those questions apart and then notes that a living religious field can carry all three processes at once without making the theories identical.

Open WRAP page — <https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/sociology-gs-1/2025/how-do-theories-of-marx-weber-and-durkheim-differ-in-understanding-religion-explain/>

Q7(c) · 10 marks

What is the nature of relationship between science and religion in modern society? Analyze with suitable examples

Sociology GS 1 · 2025 · Religion and Society

Revision summary

Comte expected science to replace theology; Weber expected disenchantment of technique.

Secularisation is regional, not a universal emptying of faith.

Relations include conflict, institutional separation and practical coexistence.

Berger's later desecularisation thesis matches much of the contemporary world.

India shows high-tech science beside public ritual and sacred politics.

The modern pattern is differentiation plus plurality, not a simple war.

Introduction

Modern society is often described as scientific, and science is often described as the opposite of religion. The sociological relationship is more mixed. Auguste Comte expected a scientific stage to replace theological thought. Max Weber spoke of disenchantment: calculation drives out magic. Later research found secularisation in some regions and religious revival in others. Science and religion now compete, ignore, and sometimes bless each other in the same public sphere.

Body

Conflict, separation and coexistence

Conflict appears in creation controversies, in battles over reproductive technology, and when clerical authority denies epidemiological advice. The independence model, close to Stephen Jay Gould's "non-overlapping magisteria," treats science as how the heavens go and religion as how to go to heaven. Dialogue appears in religious environmentalism and in scientists who remain practising believers. Peter Berger first expected secularisation, then stressed desecularisation: the world is furiously religious, with pockets of European-style unbelief.

Weber's disenchantment never meant that temples empty overnight. It meant that technical rationality becomes the default for administration, medicine and production, while meaning and theodicy may still be sought in faith. Thomas Luckmann described invisible religion; Durkheim already allowed civic sacredness. In India, space missions and large science laboratories coexist with ritual at launch, pilgrimage economies, and political uses of sacred geography. Ayurveda and evidence-based medicine negotiate prestige. Anti-superstition movements and new gurdums grow together.

The nature of the relationship in modern society is therefore **structurally differentiated and empirically plural**. Science claims cognitive authority over empirical nature; religion claims authority over ultimate meaning, identity and often morality. The state, the market and the media decide which claim wins in a given dispute. A single formula of inevitable conflict is as unhelpful as a pious harmony.

Flow diagram

Modern society -> Science cognitive authority
Modern society -> Religion meaning identity
Science cognitive authority -> Conflict
Religion meaning identity -> Conflict
Science cognitive authority -> Coexistence dialogue
Religion meaning identity -> Coexistence dialogue
Science cognitive authority -> Disenchantment of technique

Conclusion

Science and religion in modern society are differentiated institutions that sometimes clash, sometimes ignore each other, and sometimes intertwine in ritual and politics. Disenchantment names a tendency of technique, not the death of the sacred. Examples should show that plurality, not a winner-takes-all story.

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Q8(a) · 20 marks

What do you understand by sustainable development? Discuss the elements of sustainable development as proposed in the UNDP's Sustainable Development Goals Report-2015

Sociology GS 1 · 2025 · Sociology

Revision summary

Brundtland defined sustainable development as meeting present needs without compromising the future.

The 2015 SDG agenda, reflected in UNDP reporting, treats that as a multi-goal programme.

Five elements-people, planet, prosperity, peace, partnership-organise the set.

Seventeen goals join poverty and inequality to climate, cities, work and institutions.

Sociology stresses unequal needs, risk distribution and weak institutions.

The agenda is a frame for development, not an automatic achievement.

Introduction

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without closing the chances of future generations. The **Brundtland Commission** popularised that formula in 1987. In 2015 the United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals, and UNDP's reporting around that agenda treated sustainability as a package of social, economic and environmental aims, not as a green afterthought to growth. Sociology is needed because "needs" are unequally defined and because institutions, not only technology, decide who bears environmental cost.

Body

From definition to the 2015 elements

The 2015 agenda is organised as **seventeen goals** with targets, from no poverty and zero hunger through health, education, gender equality, water, energy, decent work, industry, inequality, cities, consumption, climate, oceans, land, peace and justice, to partnership. UNDP and UN communications also grouped the agenda as five interlocking "P"s: **people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership**. People names the social floor: poverty, hunger, health, education, gender. Planet names climate, ecosystems and resource limits. Prosperity names inclusive growth and decent work rather than GDP alone. Peace names institutions, rights and an end to violence as development conditions. Partnership names finance, data and global cooperation, including the famous idea of leaving no one behind.

Sociologically this is a shift from earlier modernisation theory, which trusted industrial take-off, and from a narrow environmentalism that ignored livelihoods. **Amartya Sen's** capability concern sits in the background of human development reporting: sustainability without freedom is incomplete. Ulrich Beck's risk society and later environmental sociology add that hazards are socially distributed: a heatwave or a flood is not class-blind.

Critical sociological reading

The elements can become a checklist that states report while extractive growth continues. Indicators may hide unpaid care and informal work. Goal 16 on institutions is easy to praise and hard to fund. Partnership can mean donor agendas. In India, tensions among coal

livelihoods, air quality, forest rights and SDG localisation at panchayat level show that the elements collide. Still, as a public language, the 2015 set forces sociology of development to hold inequality, ecology and governance in one frame, which is its intellectual yield.

Flow diagram

Sustainable development -> People
Sustainable development -> Planet
Sustainable development -> Prosperity
Sustainable development -> Peace institutions
Sustainable development -> Partnership
Sustainable development -> Seventeen SDGs 2015

Conclusion

Sustainable development means intergenerational justice in meeting needs. The 2015 UNDP-linked SDG agenda specifies that as people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership, operationalised in seventeen goals. The sociological task is to see those elements as institutional and distributional, not as a poster of trees beside a factory.

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Q8(b) · 20 marks

How do 'Civil Society Organizations' such as 'NGOs' and 'Self-Help Groups' contribute to grassroots level social changes? Discuss

Sociology GS 1 · 2025 · Sociological Thinkers: Karl Marx

Revision summary

NGOs and SHGs are civil society forms between family, market and state.

They contribute through services, rights mobilisation, thrift, credit and women's public voice.

SEWA, Kudumbashree and SHG-bank linkage are standard Indian illustrations.

Social capital and capabilities names for the gain.

NGOisation, donor dependence and microcredit capture are the critical limits.

Grassroots change holds when members remain political subjects, not only project targets.

Introduction

Civil society organisations sit between household, market and state. Non-governmental organisations and self-help groups are two familiar forms in development practice. They claim to work at the grassroots: the hamlet, the slum, the women's meeting under a tree. The sociological question is how they actually produce social change, and for whom.

Body

How they contribute

NGOs may deliver services the state undersupplies-health camps, legal aid, watershed works-or they may mobilise rights, as in campaigns for information, forest rights or disability. They translate local trouble into files, courts and media. Antonio Gramsci's civil society is a field of hegemony as well as resistance; Tocqueville's associations train citizens. SHGs, especially women's groups linked to banks after NABARD's programme, create small credit, thrift and a public female voice in villages where the panchayat was a male space. Kerala's Kudumbashree and SEWA's organising of informal women workers show that livelihood and citizenship can move together. Sanitation, immunisation and school attendance campaigns often run through such groups. At their best they thicken social capital in Coleman's sense and expand capabilities in Sen's sense.

Grassroots change is not automatic

Critics of NGOisation argue that donor-funded organisations can depoliticise struggle, professionalise leaders, and substitute project cycles for movements. Sangeeta Kamat and others described this risk. SHGs can become instruments of microfinance extraction, or of party and caste capture, rather than sisterhood. Men may take the loan while women carry the liability. NGOs may bypass panchayats and weaken already thin local democracy, or they may train panchayat women. Scale is limited: a successful cluster does not equal agrarian reform. The state may outsource its duties and then blame civil society for gaps.

Contribution is therefore **conditional**. NGOs and SHGs change grassroots life when they organise voice and resources without replacing politics, and when the poor remain members rather than beneficiaries on a list. They fail when they become a parallel bureaucracy of projects. Indian illustrations should keep both the SEWA and Kudumbashree yield and the

microcredit caution. Change is grassroots only if local people can refuse a project and still have a public voice.

Flow diagram

Civil society -> NGOs services and rights
Civil society -> SHGs credit and voice
NGOs services and rights -> Grassroots change
SHGs credit and voice -> Grassroots change
Grassroots change -> Livelihood gender citizenship
Grassroots change -> NGOisation capture risk

Conclusion

NGOs and SHGs can shift credit, care, rights and women's public presence at the grassroots. They are not a substitute for a capable, accountable state or for redistribution. Civil society contributes to change when it organises people, not when it only delivers a scheme.

Open WRAP page — <https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/sociology-gs-1/2025/how-do-civil-society-organizations-such-as-ngos-and-self-help-groups-contribute-to-grassroot-level-social-changes-discuss/>

Q8(c) · 10 marks

In what way does queer kinship challenge the traditional kinship system? Substantiate by giving illustrations

Sociology GS 1 · 2025 · Sociology

Revision summary

Traditional kinship canonically runs on descent, marriage alliance and binary gendered terms.

Queer kinship organises care, parenthood and belonging beyond that monopoly.

Weston's chosen families and Schneider's critique of blood as symbol are theoretical anchors.

Indian hijra gharanas illustrate initiation-based relatedness outside the patriline.

Law often still privileges conjugal heterosexual kinship, which is part of the challenge.

The point is that kinship is done through practice, not only inherited as blood.

Introduction

Traditional kinship systems, in the anthropological and sociological canon, organise relatedness through descent and through marriage alliance. Blood, lawful marriage and the gendered household have been treated as the natural grid. Queer kinship names the ways lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and other non-normative people actually make lasting care, parenthood and belonging. Those practices challenge the monopoly of blood-and-marriage as the only real family.

Body

What is being challenged

David Schneider already argued that American kinship's "blood" is a cultural symbol, not a raw fact. Kath Weston, in *Families We Choose*, showed gay and lesbian networks in which friends, ex-lovers and co-parents do the work of kin. Judith Butler and later queer theory stressed that the heterosexual family is a regulatory ideal, not a description of all intimacy. Traditional systems assume binary gender for terms such as mother, father, uncle, and they assume that legitimate children follow a recognised marriage. Queer kinship interrupts all three: who counts as a parent, which body can be a mother or a father in law and in daily care, and whether a household must be conjugal.

Illustrations

In India, hijra and kinnar gharanas organise guru-chela relatedness, ritual work and care in old age outside the patrilineal house. That is kinship by initiation, not by descent from a father. Urban chosen families appear after natal rejection: shared rents, hospital signatures, funerals. Adoption and marriage equality remain legally constrained, which shows how tightly traditional kinship is wired into law. Friendship as kin during illness is an everyday challenge.

The challenge is not that biology disappears. It is that care and name can be organised otherwise, exposing kinship as a political arrangement of gender and legitimacy.

Flow diagram

Traditional kinship -> Blood descent
Traditional kinship -> Heterosexual marriage alliance
Queer kinship -> Chosen care
Queer kinship -> Guru-chela gharana
Queer kinship -> Legal lag
Queer kinship -> Traditional kinship

Conclusion

Queer kinship challenges traditional systems by relocating relatedness from compulsory heterosexual marriage and blood to chosen and practiced ties. Illustrations from hijra gharanas and urban chosen families show that the challenge is already social, even where law still lags. Kinship is revealed as made, not merely given.

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Compiled answer key

Last pages of this pack. Each question links to the WRAP model answer on wrapexams.com.

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Q1(a) 10 marks	Q1(b) 10 marks	Q1(c) 10 marks	Q1(d) 10 marks
Q1(e) 10 marks	Q2(a) 20 marks	Q2(b) 20 marks	Q2(c) 10 marks
Q3(a) 20 marks	Q3(b) 20 marks	Q3(c) 10 marks	Q4(a) 20 marks
Q4(b) 20 marks	Q4(c) 10 marks	Q5(a) 10 marks	Q5(b) 10 marks
Q5(c) 10 marks	Q5(d) 10 marks	Q5(e) 10 marks	Q6(a) 20 marks
Q6(b) 20 marks	Q6(c) 10 marks	Q7(a) 20 marks	Q7(b) 20 marks
Q7(c) 10 marks	Q8(a) 20 marks	Q8(b) 20 marks	Q8(c) 10 marks

Question-wise key

Q1(a) · 10 marks Solution

Q1(b) · 10 marks Solution

Q1(c) · 10 marks Solution

Q1(d) · 10 marks Solution

Q1(e) · 10 marks Solution

Q2(a) · 20 marks Solution

Q2(b) · 20 marks Solution

Q2(c) · 10 marks Solution

Q3(a) · 20 marks Solution

Q3(b) · 20 marks Solution

Q3(c) · 10 marks Solution

Q4(a) · 20 marks Solution

Q4(b) · 20 marks Solution

Q4(c) · 10 marks Solution

Q5(a) · 10 marks Solution

Q5(b) · 10 marks Solution

Q5(c) · 10 marks Solution

Q5(d) · 10 marks Solution

Q5(e) · 10 marks Solution

Q6(a) · 20 marks Solution

Q6(b) · 20 marks Solution

Q6(c) · 10 marks Solution

Q7(a) · 20 marks Solution

Q7(b) · 20 marks Solution

Q7(c) · 10 marks Solution

Q8(a) · 20 marks Solution

Q8(b) · 20 marks Solution

Q8(c) · 10 marks Solution

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