



OAKS PARK SIXTH FORM 
Learning Together, Achieving Together

A Level Sociology Transition Booklet 2026-27



Full Name: _____

Key Areas of Focus	
Introduction to A Level Course	What is sociology? Key concepts in sociology The impact of class, age, gender and ethnicity on our identity
GCSE Link	GCSE Sociology, GCSE Geography, GCSE History, GCSE Religious Studies
Skills	Literacy, comprehension, interpretation and evaluation.
Wider Reading	List available at back of booklet

A-Level Sociology

Sociology is the study of society, social relationships, and human behavior within a group context. It explores how individuals interact with one another, how social structures (like family, education, and the criminal justice system) influence behavior, and how culture, norms, and institutions shape our daily lives. Sociologists use research and theory to understand social patterns, inequalities, and the ways societies change over time.

Different sociologists view society through distinct theoretical perspectives, each offering unique insights into how social life is structured and functions.

This transition booklet focuses on understanding the key theoretical perspectives that we study at A-Level. This knowledge will support you in every topic that we study in sociology.

These theoretical perspectives are

- Functionalism
- Marxism
- Feminism
- New Right
- Interactionism
- Postmodernism

You are required to watch videos as part of the tasks, so please ensure you have access to the electronic version of this booklet to access the links. This can be found on the school website, but if you are having difficulties accessing the links, please contact lwillson@oakspark.redbridge.sch.uk

If there are any terms or concepts that you do not understand, please make every effort to research these yourself.

Functionalism

Task 1 - Watch this [video](#) on Functionalism and make notes on the key points in the box below.



Task 2 - Read this information below and answer the questions which follow

Functionalism is a **consensus theory** that sees society like a **machine or body**—with different parts (like family, education, and religion) working together to keep things running smoothly. Functionalists believe the **family is essential** for teaching shared norms and values, and for preparing children to be part of wider society.

Key thinkers:

Murdock: Believed the family was vital in performing 4 key functions [Education, Economic, Reproductive and Sexual]

Talcott Parsons: Argued the nuclear family performs two key functions:

1. **Primary socialisation of children** (teaching values and norms)
2. **Stabilisation of adult personalities** (emotional support and stability)

Questions:

- 1) According to Functionalists, why is the nuclear family important for society?

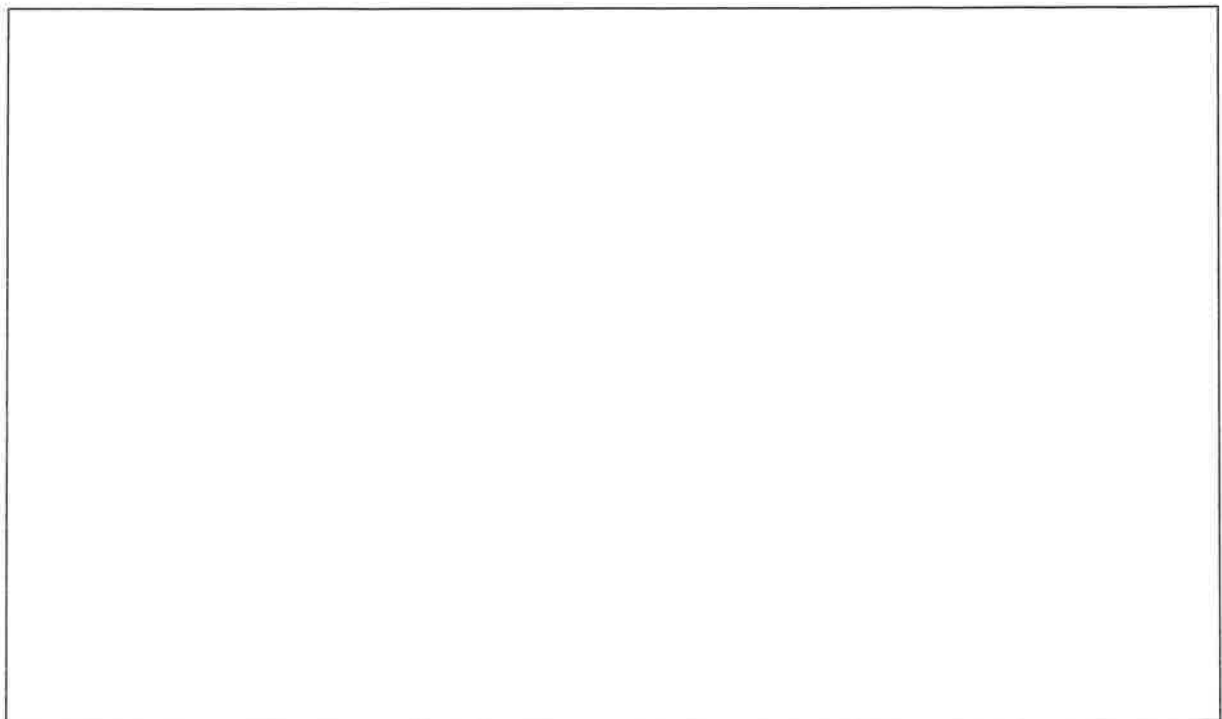
- 2) What kind of values and norms might parents pass on to children? Explain why they are important!

3) Do you think all families serve the same function in society today? Why or why not?

Task 3: Visualising Functionalism

Functionalists often compare society to a machine or a body. Create a **visual metaphor** (drawing, poster, or labelled diagram) that shows how a family is like a machine or organ in the body.

- Include different "parts" of the family (e.g. parents, children, roles) as parts of your machine/body.
- Label each part with the **function** it performs (e.g. "teaches discipline", "provides emotional support").



Marxism

Task 1 - Watch this [video](#) on Marxism and make notes on the key points in the box below.



Task 2 - Read this article on Zero hour contracts and answer the questions which follow

New Law Promises Better Job Security for Young People

The government has announced a new law to help people, especially young workers, who have insecure jobs. One big change is the ban on unfair zero-hours contracts. These contracts only pay people when they're needed, with no guaranteed hours.

Under the new **Employment Rights Bill**, workers must be given contracts that match the hours they usually work. Employers will also have to give fair notice if shifts are changed or cancelled, and may need to pay compensation.

The government says these changes will give workers more stability. However, people who like the flexibility of zero-hours contracts can still choose them.

What Young Workers Think

Fraser McGuire, 20, works two zero-hours jobs in bars. He says he would rather have regular hours, but for young people, zero-hours contracts are common. Sometimes he earns enough to pay rent, but other times he struggles. He believes the new law could help workers feel more confident about standing up for their rights. Still, he wonders how the law will be enforced and what "exploitation" really means.

Tamara Beattie, a mother from Fife, has been on a zero-hours contract for over two years. She likes the flexibility to care for her daughter, but says it's hard to pay the bills and it affects her mental health. She supports the new law but says more needs to be done to support parents, like offering family-friendly jobs.

Reactions from Unions

Many unions support the bill and believe it will improve workers' lives. But one union, the **IWGB**, says it doesn't help gig workers like Uber or Deliveroo drivers. These workers are considered self-employed and don't get basic rights like sick pay or holidays.

The **Trades Union Congress (TUC)** says gig workers are hard to reach because they work in many different areas. Some have won better rights through court, but this puts pressure on workers rather than the government.

The TUC hopes the new law will make it easier for all workers to join together and speak up for better conditions.

Questions

- 1) Do you think Marxists like zero hour contracts or not? Explain your answer.

- 2) Would Marxists be in favour of the changes in the law surrounding zero hour contracts? Explain your answer.

- 3) Why might someone choose to be on a zero hour contract?

Feminism

Task 1 - Watch this [video](#) on Feminism and make notes on the key points in the box below.



Task 1: *The Good Housewife's Guide*, a 1950s magazine article offering advice to women on how to treat their husbands and run a household.

Read through the article and answer the questions that follow

Housekeeping Monthly 13 May 1958



The good wife's guide

- *Have dinner ready.* Plan ahead, even the night before to have a delicious meal ready, on time for his return. This is a way of letting him know that you have been thinking about him and are concerned about his needs. Most men are hungry when they come home and the prospect of a good meal (especially his favourite dish) is part of the warm welcome needed.
- *Prepare yourself.* Take 15 minutes to rest so you'll be refreshed when he arrives. Touch up your make-up, put a ribbon in your hair and be fresh-looking. He has just been with a lot of work-weary people.
- *Be a little gay and a little more interesting for him.* His boring day may need a lift and one of your duties is to provide it.
- *Clear away the clutter.* Make one last trip through the main part of the house just before your husband arrives.
- *Gather up schoolbooks, toys, paper, etc.* and then run a duster cloth over the tables.
- *Have two coffee moments.* At the hour you should prepare and have a drink for him to be served by. Your husband will feel he has reached a haven of rest and peace and it will give you a lift too. After all, giving him this comfort will provide you with maximum personal satisfaction.
- *Prepare the children.* Take a few minutes to wash the children's hands and faces (if they are small), comb their hair and, if necessary, change their clothes. They are little treasures and he would like to see them playing the part. Minimize all noise. At the time of his arrival, eliminate all noise of the washer, dryer, or vacuum. Try to encourage the children to be quiet.
- *Be happy to see him.*
- *Greet him with a warm smile and show sincerity in your desire to please him.*
- *Listen to him.* You may have a dozen important things to tell him, but the moment of his arrival is not the time. Let him talk first - remember, his topics of conversation are more important than yours.
- *Make the evening his.* Never complain if he comes home late or goes out to dinner, or other places of entertainment without you. Instead, try to understand his world of strain and pressure and his very real need to be at home and relax.
- *Your goal.* Try to make sure your home is a place of peace, order, and tranquility where your husband can renew himself in body and spirit.
- *Don't greet him with complaints or problems.*
- *Don't complain if he's late home for dinner or even if he stays out all night.* Count this as minor compared to what he might have gone through that day.
- *Make him comfortable.* Have him lean back in a comfortable chair or have him lie down in the bedroom. Have a cool or warm drink ready for him.
- *Arrange his pillow and offer to take off his shoes.* Speak in a low, soothing and pleasant voice.
- *Don't ask him questions about his actions or question his judgment or integrity.* Remember, he is the master of the house and as such will always exercise his will with fairness and truthfulness. You have no right to question him.
- *A good wife always knows her place.*

1. What does this article suggest about the role and expectations of women in the 1950s?

2. How might this guide reflect the values of the time?

3. From a sociological perspective, how are gender roles being reinforced by this text?

4. What assumptions are made about men and women in this guide?

5. How might different feminist theories respond to this article? Try to briefly explain what each would say:

- **Liberal feminists**

Believes gender inequality is caused by discrimination and outdated attitudes. Wants legal and social change to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women and men

- **Radical feminists**

Argues that society is patriarchal (male-dominated) and that all institutions are built to benefit men. Believes deeper changes are needed to challenge male power and control in both public and private life.

- **Marxist feminists**

Links women's oppression to capitalism. Believes women are exploited both at home (as unpaid domestic workers) and in the workforce. They think gender inequality will only end when capitalism is replaced.

- **Difference feminists**

Suggests that not all women have the same experiences. Criticises other feminists for focusing mainly on white, middle-class women. Believes factors like ethnicity, class, and culture also shape gender roles

Task 2: Reimagine *The Good Housewife's Guide* for a modern 21st-century audience, based on the values of liberal feminism.

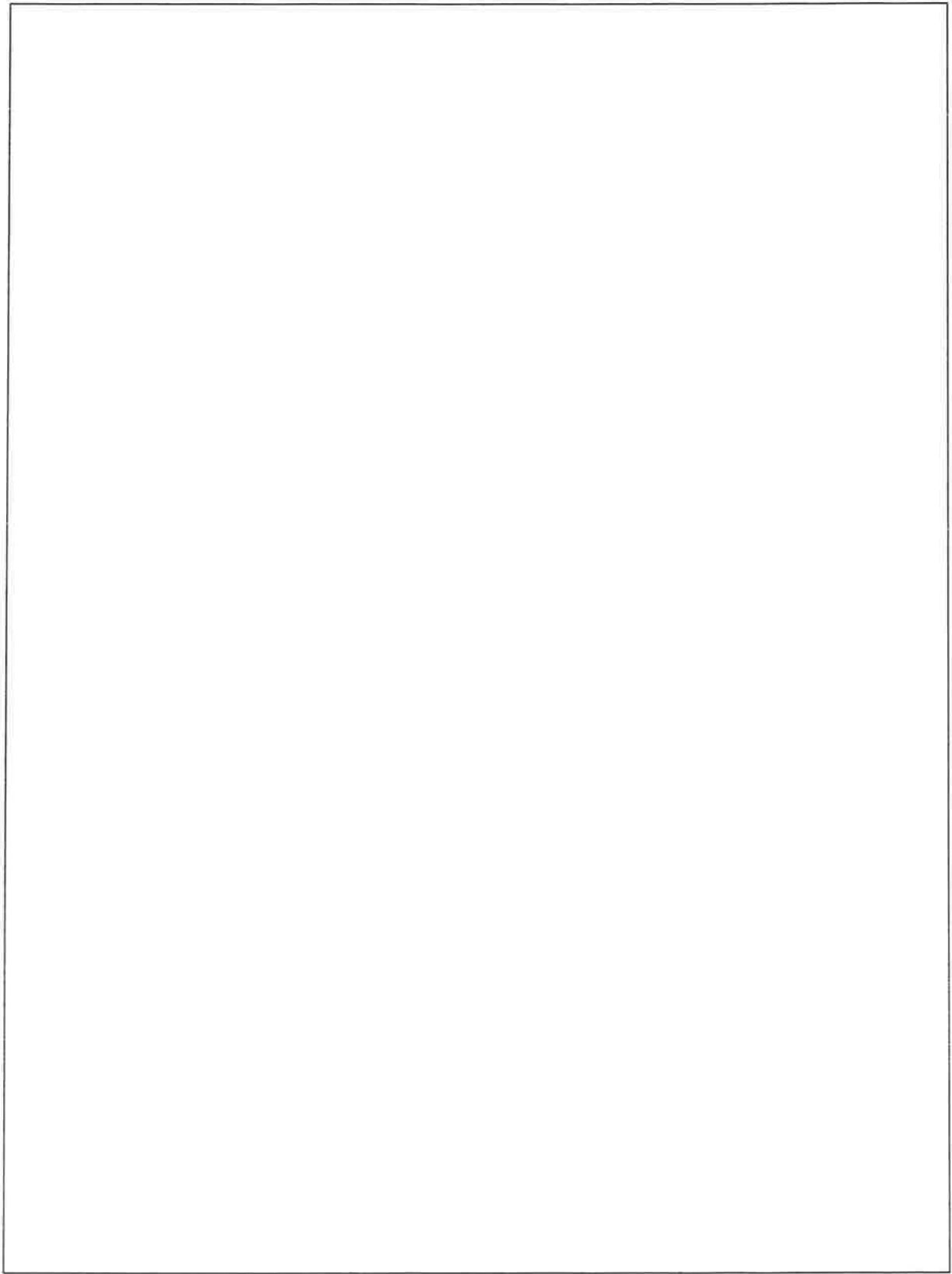
Success Criteria:

Create a Modern Guide for Gender Equality in the Home.

Include at least 5 new "guidelines" that promote fairness, shared responsibilities, and mutual respect in a relationship.

Present it in a creative format (poster, magazine cover, infographic, social media post, etc).

- Be thoughtful: your new guide should challenge outdated gender roles and reflect modern liberal feminist values.



New Right

Task 1 - Watch this [video](#) on the New Right and make notes on the key points in the box below.



Task 2 - Create a campaign poster from a New Right perspective based on what you have learnt about their views on society. You can present this how you choose and make it as creative as you like.

Let's Make Britain Great Again



Interactionism

Task 1 - Watch this [video](#) on Interactionism and make notes on the key points in the box below.



Task 2 - Read the article below and answer the questions which follow.

Not Many See Past Your “Drug” Label

Human beings are social creatures – we understand the world around us through our interpretation of the world. This interpretation is fundamentally important to create the structure we need to get through our everyday lives. Now, to live in consensus today we must have shared interpretations, values and beliefs we share together with other humans. Consequently, this means we generally share the same common labels that we ascribe to people.

We see people consume and sell drugs, and many will instantly take a condescending approach to these groups. Phrases like “ah he's just a drug dealer”, “silly nitty” are all too common. Derogatory dialogue stemming from derogatory views, cultivated from ignorance on why people are involved with them in the first place.

A drug dealer is simply a human being who is selling drugs for money. A drug user is simply a person who consumes drugs. Reducing people's problems or situation to a drug is simply narrow minded, pushed forward by propaganda of mass media outlets that purposely sweep under the carpet the real issues that may have led to the creation of a “drug dealer” and “drug user”, or create an issue when there is none.

Reductionism is an effective tactic to dismiss real issues at hands – and this is what is happening when we reduce to their drug-related label. The higher proportion of people selling drugs for money are usually doing so to put food in the fridge or to simply financially stabilise their family or loved ones. The context on why an individual sells drugs is essential: it humanises them and enables people to look beyond the label as this becomes relatable.

I understand the tactic of reductionism very well. I was branded as a criminal and placed in prison to rot for 14 months simply because I supported my single mother of three to pay the bills by selling cannabis to people who consented to buy the cannabis from me. The truth is that I found it disheartening that I could not support my mum financially, who had to take up the burden all on her own during that time-period.

The real issue at hand is the lack of perceived viable opportunities by these individuals, because most modern societies do not pride themselves on providing stable viable economic opportunities for those in the lower income bracket, instead marginalising this section of society when they either utilise drugs as a tool to provide income or cope with the pain they experience through life. Human beings are complex and cannot be described by a label.

The risk of labels is the feelings that could be potentially invoked among people which consequently may lead to unpleasant, dangerous actions. The Self Fulfilling Prophecy, is the notion that a label persistently attached to a person or people will increase the likelihood that the

label will become reality, as an identity forms around it. Rosenthal and Jacobson carried out a famous study on the subject of teacher *labelling* and its impact on pupils. Their findings supported the idea of a self-fulfilling prophecy, whereby if teachers labelled pupils as high-flyers or unusually gifted, their attainment came to reflect that label (and, theoretically, the opposite would also be true, with negative labels).

The truth is this is happening in our society today: those who sell drugs to feed their families, and those who consume drugs are looked down upon as criminals and hopeless people. People are conditioned to not look beyond the drugs; for most, the drugs are the reason, cause, and consequence of their problems, and not the inadequate housing, lack of employment opportunities, or drastic life changes. We would rather lock up drug users and dealers as criminals than question those in power on how they're governing, and how they've perpetuated these conditions of precarity in the first place.

We have to resist this reductionism and adopt a more profound, complex, and understanding view of drugs and those that are involved with them

Questions

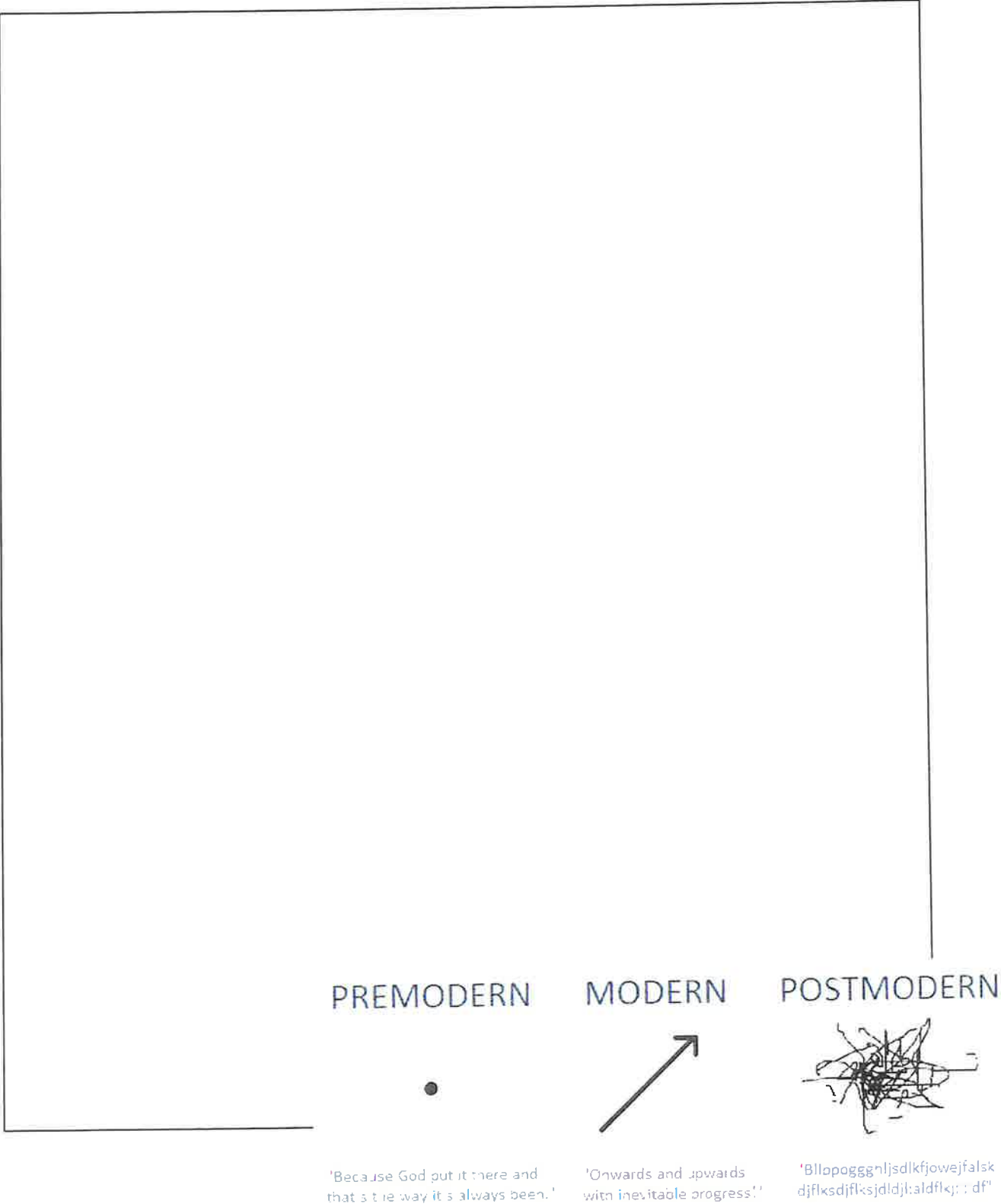
- 1) According to the article, how are drug dealers labelled by society?

- 2) From an interactionist perspective, how might this label negatively impact the person who has been labeled?

3) What solution might interactionists suggest to reduce crime in society?

Postmodernism

Task 1 - Watch this [video](#) on Postmodernism and make notes on the key points in the box below.



Task 1: Read the following summary explanation of a sociological theory Personal Life Perspective and answer the questions that follow

Personal Life Perspective (Carol Smart)

This theory focuses on the **individual meanings** and **personal connections** people form in their lives—not just traditional ideas like nuclear families. It sees family as a **fluid and personal concept**, shaped by how people feel and act, not just legal or biological ties.

For example, someone might see a close friend, a step-parent, or a pet as "family" because of emotional closeness—even if they're not related by blood or marriage.

Postmodernism

Postmodernism argues that in today's society, there is **no single way to live**. We have more **freedom and choice** in how we live, love, and form identities. Family life has become more **diverse** (e.g. single-parent families, same-sex families, cohabitation) because individuals are no longer following fixed traditions.

1. According to the personal life perspective, why might someone see a friend, pet, or even an ex-partner as "family"? Explain your answer

2. How does this view challenge more traditional views of the family?

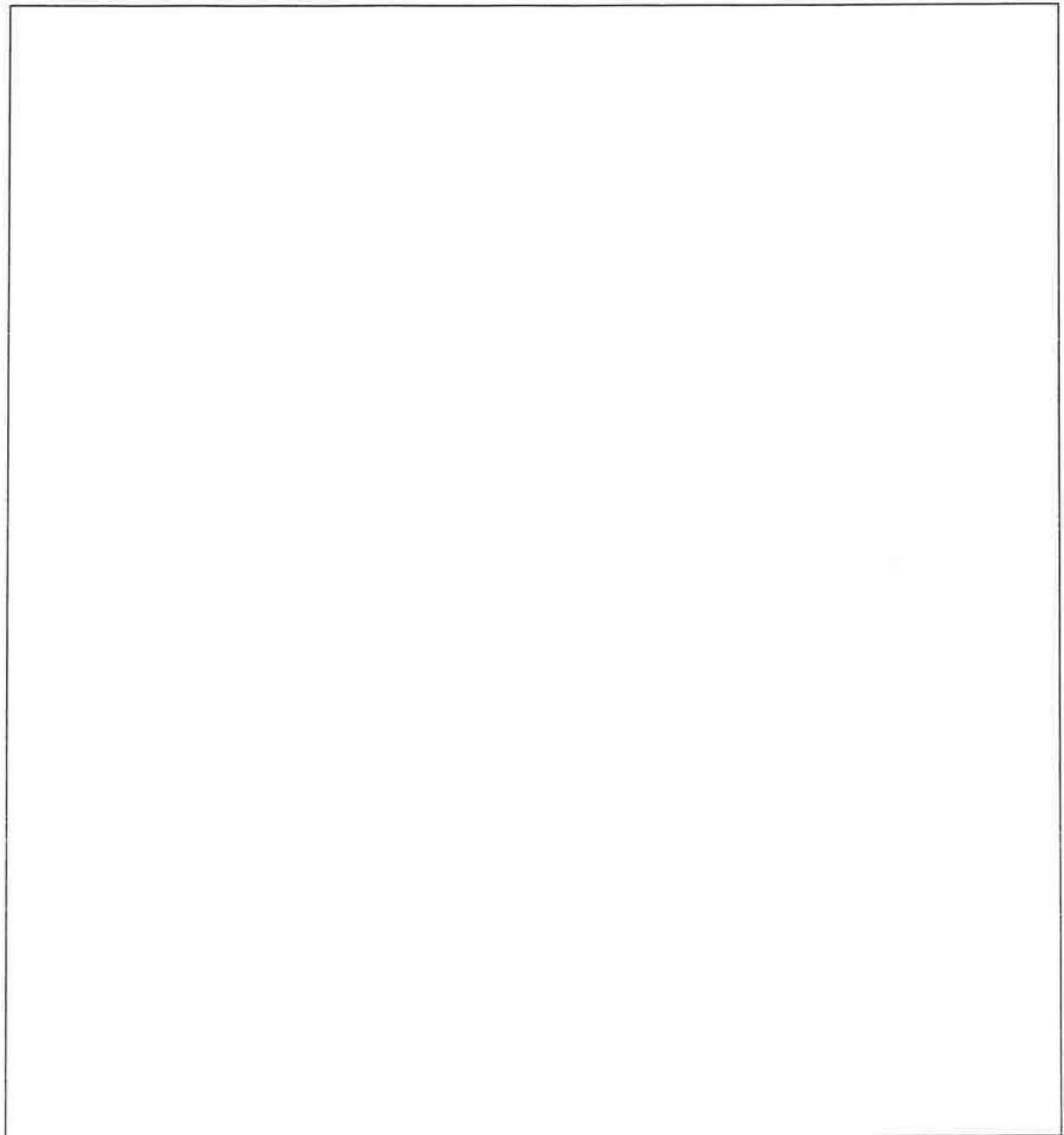
3. How has family life become more diverse in recent years? Can you give examples?

4. Do you think people today have more freedom to choose their family and lifestyle than in the past? Why or why not?

Task 2 follows on the next page.

Task 2: Be Creative and design your own family tree including ideas from postmodernism and personal life perspective

- You can include people, pets, traditions, places, objects, or memories.
- Label your diagram with short explanations of why each connection matters to you.
- Try to reflect the idea that family is **more than just blood or legal ties**, linking your map to the **personal life perspective**.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a student to draw their own family tree. The box is oriented vertically and occupies the lower half of the page.

