

Candidate 5 evidence

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	Section 1 - Human Society (30 marks)	
1	Describe two features of symbolic interactionism. (4 marks)	
	<p>One feature of symbolic interactionism is Becker's Labelling Theory. This Theory describes a way of evaluating why people in society act in the way that they do. According to Becker, we act in the way that society designates for us whether according to the rules or are deviant from them. For example, criminals are labelled as deviant and so they act in the way that society expects of them - criminally.</p> <p>Becker's Labelling Theory is related to the Charles Cooley's Looking Glass Self conception. In this theory, the distinction is made between the words 'I' and 'me' in that while 'I' is our rawest, deepest conception of who we are as human beings uninfluenced by agents of socialisation, 'me' is our image of ourselves through the 'looking glass' of other people's perceptions. In this sense, the symbols which we associate ourselves with - mostly signified in language - and call 'me' are just us applying labelling theory to ourselves. An so to continue the example, criminals who are labelled as deviant may not only act in a criminal way because society expects them to but because being deviant has become part of their identity - part of their 'me' - as it is how others see them through the looking glass.</p> <p>Another feature of symbolic interactionism is that it is a micro approach. This means that it is tightly focused on interactions between individuals (as well as small groups_ in society as an explanation for sociological trends and phenomena rather than broader structural forces which may have influence on human behaviour.</p>	
2	Explain one difference between Marxism and Weberism. (3 marks)	
	<p>The primary difference between Marxism and Weberism is the extent to which they are conscientious of interactions between individuals within society. While Weberism is a social theory which attempts to harmonise the structural and action approach to sociology and argues that while structural forces do play a role, human interactions are more important; Marxism is purely focused on the structural aspect of the human experience and is much less interested in an individual's ability to affect his own life. Overall, Marxism is a macro theory which focuses on the role of structural forces in society on an individual's life (through social institutions as part of the superstructure), Weberism incorporates this thinking to but combines it with analysis of interactions between individuals and small groups - deeming the latter to be more important and therefore classifying Weberism as an action theory (micro approach).</p>	
3	Analyse similarities and differences between consensus and conflict theories. (9 marks)	
	<p>One example of a consensus theory is Functionalism - first championed by Emile Durkheim in the final quarter of the 19th Century and carried on by sociologists such as George Herbert Mead.</p> <p>One example of a conflict theory is Marxism - developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels through works such as the Communist Manifesto and Das Kapital in the middle of the nineteenth century based on a Hegelian view on the dialectics of history.</p> <p>One more example of a conflict theory is Feminism - the ideological basis of which was developed by women such as Mary Wollstonecraft in the late 18th Century and then its tenets put into practice through various waves of feminism from the Suffragettes and Suffragists of the early 1900s to the civil right feminists of the 1960s to today.</p> <p>One aspect which all three of these theories share in common is that they are all structural approaches (also known as macro theories). In this way, they are all different</p>	

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	<p>to symbolic interactionism or Weberism because they uphold the role of society as the most important factor in influencing socioeconomic and cultural realities in the lives of individuals rather than prioritising interactions between individuals.</p> <p>A difference between the consensus and conflict theories is the clearer stratification of society under conflict theories - which is the basis for the conflict in the first place. In Feminism, there is a Patriarchy with its interest in oppressing women and promoting the supremacy of men in society. In Marxism, there is a bourgeoisie whose capital interests are constantly at odds with those of the proletariat (for example, they have an interest in suppressing wages for workers and raising prices for consumers). In Functionalism, no such clear social stratification takes place. While Functionalists do acknowledge that there are different classes and categories in society, they argue that this level of stratification is necessary for the harmonisation of society and the protection of it from anomie (normlessness). Therefore in summary, while Marxism and Feminism treat the inequality within society (whether it be between upper and lower classes or men and women) as the gravest injustice to be overcome, Functionalists argue that these inequalities exist to a much lesser degree and that to the degree that it does exist, it is necessary for societal harmony.</p> <p>One way in which the types of macro theories are different is the disunity within. Inside of Feminism there are different factions based around preferred approaches. For example, there are Liberal Feminists, Marxist Feminists and Radical Feminists who have sometimes diametrically opposed concerns and tactics. Similarly, theorists within Marxism have different conceptions of what exactly Marxism put into theory or practice should look like - as shown by the numerous different factions during the birth of the Soviet Union (from Mensheviks and Bolsheviks to 'Left Communists' and Socialist Revolutionaries - all with different interpretations of how Marxist theory should be applied to the specific situation they were in). As opposed to these bitterly divided theories of Marxism and Feminism, Functionalism is more unified. Although there may be disagreements between Durkheim and Mead, both have the same general understanding of how society is (harmonious) and what its goal and purpose should be (the eradication of anomie / normlessness).</p> <p>One way in which all three theories are similar is that they share a weakness in that they struggle to integrate the role played by individuals within a society into their understanding of the mechanics of society as each is focused on the way in which structural forces and objectives - be it the fight against anomie and normlessness, the fight for class consciousness or the fight against the patriarchy for gender equality - as broader social movements obscure the actions of individuals or small groups.</p>	
4	Describe any two stages in the research process. (4 marks)	
	<p>One stage in the research process is the identification of the issue - for example the impact of gender roles on crime. It is important to have a strong idea of what exactly one is investigating and researching in order to narrow the scope of the search into one topic - rather than having a vague and woolly topic of research which may lead to one branching off into different tangents.</p> <p>Another stage in the research process is the selection of the appropriate research methods. There are some social issues that when investigating, it may be more helpful to evaluate based on quantitative methods such as official statistics. For example on gender roles and crime, one would use official statistics to research what percentage of the prison population is male as opposed to female. However, it may also be useful when investigating an issue like this to incorporate some qualitative methods into the researching process for example a case study may be useful to evaluate the differences in the way male and female prisoners are treated by society.</p> <p>Therefore in summary, one stage in the research process is to identify the sociological issue that one is seeking to investigate - e.g. suicide or crime or social mobility - in order to have a proper grounding and foundation for the rest of the research to be built on.</p>	

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	Another stage in the process is to select the right research methods that would suit the issue being investigated - whether it be purely qualitative methods like case studies and participant observation or quantitative methods such as official statistics or a blend of the two.	
5	Describe two features of focus groups. (4 marks)	
	<p>One feature of the research method of focus groups is that they are a qualitative method - focusing on the quality of answers rather than the quantity of data. This means that while they may only investigate a small sample size of people, the quality and interpretability of the answers from those people will be greater than that could be gleaned from official statistics such as the number of prison rapes in a given year.</p> <p>Another feature of focus groups is the group aspect. While interviews - both structured and unstructured - typically take the form of a one-on-one interaction between investigator and participant, focus groups are designed around interaction between the participants. As such, this method may be a more appropriate way of investigating social factors such as the interaction between old people and young people or men and women rather than for trying to investigate things like the reasons for committing crime or the reasons for suicide which are more personal, individual decisions. In these latter examples, a method like interviews or case studies may be a more effective way to investigate.</p>	
6	Evaluate Participant Observation as a research method. (6 marks)	
	<p>One weakness of participant observation is the Hawthorne Effect. If the participants are aware that they are being observed, they may alter their usual answers in hopes of pleasing the investigators and giving them an answer they want, rather than a perfectly honest answer. This pressure to conform to the expectations of those investigating you would not exist if you were being observed without your knowledge.</p> <p>On the other hand, a strength of participant observation is that there are fewer ethical concerns as no person is being deceived and observed without their knowledge. It is ethically problematic to secretly observe someone as it violates their right to privacy and so non-participant observation as a research method needs to be used much more carefully and sparingly than participant observation.</p> <p>One feature of participant observation is that it is a qualitative method of research. This can be interpreted as a strength because it means that instead of valuing the pure quantity of data collected, in many cases it values the depth of the answers. This means that more detailed conclusions can be drawn from the data (such as exactly why crime is being committed in a certain area of the country) that is collected rather than just a number on an official government spreadsheet (which may just show the raw facts that crime is being committed disproportionately in a certain area of the country, for example) which can be interpreted in more ways.</p> <p>However, this feature could also be construed as a weakness. Quantitative methods - most notably Official Statistics - are able to collect large amounts of data which help to draw conclusions on broader social trends. For example, in examining the nature of suicide in the United Kingdom, it may be helpful to draw upon statistics from the ONS to observe broader trends in the data rather than encountering the social problem on a case-by-case basis.</p>	
	Section 2 - Culture and Identity (25 Marks)	
7	Explain the impact of socialisation on the formation of identity. (8 marks)	

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	<p>Socialisation is the lifelong process by which we as human beings acclamate to the society in which we live. It has many different forms - for example when an immigrant or asylum seeker moves to a different region or country, they are pressured by societal forces to socialise into their new cultural backdrop and obey the rules of the society which they have joined. This type of socialisation is called assimilation.</p> <p>Socialisation comes in two main stages throughout life. The first is primary socialisation - that which takes place when we are very young. In our early years our primary influence comes from our parents or close family members. For some people, religion can play a role and for an increasing number of people in the coming generation, social media and the internet is playing a role as many parents give their children phones and tablets at younger and younger ages.</p> <p>The second stage of socialisation is called secondary socialisation and it never really finishes. This is socialisation which comes from places like the media, our peer groups, school the workplace, more serious engagement with spiritual, political, philosophical and religious ideas and elsewhere.</p> <p>It can be said that both of these stages hold a great deal of significance in the formation of one's identity. In the early stages of primary socialisation, we are defined almost exclusively in relation and comparison to our parents as it is through them that we can gain an appreciation and comprehension of the world. When we are very young, too, we are limited in the power we can exert as we are often the smallest in our family and the bottom of the food chain. As such, when we are young we often define our identity as being more attached to items and we use superlatives to express this e.g. 'favourite colour', 'favourite dinosaur', 'favourite shoes', 'favourite dress', 'favourite food'. Whereas when we are adults, we strive to less clearly define our favourites and least favourites because secondary socialisation allows us to define ourselves in alternate ways.</p> <p>Secondary socialisation, through interactions with peer groups and digestion of media, allows us to explore our interests and hobbies and passions more independently of that of our parents. Part of secondary socialisation is in fact using these agents of socialisation such as the media and peer groups to define ourselves in opposition to our parents - known as the teenage rebellious phase - as we explore our identity. Secondary socialisation never stops and can be influenced by events that take place later in life such as getting married, having children, career progression etc. But it influences our identity throughout that time because oftentimes, our gut feelings about our own identity - who we are as a person - are cross-referenced in our mind with certain experiences that we have been through. If one thinks of themselves as an unintelligent person, that may be a product of the experience of doing poorly in a test or being castigated by parents or teachers or peers for making mistakes again and again and so this serves as an example of where a deep-set ideal we have about ourselves is strongly impacted by agents of socialisation and socialising events in our lives.</p> <p>Identity is not only a set of facts about us (eye colour, preferred hairstyle, birthday, fingerprint) but also a complexion of our experiences and thoughts and emotions. It is socialisation that grants us this complexion of experiences and influences our thoughts and emotions and so it is socialisation and its agents which it could be said have the most significant impact on the formation of identity of all social factors throughout a person's life.</p>	
8	Explain high and popular culture using one sociological theory. (7 marks)	
	<p>One sociological theory that can be used to explain the existence and dichotomy of high and popular culture is Marxism. Marxists would argue that the means by which the two are kept separate are economic. The reason that Lacrosse and Polo are seen as being symptomatic of high culture is because these sports require expensive equipment, access to lots of land and good connections in order to play. It is through the control of these artefacts that the bourgeoisie can keep the proletariat excluded from participation in these activities.</p>	

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	<p>When it comes to the appreciation of fine art - whether it be paintings in a museum or operas - Marxists would argue that these things require a very specific degree of education that most people in society do not have access to. In British society, there is a very clear cultural stratification between those who attended schools like Eton, universities like Oxbridge and clubs like the Bullingdon Club who had the education required to engage in things like fine art and poetry and those who did not.</p> <p>This, then, also extends to the political realm in that it is no coincidence that so many Prime Ministers in Britain attended these schools and universities and swam in the same social circles - they had the education to progress in society. They had the right connections to accumulate as much power as possible and use that power in their own class interests.</p> <p>This, then, is the Marxist perspective on high and popular culture and its relation to the political realm. For Marx and his followers, high culture is symptomatic of a society where the bourgeoisie deliberately seek to socially exclude the proletariat from engaging in activities considered 'high culture' in order to maintain their rank in society.</p> <p>Popular culture is often that which the lower classes find relatable. The Simpsons is popular because many in America and across the world can recognise the socioeconomic situation and problems of the fictional family and relate to it. Sometimes, there are things which can go from being popular culture into having more institutional power. For example, in his day Shakespeare was performing for the lowborn of society and his works would be considered popular culture of the time but today, an appreciation of Shakespeare can be perceived as upper class and slightly ostentatious. The Beatles, once the pinnacle of popular culture, had the same trajectory where they gave gained more traditional relevance - signified by Sir Paul McCartney's knighthood.</p> <p>Therefore, while it is possible for some things to transcend popular culture and garner more high cultural recognition or traditional institutional influence, this is the exception and for Marxists, most of the time the barriers between popular culture and high culture are jealously guarded - just as the bourgeoisie's position at the top of society is.</p>	
9	Using the study <i>Cohen, S. (1972) Folk Devils and Moral Panics</i>:	
(a)	Describe two findings of the study. (5 marks)	
	<p>One finding of the study surrounds the Moral Panics. Cohen found that the media tends to exaggerate the scale of problems in their headlines. This process of exaggeration which feeds into a panic which feeds into a demand for more information and a confirmation bias leads to a whirlwind by which society becomes less united and the media owners make more money. This was exactly the case in the 1960s when the scale of the problem of the opposing subcultures of Mods and Rockers came into conflict - a conflict magnified and multiplied by newspapers who used it to cause such a moral panic.</p> <p>Another finding of the study is that the Folk Devils often created by the media are rarely as sensational as they are made out to seem. In the sixties, mods and rockers were a relatively minor, insular movement which, like all social trends, would likely go out of fashion soon enough anyway. It was the media's intervention in the situation, reporting exaggerated stories of the misdeeds of the groups or their growing influence in society, which escalated the situation. Therefore, it could be said that a finding of Cohen was that the media shining a spotlight on folk devils often does little to help and often worsens situations of social tension.</p> <p>Overall, Cohen's two findings were that (1) the media tends to overemphasise the scale of the problem and that (2) this overemphasis leads to more societal disunity and tension which often makes the moral panic more real and effectual.</p>	

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(b)	Evaluate the study. (4 marks)	
	<p>The study is strong in that it stands the test of time and is relevant today - arguably even more so. While back in 1972, the main medium of communication was newspapers, today the arena of sensationalisation is social media on platforms like Twitter or YouTube. The concept of 'clickbait' is a descendant of the sensationalised headlines that twist and exaggerate even minor things until they become a serious folk devil to be feared. Therefore in summary, the study is easily replicable today by looking at modern trends in social media in the way in which stories are reported and moral panics are managed.</p> <p>However, the study is weak in that it was compiled over fifty years ago and many of the things detailed - such as the mods and rockers - are no longer relevant to modern lives. Therefore, on its own, the study may no longer be sufficient to explain the folk devils and moral panics of the 2020s but it is strong in that it lays the foundations for further such studies with similar methodology to be carried out in future.</p>	
	Section 3 - Social Issues	
10	<p>Analyse a social issue of your choice. This could be social mobility or any other social issue you have studied. (25 marks)</p> <p>In your answer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use two contrasting theories, at least one must be a structural theory • Explain findings from one study • Link this study to your chosen theories 	
	<p>Introduction</p> <p>In 1895, Emile Durkheim published a book called 'Suicide: A Study in Sociology'. He used this - generally regarded as his magnum opus - as a way of distinguishing the discipline of sociology from psychology and political philosophy. He chose suicide as the social issue to study as for centuries - going back to ancient Greek and Roman myths and traditions - it had been regarded as the ultimate individual act with no sociological basis of which to speak. In this work, Durkheim set out to prove that in fact there was a sociological dimension to suicide. He also chose suicide because there were available statistics from the time in which he lived for a multitude of countries from Austria Hungary to Spain to Britain to France to Prussia. This work is generally considered to be extremely influential in the field of sociology and the basis for many future investigations into the phenomenon of suicide due to the rigour with which it was compiled. First, we must define our terms. 'Suicide' is the act by which someone deliberately takes their own life. 'Social Regulation' is defined by Durkheim as being the extent to which people feel regulated by society and, in turn, the extent to which they are able to regulate themselves. 'Social Integration' is defined by Durkheim as being the extent to which people feel integrated into society.</p> <p>Types of Suicide</p> <p>In his work, Durkheim defined four types of suicide based on the extent to which people had various social characteristics. One of these types of suicide occurs when someone suffers from too much social integration and too much social regulation. They feel too much a part of society and so their individual identity is too far diminished. As such, they feel like they are unable to contribute much to society - on top of feeling constrained and unable to live out their own lives independent of society's expectations - and so this is what leads them to end their lives.</p> <p>Another of these types of suicides defined by Durkheim occurs when people suffer from too little social integration and too little social regulation. This is when people feel like</p>	

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	<p>they are excluded from society - perhaps considering themselves deviant in some way - and do not see a way of properly reintegrating with the society. They therefore decide that to take their own life is the only option. They also suffer from a lack of social regulation. Whereas many people are hesitant to take their own life because they feel a sense of responsibility to society or to others, people without that social regulation imposed on them feel more free from the norms of society and therefore more free to kill themselves. This is therefore linked with the functionalist concept of anomie and called anomic suicide.</p> <p>Another type of suicide is called egoistic suicide. This is where a person feels a strong sense of social regulation but a low sense of social integration. They feel like they follow society's rules and expectations and fulfill their roles but that they do not in return have a stake in society - that they are not properly integrated within it.</p> <p>A final type of suicide occurs when people feel strongly integrated within society but an inability to regulate themselves. This is not a very common situation as for many people, part of being integrated within a society is feeling regulated by it, but it still exists wherein people have chaotic lives with lots happening and an inability to manage and regulate all the responsibilities and expectations placed upon them - even if they're perfectly integrated within society perhaps in school or work with perfectly supportive parents and a family of their own.</p> <p>Overall, there are a number of different types of suicide according to various degrees of social integration and social regulation. Durkheim found some to be more common than others - for example that among the prison population, anomic suicide was the norm as they felt little self-regulation, were deliberately not integrated within society and had little aspirations for the future.</p> <p>Functionalist Perspective</p> <p>Durkheim was the prototypical Functionalist. He viewed society as being an intricate web of social institutions and agents of socialisation all working to keep the forces of anomie and normlessness at bay. Functionalists would argue that, like with crime, suicide is a normal part of society. In fact, as Durkheim found, the more harmonious and functional society is, the higher the suicide rate (shown in his study when comparing suicide rates in times of crises such as in 1866 for Austria and Prussia to periods of relative prosperity). Therefore, suicide is a functional artefact that keeps society going by virtue of the fact that it has been part of human civilization since it began.</p> <p>One stark example of where suicide might be said to serve a social purpose is in the Inuit tribes of the far North of America. Traditionally, when a person becomes of an age that is too advanced to be of social utility to the rest of the tribe, they are expected to sacrifice themselves and take their own lives in order not to put strain on the resources of the tribe. Other examples exist across the world of suicide being an important part of culture from willing sacrifices to the Aztec Gods to the role suicide played in the warlike culture of Japan from the samurais to Kamikaze pilots. Functionalists would point to examples like these to say that suicide is not in every instance a social disbenefit and that the act of taking one's own life serves an equivalent, if more subtle and subdued, function in modern western society.</p> <p>The concepts of social regulation and integration are necessary to hold to in order to maintain the norms and values of society and keep normlessness in check. Although these things need to be balanced in order to keep most of society regulated, there are some people for whom they are either too regulated, are insufficiently regulated, are too integrated or not integrated enough and, from a purely utilitarian standpoint, rather than society as a whole moving to meet these people where they are, these people remove themselves from society. This kind of perspective on social issues such as crime, social stratification and suicide may be critiqued for treating people as cogs in a machine and individual interests as subservient to that of society as a whole.</p> <p>In summary, the functionalist perspective is that suicide serves a necessary social function in reinforcing the need for social integration and regulation of individuals</p>	

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	<p>within a modern western society. This is contrasted with other social perspectives - some of which like Marxism argue that suicide is not a necessary component of society and is in fact a product of malleable social trends - others of which like symbolic interactionism stressing that suicide really is the ultimate individual act with little influence by big societal superstructures.</p> <p>Marxist Perspective</p> <p>Marxists would argue that the societal superstructure contributes to suicide - especially suicide. The bourgeoisie at the top of the superstructure have an interest in, through the media, discouraging individual expression - encouraging compliance in school and in the workplace. How 'society' is defined is often dictated by the media which serves the interest of the wealthy and portrays the artefacts of high culture - often out of reach of the proletariat - to be what society and culture really is. As such, the lower classes, who are socioeconomically excluded from participation in this high culture, feel an increased sense of a lack of integration in society.</p> <p>They would further say that we live in a culture which prioritises material wealth. To have more material wealth is seen to be a social boon. Therefore, when workers are alienated from the products of their labour - their material wealth - it contributes to them feeling alienated from our culture and society as a whole. This alienation may therefore prompt them to take their own lives and remove themselves from a society they did not feel they were a part of. For example, nowhere is this consumerist nature of society shown than on Christmas where it is expected that people exchange gifts with each other and events such as 'Black Friday' have been created to accommodate this expectation. Marxists would point to the fact that it is at Christmastime when the rates of suicide are highest throughout the year as contributing evidence to the suggestion that consumerism is a social phenomenon and artefact of our modern Western culture that is seriously contributing to the issue of suicide.</p> <p>In summary, Marxists would attribute suicide - especially egoistic suicide - to an alienation of the proletariat from society - society being represented through our consumerist culture and the glorification of high culture which many of the lower classes struggle to attain. This kind of perspective - extending to the Marxist perspective on crime - could be critiqued by Weberists or Symbolic Interactionists for being too focused on the role played by people and social classes as parts of a society rather than as individual human beings with their own thoughts and motivations that may induce them to take their own lives or commit a crime.</p> <p><i>Suicide: A Study in Sociology Findings</i></p> <p>There were several findings from <i>Suicide: A Study in Sociology</i> (1895). For one, Durkheim found that in his time, men were both more likely to attempt suicide and more likely to succeed in committing suicide than women. This is a trend which persists to this day although through further investigation it has been found that, in the UK at least, the rates of suicide for men and women are closest during adolescence. The most likely group in the UK to take their own lives are middle-aged men between the ages of 50 and 55. However, Durkheim found that rates of suicide did increase in women the older they got while unmarried or if they were barren.</p> <p>Durkheim also found that in periods of societal turmoil, suicide rates go down. For example, suicide rates decreased in both Prussia and Austria during the Austro-Prussian War of 1866. This was replicated during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Common sense thinking might infer that as depression rates went up during the lockdown, so too did suicide rates but this would actually be incorrect and the reverse was true. One explanation for this could be that during crises, more of an effort is made to emphasise social integration and cohesion and during the pandemic specifically, people made more of an effort to check up on their loved ones etc.</p> <p>Further findings were also that those who were married were less likely to kill themselves (perhaps because being in a loving marriage engendered a stronger sense of social integration as well as the regulation from someone else) as were those in the</p>	

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	<p>lower classes (perhaps because they have less faith in future advancement and improvement in their conditions).</p> <p>This study is linked to Functionalism in particular - especially as it is practically the study which founded both sociology as a discipline and functionalism as a doctrine within sociology. For example, the specific finding that times of crisis breed more social integration and regulation and therefore decrease rates of suicide contribute to the functionalist perspective of suicide being normal in a functional society. This study is also linked to Marxism as it reaffirms the hypothesis that those on the lowest rungs of society are most likely to commit suicide - the proletariat rather than the bourgeoisie.</p> <p>Overall, suicide is a phenomenon that has existed in human civilization for millenia. Whether conceived as a purely individual decision with no social implications or consequences or as a subject to be studied on a broader scale, many different theories and perspectives have been developed to explore the nature, reasons for and consequences of suicide on society. Ultimately, it seems likely that as suicide is still a problem in the UK - and a disproportionate one according to gender at that - according to the ONS and as organisations such as Samaritans are founded to try to help alleviate the problem, it is not a social issue that will slip into irrelevance any time soon.</p>	