

OXFORD CAMBRIDGE AND RSA EXAMINATIONS
GCSE

B673/01/CS
SOCIOLOGY

Applying Sociological Research Techniques

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1 January 2012**

PRE-RELEASE MATERIAL FOR 2012 EXAMINATION

JUNE 2012

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INVESTIGATION 1 – A STUDY (2011) BY A 35 YEAR OLD FEMALE VOLUNTARY WORKER IN AN INTERNATIONAL FAMILY CENTRE IN MIDDLESBROUGH.

Title: Asian Families in the UK

I want to prove or disprove the following hypothesis:

‘Divorce and family breakdown in the UK is increasing but Asian families have strong bonds which keep them together’.

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As a Pakistani woman born and brought up in the UK, I have first-hand experience of two different cultures. I am aware that both divorce and cohabitation seem to be common features of life in the UK today. However, in my family and local Pakistani community most people marry rather than cohabit and divorce does not happen very often.

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Most couples I know say they will stay together for life. This could be because of the influence of older members of the family who must be respected. However, there are some couples who divorce and they seem to be the younger ones. I wonder whether things are changing in the Asian communities. I need valid and reliable evidence to study this.

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Aims:

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- to find out and compare the pattern of divorce of white and Asian families in the UK;**
- to find out and compare the amount of cohabitation among white and Asian couples in the UK;**
- to find out and compare the views and attitudes of white and Asian people to marriage, cohabitation and divorce.**

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SECONDARY RESEARCH

To find out the patterns of cohabitation and divorce in the UK I wanted to use official statistics as these have many advantages and are considered to be good quality data. 30

I found graphs A and B (Source 1) from the Office of National Statistics (ONS). The data has information from the Census in 2001 but not from the next Census in 2011 as this information is not yet available. 35

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SOURCE 1

I found the graph below from the ONS. I also found from the ONS that:

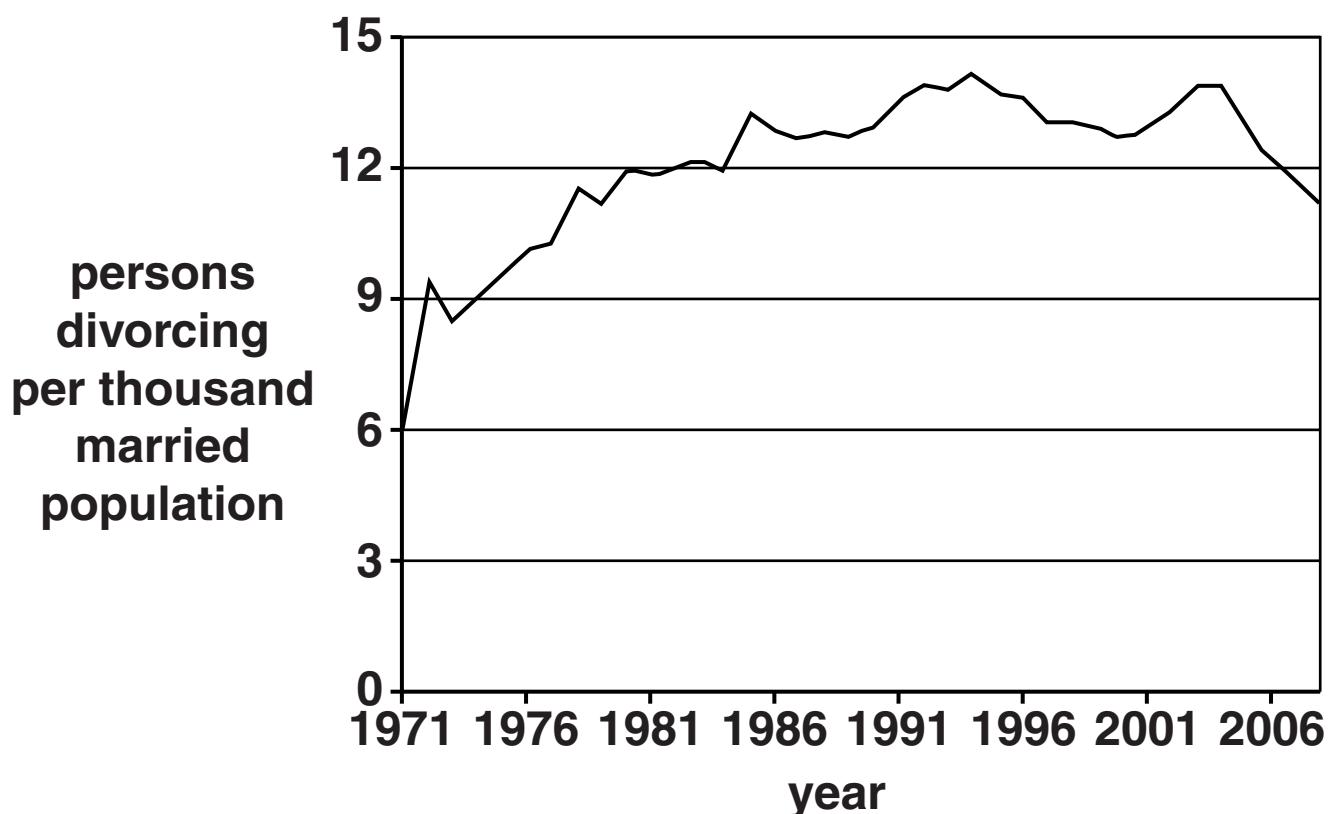
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- since 1998 the average age at divorce in England and Wales has risen from 40 to 44 years;
- 1 in 5 people who divorce had been in a previous marriage that had ended in divorce and this number had doubled since 1981;
- 69% of divorces in 2008 were of couples who had not been married before.

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GRAPH A

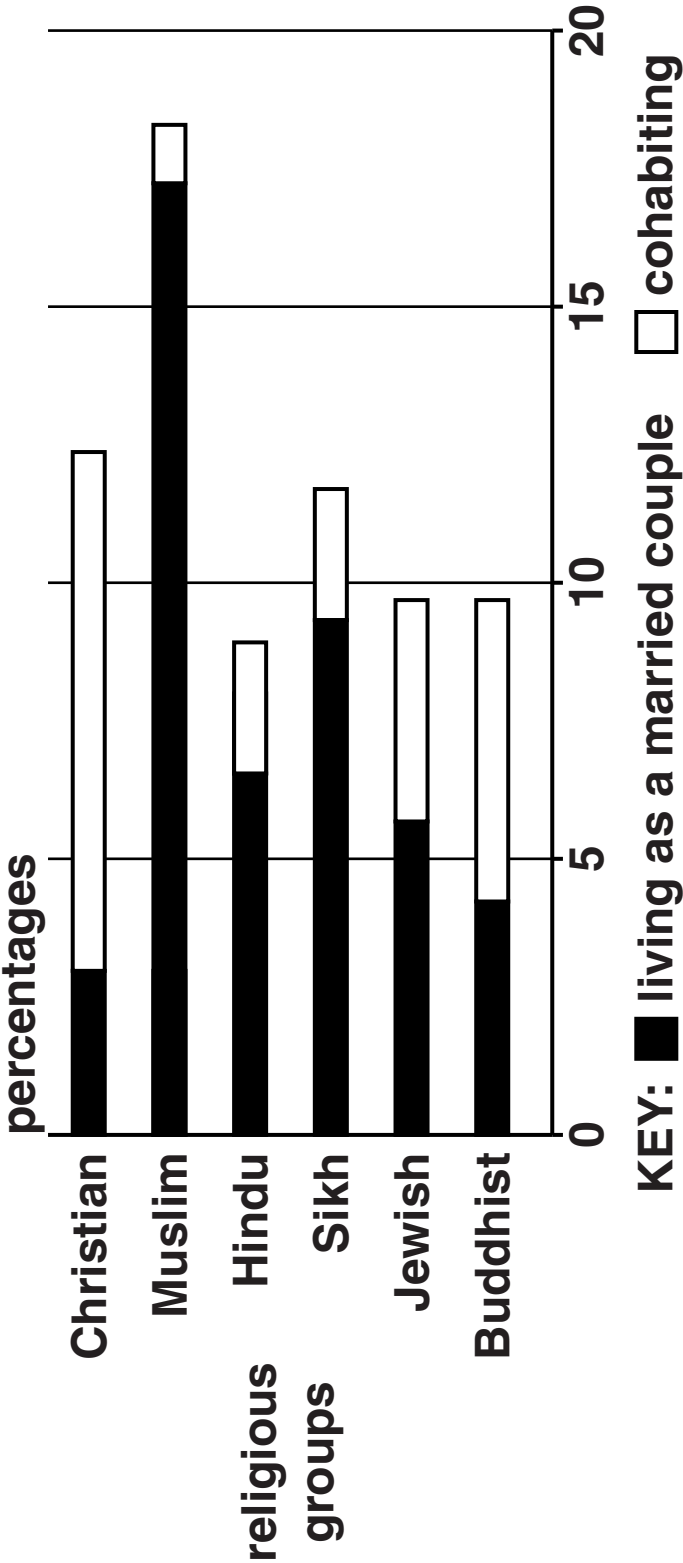
DIVORCE RATE IN ENGLAND AND WALES



GRAPH B

The graph opposite seems to prove to me that white couples are more likely to cohabit than Asian couples. 50

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS OF 16 – 24 YEAR OLDS: BY RELIGION, APRIL 2001
GREAT BRITAIN



SOURCE 2

I could not find any official statistics on divorce within the Asian community but I did find an article about Asian families on the BBC website. I decided the BBC was a valid and reliable source of information and although not as good as official statistics, the article was useful for my study with some reference to divorce. As it was rather long I have shortened and adapted the information.

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ARE ASIAN FAMILY VALUES THE FUTURE? (BBC WEBSITE 2000)



Different generations living together “enrich society”

The “traditional nuclear family” is often seen by MPs as the ideal family unit for a stable society. They compare the gay dads, spiralling divorce rates and working mothers of today, with a golden past where a wife, husband and their two or three children lived happily under one roof.

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Yet Home Secretary Jack Straw now says white

British households could learn a lot from the extended structure of Asian families.

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He is particularly keen on the way different generations live together in households of Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Indian origin with the young caring for their elders.

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However, Professor Tariq Modood of Bristol University, believes this view of Asian families is too simple. He says that in Britain the Asian family structure is changing fast and the number of elderly relatives living with their children is falling rapidly.

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Professor Modood says people might prefer not to be shoved in together under one roof, but if they can afford it they might prefer to live close by, eg buying a house round the corner.

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He suggests the downsides of joint living are people getting in each other's hair, and arguments between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law. He also says the elderly relatives lose their freedom.

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"The picture is starting to look like Britain in the 1950s"

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I found the study in source 2 useful because it investigated views across generations so I could see how the family was changing, but I would have liked to know how big the sample was and where the respondents lived.

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SOURCE 3

My next piece of evidence gives me data about family types in Great Britain as a whole, as well as data on three different Asian groups.

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Household types as a % of all households

	Column 1	Column 2	Column 3
	3+ adults & 1+ children	2 adults & 1+ children	1 parent family
Great Britain	5	20	4
Indian	21	36	3
Pakistani	27	41	5
Bangladeshi	33	44	4

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Source: Census 1991

I will assume the 1 parent families in Column 3 are due to divorce. I will also assume that Column 1 refers to the extended family and Column 2 to the nuclear family. My other assumption is that 'children' refers to people under 16.

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To make the table simpler I have missed off 2 columns and rounded the percentages to whole numbers eg. 5% for Great Britain in column 1 was 5.4.

My Conclusion

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As shown by Column 1, the percentage of extended families among Asians is higher than the percentage of extended families in Great Britain as a whole.

The complete table was in a study produced by the Policy Studies Institute based at the University of Westminster. This must be a good source which I can trust. **130**

The study included quotes from interviews with Asian people and these gave me some interesting qualitative data. Some quotes supported the information in the BBC article. Some supported my hypothesis but other quotes did not support it. I have chosen three examples of the quotes to include in my study. **135**

Quote 1 – “Friends and colleagues are one thing but contact with family is important in terms of knowing who you are. It is important, a ‘must’, to keep in touch with your family.” **140**

Quote 2 – “In the past people lived together to help each other. Today people live apart from one another and are less able to lend a hand. I have even known some children leave their elderly parents in nursing homes because they could not be looked after at home. However for many people in the Asian community, family values are still strong.” **145**
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Quote 3 – “All my dad did was eat, work, go to bed day after day to try to save as much money as he could to go back (to Bangladesh) or send back to his family. They didn’t mix with others, didn’t want to or know how to. My life is completely different, educated here, I have black, white, Asian friends, I socialise, go out to discos. I don’t spend much time with my family.” **155**
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PRIMARY RESEARCH

I conducted a study at the international family centre where I work as a volunteer. Most of the people who visit the centre (my sample frame) are women who are British-born Pakistanis. There are a few Indian and Bangladeshi women but most of the Asian people in my area are Muslim and their culture is Pakistani. Most speak very good English, as do their parents, as they are the second or third generation of people from their culture living in the UK. However, there may be some recent immigrants living in the area who do not visit the centre.

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I decided that 15 Asian respondents would be a large enough sample to carry out semi-structured interviews to find out their views about marriage, cohabitation and divorce. I chose these using a random sample. I have the advantage of being an Asian woman as some women (eg my aunt in Bradford) would probably refuse to talk openly to someone male or white.

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I also needed 15 white respondents to interview so I could compare the findings for the two groups. I chose people I know such as my neighbours, friends and some people from my evening class who are also studying IT. I hoped my sample would be representative.

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Interview Schedule

(Note – I encouraged respondents to explain and expand their answers)

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- 1. Would you prefer to get married or cohabit?**
- 2. What do you think is the main reason why people divorce?**

3. What is your view of making divorce easier to get? 195
4. How important do you think it is that the family of a couple support their marriage?
5. What is your view of love marriage and arranged marriage?
6. How would you feel about your children wanting a same sex marriage? 200
7. How far do you respect and take advice from your family?
8. How often do you see extended family members? 205
9. Do you (or would you) provide support for family members such as have an elderly parent or in-law to live with you or lend money?

Results

I expected to find that Asian people have very different attitudes from white people but my results did not show this completely as the Asian respondents all agreed they would prefer to get married than cohabit. They felt cohabitation would bring disgrace on the family and they mostly supported the Muslim teaching on marriage. 210
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The white respondents were more accepting of divorce and agreed the law should not make this difficult. However, the Asian respondents also supported divorce being legal (as does the Muslim religion) but they felt their families would discourage divorce. 220

Most respondents had close contact with family. Both groups said they would want to help family members but said it could be difficult if they lived abroad. Unlike the white sample, Asian respondents 225

said they would have pressure from their community to help. However, they did say Asian families were changing; becoming smaller, divorce more common and arranged marriage less popular. Both groups said they would not encourage their children into same sex marriages. **230**

I think my research went very well. I have produced valid and reliable results which partly prove my hypothesis. **235**

Conclusion

My overall conclusion from my research is that Asian families do have stronger bonds than white families but they are changing.

INVESTIGATION 2 – A STUDY (2010) BY A SIXTH FORM STUDENT IN BRIGHTON. 240

I enjoy both media studies and sociology so I decided to research the family using mostly media sources. My aims were to find out if the family is still important today and to understand people's experiences of different types of family. 245

I have not carried out practical research before and I know I need to collect data which is both valid and reliable so that I can meet my aims and produce generalisations. 250

PRIMARY RESEARCH

I decided on three methods so I could collect a range of evidence.

METHOD 1 – Content analysis

The TV is an important part of life today and the content reflects what people want to watch. I decided that if the family is still important, producers would encourage viewers by often showing programmes on the family. 255

I studied the weekly TV guide from a Saturday tabloid newspaper in December. It did not matter which media source I used as the TV does not change. I counted up all the programmes broadcast each day on the main channels. I did not use the Freeview, Cable or Satellite channels as there were too many! I counted all TV programmes from the news updates to films over 24 hours of each day. 260 265

I had to decide whether the content of each

programme was about the family. I included some soap operas such as Eastenders (because many characters are related) but not other soap operas such as Hollyoaks. 270

Percentage of TV programmes about the family.

Day	No. of programmes per day	No. of programmes about the family	% of programmes about the family	275
Sat	49	9	18	280
Sun	45	15	33	
Mon	49	17	35	
Tues	49	15	31	
Wed	50	15	30	
Thurs	49	15	33	285
Fri	51	17	33	
Total	342	103	30 (Average)	

METHOD 2 – Case Study 1

I have first-hand and therefore valid information about my own single parent family so I have used this as a case study.

Pam was widowed ten years ago when her children Sam (17) and Kirsty (15) were only young. Pam worked part-time and with her widow's pension the family were financially ok, went on holidays and the children had the toys and games their friends had. Although they missed their Dad, the children have grown up happy and successful in school and the three of them are close to each other and to the children's grandparents. **290**
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The case study shows that single parent families are as successful and happy as two parent families. **300**

METHOD 3 – Internet Survey

To get the views of a wide range of people I used an internet chatroom and asked people to answer some questions. This was a good method as I put the questions out at midnight one night and had 100 replies by 1.00 am! **305**

I asked:

- 1. Is your family a nuclear one?**
 - 2. Do you see your grandparents often?**
 - 3. Do you think the family is important?**
 - 4. Do you think gay families are good?**
 - 5. Do you think divorce is good?**
- 310**

I got back all sorts of answers! People chatted on and I had to decide whether overall their answers meant 'yes' or 'no'. Some answers were really silly or offensive and others just didn't make sense. I **315**

categorised these as ‘useless’ and put the results in a table:

Question number	yes	no	useless	total
1	23	42	35	100
2	51	26	23	100
3	56	13	31	100
4	39	7	54	100
5	34	34	32	100

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SECONDARY RESEARCH

My secondary research is made up of two case studies from documentaries on TV. From these I found out about step families and gay families. I made notes as I watched the programmes and then wrote up my findings.

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SOURCE 1 – Case Study 2

**DANIELLE LINEKER – MY NEW STEP FAMILY:
June 2010 BBC 3**

The model Danielle Bux married ex-footballer Gary Lineker in 2009 and tells us in the programme about being a step-mother. The family is now made up of Danielle’s eight-year-old daughter Ella plus Gary’s boys – George, 18, Harry, 17, Tobias, 14, and Angus, 13 – from his first marriage. The boys don’t live with the Linekers but they see them often and go on holidays together.

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She says that being a step-parent is so common today (even the Royal Family has them) yet no one really talks about it. If they do, it's all the bad stories about wicked step-mothers rather than the good things. 345

Danielle said that her mum remarried when she was seven, and now that she's a step-mum she can understand some of the issues her step-dad Alex faced. She thinks that some children feel anxious about going from parent to parent and step-parents are worried about not stepping into the role of the natural parent. 350

She thinks disciplining each other's children is a problem but they talk to each other about it and they are making this work well. 355

I think she is right and most step-families have these problems but I was suspicious about whether she was telling the truth! I wondered why only one of Gary's boys was on the programme – she said it was because they were under 18 but her daughter of eight was on. Perhaps there are more arguments than she is making out! 360

CUTTING EDGE: MY WEIRD AND WONDERFUL FAMILY: July 2010. Channel 4.

Barrie and Tony Drewitt-Barlow are millionaires who live in Essex. They are a gay married couple who have three kids, Saffron, Aspen (both ten) and Orlando (seven) and were fathering another pair of twins (born by the end of the programme). All the kids were born using donor eggs and surrogate mothers in America. Having them cost Tony and Barrie £250 000.

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The kids call Tony and Barrie ‘dad’ and ‘daddy’ and they seemed to be like any normal family but very rich! They all seemed to really love each other. Tony said, “I don’t see what makes us any different from anybody else, it’s always been as normal a family as anybody else’s.” I thought it would be better if the girl, Saffron, had a female role model but Barrie acted like a mum, went shopping with her and bought her lots of clothes.

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The kids were very well looked after and seemed very happy. At the end of the programme, when they picked up the twin babies, Barrie and Tony were like any other new parents.

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The kids knew all about how they were born and seemed very proud of being different but Saffron was upset because her biological mother was not very interested in seeing her. It was a shame they were moved to a different school because some of the parents complained about Barrie’s part in the school play in which he wore female clothes.

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I think this family was just as good as a non-gay family and they should have been allowed to get their babies without having to go to America. It was better than many other ‘normal’ families as there were two very caring parents.

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Findings from my secondary research are:

- **there are different types of families in the UK;**
- **gay families are good and the children are happy;**
- **step parents find it difficult to build a relationship with their step-children.**

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Overall I think I produced good, valid and reliable data to research the family.



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