
VCE UNITS INFORMATION

VCE Sociology Units 3 and 4

CONTENT

Unit 3: Culture and Ethnicity

This unit explores expressions of culture and ethnicity within Australian society in two different contexts – Australian Indigenous culture, and ethnicity in relation to migrant groups.

Area of Study 1 involves a critical exploration of the historical suppression of, and increasing public awareness of, Australian Indigenous culture. This requires some knowledge of the past and its influence on subsequent generations, as well as knowledge of contemporary factors that may be supporting and/or limiting increasing awareness of Australian Indigenous culture. Indigenous and non-indigenous perspectives and responses are integral to the area of study.

Ethnicity is investigated in Area of Study 2. Ethnicity is a key sociological category that plays an important role in social life. Individuals often define themselves, or others, as members of at least one ethnic group based on a common heritage that gives them a unique social identity. Ethnicity is not fixed and unchanging; instead, ethnic identities constantly evolve and are shaped through a variety of political, cultural and social forces. The concept is often used in contrast to the concept of race, which generally refers to groups based on visible physical characteristics such as skin colour and facial features. Most sociologists prefer to focus on the concept of ethnicity rather than race.

Students develop an understanding of a variety of barriers and enablers that need to be considered when investigating experiences of ethnicity. For example, the way that a group sees itself might not correspond with the way that outsiders see it. Sometimes observers place people into broad ethnic categories that do not correspond with the views of individual group members.

Unit 4: Community, Social Movements and Social Change

In this unit, students explore the ways sociologists have thought about the idea of community and how the various types of community are experienced. They examine the relationship between social movements and social change.

In Area of Study 1, students examine the changing definitions and experiences of community. This includes examination of the challenges and opportunities posed by political, social, economic and technological change. Students examine the concept of community with particular reference to the theory of Ferdinand Tonnies.

In Area of Study 2, students investigate the role of social movements. A social movement involves a group engaged in an organised effort to achieve social change. Students develop an understanding of the purpose, evolution, power and outcomes of social movements.