



i am a girl



STUDY GUIDE

Sociology

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USING THE DOCUMENTARY FILM

I am a Girl


Ideas for Victorian teachers and students to use the film, accompanying study guides and the NSW curriculum study notes as a resource for the VCE Sociology Study Design requirements.

Note: It is presumed that Victorian teachers will first read the NSW guides and utilise what may be of use to them. This Victorian document provides the broad VCE study design links in order for Victorian teachers to match the film and its resources to their specific context - and then offers ideas for extension. It is recommended that teachers read the NSW study guides (including the formal film study guide) to ascertain the scope and themes of the film, then consult this Victorian document to see where and how it can fit into their mandated study design.

The material in this Study Guide is written to support and extend the VCE Sociology Study Design, published by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority. Reference to this material does not imply endorsement by the VCAA.

Reference has been made to the NSW study guides written for use with the film *I am a Girl*. These notes acknowledge the work written by:

Wally Russell & Olivia Behl - *Society and Culture*
Danielle Davis - *Community and Family*.



INTRODUCTION - USING THIS RESOURCE

The following study design links and suggested activities have been provided to offer Victorian teachers some ideas to assist them in using the resources and activities that have been created for a New South Wales context. The resources created for the NSW context are:

‘Society and Culture’ by Wally Russell and Olivia Behl
‘Community and Family’ by Danielle Davis

By suggesting how such teaching resource might fit into the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) context, it is hoped that teachers might be able to utilise them more fully by simply adjusting the activities to suit their particular study design context. The language and requirements of the specific Victorian study design have been used and are therefore heavily directed towards Victorian teachers.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE RESOURCE:

The documentary film *I am a Girl* outlines the experiences of girls from a number of socially and culturally diverse backgrounds and can be used as a means of comparing and contrasting the personal experiences of students with those of young people around the world.

The teaching resources and activities designed for a NSW context can be used, with some adjustment, in other education contexts.

Note: the film can be viewed and used in its entirety or, alternatively, teachers may choose to access specific extracts and use them in their lesson and unit plans in a more integrated way.

ADVICE FOR VICTORIAN TEACHERS

The film, and accompanying resources, (including those designed for a NSW context), can be used in a number of ways by Victorian teachers of the VCE Sociology Study Design.

The VCE Sociology study* is made up of four units.

- Unit 1: Youth and family
- Unit 2: Social norms: breaking the code
- Unit 3: Culture and ethnicity
- Unit 4: Community, social movements and social change

*see <http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Documents/vce/sociology/SociologySD-2012.pdf> for the complete Study Design

It is as a resource to help teach *parts* of Sociology Unit 1 and Sociology Unit 3 that this film and its resources have perhaps the most relevance.

SUGGESTED VCE SOCIOLOGY STUDY DESIGN LINKS:

I am a Girl profiles six young women coming of age in six extremely different environments. As is suggested in the NSW teaching materials, Victorian students should familiarise themselves with concepts and definitions from their own study design and be able to apply them to the case studies in the film.



VCE SOCIOLOGY UNIT 1 YOUTH AND FAMILY

As referenced in the 'Community and Family' notes, *I am a Girl* is a feature length documentary that "paints a picture of the reality of what it means to be a girl in the 21st century". From the variety of accounts of the young women featured in the film, Victorian teachers will be able to draw relevant material for large parts of their study design pertaining to Youth and Family. Danielle Davis quotes film director Rebecca Barry, saying, "Feminism may have promised equality and sought a better and fairer

world for women, but the reality is that girls make up almost a quarter of the world's population, yet still face the greatest discrimination of any group on the planet. Technology and science offer unimaginable potential but we still struggle to ensure men and women are afforded equal opportunities."

Relevant concepts from Unit 1 could include some from the list below:

Adolescence	Ethnography	Perspective
Causation	Family	Prejudice
Cross-sectional research	Feminism	Research Methods
Culture	Functionalism	Social Category
Cultural hybridity	Heterogeneous	Society
Demography	Homogeneous	Sociological Imagination
Discrimination	Longitudinal research	Stereotype
Ethics	Multiculturalism	Theory
Ethnicity	Patriarchy	Youth

In Unit 1, **Area of Study 1: 'Category and experience of youth'**, students are introduced to the discipline of sociology through the case study of youth. Students are asked to explore examples from Australia and other societies to provide comparative perspectives. Topics for analysis include youth cultures, as well as the way youth use public space: both physical space and 'cyber space'. Students examine 'youth' and 'adolescence' as social categories, and consider how the experience of

young people can differ. In addition, students explore the concept of homogeneity by analyzing how, if at all, young people share common values and characteristics and experiences as a result of being in the same age category. Building on this reflection, students investigate the concept of sustainability, for example, by considering social sustainability in terms of the moral obligations young people may have in areas such as human rights.

OUTCOME 1

“On completion of this unit the student should be able to describe the nature of sociological inquiry and discuss in an informed way youth and adolescence as social categories. To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 1.”¹

Some key knowledge² from this Area of Study of relevance to the film include:

- factors leading to differences in the experience of being young:
 - ethnicity, age, class, rural/urban location, gender and other social differences
 - unemployment, education, demographic shifts, intergenerational inequity and use of new technologies
 - attitudes to environmental and social sustainability
 - cultural formations such as in dress, music and media
- reasons for categorisation of youth and consequences of homogenous thinking about youth and adolescence, including stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination.

Some key skills³ from this Area of Study enabled by use of the film include:

- gather and use a wide range of relevant source material
- evaluate sources and critically reflect on their own and others' approaches to understanding the social world
- identify and explain factors leading to different experiences of being young
- define social categories and their place in sociological discourse

Some questions pertaining to the film (identified by Russell and Behl for a NSW context) might be of use to Victorian teachers and students in this particular part of the study design that explores youth as a social category. Relevant questions might include:

- Who are Katie's peers? How does she interact with them? How important is Katie's peer network in her life? How does Katie's peer group compare with your own?
- Compare how both Manu and Kimsey cope with motherhood.
- What technology does Kimsey use? How could improvements in technology change Kimsey's situation?
- List the various devices used by Breani in the film and comment on how important they are to her and her peer network?



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- 1 VCE Sociology Study Design, p.13, <http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Documents/vce/sociology/SociologySD-2012.pdf>
 - 2 all sourced from the VCE Sociology Study Design, p.13
 - 3 all sourced from the VCE Sociology Study Design, pp.13-14

VCE SOCIOLOGY UNIT 1 YOUTH AND FAMILY

Some of the girls featured in the film experience several major changes in their families and immediate communities – precipitated by death, unplanned pregnancy and illness, for example. Victorian students could be asked to view the narratives in the film through the lens of ‘family’ and consider the definitions of ‘family’ and the role that families can play in the lives of individuals and the community in general.

In Unit 1, **Area of Study 2: ‘The Family’**, students explore different definitions of the family, including nuclear,

extended and blended families and they are introduced to comparative perspectives as a methodology in sociology. Students may utilise this methodology by considering a range of experiences of family life found in different cultures and they investigate issues arising from homogenous thinking about families, and in doing so consider functionalist and feminist views of the family. The study enables students to explore issues around traditional and non-traditional forms of the family and analyse gender roles within the family.

OUTCOME 2

“On completion of this unit the student should be able to analyse the institution of family. To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 2.”¹

Some key knowledge² from this Area of Study of relevance to the film include:

- comparative perspectives as a methodology in sociology, including the experience of family life and the changing role of family members in Australia compared with family life in different cultures
- the influences of key demographic, cultural, economic, technological and social developments on the ways people create and experience family life and on the place and role of family as a social institution
- issues concerning homogenous thinking about families such as stereotyping

Some key skills³ from this Area of Study enabled by use of the film include:

- gather and use a variety of relevant source material
- evaluate sources and critically reflect on their own and others’ approaches to understanding the social world
- explain the functionalist and feminist views of family
- explain comparative perspectives as a methodology in sociology and apply it to the analysis of family

Some questions pertaining to the film (identified by Russell and Behl for a NSW context) might be of use to Victorian teachers and students in this particular part of the study design that explores the institution of family.

Relevant questions might include:

- Describe Breani’s family situation and the roles that significant family members take in her growing up.
- In what way is Aziza’s life different to her mother’s?
- How are domestic tasks allocated in Katie’s household? Explain how Katie is supported by her family.
- Habiba’s marriage is symbolic of her move from one family to another. How will she maintain contact with both her family and her peers after marriage?
- Manu’s dad’s reaction to her pregnancy tells us a great deal about his ambition for his daughter. How does this relate to the value of gender equity?

1 VCE Sociology Study Design, p.14, <http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Documents/vce/sociology/SociologySD-2012.pdf>

2 all sourced from the VCE Sociology Study Design, p.14

3 all sourced from the VCE Sociology Study Design, p.15



POSSIBLE LEARNING ACTIVITIES / STUDENT RESEARCH TASKS

According to the VCE Sociology Study Design, for Unit 1, teachers must select assessment tasks from the list provided, and student demonstration of achievement must be based on the student's performance *across* these selected assessment tasks. These tasks can include:

- an interview and a report
- **an essay**
- a research report
- a test
- a written report
- **a film analysis**
- a representation analysis
- a review of youth or family specific journals or magazines
- an annotated media file
- a multimedia presentation.

*Teachers are invited to consult the *I am a Girl* Study Guide and related Teacher Notes produced by DAF if using the film text as the material for a **film analysis** task.

Another of these assessment task options has been elaborated upon (**bold** – see below) in the context of the film *I am a Girl* to offer a possible template and further direction if required.

ESSAY 1 (SAMPLE TOPIC)

Using the characters featured in the film *I am a Girl* as specific examples, analyse the key factors leading to differences in the experience of being young (consider ethnicity, age, class, rural/urban location, gender and other social differences).

ESSAY 2 (SAMPLE TOPIC)

To what extent do specific subjects in the film *I am a Girl* demonstrate how the influences of key demographic, cultural, economic, technological and social developments can impact on the ways people create and experience family life?

drawn from the NSW Study Guides that might form the basis for rich essay topics include:

- The subjects of this film share their diverse experiences, including some substantial life changes. Have you ever experienced a substantial change in your life? If so, what type of formal and informal support was available to assist you manage this?
- Issues with Katie's mental health, her graduation and her isolation, are just some of the changes Katie and her family experienced. As a result of your research, identify support networks that are available to assist Australian individuals and families manage changes like these.
- Identify the different roles that each of these girls adopt within their family, peer and cultural groups and discuss with reference to the sociological theories you gave studied.
- Describe, with close reference to at least two girls from the film, the social factors that contribute to the role individuals adopt within groups. (Consider relationship with group members, attitudes of group members, e.g peer acceptance, gender expectations and the media).
- Can you identify any girls in the film who are subject to gender expectations in the groups they belong to i.e cultural, family etc. What are the consequences of these expectations? Discuss your ideas with reference to the social theories you have studied.
- After watching each of the case studies carefully, brainstorm a selection of the following topics and providing instances from the film which illustrate or access these concepts and ideas - factors leading to differences in the experience of being young, family as a social institution, stereotyping, cultural formations, comparative perspectives, homogeneous thinking, functionalist and feminist views of family etc.

Essay Writing

SOME TIPS

Consider a simple 5-paragraph essay structure:

1. Introduction
2. Paragraph 1
3. Paragraph 2
4. Paragraph 3
5. Conclusion

This structure can of course be added to if you need to construct a larger essay (eg if the topics to be engaged with exceeded 3 paragraphs, for example).

In the Introduction – use E.S.P:

- **E**ngage with your topic area
- **S**tate your contention clearly and
- **P**reface the main ideas of the essay

For the 3 body paragraphs – use TEEL for each paragraph:

- **T**opic sentence (to firmly state the content of the paragraph)
- **E**vidence (to support your contentions)
- **E**xplanation (to explain how the evidence carries your point)
- **L**ink (both the main essay topic and the following paragraphs)

In the Conclusion:

Draw together your findings/analysis from each section of your argument and state your conclusion/evaluation/researched thesis, based on your findings

For further tips for essay writing, visit:

http://www.jcu.edu.au/business/public/groups/everyone/documents/tutorial/jcuprd1_071933.pdf

VCE SOCIOLOGY UNIT 3 CULTURE AND ETHNICITY

As the NSW 'Community and Family' notes observe, *I am a Girl* "takes the audience through a pastiche of diverse cultures and societies around the globe including Cambodia, Papua New Guinea, Cameroon, Afghanistan, USA and Australia".

While the film doesn't address the key sociological terminology from the unit *directly*, it instead offers oral accounts that can assist teachers and students to unpack some of the ideas around these study design concepts. The film's subjects are from diverse backgrounds, ethnicities and environments.

Teachers need to be made aware of HOW and WHERE they can utilise the film in accessing the often-complex ideas and theories present in the study design. This film is a resource which could be used as a starting point for student sociologists to access narratives that offer multiple perspectives to assist students' understanding of ethnicity and the variation in experiences that exist in local, national and global communities. This might pertain to marriage customs, views on pregnancy, family support structures, and issues particular to, or amplified by, differences in culture. The study design asks students to consider ethnic diversity through aspects such as faith, tradition and customs. All of the stories access some of these aspects.

In the Sociology course students are asked to question how people can construct notions of the 'other' by judging from only one cultural viewpoint. What these stories in the film can provide are snapshots of the lives and experiences of young women from all around the world and thereby offer Victorian students either the chance to identify with them, or conversely learn more about other cultures through exposure to these stories. For example, 'Katie' might represent, for many, the dominant narrative, however, likely not for all. Some of the other girls' stories might have resonance for students of different backgrounds to the 'Australian, Anglo-Saxon, middle class' narrative typified here.

In a sense, this film offers something akin to a series of 'interviews' with people that may not have been accessible to students other than through this medium. In this way, the narratives detailed in the film can be a representative sample of the thoughts, feelings, difficulties and aspirations of young women, of varied ethnic and cultural backgrounds. It is a springboard into the hearts, minds, feelings and experiences of 'others'. Victorian students could then extend this through their own research (using, for example, the ideas for setting up a research project/report as detailed below) into people around them or their communities.

Relevant concepts from Unit 3 could include some from the list below:

Assimilation	Ethnicity	Moral panic
Asylum-seeker	Ethnocentrism	Multiculturalism
Comparative method perspective	Hybridity	Non-material culture
Cultural Relativism	Immigration	"Other"
Ethnic identity	Integration	Race
Ethics	Material culture	

In Unit 3, **Area of Study 2: "Ethnicity"**, students examine the sociological concepts of race and ethnicity. The concepts of ethnocentrism and cultural relativism are applied in the consideration of the concept of the 'other' in the context of ethnicity. Students investigate the ways that cultural identity is formed and experienced

by Australian immigrant groups, as shaped by various material and non-material aspects of culture. Students learn about hybridity, and investigate Australia's ethnic diversity. In addition, in the context of research into ethnic groups, students consider the ethical implications of conducting research on human subjects.



OUTCOME 2

On completion of this unit the student should be able to identify and analyse experiences of ethnicity within Australian society.

Some key knowledge¹ from this Area of Study of relevance to the film include:

- the nature and meaning of the sociological concepts of race and ethnicity
- the concepts of ethnocentrism, cultural relativism and the ‘other’
- Australia’s ethnic diversity compared with other developed countries
- the experience of a specific ethnic group with reference to relevant sociological concepts and theory:
 - how the ethnic group identifies itself
 - an overview of the non-material and material culture unique to the group
 - cultural activities unique to the group
 - challenges experienced by the group, methods used to address them and the outcome of this intervention

Some key skills² from this Area of Study enabled by use of the film include:

- explain and apply sociological concepts
- explain the theory of ethnic hybridity
- outline Australia’s ethnic diversity through the use of comparative methodology
- analyse the social, political and economic impact of immigration
- analyse the experience of a specific ethnic group with reference to relevant sociological concepts and theory

- apply ethical methodology to source relevant evidence
- source and use a range of relevant evidence to support observations and analysis
- evaluate sources and critically reflect on their own and others’ approaches to understanding the social world

In Unit 3 of the Sociology Study Design, assessment is more structured, where the assessment task types are listed for each outcome. These include one or more of the following:

- an analysis of text-based or visual representation/s
- a multimedia presentation
- **a research report**
- a test
- an extended response.

One of these options has been elaborated upon (**bold** – see below) in the context of the film *I am a Girl* to offer a template and further direction if required.

As Wally Russell and Olivia Behl observe in their NSW study notes *Society and Culture*, HSC students (and likewise VCE students for a different context) “could use the film as part of their cross-cultural study within this unit...to determine the nature of traditional society and culture...[and] explore BOTH continuity AND change... through a detailed study of ONE of the following aspects:

- beliefs, values and lifestyles
- gender roles and the status of men and women

1 all sourced from the VCE Sociology Study Design, pp.22-23

2 all sourced from the VCE Sociology Study Design, pp.23

Some categories and questions pertaining to the film (identified by Russell and Behl for a NSW context) might help Victorian teachers and students plan towards their eventual research topic. Categories and questions might include:

CULTURE

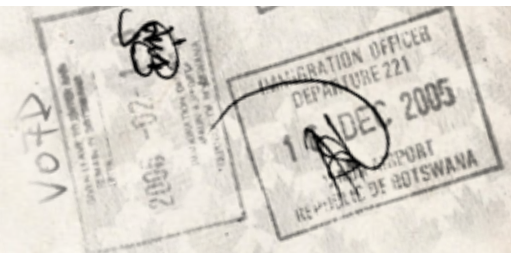
- How are girls valued in traditional Afghan culture?
- What is Habiba's religion? How do you think this impacts on her understanding of gender roles?
- Discuss the leisure activities that you engage in and compare them to Kimsey's situation.

ENVIRONMENT

- Explain what it means to live in the Projects. What are the similarities and differences between your own environment and the Projects?
- How has Aziza's life has been impacted on by war?

VALUES

- What does Habiba's story tell us about the balance between traditional and modern values in Cameroon?
- Compare Manu's situation with a teenage mother in Australia. Would an Australian girl have to give up on education? What social institutions in Australia would support a girl like Manu in continuing her education?



A RESEARCH REPORT (USING I AM A GIRL MATERIAL AS ONE PART OF THE RESEARCH)

This research report template provides a way for Victorian teachers to expand upon their use of the film. As has been demonstrated, specific, localised questions directly pertaining to the film have been asked in the NSW curriculum guides. Moving beyond the comprehension activities, this template offers Victorian Sociology teachers some extension activities that *fit the assessment guidelines* of this particular study design.



WHATEVER THE LEVEL OF YOUR SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH, YOUR WORK WILL MOST LIKELY CONTAIN SOME OR ALL OF THE FOLLOWING ELEMENTS:

a) A research question

For example: Questions about the ways that identification with larger social categories – race, ethnicity, gender, religion, political affiliation etc – affect aspects of social life.

b) A statement of why your research question is important

This is the “so what?” part of your research proposal. It needs to explain to a reader what you, through your research, are contributing (no matter how small) to a body of knowledge in the social sciences.

c) A literature review of relevant sociology-related literature

Researchers refer to the secondary sources in their discipline as “the literature.” Referring to scholarly articles, books and recognised websites helps to reinforce the material with ‘academic rigour’. Consulting this literature is absolutely essential in the early stages of your research.

d) Description of the data (evidence) you have selected for analysis

Data in the social sciences is divided into two broad categories: *qualitative* and *quantitative* data. Qualitative data consists of data measured primarily in words, while quantitative data measures data as numerical values. *Qualitative* methodology might be achieved through observation, interviewing a relevant sample, or analysing text materials through the methods of content analysis. Sociologists often need to apply for ethics approval when researching human subjects. *Quantitative* data generally involve statistical analyses.

e) A discussion of the methods used for the data analysis

The methods you use in your research work will depend on three things: the research question you select, your own individual preferences, and the constraints of time and resources. As mentioned above, the main methodological distinction in the social sciences is between *quantitative* and *qualitative* methods.

f) Analysis of results

When writing about the results of your data analysis, the logistics of how you do so will depend somewhat on whether you are using qualitative or quantitative methods. In essence, however, you will need to *cite your evidence*, *discuss the interpretation* of that evidence, and *make some form of a larger claim* based on that interpretation of evidence.

g) Discussion of the significance of the analysis, including general conclusions

In social science field, this part typically summarises the most important ‘learnings’ gathered through your research: what are the most important findings of your research, and why do they matter for the larger discipline of sociology? You could also discuss any limitations of your study, as well as the practical applications of your research for understanding the ‘real world’.

h) A bibliography of works cited or resources used

A Bibliography should include all of the works you cite in your research proposal, as well as other relevant works consulted in your research but otherwise not directly cited in your report. Sociologists use various citation formats in their writing depending on the particular style of citation requested by the academic journal in which their work is published. For example:

the APA style (American Psychological Association) uses the author-date in-text citation method, in which the surname of the author and year of publication are inserted in the text of the paper or article (e.g., [Smith, 2005]). To cite a specific part of a source, a page number can also be given (e.g., [Smith, 2005, p. 55]). A single alphabetical reference list appears at the end of the paper

Whichever citation method is chosen, the details should contain the same key information: all authors, the title of the work, where it was published, and for academic journals, the journal volume number.

For more ideas about conducting research in Sociology, search online for:

- Alan S Berger, ‘Sociological Research Methods and Techniques’ (2010).

For an excellent ‘teacher extension’ website for the study of Sociology, visit: <http://thesocietypages.org>

The Society Pages is an online, multidisciplinary social science project headquartered in the Department of Sociology at the University of Minnesota and supported by publishing partner W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. The Society Pages’ mission is to bring measured social science to broader public visibility and influence.

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