

Volume 33, Number 4, April 2024

Revision

Revision practice

Joan Garrod

This worksheet takes a look at two more articles from SOCIOLOGY REVIEW Vol. 33, No. 3, and suggests ways in which you might use some of the material in an exam answer — always bearing in mind that anything you include in an answer must be relevant to the question asked. There is also some guidance on revising for your sociology exam. The PowerPoint presentation takes a look at some of the sociological issues surrounding climate change.

The gender housework gap and parenthood

This article is particularly useful for any question for which a discussion of the domestic division of labour is relevant. You could also use it for a discussion of the social norms regarding 'traditional' views of masculine and feminine roles in the context of a family, and how and why these might have changed. Examiners are always looking for evidence of the appropriate use of sociological concepts in student answers, and here you are introduced to the concept of 'gender deviance', referring to situations in which a person does not conform to their expected gender behaviours. The article looks at the notion of gender deviance in the context of the fact that many women now earn more than their partner, a relatively new phenomenon. Of particular importance is the research evidence presented here of what happens when a couple become parents in this situation. Not only do many women in this position continue to 'neutralise' their deviance as evidenced by their greater earning power by doing a greater share of the housework, they go even further to 'neutralise' the additional deviance caused by their not conforming to the stereotype of the 'traditional mother'. A brief discussion of this would allow you to show good evaluation by showing not only what women high earners do in the domestic sphere (taking a greater share of domestic tasks), but why (attempting to neutralise their 'gender deviance').

Rethinking traditional masculinity

This provides another example of ways in which you can show good evaluation by offering a critique of a well-used concept. There are many topic areas in the sociology exam where it could be appropriate to discuss the concept of 'traditional masculinity'. You could point out that views of 'traditional' masculinity are not universal, but are shaped by important social factors such as age, class, community and ethnicity. The concept is often used in an Anglocentric or eurocentric fashion, which of course has important implications for those from different global regions and cultures. An important point to make when discussing this is to refer to the author's preference of talking about 'masculinities' in the plural. 'Unpicking' a concept and discussing possible issues with the way it is defined and commonly used is a very good way to show good sociological insight and evaluation.

Revising for your exam

There are two important points that need to be made before you continue reading this section. First, there is no one way of revising that is suitable for everybody, so you need, in good time, to work out which method works best for you. The second point is that revision is not a single activity, something to be done in the days, or even the night before, the exam. It is a process, and one that should start well before the date of the exam.

Your folder

In an ideal world, you will have kept your sociology folder well organised and up to date since the start of your course. However, should this not be the case, the sooner you tackle this task, the better. There is nothing more daunting than staring at a jumble of ill-assorted and possibly dog-eared and crumpled papers when you want to start revising. How to remedy this?

- Go through your folder (or folders, if you have more than one) and make sure that all your notes and homework are divided into the appropriate topic areas.
- Some people find it helpful to have additional, separate, sections for things such as concepts and definitions, summaries of studies, examples of studies that have used different methods and so on. If you haven't taken this approach, decide whether you would find it helpful in terms of revision.
- Check that you have completed every task that you have been set throughout your task, and if there are gaps, start to tackle the backlog.
- Read any comments on your work made by your teacher, and decide whether you have taken the advice given on board. If not, think about how you might do so.
- If some notes have been hastily scribbled and are barely legible, write or type them out again — this in itself is a form of revision.

Having a tidy, well-organised folder will make it easier for you to revise a particular topic, or method, without scrambling to find assorted sheets of paper which have been put in the wrong place.

Find what works best for you

You may already know from your previous exams, how best you can revise. It is still worth, however, considering other options, as A-level revision can be different from revision for different exams, such as GCSE. Go online, ask friends or your teacher, and try out different methods. There is also plenty of advice online, so it's worth an internet trawl. The University of Birmingham, for example, offers its 'Five best revision techniques'. You can access this at:

<https://tinyurl.com/5x44x4ew>

The Complete University Guide also has suggestions. You can find these at:

<https://tinyurl.com/6p5yymmr>

If you want more focused advice, concentrating on revising A-level sociology, then an internet search will provide you with further links to explore. Remember, though, that this will be a process that takes time, so start as early as possible.

Use your friends

Some revision activities work well when done with a friend or in a small group. Test each other with flashcards, or discuss together how you might tackle a question on a past paper. Such sessions can often be fitted in to study periods, or staying behind for half an hour at the end of the day — they should last only a relatively short time.

Draw up a revision timetable

Make a schedule of which topics you will revise, and when, and for how long. Make this realistic. Don't set yourself unreasonable goals — the positive buzz from achieving what you set out to do will give you the impetus to carry on with your programme. Remember that revision sessions should be relatively short — 30–45 minutes at a stretch. Trying to revise for longer spells than this calls into play the law of diminishing returns — the longer you revise at a time, the less it is likely to sink in. Aim for perhaps three or four short sessions at a stretch, and in between each one, take a proper break. Phone a friend for a chat, go for a short walk, play a short game on your phone, make a snack — have a real break from revision.

Look after yourself

Leading on from the above, remember the importance of exercise, a good diet and plenty of sleep. If you have planned your revision programme sufficiently well in advance, you will be able to incorporate it into your usual activities. Try to keep a positive attitude about the exams, and don't be afraid to ask for help and advice if you feel that these are needed. Some students find it helpful to plan something to look forward to after the exams, such as a holiday.

Hopefully, you will be able to go into the exam room knowing that you have done everything that you could to achieve a positive outcome. All members of the SOCIOLOGY REVIEW team thank you for your support, and wish you every success in your forthcoming exams.