

Volume 34, Number 1, September 2024

Revision

Revision practice

Joan Garrod

This issue contains advice on keeping a well-organised sociology folder. There is also an exercise based on the 2024 A-level results, which raise some important issues. Some tasks based on the August 2024 riots in towns and cities in England and Northern Ireland will not only provide you with useful material which links to various topics on the specification, but will help you to develop application skills. The PowerPoint presentation looks at the important issue of wealth inequality in the UK.

Your sociology folder

A well-organised folder will prove invaluable when it comes to revising for your exams, but will also help with essays and class exercises. There is no one right way of organising a folder — people work in different ways, but here are some general guidelines to follow, and you can adapt them to suit your own individual style.

Dividers

Regular class work

Using dividers to group your material into sections is an obvious, but very useful, strategy. The obvious sections will be for each of the topic areas you cover. Each topic section should contain class notes, notes you have generated yourself, homework tasks and essays — all the regular paperwork associated with your study of each topic.

Concepts

In each topic, you will learn a number of concepts associated with that area of sociology. For example, in your study of the family you will learn about the dysfunctional family and the symmetrical family; in the education topic you will learn about meritocracy and the self-fulfilling prophecy; in religion about the sacred and the profane, and so on. It is a good idea, as you learn each of these concepts, to put it in a list, with a brief definition, and also whether or not the concept is associated with a particular sociologist or perspective. You may wish to have all your concepts in a separate section, or make a separate section for each topic. Not only will this help you when revising, but it will prove useful when writing an essay, for example, to look to see which of the appropriate concepts you should include. Good use of appropriate concepts is something that examiners always look for.

Methods

This should definitely be a section on its own. Put each method, as you learn about it, on a separate page. For each one, make a brief note about its main characteristics, whether it is quantitative or qualitative, and what are considered its strengths and weaknesses. As you come across details of research studies in each of the topics you are studying, go the appropriate method(s) and write the name of the study, the author(s) and any other information you think is relevant. Remember to keep

these notes brief. Again, this will provide you with important details of a range of sociological methods that you can use as examples when referring to a particular method.

Reports and events

Again, you may wish this to be a completely separate section in your folder, or one linked to a particular topic. If you are noting a particular report, such as the Casey Report into the Metropolitan Police or the ongoing reports into the Post Office Horizon scandal. There are also reports issued by organisations such as the World Health Organization and The Joseph Rowntree Foundation that are worthy of note. You need only write down the name of the report, the date it was published, to which topic(s) it is relevant, and two or three sentences about its main findings. This again will enable you to use relevant examples in essays or exams. 'Events' covers a wide range of happenings of sociological interest, such as the repeal of Wade v Roe in the USA, the Covid-19 pandemic, the Olympic Games, and the 2024 riots. Keep your eyes on the news for useful examples here. The very act of writing brief notes on these things will help you to remember them.

A-level results 2024

At the time of writing, only the A-level results had been issued, but you could find a similar link and do the same kinds of exercise as these with regard to the GCSE results.

Use the link below to access an article in the *Guardian* 16 August 2024. Develop your skills in interpreting data and drawing out the essential points from an article (or report) by completing the following tasks.

<https://tinyurl.com/4s8zz4ky>

- 1 What was the most popular A-level in 2024?
- 2 Roughly what proportion of entries were from males, and what from females?
- 3 How might this difference be explained sociologically?
- 4 Look at the diagram showing the top subjects ranked by popularity. How has the popularity of sociology changed over the period shown?
- 5 The social sciences have increased in popularity. Note which subjects are included in this category.
- 6 What is meant by the independent school 'grade bump' that occurred during the Covid-19 years?
- 7 What percentage of A* or A grades was awarded in 2024 to pupils from private schools?
- 8 Identify three possible reasons why such pupils are so successful.
- 9 What was the difference in percentage points in the top grades awarded to pupils from grammar schools and those from comprehensive schools?
- 10 What increase in top grades occurred between pupils from the London area and those from the East Midlands?
- 11 What sociological explanations might there be for these regional differences?
- 12 Look at the final chart on A* grades. What explanations might there be for the increases that occurred when grades were awarded on the basis of teacher assessment?