

Welcome to A-Level Sociology! Sociology is the study of society and of people and their behaviour. Sociologists study a wide range of topics like education, families and households, beliefs in society and crime and deviance. Sociologists collect evidence methodically by carrying out research to establish whether their theories are correct. Our course is 100% assessed via 3 external written examinations (AQA Board) and we are a literacy based subject. Please complete our transition task by your first lesson back in September. Should you require any help or if you have any questions then please contact Ms Gendall: lgendall@cardinalnewmanschool.net

COMPULSORY TRANSITION TASK

Prepare a presentation which answers the question ‘Who should be held responsible for the Grenfell disaster of 2017?’

To fully address this question, your presentation must also consider the following:

- How did the fire start and how did it manage to spread so quickly?
- What evidence is there to suggest that the fire could have been prevented?
- Why do some people feel that the authorities did not do enough to support the residents of Grenfell?
- Who do you feel (if anybody) should be held responsible for this tragedy?
- Why might sociologists in particular be interested in researching events like Grenfell?



Your presentation can take one of the following forms:

- A spoken presentation with supporting materials, such as PowerPoint (lasting approximately 5 minutes)
- A written report or information booklet
- A short video (lasting approximately 5 minutes)

Extend your learning and understanding (also a compulsory part of this transition task):

Choose 1 of the 3 sociologists/sociological perspectives from the list below. How might your chosen sociologist/perspective answer the same question ‘Who should be held responsible for the Grenfell disaster of 2017?’:

- Karl Marx and Marxism
- Talcott Parsons and Functionalism
- Ann Oakley and Feminism

Possible resources to use:

- BBC iPlayer, (1) London Tower Fire: Britain’s Shame and (2) Grenfell: Who Is To Blame?
- ITV Hub, Grenfell: The First 24 Hours
- YouTube, enter Grenfell Tower into the search option (thousands of resources available)
- Use Google or Google Scholar to help you to complete the extension task by searching for relevant articles and materials on your chosen sociologist/sociological perspective

Wider Reading and Preparation for A-Level Task 1 (Education)

1. 'Is the education system in the UK biased in favour of boys?'

To answer this question, you need to consider the following first:

- a. What does gender equality in education involve? Is it just about equal achievement and exam results, or is there more to it?
- b. What if anything is needed in education to achieve gender equality?



The following websites will give you some help:

<http://www.genderandeducation.com/resources-2/inclusion/promoting-gender-equality-in-schools/>

<https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/guidance/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/employment-and-careers/women>

<http://www.csie.org.uk/inclusion/gender-discrimination.shtml>

2. Now that you have undertaken some independent research, consider the original question again, 'Is the education system in the UK biased in favour of boys?'

3. Write a 500 word summary of your response to the question explaining clearly how you have come to your conclusion.



Wider Reading and Preparation for A-Level Task 2 (Families and Households)

Why don't victims of domestic violence leave?

Leslie Morgan Steiner is a writer and outspoken advocate for survivors of domestic violence — including herself.



1. Watch the clip and then answer the questions that follow:

https://www.ted.com/talks/leslie_morgan_steiner_why_domestic_violence_victims_don_t_leave

1. Why does she state she is not a typical domestic violence survivor?
 2. Who does Steiner suggest can be a victim of domestic violence?
 3. Why does Steiner say domestic abuse is confusing?
 4. Which group does she suggest are most at risk of domestic violence?
 5. Note the statistics she gives for domestic violence in the United States (US).
 6. How many children are victims of domestic violence in the US?
 7. What does Steiner identify about her former partner that might have contributed to his actions?
 8. Note the phases of domestic violence that Steiner identifies in her story.
 9. Why didn't Steiner report the early cases of domestic violence?
 10. Which sociological explanation of domestic violence might the Steiner case demonstrate?
2. Now that you have engaged with the above material, why do you think that victims of domestic violence do not leave?



Wider Reading and Preparation for A-Level Task 3 (Research methods)

Testing Durkheim's theory of suicide

Durkheim (1897) found that suicide rates were higher:

- (i) among men than women
- (ii) among single and divorced people than married people
- (iii) in some societies than others



1. Use the following sources to test whether Durkheim's claims hold good nowadays:

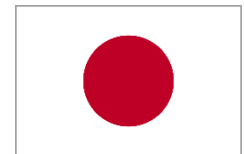
a. First, go to <http://www.ons.gov.uk>

Then for (i) and (ii) above, search for 'Health Statistics Quarterly - Trends in suicide by marital status in England and Wales, 1982-2005 - Spring 2008 and use the graphs.



b. Japan is usually considered a more integrated society than the UK - so for (iii) above, go to

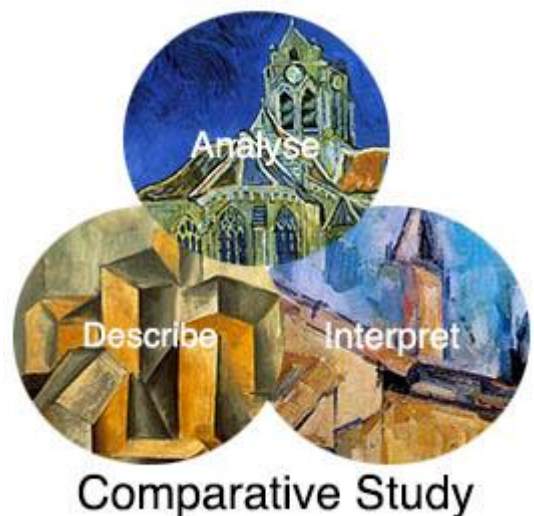
http://www.who.int/mental_health/prevention/suicide/suicideprevent/en/



to compare suicide rates for the UK and Japan.

2. Based on your findings from the above sources, does the evidence from the official statistics support each of Durkheim's three findings?

3. Having used this method (Durkheim called it a comparative study) to study suicide, what do you feel are the advantages and disadvantages of this for studying this particular sociological area of interest?



Wider Reading and Preparation for A-Level Task 4 (Crime and deviance)

Why do people commit crime?

1. Watch the clip and answer the questions that follow:

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/helen-zhao/why-were-hardwired-to-bel b 10331248.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/helen-zhao/why-were-hardwired-to-bel-b-10331248.html)



- What do the statistics on the value of hard work suggest about Americans' belief in the American Dream?
- What do the statistics on earnings of children and parents suggest about people's chances of achieving the American Dream?
- What does the pattern of the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer suggest about the American Dream?
- Why do Americans want to believe in the value of hard work and the American Dream?
- How does the American Dream act as a motivator?

2. According to the sociologist, Merton, the American Dream can be pursued through either legitimate (legal) or illegitimate (illegal) means. Alternatively, individuals may reject the American Dream. Hollywood films often portray the rejection of the American Dream or its pursuit by illegitimate means. Use the internet to check the plot lines of the following films and find out how they illustrate the pursuit of the American Dream through crime:



- Gangs of New York
- Goodfellas
- The Wolf of Wall Street
- The Godfather
- Robin Hood
- Aladdin



and how these films illustrate the rejection of the American Dream:

- Rebel Without a Cause
- Saturday Night Fever

3. Now considering all of the above, why do you think people commit crime?

Wider Reading and Preparation for A-Level Task 5 (Beliefs)

Is society becoming secular (non-believing in God and religion?)

1. Watch the following clip and answer the questions.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d9W0q6RqdV0>



- a. What is the current discussion between sociologists with regard to secularisation?
- b. What is the general notion about religion in the modern world?
- c. How does the view in question 2 link to Karl Marx's view of religion?
- d. According to Kivisto, who is the key sociologist in the study of secularisation?
- e. What is meant by the key theme of rationalisation in Weber's work and how does this link to religion?
- f. Why did America see a growth in the study of sociology after World War Two?
- g. What does Berger claim are the origins of secularisation?
- h. How did this encourage secularisation?
- i. What example does Kivisto use to show how religion has declined in society?
- j. Why does religion remain, despite its decline?
- k. Why does Kivisto claim that the Marxist theory of religion may be wrong?
- l. How does religious pluralism affect religion in society?
- m. Why does religion in America act as evidence against the secularisation thesis?
- n. What evidence does Kivisto give against the secularisation thesis in non-European countries?
- o. Why does this lead Berger to see Europe as the anomaly with regard to secularisation?
- p. What is the key argument of post-secularists?
- q. What is a 'secular age'?
- r. What is a 'cradle Catholic'?

2. Now write a short paragraph to assess whether the evidence from the clip shows religion in society is in decline.



Wider Reading and Preparation for A-Level Task 6 (Theory and Methods)

Using **field experiments** with actors to conduct sociological research (racial discrimination in this case)

1. Use the internet or an alternative resource of your choice to look up the meanings of the words in red before undertaking the rest of the task.

2. Watch the two clips and then answer the questions that follow:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3DrZDm8XWBI>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h9zoz_plfOg

- a. What is the purpose of the research?
- b. What **variables** is the researcher manipulating?
- c. How much control does the researcher have over the experiment?
- d. Are there any **ethical issues** associated with the research? Explain your answer.
- e. State whether this research is likely to give each of the following types of data. Explain your answers.
 - i. **reliable data**
 - ii. **valid data**
 - iii. **representative data**

3. Using your answers to the questions in part 1 above, write a paragraph summarising the strengths and limitations of field experiments in sociological research.

