

**OCR ADVANCED SUBSIDIARY GCE  
IN SOCIOLOGY (3878)**

**OCR ADVANCED GCE  
IN SOCIOLOGY (7878)**

**Indicative Scheme of Work**

**Module 2534: Sociological Research Skills**



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WEEK No	SPECIFICATION CONTENT AND OBJECTIVES	TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES	RESOURCES	KEY SKILL ELEMENTS D=Development PE=Portfolio Evidence
1	<p><b>Key Concepts in Social Research (1)</b></p> <p><b>Evidence and proof</b></p>	<p><b>Prove it!</b> Group exercise to explore the different kinds of questions asked by social scientists, the way they are researched, and the kind of evidence which might be accepted in support of sociological arguments.</p> <p>Divide the class up into at least three groups and give each group one of the following propositions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) 'Female pupils do more homework than male pupils in secondary schools'</li> <li>(b) 'Crime increases when there is more unemployment'</li> <li>(c) 'Young people learn most of their attitudes from their peer group'</li> </ul> <p><b>OR</b> make up propositions that reflect modules that relate to modules covered so far.</p> <p>Ask each group to think of the <u>kind</u> of evidence they would have to produce to demonstrate that their claim is 'true'. Each group needs to present their statement and make clear how they would support it.</p> <p>The other groups have 5 minutes to identify why the suggested evidence would not prove the statement.</p> <p>The teacher should summarise key problems raised with regard to concepts such as 'bias', 'subjectivity', 'representativeness' etc. Remind students that it is difficult to 'prove' propositions 'true'.</p>	<p>Background reading (optional) Fulcher &amp; Scott, '<b>Sociology</b>' (1999) on varieties of research design: exploration, description and explanation. (p73)</p>	<p>D=WO3.1, WO3.2</p> <p>PE= C3.1a, C3.1b, C3.2, C3.3</p>

	<p><b>Key Concepts in Social Research (2)</b></p> <p><b>Hypothesis and operationalisation</b></p>	<p>Provide students with a summary of the work of Catherine Hakim and the women and work debate. Note the importance of the idea of 'commitment to work' as one of Hakim's means of identifying differences between the career paths of men and women.</p> <p>Get the students to list the factors which are likely to influence a person's choice of full-time or part-time work. Are the factors the same for males and females?</p> <p>Introduce students to the concepts of 'hypothesis' and 'operationalisation'.</p> <p>Students should identify, with teacher assistance, the Hakim hypothesis and those aspects of it that require operationalising, e.g. 'commitment', 'happy' with the traditional division of women and 'choice'.</p> <p>Set students the task of designing questions that might operationalise these concepts.</p> <p><b>Homework task:</b> Read Elliot, page 14, section subtitled 'The limitations of survey evidence' and write 100 words explaining why Hakim's methods are seen as a problem by some sociologists.</p>	<p>A good summary of Hakim with commentary on her research methods can be found in Jane Elliot's <b>Sociology Review</b> article, '<b>What do women want?</b>' Vol.6, No.7, April 1997, pages 12-14.</p> <p>Alternatively, pages 700-702 of Mark Kirby's <b>Sociology in Perspective</b> is excellent although it lacks commentary about her research method.</p>	
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2	<p><b>Key Concepts in Social Research (3)</b></p> <p><b>Validity</b></p> <p><b>Reliability</b></p>	<p>Introduce the concept of ‘validity’ by giving students definitions taken from McNeill, Lawson and Garrod and Chignell.</p> <p>(NB a number of texts have inaccurate, misleading, or simply too brief definitions of key concepts, which lead students into trouble later on).</p> <p>Remind students that feminist sociologists were criticising Hakim for lack of validity because they did not believe that the findings of her survey reflected the reality of women’s lives, especially the influence of external constraints on their choices.</p> <p><b>Validity Exercise (Homework):</b> Activity 10 Husband and Wives in Sociology in Focus, pages 22-23 is excellent for illustrating the problem of validity.</p> <p>Introduce the concept of ‘reliability’ by giving students definitions taken from McNeill, Lawson and Garrod and Chignell.</p> <p><b>Practical Reliability exercise - ‘Selecting a school for your child’</b></p> <p>In order to further the understanding of the concept of reliability, set students the following task to be completed in a single lesson.</p> <p>‘Who would you ask, what would you look at, etc if you wanted to choose a new school for your child? Take each of the following examples in turn and assess their reliability.</p> <p>A. League Tables B. People in supermarket queue or pub C. Visits to systematically selected Schools D. Teachers and pupils.</p> <p>Use this exercise to stress the fact that the kind of knowledge collected through different methods can be</p> <p>Reliable but not valid (A) Valid but not reliable (D) Reliable &amp; Valid (possibly-C) Neither Reliable nor Valid (B)</p>	<p>Routledge, 1989, p15 T.Lawson and J. Garrod, <b>The complete A-Z Sociology Handbook</b>, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Hodder and Stoughton, (2000), p.309 H. Chignell, <b>Theory and Methods</b>, Connect Publications, 1996, p.23. Available mail-order from Connect Publications, Cooksbridge House, Cooksbridge, Lewes, East Sussex, BN8 4SR , Tel No. 01273 400118.</p> <p><b>Sociology in Focus</b> by Paul Taylor et al, Causeway Press.</p> <p>McNeill p. 14 Lawson and Garrod, p.239 Chignell, p.23</p>	<p>D=C3.1a, C3.1b, C3.2, C3.3, WO3.1, WO3.2</p>

	<p><b>Representativeness and generalisability</b></p>	<p>Introduce the group to the concepts of representativeness and generalisability using the definitions in McNeill, Chignell and Lawson &amp; Garrod.</p> <p>Divide the class into four groups and get them to research using textbooks such as Haralambos, Taylor, Fulcher and Scott, Kirby and Dunsmuir and Williams, the representativeness of the samples used in the following sociological studies:</p> <p>Paul Willis: Learning to Labour The British Crime Survey Dobash and Dobash: Violence Against Wives E. Bott: Family and Social Network G. Marshall: Social Class in Modern Britain M.Stanworth: Gender and Schooling The Census S. Lees: Sugar and Spice</p> <p>They should assess the level of representativeness and the ability to make generalisations on a scale of 1-5, 1 being highly representative of the wider social group and 5 being very unrepresentative. Point out to students that not all studies are meant to be representative and generalisable, e.g. Willis.</p> <p>Excellent data response activities for classwork or homework which assess student understanding of validity, reliability, representativeness and generalisability are available in Chignell.</p>	<p>McNeill, p 15/16. Chignell, p. 23 Lawson and Garrod, p. 114 and 240.</p> <p><b>Sociology: Themes and Perspectives:</b> Haralambos and Holborn <b>Sociology in Focus:</b> Paul Taylor et al. <b>Sociology:</b> Fulcher and Scott <b>Sociology in Perspective:</b> M. Kirby <b>How to do Social Research:</b> Dunsmuir and Williams.</p> <p>Chignell, p. 24 on Sue Lees (part 3) and page 26 on evaluating data.</p>	
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3	<p><b>Theoretical and Practical Constraints on Choice of Topic to Research and Methods Used.</b></p> <p>To identify the role of a range of theories in contributing to judgements about validity. The theoretical background in generating research questions.</p> <p><b>Brief introduction to Positivism and Anti-Positivism</b> (NB: This should be a superficial introduction. The aim is to introduce students to the concepts used by these two approaches only rather than students acquiring an in-depth substantive understanding of the theory war. This can be returned to in more depth in A2 if necessary).</p> <p><b>Practical Constraints:</b></p> <p><b>The Influence of values</b> <b>Social policy</b> <b>The Nature of the Research Aim</b> <b>Funding</b> <b>Ethics of Research</b></p>	<p>Prepare and distribute <b>brief</b> introductions to Positivism and Interpretivism. Good sources for this are Chignell, Dunsmuir and Williams and the NEC AS-Level Sociology pack.</p> <p><b>Activities:</b> Use those in Chignell OR Chapman OR give students the list of previous studies and ask them to assess whether they are taking a positivist or interpretivist approach or neither.</p> <p>Remind students that the choice of research topic is influenced by a range of practical constraints too. Students should brainstorm what practical factors would affect their choice of research if they were employed as a sociologist.</p> <p>Reading and activities should be extracted from some of the following texts:</p> <p>Chignell (reading and data response activity) Chapman (Reading and activities) McNeill (Reading only)</p> <p>Focus on Ethical problems. Laud Humphrey's research contains some interesting ethical dilemmas. You will find this discussed in some detail by Dunsmuir and Williams. Alternatively give the students an edited copy of the British Sociological Associations ethical guidelines for classroom discussion.</p>	<p>Chignell, pages 51- 56 are very accessible in terms of level and language on this topic and include two data response questions.</p> <p>Dunsmuir and Williams, pages 7-8 contains a brief but pertinent introduction.</p> <p>Steve Chapman's NEC AS-Level pack, pages 14-20 of Unit 3, Topic 1 includes a fairly accessible introduction to positivism and interpretivism with self-check questions and activities.</p> <p>Chignell, pages 27-29.</p> <p>NEC, Unit 3, Topic 1, pages 21-24 McNeill, pages 11-13.</p> <p>Dunsmuir and Williams, p.13-16 McNeill, p72-74 especially on Festinger's study of cults is useful. Ken Browne's <b>An Introduction to Sociology (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)</b>, Polity Press contains a good summary of ethical considerations on page 482.</p>	<p>D=C.3.1a, C3.1b, C3.2</p>



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5	<p><b>Collecting Primary Data</b></p> <p><b>Carrying out a social survey</b></p> <p><b>Designing a questionnaire / interview schedule</b></p> <p><b>Sampling</b></p> <p><b>Evaluating questionnaires</b></p>	<p>Introduce students to the distinction between quantitative and qualitative data using definitions from Lawson and Garrod, Chignell, Chapman/NEC, Taylor etc.</p> <p>Students need to be made aware of the stages a social survey goes through in terms of planning, design and execution. It is worth using extracts from practical coursework books to illustrate this.</p> <p>Introduce students to concept of open-ended and closed questionnaires and interview schedules with practical examples of how they work. Note that some combine the two.</p> <p>Prepare a list of problematical questions for students (e.g. loaded, leading, double, vague, ambiguous, technical etc) and ask students to identify problems and re-word them. The NEC pack contains an off-the-peg activity as do Browne and Taylor.</p> <p>Prepare list of the details of different random and non-random sampling methods to distribute to the students. Introduce idea of sampling unit, population and sampling frames.</p> <p>Give students list of possible groups to research. They should identify the sampling method to be used and justify that choice. Follow up by giving them a list of established studies. Using textbooks they need to find out what sampling methods were used. Browne, Chignell, Taylor and Chapman/NEC contain useful exercises in order to test student understanding.</p> <p>Using the above sources, students should prepare a table/revision wall-chart listing the strengths and weaknesses of the questionnaire.</p>	<p>Lawson and Garrod, page 229 Chignell, page 22. Chapman/NEC, Unit 3, Topic 2, pages Taylor, page 1.</p> <p>A good example of a contemporary survey is Beverley Skeggs' work into Manchester's Gay Village, referenced in <b>S magazine</b>, September 1998. See <b>Researching Young People's Drug Use</b> by Howard Parker in <b>Sociology Review</b>, Nov 1999.</p> <p>Nick Howe's <b>Advanced Practical Sociology</b>, Nelson (1994) 26-28 is good. Dunsmuir and Williams, p.66 contains an excellent checklist which is worth using. McNeill, pages 17-25 are good for background reading. See <b>Questionnaire Design</b> by Simon Dyson in <b>Sociology Review</b>, November 1994. Also <b>Beware of the Questionnaire</b> by Steve Taylor in <b>S Magazine</b>, Feb 1999.</p> <p>Browne, pages 468-473 are excellent and very accessible. Chignell, pages 33-34. Chapman/NEC, Unit 3, Topic 2, pages 8-10 on the social survey, 13-19 includes question activity with answers. Taylor, pages 613-617 McNeill, pages 28-33 contain several examples of questionnaire design. McNeill, 35-39</p> <p><b>Questioning Surveys</b> by Stephen Sinclair in <b>Sociology Review</b>, November 1999 is excellent on attitude and opinion surveys.</p> <p>Browne, 463-468 is excellent and just right for this level. Chignell, pages 31-32 are excellent for this level. Chapman/NEC, Unit 3, Topic 2, pages 10-13. Taylor, pages 611-614</p>	<p>D=C3.1b, C3.2, C3.3, N3.3</p>

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6	<p><b>Interviews</b></p> <p><b>Structured Interviews</b></p> <p><b>Unstructured Interviews</b></p> <p><b>Evaluating Interviews, e.g. interview bias</b></p>	<p>Introduce students to the distinction between structured and unstructured interviews.</p> <p>Students should use textbooks to identify the strengths of structured interviews and specific studies that have used them. Chignell, Chapman and Dunsmuir and Williams all contain appropriate material.</p> <p>Students should construct a list of advantages that this particular type of interview is supposed to have over the structured interview using sources such as Dunsmuir and Williams which contains a very accessible account of how Oakley used unstructured interviews in her study 'From Here to Maternity', Taylor and Chignell.</p> <p>Students need to identify problems that arise out of status differences, environment and lack of interviewing skills. Students often neglect interview bias – they need to be familiar with this concept. The Chapman/NEC pack contains a number of useful activities which illustrate the practical problems associated with interviewing.</p> <p>Reading and useful data response activities can be found in Taylor, Chignell and Browne.</p>	<p>Chignell, pages 34-36 Chapman/NEC, Unit 3, Topic 2, pages 19-21.</p> <p>Dunsmuir and Williams show how Wilmott and Young used the structured interview alongside the questionnaire, pages 25-28. Browne, pages 473-476</p> <p>See <b>Which Research Interview</b> by Andy Hobson in <b>Sociology Review</b>, Feb 1998</p> <p>Dunsmuir and Williams, pages 30-34. Taylor, page 618. Chignell, pages 34-37</p> <p><b>Schooling, Sport and Ethnicity: A Case Study</b> by Scott Fleming is a good example of empirical research using intensive interviewing and allowing the qualitative data to speak for itself. <b>Sociology Review</b>, Sept 1993.</p> <p>See <b>Interviewing by Conversation</b> by Simon Dyson in <b>Sociology Review</b>, April 1994.</p> <p>Unit 3, Topic 2, pages 22-25</p> <p>Taylor, pages 619-620. Chignell, pages 34-37 Browne, pages 475-476.</p>	<p>D=C3.2, C3.3</p>



	<p><b>Evaluating Observation</b></p>	<p>Students should construct table/wall-chart listing strengths and weaknesses of observation. The following sources are excellent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Browne</li> <li>• Chignell</li> <li>• Chapman/NEC</li> <li>• Taylor</li> </ul> <p>And contain activities/data response materials on observation.</p>	<p>Browne, pages 477-480  Chignell, pages 38-42  Chapman, Unit 3, Topic 2, pages 26-35  Taylor, pages 620-623</p> <p>See Unit 3, Topic 4 on triangulation in the Chapman/NEC pack but use selectively.  Taylor, pages 632-635  McNeill, pages 121-123.</p>	
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8	<p><b>Triangulation</b></p> <p><b>2534 Practice</b></p> <p><b>2535 Research Report</b></p>	<p>Students should be introduced to the idea of triangulation. It should be made clear that most sociological studies with which they are familiar, either through this unit or others such as the family, have used a variety of research techniques. There is no need at this level for students to be able to distinguish between triangulation and methodological pluralism.</p> <p>It is recommended that students are given a summary of Eileen Barker's research methods to discuss. Willis too is worth discussing.</p> <p>Students should be given past research scenarios from old A-Level papers 31 and specimens for 2534 to work on the skills required.</p> <p>Candidates need to select a piece of research and write a report on it of not more than 1000 words. See Research Report notes and exemplars.</p>	<p>Dunsmuir and Williams contains an excellent summary of Barker on pages 60-63.</p>	<p>D=C3.2, C3.3, N3.1, N3.2, N3.3, IT3.1, IT3.3</p>

## 2 Resources

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- Aiken, D. and Chapman, S. **Key Skills in A levels: Sociology** NEC, FEDA, DfEE (2000)  
(available from Key Skills Support Programme, Tel: 020 7962 1066)
- Barratt D. and Cole T. **Sociology Projects: A Student's Guide** (London: Routledge 1991).  
ISBN: 041504863X
- Browne, Ken, **An Introduction to Sociology** (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) (Polity Press 1998)  
ISBN: 0745620213
- Chapman S. **Revise AS Sociology** (Letts2000) ISBN 1840853123
- Chignell, Hugh **Theory and Methods** (Connect Publications 1996) ISBN: 095206832X
- Denscombe, M. **The Good Research Guide** (Buckingham: Open University Press 1998)  
ISBN: 0335198058
- (This may be difficult for students to use on their own at AS, but there are many clear and accurate explanations of difficult ideas in here, and the checklists at the end of each chapter are an excellent idea which can be borrowed for use in self- and peer-evaluation exercises related to 2534, and particularly for evaluating studies in the research report)*
- Dunsmuir, A. and Williams, L. **How to do Social Research** (London: Harvill Collins 1993)  
ISBN: 000322242X
- Howe, Nick **Advanced Practical Sociology** (Nelson 1994) ISBN: 0174482183
- Langley, P. **Doing Social Research** (Connect 1993) ISBN: 0946183295
- Lawson T. and Garrod, J. **The Complete A-Z Sociology Handbook**  
(London Hodder and Stoughton 2000) ISBN: 0340772204
- McNeill, P. **Research Methods** (Routledge 1990) ISBN: 0415041260
- Taylor, P. et al **Sociology in Focus** (Causeway 1995) ISBN: 1873929218

### Miscellaneous

OCR Specimen Papers and Mark Schemes  
Sociology Review  
Social Trends  
British Social Attitudes Surveys