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	Key Concepts in Social Research (1) Evidence and proof	 Prove it! 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. Divide the class up into at least three groups and give each group one of the following propositions: (a) 'Female pupils do more homework than male pupils in secondary schools' (b) 'Crime increases when there is more unemployment' (c) 'Young people learn most of their attitudes from their peer group' OR make up propositions that reflect modules that relate to modules covered so far. Ask each group to think of the kind 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. The other groups have 5 minutes to identify why the suggested evidence would not prove the statement. 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'. 	Background reading (optional) Fulcher & Scott, ' Sociology ' (1999) on varieties of research design: exploration, description and explanation. (p73)	D=WO3.1, WO3.2 PE= C3.1a, C3.1b, C3.2, C3.3

Scheme of Work: Unit 253 Sociology

Key Concepts in Social Research (2) Hypothesis and operationalisation	 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. 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? Introduce students to the concepts of 'hypothesis' and 'operationalisation'. 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'. Set students the task of designing questions that might operationalise these concepts. Homework task: 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. 	A good summary of Hakim with commentary on her research methods can be found in Jane Elliot's Sociology Review article, ' What do women want? ' Vol.6, No.7, April 1997, pages 12-14. Alternatively, pages 700-702 of Mark Kirby's Sociology in Perspective is excellent although it lacks commentary about her research method.		
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Scheme of Work: Unit 2534	2	Key Concepts in Social Research (3) Validity	 Introduce the concept of 'validity' by giving students definitions taken from McNeill, Lawson and Garrod and Chignell. (NB a number of texts have inaccurate, misleading, or simply too brief definitions of key concepts, which lead students into trouble later on). 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. Validity Exercise (Homework): Activity 10 Husband and Wives in Sociology in Focus, pages 22-23 is excellent for illustrating the problem of validity. 	Routledge, 1989, p15 T.Lawson and J. Garrod, The complete A-Z Sociology Handbook , 2 nd edition, Hodder and Stoughton, (2000), p.309 H. Chignell, Theory and Methods , Connect Publications, 1996, p.23. Available mail-order from Connect Publications, Cooksbridge House, Cooksbridge, Lewes, East Sussex, BN8 4SR , Tel No. 01273 400118. Sociology in Focus by Paul Taylor et al, Causeway Press.	D=C3.1a, C3.1b, C3.2, C3.3, WO3.1, WO3.2
ω		Reliability	 Introduce the concept of 'reliability' by giving students definitions taken from McNeill, Lawson and Garrod and Chignell. Practical Reliability exercise - 'Selecting a school for your child' In order to further the understanding of the concept of reliability, set students the following task to be completed in a single lesson. '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. A. League Tables B. People in supermarket queue or pub C. Visits to systematically selected Schools D. Teachers and pupils. Use this exercise to stress the fact that the kind of knowledge 	McNeill p. 14 Lawson and Garrod, p.239 Chignell, p.23	
© OCR 2000			collected through different methods can be Reliable but not valid (A) Valid but not reliable (D) Reliable & Valid (possibly-C) Neither Reliable nor Valid (B)		

Representativeness and generalisability	Introduce the group to the concepts of representativeness and generalisability using the definitions in McNeill, Chignell and Lawson & Garrod.	McNeill, p 15/16. Chignell, p. 23 Lawson and Garrod, p. 114 and 240.	
	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: 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	Sociology: Themes and Perspectives: Haralambos and Holborn Sociology in Focus: Paul Taylor et al. Sociology: Fulcher and Scott Sociology in Perspective: M. Kirby How to do Social Research: Dunsmuir and Williams.	
	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.		
	Excellent data response activities for classwork or homework which assess student understanding of validity, reliability, representativeness and generalisability are available in Chignell.	Chignell, p. 24 on Sue Lees (part 3) and page 26 on evaluating data.	

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3	Theoretical and Practical Constraints on Choice of Topic to Research and Methods Used.			D=C.3.1a, C3.1b, C3.2
	To identify the role of a range of theories in contributing to judgements about validity. The theoretical background in generating research questions.	Prepare and distribute brief introductions to Positivism and Interpretivism. Good sources for this are Chignell, Dunsmuir and Williams and the NEC AS-Level Sociology pack.	Chignell, pages 51- 56 are very accessible in terms of level and language on this topic and include two data response questions.	
	Brief introduction to Positivism and Anti- Positivism (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).	Activities: 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.	Dunsmuir and Williams, pages 7-8 contains a brief but pertinent introduction. 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.	
	Practical Constraints: The Influence of values Social policy The Nature of the Research Aim Funding Ethics of Research	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. Reading and activities should be extracted from some of the following texts: Chignell (reading and data response activity) Chapman (Reading and activities) McNeill (Reading only) Focus on Ethical problems. Laud Humphrey's research contains some interesting ethical dilemmas. You will find this discussed in some detail by Dunamuir and Williame	Chignell, pages 27-29. NEC, Unit 3, Topic 1, pages 21-24 McNeill, pages 11-13. Dunsmuir and Williams, p.13-16 McNeill, p72-74 especially on Festinger's study of cults is useful. Ken Browne's An Introduction to Sociology (2nd edition) , Polity Press contains a good summary of ethical considerations on page 482.	
		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.		

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	4	The distinction between primary and secondary sources of data	Introduce students to the concepts of primary and secondary data. Use definitions in Chignell or Lawson & Garrod.	Lawson and Garrod, pages 220 and 251. Chignell, page 22.	D=N3.1, N3.3 PE= C3.1a, C3.1b,C3.2, C3.3, IT3.1
		Secondary data – focus on official statistics	Introduce students to government as source of official statistics – perhaps show them Census details, registration data, i.e. births, marriages, deaths etc, crime statistics, unemployment statistics etc. Students could look through copies of Social Trends, General Household Surveys or visit government web-sites to get an idea of sheer volume and range of statistical information collected. Brainstorm the advantages of such data for sociologists and back-up with reading from Ken Browne or the NEC pack or Sociology in Focus.	Social Trends General Household Survey Newspaper articles about the Census Government web-sites accessible through open.gov.uk. The Office for National Statistics web-site can be accessed on www.statistics.gov.uk/. Details of the 2001 Census can be found at www.statistics.gov.uk/nsbase/census2001/ Browne, pages 460-462 Taylor, pages 625-627 Chapman/NEC, Unit 3, Topic 3, pages 1-9 Chignell, pages 43-44	
		Interpreting Statistics	It is important that students are confident in analysing and interpreting raw statistical information in a range of forms, e.g. graphs, tables, pie-charts especially in regard to scale and proportion. Photocopy a selection of statistics presented in a variety of ways. Students should: (a) Write a 100 word summary detailing what the statistics are saying about		
		Evaluating official statistics	 particular social phenomena. (b) Convert the statistics into another form, e.g. if the statistics are presented in table form, they could be turned into a table or pie-chart etc. (c) Answer a series of questions relating to scale, proportion, percentages etc. Students should choose either official statistics on suicide OR crime OR unemployment and research their reliability and validity using a range of textbooks. They should prepare an evaluative report of about 400 words stating why sociologists should be cautious in their use of these statistics. 	Measuring Crime by Andy Pilkington in Sociology Review, Nov 1995 is a useful source.	See Activity 13 in Key Skills In A-Level Sociology by Dave Aiken and Steve Chapman, NEC, 2000.
		Other types of secondary data Personal documents Mass Media	Homework exercise. The data response exercise in Sociology in Focus, pages 627 is very useful as is the one in Chignell, page 45. Students should be aware of other forms of secondary data. Because of time constraints, teachers may wish to set reading exercises around these types although there are useful data response and activities in Chignell, Taylor and the NEC pack which cover these areas.	Chignell, pages 46-50 (includes two data responses) Taylor, pages 628-631 (includes data responses) Chapman/NEC, Unit 3, Topic 3, pages 10-17 (includes self-checks & activities).	

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5	Collecting Primary Data	Introduce students to the distinction between quantitative and qualitative data using definitions from Lawson and Garrod, Chignell, Chapman/NEC, Taylor etc.	Lawson and Garrod, page 229 Chignell, page 22. Chapman/NEC, Unit 3, Topic 2, pages Taylor, page 1.	D=C3.1b, C3.2, C3.3, N3.3
	Carrying out a social survey	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.	A good example of a contemporary survey is Beverley Skeggs' work into Manchester's Gay Village, referenced in S magazine , September 1998. See Researching Young People's Drug Use by Howard Parker in Sociology Review , Nov 1999.	
	Designing a questionnaire / interview schedule	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.	Nick Howe's Advanced Practical Sociology , Nelson (1994) 26-28 is good. Dunsmuir and Williams, p.66 contains an excellent checklist which is worth using.	
		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.	McNeill, pages 17-25 are good for background reading. See Questionnaire Design by Simon Dyson in Sociology Review , November 1994. Also Beware of the Questionnaire by Steve Taylor in S Magazine , Feb 1999.	
			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	
	Sampling	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.	Questioning Surveys by Stephen Sinclair in Sociology Review , November 1999 is excellent on attitude and opinion surveys.	
		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.	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	
	Evaluating questionnaires	Using the above sources, students should prepare a table/revision wall-chart listing the strengths and weaknesses of the questionnaire.		

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6	Interviews	Introduce students to the distinction between structured and unstructured interviews.	Chignell, pages 34-36 Chapman/NEC, Unit 3, Topic 2, pages 19-21.	D=C3.2, C3.3
	Structured Interviews	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.	Dunsmuir and Williams show how Wilmott and Young used the structured interview alongside the questionnaire, pages 25-28. Browne, pages 473-476	
			See Which Research Interview by Andy Hobson in Sociology Review , Feb 1998	
	Unstructured Interviews	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.	Dunsmuir and Williams, pages 30-34. Taylor, page 618. Chignell, pages 34-37 Schooling, Sport and Ethnicity: A Case Study by Scott Fleming is a good example of empirical research using intensive interviewing and allowing the qualitative data to speak for itself. Sociology Review, Sept 1993.	
	Evaluating Interviews, e.g. interview bias	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.	See Interviewing by Conversation by Simon Dyson in Sociology Review , April 1994. Unit 3, Topic 2, pages 22-25	
		Reading and useful data response activities can be found in Taylor, Chignell and Browne.	Taylor, pages 619-620. Chignell, pages 34-37 Browne, pages 475-476.	

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7 6	Ethnography	Introduce students to the concept of ethnography and the three main types of observation: direct observation; participant observation and covert observation.	Introducing Ethnography by Martyn Hammersley in Sociology Review November 1992 is still an excellent introductory reading. Staying on-side on the inside: problems and dilemmas in ethnography by Andrew Parker in Sociology Review, Feb 1998 is recommended.	PE=C3.1a, C3.1b, C3.2, C3.3 D=WO3.1
	Observation Studies	 Divide class into three groups and distribute the following tasks: (a) one group is to directly observe teacher-pupil interaction in a Year 11 group. (b) One group is going to observe behaviour in a supermarket. (c) One group is going to observe behaviour three weeks running in an evangelical church. Students must take account of the following: They must gather both quantitative and qualitative data. How is this to be practically achieved? Group 1, for example, needs to think about how they quantify classroom interaction whereas Groups 2 and 3 need to think carefully about the types of observation they should adopt. How do they intend to gain access to the groups? How do they intend to minimise disruption to the natural behaviour of the group? What practical problems do they think they will experience? How reliable will their method be? How valid will their findings be? Discussion and feedback Teacher should supply groups with case-studies of observation studies. The following are recommended: Holdaway: Inside the British Police Whyte: Streetcorner Society Pryce: Endless Pressure Hobbs: Doing Business	Observing the social world of fruit- machine playing by Mark Griffiths in Sociology Review, Sept 1996 is worth looking at. New Age Travellers by Greg Martin in Sociology Review, April 2000 is a good contemporary example of ethnographic research into a group difficult to access. See The White-Haired Offender by A. Wahidin in Sociology Review, Sept 1999. Howe's Advanced Practical Sociology contains some extracts from Hunter S Thompson's 'Hell's Angels' and Terry Williams' 'Cocaine Kids' on pages 17-21. Research Methods by Robert Burgess, Nelson, 1993 is a useful source of extracts from Janet Foster, E, Liebow, WF Whyte, etc. Sociological Research Methods in Context by Fiona Devine and Sue Heath, MacMillan, 2000 contains an excellent chapter on Hobbs. Dunsmuir and Williams, pages10-11 focus on Patrick. See also McNeill, chapter 4, pages 64-87	

Evaluating Observat	 Students should construct table/wall-chart listing strengths and weaknesses of observation. The following sources are excellent. Browne Chignell Chapman/NEC Taylor And contain activities/data response materials on observation. 	Browne, pages 477-480 Chignell, pages 38-42 Chapman, Unit 3, Topic 2, pages 26-35 Taylor, pages 620-623 See Unit 3, Topic 4 on triangulation in the Chapman/NEC pack but use selectively. Taylor, pages 632-635 McNeill, pages 121-123.	
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WEEI No	SPECIFICATION CONTENT AND OBJECTIVES	TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES	RESOURCES	KEY SKILL ELEMENTS D=Development PE=Portfolio Evidence
8	Triangulation	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.	Dunsmuir and Williams contains an excellent summary of Barker on pages 60-63.	D=C3.2, C3.3, N3.1, N3.2, N3.3, IT3.1, IT3.3
		It is recommended that students are given a summary of Eileen Barker's research methods to discuss. Willis too is worth discussing.		
	2534 Practice	Students should be given past research scenarios from old A-Level papers 31 and specimens for 2534 to work on the skills required.		
	2535 Research Report	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.		

- 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** (2nd 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