

O Level Sociology (2251)

Unit 1: Methodology

Recommended Prior Knowledge

This unit provides a foundation for other parts of the syllabus by focusing on methods of sociological research.

Context

This unit links with other units in the syllabus by promoting knowledge and understanding of the various methods of research and their limitations which are used in studying sociological topics.

Outline

The unit examines how information and data are collected by sociologists. The main aim is to promote awareness of methodological issues and a critical approach to sociological evidence.

AO	Learning outcomes	Suggested Teaching activities	Learning resources
1.1	Consider how sociologists study society.	Begin the unit by outlining the main methods of sociological investigation. Provide brief details of some sociological studies.	Blundell J, pp25 – 51 , contains a useful glossary of terms on p 50 P Wilson & A Kidd , pp 6 - 45
	Recognise the main methods of investigation: participant and non-participant observation; covert and overt observation; open ended and closed ended questionnaires; interviews; experiments; case studies; longitudinal surveys and content analysis.	Provide a summary of the main research methods. Using examples of the various methods, create a table which covers each method, and an example of a study using that method along with the findings.	O'Donnell G, Mastering Sociology 4 th ed, pp 11 – 20 Blundell J, pp25 – 45 P Wilson & A Kidd, pp 12 - 45
	Describe research strategies, for example the use of pilot surveys, sampling and sampling methods.	Class activity Divide class into pairs or small groups, allocate each group a different method of research and ask them to identify the strengths and	P Wilson & A Kidd, pp 12 -15 Blundell J, pp32 – 33

		weaknesses of their allocated method. Invite each pair/group to discuss their findings with the class.	O'Donnell G, pp 18 - 20
	Discuss the stages in devising and implementing a research strategy and the problems that may be encountered.	Working in small groups, invite the students to identify a research topic and to devise a suitable research strategy for investigating that topic. For example designing a questionnaire or conducting an interview on fellow students.	For useful guide to research methods see: www.tutor2u.net/sociology
	Distinguish between positivist and interactionist perspectives.		Kirby M et al, pp 528 for interactionism and 553 for positivism.
1.2	Recognise the types of information and data that sociologists use.	Provide the students with a summary of the different types of data used by sociologists. Distinguish between quantitative and qualitative data.	Blundell J, pp 25 Chapter 2
	Distinguish between primary and secondary data, official statistics and other statistical sources.	Set an exercise in which students are asked to find a study which uses each type of data.	P Wilson & A Kidd, p 16 and pp 36 – 39. Blundell J, pp 38 & 39 O'Donnell G, pp 21 – 25
	Recognise published studies.	Ask students to use the internet to find details of published sociological studies.	www.statistics.gov.uk http://www.tutor2u.net/sociology/
	Discuss different forms of evidence.	Class discussion on the strengths and limitations of different types of evidence. Class activity Ask class to create a table consisting of three columns headed 'type of data', 'example of study' and 'evidence'. Collate individual tables to create one which covers all the findings of the class.	P Wilson & A Kidd, p21 - 29 Kirby M et al, pp 334 – 369 for types of data and examples of studies.
1.3	Identify the factors that should be considered when evaluating	Outline the factors which need to be considered in evaluating research. Include references to the concepts of validity, reliability, objectivity, bias,	Blundell J, for a guide to terms and definitions, p50.

sociological research.

Recognise how the method of data collection and the form of presentation may influence the information given and the conclusions reached.

Distinguish between reliability and validity.

Discuss the potential influence of researcher bias and values in distorting sociological data.

and representativeness.

Provide examples of different methods of data collection along with different forms of presentation. For example, graphs, pie charts, bar charts and statistical tables.

Set exercises that allows the students to use the concepts of reliability and validity.

Conclude the unit by discussing the ways in which bias and values may affect data.

Class activity

Divide the students into small groups and provide each group with an example of a sociological study.

Ask the students to identify the factors which may have influenced the choice of topic and the research method used.

Feedback to class and discuss.

Blundell J, pp38 - 41

Browne K, Appendix pp423 - 433

Kirby M et al, pp 362 & 363.

P Wilson & A Kidd, p22 & 23

For interactive site for students, including online quizzes see;
<http://sixthsense.osfc.ac.uk/sociology/index.asp>