Year 1 Sociology

**Paper 1: Education with Theory & Methods**

[](http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CAcQjRxqFQoTCP30xrzr4cYCFSqX2wodHfUNxQ&url=http://www.educatorstechnology.com/2013/11/education-10-vs-education-20-vs.html&ei=KsmoVf23Mqqu7gad6reoDA&bvm=bv.97949915,d.d24&psig=AFQjCNFPJODaq6lywpijh8KsUqzowFNs_g&ust=1437211287800191)

***Section B***

Methods in Context

Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Class:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Specification Content:

**What you need to know for Methods in Context in your Paper 1 exam:**

You will be expected to:

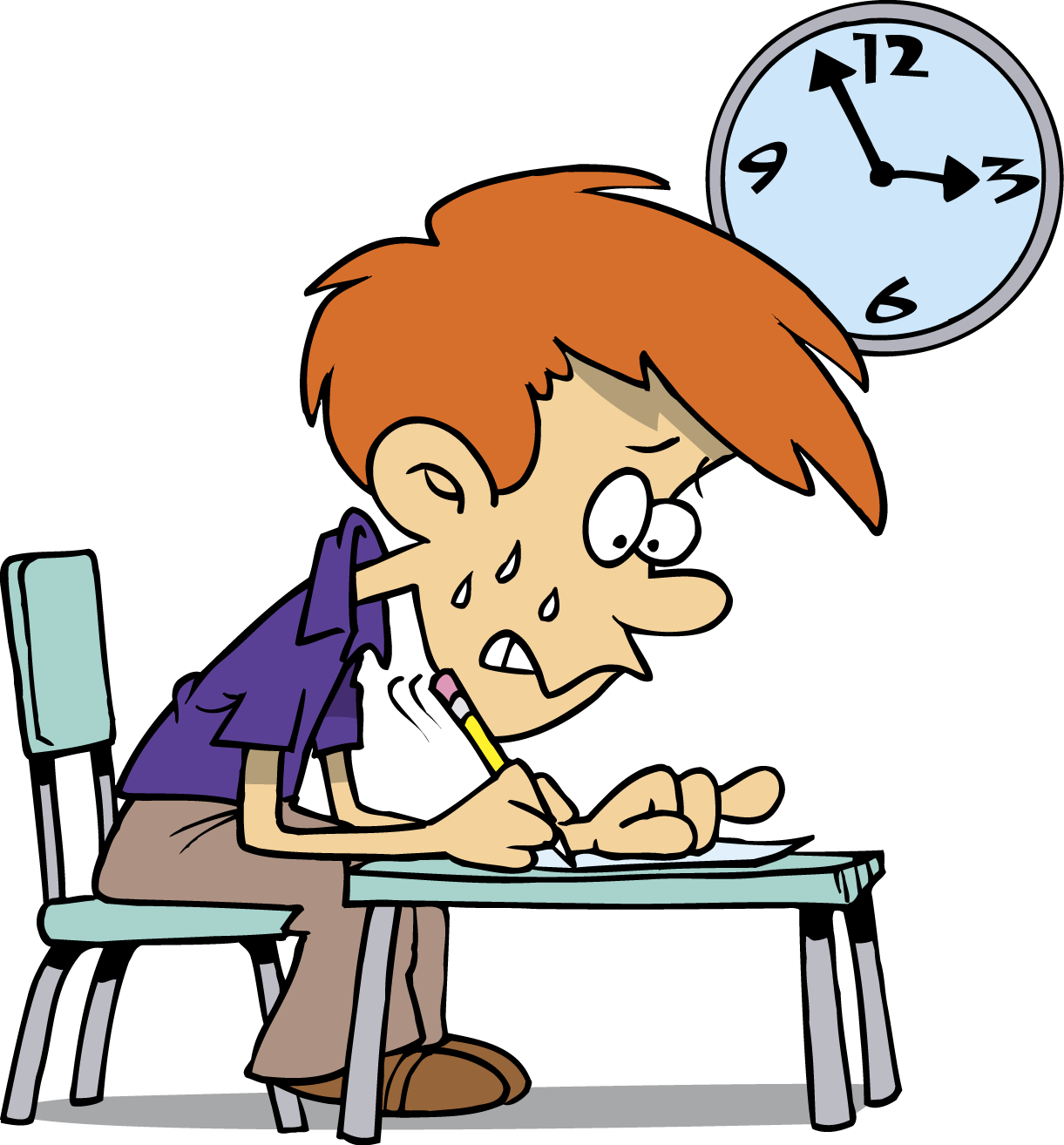
* Be able to apply sociological research methods to the study of education.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Questions may be based specifically on the following areas:** | Do I have completed Notes? | Have I made revision Notes? | Have I memorised this info? | Have I practised exam style questions? |
| **Questionnaires**: strengths and limitations in the context of education |  |  |  |  |
| **Interviews**: strengths and limitations in the context of education |  |  |  |  |
| **Observations**: strengths and limitations in the context of education |  |  |  |  |
| **Experiments**: strengths and limitations in the context of education |  |  |  |  |
| **Official statistics**: strengths and limitations in the context of education |  |  |  |  |
| **Documents**: strengths and limitations in the context of education |  |  |  |  |

Exam Structure:

**This topic will appear on Paper 1 at A Level**

The A-level Paper 1 will be 2 hours long, contain 80 marks and be worth a third of your A Level. You will be assessed via short answer and extended writing questions in the following areas:

* [](http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwiH17rsm6rNAhUMBcAKHYIYCW0QjRwIBw&url=http://firearmsafetycanada.com/?page_id%3D12&psig=AFQjCNEdDWy4gaTupewTvc6I4kTb1sWMrQ&ust=1466086461052204)**Education**: short answer and extended writing worth 50 marks
* **Methods In Context**: extended writing worth 20 marks
* **Theory and Methods**: extended writing worth 10 marks

**Imagine you are going to conduct research into bullying in a school**

What method would you use?

Why?

What data would you use? (primary /secondary / qualitative / quantitative?)

Why?

What problems might you face in trying to study pupils when they are not in a school setting? (e.g. school trip)

How is the school day organised? What restrictions and opportunities might this create for your research?

[](http://www.mymcpl.org/blog/no-escape)

Whose permission would you need to carry out your research?

In what ways could the age of the pupil affect your research?

How might the teachers feel about a researcher being in their classroom or staffroom? How might this affect your research?

As this is a sensitive topic – do you think parents would be willing to let you carry out research with their children? Give reasons.

**Applying P.E.R.V.E.R.T**

**Eye on the Exam!**

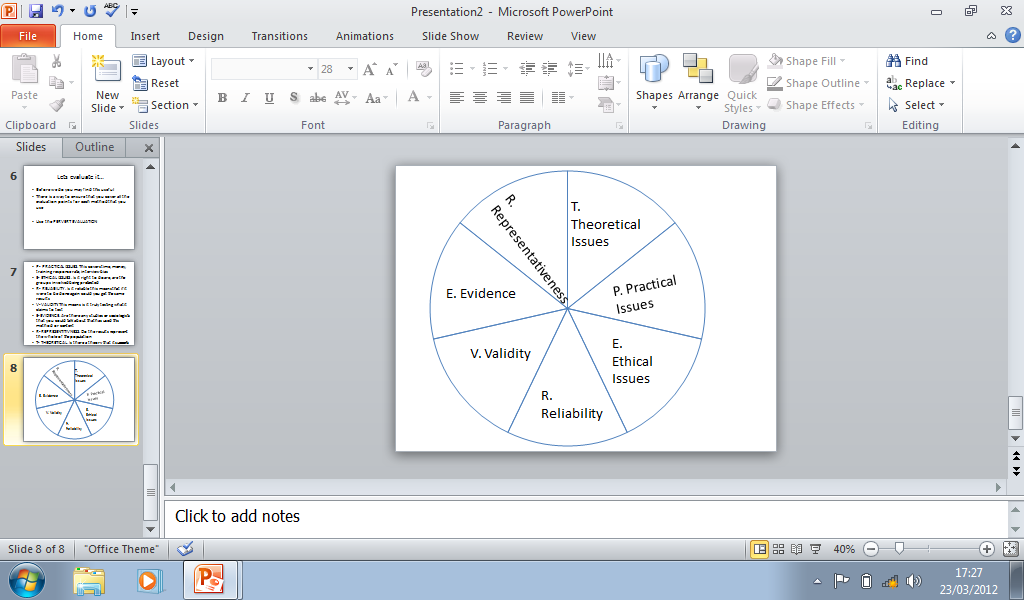
In this section of Paper 1, it is expected you use your knowledge and understanding of the various **research methods** and types of data used by sociologists to **particular issues in education**, and to consider some of the *practical*, *ethical* and *theoretical* (PET) issues that might arise in educational research. In the exam, you will not gain many marks for simply evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the given method (e.g. interviews). You must ***apply*** what you know to the specific educational context, characteristics of the people or situation involved, and to the particular research topic that the question asks about.

**P.E.R.V.E.R.T**

This can be used as a checklist to help you consider the strengths and limitations of the method applied to the research setting and topic, and the characteristics of the people being studied.

**Representativeness** - of the information - can findings be generalised?

**Theoretical issues** - such as positivist or interpretivist views of using the method

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**Evidence** - examples from research or your own understanding to illustrate the points you're making

**Validity** - of the information collected - will it provide true information

**Ethical issues** - arising from using the method

**Practical issues** - with using the method

**Reliability** - of the information collected - could it be replicated?

**TASK** - In groups of 3/4, create a ***detailed presentation*** of these issues which will be used an aid to teach the class next lesson

**C:\Program Files\Microsoft Office\MEDIA\CAGCAT10\j0301252.wmfMethods in Context: Researching Education**

**Researching Pupils**

* Researchers need to get permission from the parents as well as the student
* A CRB check will have to be carried out on each researcher to ensure that they are suitable people to have close contact with children
* Ability and understanding: The ability of the students’ needs to be considered because……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………… This poses problems because ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
* Limitations in pupils’ understanding make it more difficult to gain informed consent. This is because the sociologist may not be able to explain the nature of the research in words that young people understand.
* Pupils’ memory are less developed than that of an adult, so they may be unable to recall in detail relevant material when asked to do so by the researcher.
* Power and status: In schools, children have less power and status than teachers therefore ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………..

For this reason, it would be impractical to use methods use as …………………………………………………………………… as this will reinforce power differences. Sociologists therefore need to consider ways in which they can overcome the power and status differences between adult researchers and young participants. They can use………………………………………………………………….……………………because……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………..

* The researcher must ensure that children do not suffer any psychological distress during research
* Other ethical issues include …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………..
* The presence of a researcher may produce unnatural behaviours of the children, challenging the ……………………….. of the findings
* **Access to children is dependent on the willingness of the parents and so the …………………………………………….. of the sample may be compromised. (Cant generalise findings)**

***Which ones are practical, ethical and theoretical issues?***

**Researching Parents**

* They are difficult to contact and research because……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………..
* Classroom interactions between pupils and teachers are easy to observe but those between parents and children aren’t for example……………………………………………………… …………………………………………………………………………………………………………….
* It is difficult to gain a representative sample of parents because ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………..
* Parents may also feel they need to create a good impression to the researcher by appearing interested in the child’s schooling and homework and so the validity of their responses is challenged

***Which ones are practical, ethical and theoretical issues?***

**Researching Teachers**

* Access to staff may be limited due to lack of time………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………...................................
* Teachers are used to being inspected and scrutinized therefore …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
* The confidentiality of the teachers must be protected because …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
* Consent must be gained from all teachers involved. This may pose a problem if conducting research in a staffroom
* In interviewer research, there may be a degree of interviewer bias which is when…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

***Which ones are practical, ethical and theoretical issues?***

**TASK** - Now use page 103-5 of the text book to write down problems faced when research classrooms and researching schools.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Researching classrooms** | **Researching schools** |
| [http://www.ais-uae.com/Website_Content/Website_Content/Photos/Classrooms%20&%20Labs_Photos/Class%20Rooms/Elementary%20Classroom.JPG](http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CAcQjRxqFQoTCKXGmrTx4cYCFYiW2woduqgGtA&url=http://www.ais-uae.com/en/Menu/index.aspx?PriMenuID=8&CatID=18&RefID=0&mnu=Cat&ei=Y8-oVeWIOYit7ga60ZqgCw&bvm=bv.97949915,d.d24&psig=AFQjCNF1Nv73DjWVyCeCSweE2D3tKcQ5oA&ust=1437212888835674) | [http://www.ventrolla.co.uk/uploads/images/St_Aidans_High_School_-_Ventrolla_2.jpg](http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CAcQjRxqFQoTCPWy-ejx4cYCFcFL2wodsNEIIA&url=http://www.ventrolla.co.uk/case-studies/case-study/st-aidans-high-school&ei=0s-oVfWBIcGX7Qawo6OAAg&bvm=bv.97949915,d.d24&psig=AFQjCNFagC-zzFqoM0Z-OZ1VQmvb4OSlpA&ust=1437212982110945) |

**Using Questionnaires to investigate education**

The contexts you are likely to be asked about in relation to questionnaires are:

* Subject and university choice
* Bullying and the experience of schooling
* Achievement and school factors
* Parental attitudes to education

When answering a methods question about the use of questionnaires in education, you will be asked about the strengths and limitations of using this method to investigate education.

***It will be a 10 (A Level) / 20 mark (AS) question***

**Task**: Recap on the advantages and disadvantages of questionnaires

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Strengths** | **Limitations** |
|  |  |

You will now need to consider whether the question is asking about research involving parents, students or teachers because as we know, they bring about their own problems.

So, what might be good/bad about using questionnaires with parents, students and teachers? Here you are basically **applying** your knowledge of questionnaires to their use with particular groups of people. When doing this, you need to use your PERVERT wheel and try to make a comment on all of these things.

**Task**- using the textbook page 117-119 complete the following which will demonstrate how to apply your knowledge of questionnaires to education.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Strengths** | **Limitations** |
| **P** ractical issues |  |  |
| **E** thical issues |  |  |
| **R** eliability |  |  |
| **V** alidity |  |  |
| **E** vidence |  |  |
| **R** epresentativeness |  |  |
| **T** heoretical issues |  |  |

**Evidence:**

Examples of research using questionnaires that you can use in your essays:

**Connor and Dewson (2001**) posted nearly 4000 questionnaires to students at 17 higher education institutes around the country in their study of the factors influencing the decisions of working class students to go to university

**Bowles and Gintis** measured students personality traits using a questionnaire similar to those used to reveal the traits valued by employers. They compared questionnaire results with students average grades/exam scores. They found a correlation between personality traits valued by employers such as docility, passivity and obedience and high scores at school.

**Practice Exam Question**

**Item A**

**Investigating material deprivation in pupils' home backgrounds**

Material deprivation is a widespread problem throughout the United Kingdom today. Some pupils experience material deprivation in their home background and this can have a negative effect on their educational achievement. For example, a lack of income with which to buy educational resources, or having to live in cramped conditions, can affect academic performance. Some parents may feel that they may have failed if they cannot provide adequate income for their family.

Sociologists may use questionnaires to investigate material deprivation in pupils' home backgrounds. To use questionnaires effectively, sociologists need to identify and gain responses from parents, but accessing a suitable database of contacts may prove difficult. Parents may also not be willing to discuss such a sensitive issue as material deprivation. On the other hand, substantial quantitative data may be generated by using questionnaires, allowing sociologists to identify patterns and draw comparisons.

**Applying material from Item A and your knowledge of research methods, evaluate the strengths and limitations of questionnaires for the study of material deprivation in pupils' home backgrounds (20 marks)**

**TASK**-use the plan on the next page to start to put together a response to this question.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Strengths** | **Limitations** |
| **P** ractical issues |  |  |
| **E** thical issues |  |  |
| **R** eliability |  |  |
| **V** alidity |  |  |
| **E** vidence |  |  |
| **R** epresentativeness |  |  |
| **T** heoretical issues |  |  |

C:\Users\norria.ST-AIDANS.001\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\CQ555Y5I\MC900060137[1].wmf**Interviews**

The contexts you are likely to be asked about in relation to interviews are;

* Pupil subcultures
* Pupils experience of sex education
* Class, ethnicity and language
* Gender identity
* Class and parental choice of schools

***It will be a 10 (A Level) / 20 mark (AS) question***

What are the types of interview we have looked at?

Remember, the question will usually just refer to interview so you can discuss any/all types we have looked at.

**TASK** - Recap on the strengths and limitations of using interviews

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Strengths** | **Limitations** |
|  |  |

*TIP! When answering a question on this, don’t forget you would need to read the item and see who the researcher is using in their research: teachers, pupils or parents and recall the issues they would encounter here and then apply these to the given situation.*

**Task**- using the textbook page 132-134 complete the following which will demonstrate how to apply your knowledge of interviews to education.

* **Practical issues**

When using interviews with pupils, there are **practical issues** to consider for instance the linguistic and intellectual skills of the pupils may be less developed than those of adults.

*Why might this be a problem?*

*How might this challenge the validity of the data obtained?*

*Despite this why might it be better to use interviews with students as opposed to written questionnaires?*

*Why can the location of the interview be problematic?*

To overcome these practical problems, researchers would have to be trained on how to successfully conduct interviews with children which will add to the cost of the research and may be time consuming.

*Explain the practical problems of using unstructured interviews*

Access and response rates:

*What are the problems with regards to access and response rate when conducting interviews with pupils? (pg. 133)*

* **Reliability**

Structured interviews are said to be reliable.

*Why is this?*

* **Validity**

However, structured interviews may not always be valid.

*Why not?*

In order to increase the validity of the data collected, researchers could use a more ‘relaxed, personal’ interviewing style with pupils to avoid them feeling under pressure in a formal setting. They can also use open ended questions, allow thinking time for the pupil, avoid asking leading questions and make sure they do not interrupt children’s answers.

* **Power and status inequalities** can affect the outcome of the interviews. Young people will see the adult interviewer as authority figures.

*What would be the problem with this?*

*What issues does this raise for the research? Explain why.*

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

The interview is a social interaction. The inequalities between children and adults, pupils and teachers, may influence this interaction and thus distort the data obtained.

* Improving the **VALIDITY** of interviews with pupils

However, researcher can adopt strategies to improve the validity with pupils and young people. Greene and Hogan (2005) argue that interviews should:

* .
* .
* .
* .
* .

**Group interviews:**

An alternative to the conventional one-to-one interview is the group interview. This has both strengths and limitations as a method of studying education.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Strengths** | **Limitations** |
|  |  |

**TASK** - Shade which of these are examples of P.E.R.V.E.R.T.

**Evidence**

Examples of research in education using interviews

* Field (1987) used interviews to study pupil’s experience of sex education in schools and experienced a high refusal rate of 29%, mainly because of parents withholding consent.
* Willis (1977) carried out unstructured group interviews to uncover the counter school culture of the ‘lads’. These interviews allowed the lads to talk freely in their own words about the way they viewed school, teachers and work and gave him an insight into their world.
* Sharps (1994) used interviews to study girl’s attitudes to education, family and work (investigating gender gap in achievement). She found a major shift in how girls view themselves from the 1970s to the 1990s. In 1974 they had low aspirations and believed that if they were intelligent they would be seen as unattractive. By the 1990s a career and being able to support themselves was a priority. She allowed the girls to respond in their own words by asking open ended questions and this lead to the collection of rich, qualitative data. However, Open ended questions do sometimes have their problems in the sense that data collected is hard to categorise.

**Eye on the exam**

**Item B**

**Investigating the extent of parental choice in education**

Supporters of marketisation policies claim that an education market gives parents greater choice over which school their children can attend. Sociologists are interested in investigating just how much parental choice there actually is in this education market. Some parents are much more aware than others of how to 'work the system', even to the extent of manipulating the rules in their favour.

Sociologists may use structured interviews to investigate the extent of parental choice in education. However, although structured interviews are useful for gathering factual information, they are probably less effective when it comes to finding out parents' attitudes and feelings. Also, how far parents are likely to give honest answers to the questions put to them in a structured interview may depend upon whether they feel their role as a parent is being challenged by the questions asked.

**01** Applying material from **Item A** and your knowledge, evaluate the strengths and limitations of structured interviews for the study of the extent of parental choice in education (20 marks)

**Structured interviews - Essay plan**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Strengths** | **Limitations** |
| **P** ractical issues |  |  |
| **E** thical issues |  |  |
| **R** eliability |  |  |
| **V** alidity |  |  |
| **E** vidence |  |  |
| **R** epresentativeness |  |  |
| **T** heoretical issues |  |  |

**C:\Users\TEMP\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\16TI5Z8Z\MC900440450[1].wmfObservations**

The contexts that you could be asked about in relation to observations are:

* Gender and classroom behaviour
* Teacher expectations and labelling
* Speech codes in the classroom
* Pupil Subcultures
* Teacher and pupil racism
* The hidden curriculum

***It will be a 10 (A Level) / 20 mark (AS) question***

**RECAP** - Mind map some of the advantages and disadvantages of observations (remember we have learnt about a few different types of observation so be sure to state which one you are talking about)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Strengths | Limitations |
|  |  |

**Structured observational methods**

Sociologists make use of observation schedules (categories). Flanders system of interaction analysis categories is one of the most popular ones often used by positivist.

*What is this?*

*Give 5 examples of the categories included on this?*

*Why would positivists prefer the use of structured observations?*

* **Practical issues**

*What practical issues are there with structured observations?*

* **Reliability**

*Why are structured observational techniques seen as reliable?*

* **Validity**

*Why would interpretivists not like structured observations and what type of observation would they prefer and why?*

**Unstructured observational methods**

* What **practical issues** can you think of in relation to using observations in a school?

(Hints: time consuming, access, lack of privacy)

* **Ethical issues**

There are obviously ethical issues to consider when using young people in observations, which mean that covert observations are rarely used. Overt observations are generally used where the pupil/parent has given full informed consent. Also confidentiality must be ensured.

* **Validity**

Pupils in schools often use different language to the researcher due to the age difference which could impact on the validity of the finding if the researcher misinterprets what is said.

Teachers may be skilled at altering their behaviour when being observed as they often undergo observations within school. We refer to this as the …………………………………………….. This could also apply to the pupils being observed.

*Why is it difficult to avoid the Hawthorne effect in research within schools?*

*Make a note of Kings (pg. 216) research using observations*

* Are observations **representative**?
* Are observations **reliable**?

**Evidence:**

Research using observations:

* Devine (2003) observed classrooms and playgrounds in three primary schools in Ireland. She made sure that she sat at desks with the children and never reported misbehaviour. She stayed in the playgrounds during breaks and avoiding mixing too much with teachers so that she could better understand the schools from the children’s point of view
* Lacey used a variety of methods including a participant and none participant observations to investigate anti school subcultures. He immersed himself in school life, teaching some lessons and observing others as well as going on school trips. He was able to gain a detailed insight to social relations within school to show how pupils polarised into pro and anti-school subcultures and the impact it had on their achievement.

**Eye on the exam**

**Investigating the ways in which classroom interactions reinforce traditional gender identities**

Some sociologists have pointed to the ease with which traditional gender identities can be reinforced in classroom interaction. Verbal abuse and other more subtle processes such as the 'male gaze' can have an impact on gender identity. Some sociologists have found that some male teachers may even collude with male pupils in 'putting down' girls.

Sociologists may use non-participant observation to investigate the ways in which classroom interactions reinforce traditional gender identities. Observing classroom behaviour at first hand enables researchers to see what actually goes on rather than getting a verbal account after the event. There is also the potential for greater insight through direct experience of classroom interaction. However, it is very difficult for the observer to avoid being noticed and this can affect the behaviour both of teachers and of pupils.

**01** Applying material from **Item A** and your knowledge, evaluate the strengths and limitations of non-participant observation for the study of the ways in which classroom interactions reinforce traditional gender identities (20 marks)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Strengths** | **Limitations** |
| **P** ractical issues |  |  |
| **E** thical issues |  |  |
| **R** eliability |  |  |
| **V** alidity |  |  |
| **E** vidence |  |  |
| **R** epresentativeness |  |  |
| **T** heoretical issues |  |  |

**Experiments**

[](http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CAcQjRxqFQoTCIXDybXc2sYCFSaC2wodtIkJzQ&url=http://www.idevicemastery.com/my-experiment-with-the-passcode-lock-erase-data-option/&ei=2w2lVcXpHaaE7ga0k6boDA&psig=AFQjCNGnSGJyI-Io97HdOODsCiIf6RXTEg&ust=1436966739138449)

The contexts you could be asked about in relation to experiments are:

* Teacher Expectations
* Classroom interaction
* Labelling
* Pupils self- concepts
* The self-fulfilling prophecy

***It will be a 10 (A Level) / 20 mark (AS) question***

**Task**: Recap on the strengths and limitations of experiments

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Strengths** | **Limitations** |
|  |  |

Sociologists rarely use experiments and therefore only a few topics have been investigated in this way. Labelling is the most obvious topic you will be asked about here which is to do with teachers expectations of pupil performance. Both field and lab experiments can be used to investigate these ‘expectancy effects’ which can be positive or negative.

**Lab Experiments:**

**Examples** of experiments in sociology:

**Harvey and Slatin (1976) (lab experiment)**

**Further Evidence:**

* Charkin (1975) used a sample of 48 university student who each taught a lesson to a ten-year old boy. One group was told the boy was highly motivated and intelligent; another group were told he was poorly motivated with a low IQ; and the third group were given no information. Charkin videoed the lessons and found that the group which were told the boy had a high intelligence and was highly motivated made more eye contact and gave out more encouraging body language than the group who was told the boy had a low IQ and motivation.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Strengths:** | **Limitations:** |
| * **Reliability** – experiments (esp lab experiments) are often relatively simply and therefore easy to repeat. This increases the reliability of the findings. * **Ethical problems** – lab experiments that do not involve real pupils have fewer ethical problems than those that do. In Harvey and Slatin’s experiment – they did not use real pupils, so no child suffered any negative effects. * **Validity** - Laboratory experiments only examine one specific aspect of teacher expectations, such as body language. This can be useful because it allows the researcher to isolate and examine this variable more thoroughly to determine a cause an effect relationship which increases the validity. * **Representative** – if these experiments are relatively easy to repeat then this can be repeated on large samples, increasing the representative and making the finding generalizable to the wider population. | * **Ethical problems** – research such as Charkin’s have used real students and this raises ethical concerns. Young people’s vulnerability and their more limited ability to understand what is happening means that there are greater problems of deception, lack of informed consent and psychological damage. These ethical concerns are the main reason why laboratory experiments play only a limited role in educational research. * **Validity** – schools are large, complex institutions and there are many variables which can affect the behaviour of teachers and pupils e.g. class size, streaming, type of school. It is therefore impossible even to identify, let alone control, all the variables that might exert an influence on teachers’ expectation s. * **Practical** – sociologists are often interested in the role of large-scale social factors ad processes such as the impact of government policies on educational achievement, which cannot be studied in small-scale laboratory settings. * **Low validity** – Lab experiments are artificial and tell us little about the real world of education. For example, Charkin used university students rather than teachers; while Harvey and Slatin used photographs of pupils rather than real pupils. It is unlikely that university students behave in the same way as experienced teachers, and teachers’ expectations are based on more than just pupils’ appearance. For example, behaviour, accent and impressions of parents all play a role. |

**Field experiments:**

**Evidence of field experiments:**

**Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) (field experiment)**

What are the theoretical issues associated with this research?

Are there any ethical problems with regards to this research?

**Key study- Jane Elliot: an experiment in discrimination**

Watch the video clip and make notes on what the experiment was about and what was found. Make a comment about what topic in sociology this relates to and also why the experiment is seen as unethical.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Strengths:** | **Limitations:** |
| * **Reliability** – field experiments are often relatively simply and therefore easy to repeat. For example, Rosenthal and Jacobson’s field experiment on ‘*Pygmalion in the classroom’* has been repeated hundreds of times. * **Representative** – if these experiments are relatively easy to repeat then this can be repeated on large samples, increasing the representative and making the finding generalizable to the wider population. * **Validity -** Field studies like Rosenthal and Jacobson’s was a longitudinal study (carried out over a number of years) which allowed them to identify trends over time which increases the validity of the findings. | * **Ethical problems** – Field experiments in educational settings pose many ethical problems. When pupils are used in an experiment this can lead to such problems like a lack of informed consent, deception, or may not protected from harm. For example, in Rosenthal and Jacobson’s study, there were lasting impacts to the pupils being labelled such as being held back educationally. Such as experiment would be unethical to be carried out today. * **Ethical problems** - Field experiments work best when those involved are unaware they are in the experiment. However, this raises ethical issues such as deception. * **Reliability** – field experiments have lower reliability as it is difficult to repeat the study exactly as there is not full control of the variables like an lab experiment e.g. age of the pupils, teaching styles. |

**Eye on the exam**

**Investigating teachers' labelling of pupils**

Some sociologists argue that even though teachers have a professional duty to treat all pupils fairly, they often give negative labels to pupils based on the pupils' social class, gender and ethnicity. Pupils respond to these labels in a variety of ways, including forming anti-school subcultures.

Sociologists may use experiments to investigate teachers' labelling of pupils. One problem is that laboratory experiments are not naturalistic and this can affect the way teachers and pupils act. With covert field experiments, however, the real purpose of the research is not known and this may help to overcome the Hawthorne Effect. Another issue is whether a particular statement or action on the part of a teacher is actually an example of unfairly attaching a label to a pupil. This is very much open to interpretation by researchers.

**01** Applying material from **Item A** and your knowledge of research methods, evaluate the strengths and limitations of experiments for the study of teachers' labelling of pupils (20 marks)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Strengths** | **Limitations** |
| **P** ractical issues |  |  |
| **E** thical issues |  |  |
| **R** eliability |  |  |
| **V** alidity |  |  |
| **E** vidence |  |  |
| **R** epresentativeness |  |  |
| **T** heoretical issues |  |  |

**C:\Users\norria.ST-AIDANS.001\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\8CZ6R1OU\MC900156979[1].wmfSecondary sources: Official Statistics**

The contexts you may be asked about in relation to secondary sources are:

* Ethnicity, class, gender and educational achievement
* School attendance, truancy and inclusion
* League tables, marketization and school performance
* Gender and subject choice
* Education, work and training

***It will be a 10 (A Level) / 20 mark (AS) question***

**Practical issues**

*What practical issues might there be when using statistics to investigate education*? (pg. 156)

**Ethical issues**

There are no real ethical issues in using official stats, since they are publicly available and using them is unlikely to cause harm

**Representativeness**

* *Are statistics representative?*

Some official statistics on education are highly representative. For instance, all state schools have to complete the school census three times a year. This collects information on pupil’s attendance, ethnicity, gender etc. because these stats cover every pupil in the country they are highly representative.

**Reliability**

* *Are statistics reliable?(*pg 156-6)

**Validity**

* *Are statistics valid?*

The validity of statistics may be open to question because…..



I am a positivist and I love official statistics because they are very reliable and it allows me to establish cause and affect relationships

[](http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=cartoon+man&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&docid=Aga1mzjGvxgxQM&tbnid=8k2HCs-RPCSH8M:&ved=0CAUQjRw&url=http://www.123rf.com/photo_12340467_happy-cartoon-man-in-suit-smiling-and-greeting-hand-up.html&ei=mvU-UZXeKKSv0QWhtoBo&psig=AFQjCNFHpXldpuCkL99LQKD48-eBWv2_Fw&ust=1363166944967067)

I am an interpretivist and I question the validity of statistics. Statistics are socially constructed! I prefer qualitative data.

**Evidence**:

Sociological research that has made use of statistics:

Modood (2004): In a study of the relationship between ethnicity, class and attainment, Modood examined data on the proportion of pupils achieving five or more A\*-C in different ethnic groups. He examined data on pupils who were eligible for free school meals and therefore low income families, with data on those who were not eligible. He found that in all ethnic groups, pupils eligible for FSM did less well than those who were not, but the effects of having a lower income were much greater for white British pupils other than ethnic groups



**Secondary sources: Documents**

The contexts you may be asked about in relation to secondary sources are:

* Ethnic, class and gender differences in achievement
* The curriculum
* Gender stereotyping in school books
* Racist incidents in schools
* Special educational needs

***It will be a 10 (A Level) / 20 mark (AS) question***

Sociologists can make use of a wide range of public documents relating to education. These include inspection reports, school policies, school websites and publicity brochures. They can also make use of personal documents such as pupil’s written work or school reports on pupils. Documents are a qualitative source of information.

**Practical issues** (page 157)

**Ethical Issues**

There are few ethical issues with regards to public documents. *Why do you think this is?*

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

However, with personal documents the researcher may need to gain informed consent before using them, from the person who created them. Researchers should also try to ensure confidentiality by keeping the identity of the person who created the document anonymous. In their research. Hey collected notes from the bin that girls had been passing to each other during the lesson, this was clearly unethical!

**Representativeness**

* *Are documents Representative?*

All schools are required to produce public documents meaning that they can be seen as representative. However, as the school themselves are producing the documents, they may choose what to document. Personal documents are often not representative.

**Reliability**

* Are documents reliable? (pg. 158)

**Validity**

* *Are documents valid?*

The validity of documents may be open to question; some schools would not accept that inspection reports provide a valid assessment of the school. Furthermore, public material about a school is likely to put a positive gloss on the schools image and performance. All documents are also open to interpretation on the researcher’s part.

Sociological research using documents

Hey (2007) investigated friendship networks among girls in a secondary school using the notes that girls passed on to one another during lesson. This allowed her to access the subjective views of girls, and build up a picture of their friendships without using the conventional methods such as interviews in which the honesty of the responses might be open to question

**Secondary sources: Practice exam question**

**Eye on the exam**

**Investigating social class differences in achievement**

Many sociologists have examined the relationship between social class and achievement and have found that there are clear patterns of middle-class pupils outperforming working-class pupils. However, sociologists also want to understand the reasons for this pattern.

Sociologists may use official statistics to investigate social class differences in achievement. These allow researchers to see trends and patterns over time which can help to reveal cause-and-effect relationships. Official statistics can be highly representative because they are often collected from a wide range of institutions. However, it is very difficult for the researcher to be sure that official statistics have not been manipulated in some way by the organisations responsible for their collection.

**01** Applying material from **Item A** and your knowledge of research methods, evaluate the strengths and limitations of official statistics for the study of social class differences in achievement (20 marks)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Strengths** | **Limitations** |
| **P** ractical issues |  |  |
| **E** thical issues |  |  |
| **R** eliability |  |  |
| **V** alidity |  |  |
| **E** vidence |  |  |
| **R** epresentativeness |  |  |
| **T** heoretical issues |  |  |