

## Worksheet 4.1 Assessing research findings (pages 225–228)

### Consolidate (work individually)

- 1 Suggest two differences between quantitative and qualitative data.
- 2 Define 'validity'.
- 3 Define 'reliability'.
- 4 Identify three types of triangulation.
- 5 Briefly explain the term 'reflexivity'.
- 6 Identify three ways a researcher might 'reflect' on their research.
- 7 Suggest three ways a researcher might assess the validity of their research.
- 8 Briefly explain the term 'dialogic research'.
- 9 Identify two ways in which methodological pluralism differs from triangulation.
- 10 Suggest two advantages of methodological pluralism.

### Evaluate (work as a class)

- 1 Assess the advantages and disadvantages of combining different methods of investigation.
- 2 Explore some of the ways in which 'as a researcher, our findings will be coloured by our social background, our experiences and our culture'.

### Apply (work in small groups)

- 1 From any area of the A level course with which you are familiar, provide examples of the following:
  - a) a study based on *quantitative* data
  - b) a study based on *qualitative* data
  - c) a study that uses *both* quantitative and qualitative data.
- 2 Examine the argument that qualitative data has greater validity than quantitative data.
- 3 Suggest three advantages of triangulation for the sociological researcher.
- 4 Suggest two advantages and two disadvantages of dialogic research.
- 5 Suggest two advantages and two disadvantages of methodological pluralism.

**Worksheet 4.2 Sociology and science (pages 229–234)****Consolidate (work individually)**

- 1 Identify three features of Comte's concept of positivism.
- 2 Suggest two examples, other than suicide, of social facts in our society.
- 3 Suggest one reason why it may not always be possible to falsify a theory.
- 4 Using an example to illustrate your answer, define the term 'paradigm'.
- 5 Give an example of an 'open system'.
- 6 Give an example of a 'closed system'.
- 7 Suggest three ways that 'structures constrain human behaviour'.
- 8 Suggest one example of a natural science.
- 9 Using an example to illustrate your answer, briefly explain the term 'objectivity'.
- 10 Suggest one methodological difference between the natural and social sciences.

**Evaluate (work as a class)**

- 1 Assess the statement: 'Sociology cannot be scientific because it operates within an open system.'
- 2 Explain how and why you agree or disagree with the following statement: 'The types of subject matter of the natural and social sciences are so different it is impossible to study the latter using a methodology designed to study the former.'

**Apply (work in small groups)**

- 1 Using the example of suicide to illustrate your answer, briefly explain the difference between 'correlation' and 'causation'.
- 2 Using any studies with which you are familiar, explain the difference between an inductive and a deductive approach.
- 3 For any two sociological perspectives you have studied, suggest ways that they differ in terms of the concepts and theories they use to explain how the social world operates.
- 4 Examine the differences between a positivist and a realist view of science.
- 5 Suggest some of the ways in which the values, experiences and beliefs of sociological researchers might colour their research.

## Worksheet 4.3 Interpretivist methodology (pages 234–238)

### Consolidate (work individually)

- 1 Define, using an example to illustrate your answer, 'social action'.
- 2 Briefly explain the term 'verstehen'.
- 3 Briefly explain the basis of the 'comparative method'.
- 4 What, according to symbolic interactionists, is the job of the sociologist?
- 5 Identify four skills required by a researcher if they are, in the words of Blumer, to feel their way 'inside the experience of the actor'.
- 6 Identify two important aspects of interaction.
- 7 What, according to phenomenology, is the job of the sociologist?
- 8 Identify four kinds of evidence that, according to Atkinson, are considered by coroners as relevant to their verdict.
- 9 Briefly explain, using examples to illustrate your answer, the 'two sociologies'.
- 10 Suggest two research methods favoured by positivists and two research methods favoured by interpretivists.

- 3 Examine the methodological differences between Durkheim's and Atkinson's studies of suicide.
- 4 Examine the possible reasons for positivists favouring *quantitative* research methods/ data and interpretivists favouring *qualitative* research methods/data.
- 5 Suggest ways you could research 'the behaviour of students in your sociology class' from *either*:
  - a) a positivist perspective, *or*
  - b) an interpretivist perspective.

### Evaluate (work as a class)

- 1 Argue the case for and against the idea that 'suicide is a social fact'.
- 2 Evaluate the argument that there are 'two sociologies'.

### Apply (work in small groups)

- 1 What are the advantages and disadvantages of 'researchers putting themselves in the place of social actors and attempting to see the world through their eyes'?
- 2 Applying the comparative method, suggest three:
  - a) historical differences between male and female behaviour in our society
  - b) contemporary differences in behaviour between our society and any other society with which you are familiar.

## Worksheet 4.4 Postmodernist methodology (pages 238–241)

### Consolidate (work individually)

- 1 Suggest three ways that postmodernists 'directly challenge the entire basis of research methodology in the social sciences'.
- 2 Briefly explain the meaning of the idea that 'there is no single reality, only multiple realities'.
- 3 Identify three reasons why, from a postmodernist view, research reports are not objective.
- 4 Explain the meaning of 'complete objectivity is an ideal'.
- 5 Identify four things researchers 'deny' during the course of their research.
- 6 Suggest four categories sociologists use to 'impose their own order and framework on the social world'.
- 7 Explain the meaning of 'all categories are problematic'.
- 8 Explain, using an example to illustrate your answer, 'defamiliarisation'.
- 9 Identify four characteristics of metanarratives.
- 10 Suggest two ways postmodernism has changed the way sociologists approach their research.

### Apply (work in small groups)

- 1 'In one sense you have one identity, in another sense you are made up of multiple identities.' Identify and explain some of your 'identities'.
- 2 Suggest ways that any two of the following categories 'create order where none may exist ... impose a particular view of reality [and] structure the social world in a particular way':
  - a) social class
  - b) age
  - c) gender
  - d) ethnicity
  - e) disability
  - f) sexuality.
- 3 Suggest ways a sociologist could justify their belief that 'research reports are a lot better than the view of the person in the street'.
- 4 If the social world consists of 'multiple realities', suggest a research method we could use to study social behaviour (and explain the relevance of your choice).
- 5 Identify and briefly explain two sociological metanarratives, other than functionalism and Marxism.

### Evaluate (work as a class)

- 1 'Sociological research is no more – and no less – valid than the opinions of the person in the street.' Argue the case for and against this statement.
- 2 'Sociological research is both possible and desirable.' Evaluate this statement using any examples of research with which you are familiar.

## Worksheet 4.5 Feminist methodology (pages 241–244)

### Consolidate (work individually)

- 1 Suggest two characteristics of 'weak thesis' feminism.
- 2 Suggest two areas of sexism which, for feminists, infuse the research process.
- 3 Identify four characteristics of what, according to Oakley, is 'the standard approach to interviewing'.
- 4 Identify the features of a feminist methodology suggested by Mies (1993).
- 5 Briefly explain how Mies' conception of 'valid knowledge' is very different from the idea of 'value freedom'.
- 6 Suggest one criticism that can be levelled at the idea of 'giving primacy to personal experience'.
- 7 Identify two things emphasised by postmodern feminism.
- 8 What type of research methods are generally favoured by postmodern feminists?
- 9 Identify three aspects of the 'researcher's voice'.
- 10 What, according to Delamont (2003), is the intention of postmodernist research?

### Apply (work in small groups)

- 1 Suggest three examples of androcentric assumptions or behaviour from any area of the Specification you have studied.
- 2 Suggest one criticism of *each* of the features of a feminist methodology suggested by Mies (1993).
- 3 Identify and briefly outline four types of feminist perspective.
- 4 Explain, using examples to illustrate your answer, the statement 'women are no longer invisible'.
- 5 Briefly examine the reasons why postmodern feminists favour interpretivist research methods.

### Evaluate (work as a class)

- 1 'Women are not a homogeneous, undifferentiated category.' Outline the sociological arguments for and against this statement.
- 2 To what extent is the feminist methodology proposed by Mies (1993) compatible with that put forward by Delamont (2003)?

**Worksheet 4.6 Sociology, methodology and values (pages 245–248)****Consolidate (work individually)**

- 1 Suggest two personal factors that may influence the research process.
- 2 Suggest two social factors that may influence the research process.
- 3 Briefly explain the idea that 'all knowledge is relative'.
- 4 Explain, using an example, the meaning of 'objective knowledge'.
- 5 Suggest two values which direct feminist research.

**Apply (work in small groups)**

- 1 Identify some of the values underlying any two of the following:
  - a) functionalism
  - b) Marxism
  - c) feminism
  - d) postmodernism.
- 2 Identify and explain one argument for and one argument against the idea that sociology should be value free.
- 3 Identify and explain one argument for and one argument against the idea that all sociological knowledge is relative.

**Evaluate (work as a class)**

- 1 Assess the arguments for and against the idea that there can be no objective, value-free knowledge.

## Worksheet 4.7 Sociology and social policy (pages 248–252)

### Consolidate (work individually)

- 1 Briefly define 'social policy'.
- 2 Identify three ways in which the founding fathers saw sociology as playing a central role in society.
- 3 Identify three influences on the creation of social policy.
- 4 Briefly explain what is meant by the 'Third Way' in UK politics.
- 5 Identify three measures introduced by Labour to reduce poverty.
- 6 Suggest two criticisms of the 'Third Way'.
- 7 Identify three ways in which, for Giddens, governments can prevent social exclusion.
- 8 Briefly explain the meaning of 'a coordinated strategy to deal with social exclusion'.
- 9 Identify three ways in which sociologists are able to inform social policy.
- 10 Suggest two reasons why some sociologists see 'standing apart from government' as a virtue.

### Apply (work in small groups)

In the first three questions students should apply their knowledge of different areas of society (such as family life, education, work, politics and so on) to social policy in the UK over the past 50 years.

- 1 Suggest examples of social changes that have resulted in changes in social policy.
- 2 Suggest some of the ways in which a changing political agenda has resulted in changes in social policy.
- 3 Suggest ways that changes in knowledge have resulted in changes in social policy.
- 4 Identify four ways people may suffer social exclusion in contemporary Britain.
- 5 Imagine that you were the government minister in charge of citizenship:
  - a) Suggest three major social policies to encourage 'active citizenship' in young people.
  - b) Briefly explain the aims of each policy.

### Evaluate (work as a class)

- 1 What contribution can sociologists make to the formulation of social policy?
- 2 'Sociologists should be less concerned with problem solving than problem raising.' Examine the arguments for and against this statement.