

# THE SOCIOLOGY TEACHER

THE JOURNAL OF THE BSA TEACHING GROUP



**What are the causes  
of social consensus**

Gabrielle Stapleton (INTRO  
needed)

**Developing English  
and Maths skills  
through Sociology**

by Sociology Teacher,  
Emily Painter

**Linear learning**

A teacher's reflection.  
By Patrick Robinson



Patrick Robinson



## *I write this in the heatwave of June and the UK is sweltering.*

**Hot** and bothered some might say, hot from the sun and bothered by an election result that seemed to satisfy.....no-one? A result in which the Conservatives won but Theresa May lost. And Jeremy Corbyn won but Labour lost. And the power of the Scottish National Party took a hit while the Democratic Unionist party in Northern Ireland gained power as kingmaker to the coalition with the Conservatives.

What links can Sociology lessons make to the election result? Here are a few ideas that came to me: (all statistics in the following bullet points come from source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/election-2017-40232272>)

- Social Media coverage: the speed of news, the speed of how news is satirised.
- Class identity: was there a return to traditional class voting trends? How would we measure this? An indirect measure of class is to look at the school background of MPs: in 2015, 32% of all MPs were educated in independent schools, this is now declined to 29% (but still disproportionate to the % of the general population that attend independent schools: 7%).
- Age identity: Corbyn and Labour being popular to the young voters, on a manifesto against tuition fees and reintroduction of EMA.
- National Identity: the low number of votes for UKIP, the stepping down of Paul Nuttall as leader. The decline in votes for the SNP.
- Disability and inequality: While there are no definite statistics on the number of MPs that have disabilities, it appears there has been an increase in the 2017 Parliament. For example: Marsha de Cordova, Jared O'Mara, Stephen Lloyd, Robert Halfon and Paul Maynard.
- Ethnic identity and inequality: the rise in the number of MPs that are from an ethnic minority backgrounds: 52 out of 650 (8% compared to 6% in 2015, but still short of

representing the 14% of the UK that are from ethnic minority groups).

- Sexuality: there are now 45 MPs who openly define themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT).
- Gender inequality: women now make up 32% of the House of Commons, up from 29% in 2015. (But this is in the context of females making up more than 50% of the UK population, the Commons still has a long way to go to truly represent the make-up of the country).
- Research Methods/Sampling techniques were used in the exit polls that were carried out by a range of media outlets.

Moving to a different point on a tragic and solemn note, I'm sure all readers of the Sociology Teacher are aware of the Grenfell Tower fire in which at least 79 people have died at the time of writing. Here is a website for readers who would like to give support: <https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/grenfell-tower-support> Could I ask if there are any Sociology teachers that taught classes in the London area near to Grenfell after the fire? I think it would be of great use to share an article about how schools and colleges responded to such a devastating incident for their pupils/students and communities. What is the best way a school/college can respond to a catastrophe in their local area? Next issue to be in Autumn of the next academic year. All the best for the summer,

*All the best, Patrick Robinson".*

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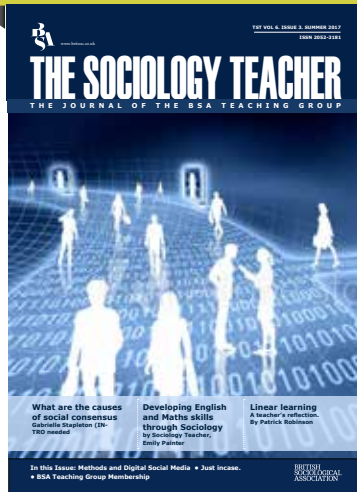
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If you're someone with an idea for something we could include in the journal, we'd be delighted to hear from you. Any aspect of teaching and learning in the Social Sciences can be suitable, but we'd be especially interested in material relating to GCSE and/or KS3, which are currently under-represented in the publication.

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Sociology teachers in schools and sixth form  
colleges, are now offered full BSA membership  
at the concessionary rate of £57pa (Jan to  
Dec), See last page For Benefits Details.

The BSA Teaching Group is a network of anyone keen to further the interests of  
sociology teaching from secondary to tertiary education.

The aim of the Group is to encourage and promote the teaching of the Social  
Sciences in Primary, Secondary, Further and Higher Education.

The Group therefore provides opportunities for those teaching in Sociology to develop  
and share ideas and strategies for the promotion and delivery of the teaching of  
the Sociology. To this end, one of the main activities of the BSA Teaching Group  
is the dissemination of information relating to teaching materials and teaching  
methods. The Group is also active in promoting the interests of Sociology teachers  
to examination boards, academic bodies, governmental and political agencies and  
the wider public.

Members of the Group can be found in every sector of education, but the majority are  
teachers of Advanced Level Sociology. Members are encouraged to be active in the  
running of the Group, either nationally or through local activities.

CONTENT, CONSTRAINT  
AND MISCONCEPTIONMETHODS AND DIGITAL  
SOCIAL MEDIANATIONAL EXTENSION COLLEGE,  
SOCIOLOGY COURSE





## Teachers Experiences of the Sociology A level.

**The following draws on research undertaken as part of Jennifer Hampton's doctoral studies at Cardiff University. The working title of her ESRC funded PhD is 'The Nature of Quantitative Methods and Analysis in A level Social Sciences'.**

My research sits in the context of the Q-step initiative (<http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/q-step>) which has seen £19.5 million invested by the Nuffield Foundation, ESRC and HEFCE in an attempt to 'promote a step-change in quantitative social science training in the UK'. This funding has been distributed across 18 universities to create centres which have supported the development and delivery of specialist undergraduate programmes of work. As well as the focus on undergraduate training, there has also been a push to forge links with schools and employers. Certainly, here at Cardiff University Q-step centre, there has been a particular focus on developing links with local colleges, not least with the development of a level


3 qualification in Social Analytics. In this context, there has been a great deal of research within the Higher Education setting, especially regarding undergraduate students' attitudes and perceptions. However, little research has been conducted into the nature of quantitative methods in students' preceding A level studies. My research aims to address this gap in the literature by investigating research methods in A level social science curricula through the use of document analysis, questionnaires and interviews with both students and teachers. What follows here is an overview and journey through some of the themes that came out of some of my work with Sociology A level teachers.



I interviewed teachers from a variety of institutions, with varying backgrounds and levels of experience. Unlike what happens in some of the other institutions that offer A level Sociology, all of my teachers were Sociology specialists, something that many of them expressed gratitude for. The various backgrounds of those who I interviewed was broad: from those who have always had a passion for sociology and knew from the moment that they did their own A level that they wanted to be a Sociology A level teacher themselves, to those who admitted to having 'fallen into it' only really getting to know the subject once they started their training or indeed teaching the course itself. Interestingly, there appears to be two opinions about those who teach the subject without a grounding in the discipline as one might expect in say a natural science subject. On the one hand, some recognise that in practical terms you are all well versed in *how* to teach and so *what* you teach is simply a matter of learning the content ahead of the students. On the other, there were some who take issue with this, claiming that it adds to and reflects the common misconception that Sociology is an easy subject.

Misconceptions appear to be rife, amongst the student body, management and the wider public, as brought up by many of my interviewees. Many discussed the fact that the majority of their students come to the A level without any 'real knowledge' of the subject, apart from the course information and perhaps an introductory lesson, and of course the

misconceptions that they hold. Some teachers suggested that students actively chose Sociology for the very reason that they hadn't come across it before in their academic career. Coupled with the lower enrolment requirements often associated with the subject, one teacher suggested that this can lead to students for whom it is simply a 'subject they haven't yet failed



Some teachers suggested that students actively chose Sociology for the very reason that they hadn't come across it before in their academic career.

at'. There was a common feeling that Sociology is perceived as an easy subject. For some students, this can result in a harsh realisation when they discover that their newly chosen A level involves more than just talking about 'teenage pregnancy and smoking'. In order to combat some of the misconceptions, there appeared to be a drive amongst some of the teachers to

challenge perceptions of the subject being 'easy'. This embodied itself with tales of teachers actively projecting the difficulty of the subject and a pride taken in choosing the most 'academically rigorous' syllabus on offer. Perhaps it is the perceived ease of the subject which has led to Sociology often being taken as a 'filler' subject under the old modular system.

There was a sense rightful pride amongst those teachers who described how they managed to convert some of those 'filler' students, who only intended to take it for AS, to full A level candidates. Amongst the teachers I talked to, many worked in institutions where Sociology was one of the most popular. Although this was often attributed to the 'filler' approach taken, it is reassuring that they also reported continued popularity under the linear system. Indeed, some spoke of how they had more applicants for the subject than they had spaces (something which reflects staffing and funding issues as well as rising popularity). Partly this may be an artefact of my sample, I only interviewed teachers in institutions who actually have a subject specialist, but national figures (taken from the Joint Council for Qualifications) have also shown a year-on-year increase in the popularity of A level Sociology over the past few years.

Throughout my interviews with teachers there were references to the pressures and constraints that you all face. As well as the usual funding and staffing issues, there is something particular that seems to reflect the nature of the Sociology A level. That is, many teachers raised



It is within the detail of research methods, the oft debunked and again renewed debate between quantitative and qualitative approaches, where the teachers really diverged.

the issue of the extremely content heavy syllabus that they work with. With a 'massive amount of content which is expected to be delivered and understood' it is a 'race to fit everything in', apparently regardless of which exam board provided their specific syllabus. Interestingly, one teacher commented that whilst the old system did not allow for any flexibility, the new linear approach may allow freedom in teaching despite the content heavy nature of the syllabus. This was said in the context of a discussion of the utility of research projects for teaching research methods. There appeared to be consensus amongst the teachers that I spoke to that whilst, in theory, research projects should help to develop deeper understanding of research methods, in practice, there were many obstacles, both real and potential, which compromised the 'meaningfulness' of these exercises. These obstacles reflected the content heavy nature of the subject and reference was made to the amount of extra work you would have to do to make the exercise formal enough to be taken seriously by the students. Indeed, there is a sense that students are savvy about what they need for their exams, taking a pragmatic approach to their studies. There was some indication that this in turn deters some teachers from providing extra learning opportunities (in terms of a research project at least) as students can be 'quite critical of teachers who don't stick to what's

necessary to get them through the exam'. There was also

a sense amongst teachers themselves, a sense that you are training students to answer exam questions, to get their grades, and so need to

be careful to focus efforts

towards this and not spend

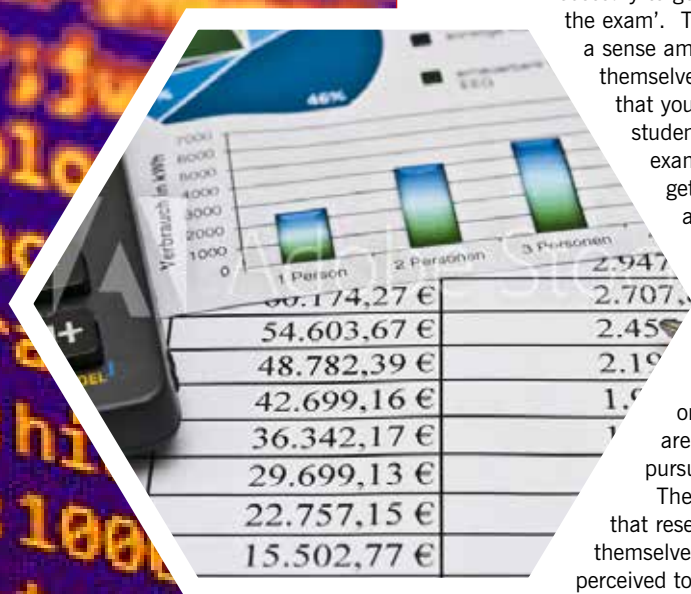
too much time on activities that are a less tangible pursuit of this goal.

There was a sense that research methods themselves were generally perceived to be quite dull by teachers and students alike,

partly attributed to the 'fiddly little areas of language' that students need to be familiar with. Furthermore, teachers reported frustration amongst their students that there are never 'any completely concluded arguments'. When it came to discussing quantitative methods specifically, a teacher suggested that her students did not find quantitative methods as daunting as they might, given the recentness of their Maths GCSEs. Conversely, it was the experience of the Maths GCSE, and the potentially negative connotations associated with that, which made other teachers report some students being 'terrified' of anything to do

with number. Whilst this active aversion may not be true for all students, there was a feeling from some of those that I spoke to that, given the type of students attracted to the course, the level of numeracy skills may be such that basic understanding of some quantitative issues may be more difficult than expected. Interestingly, many reported how students enjoy critically engaging with quantitative methods; that whilst they are able to appreciate *some* of the usefulness of these approaches, it is the criticism of their use which they really enjoy. The greater engagement with a negative critique the more 'anti-numbers' students can become, which some recognised as problematic in itself. On the whole, there was an impression given that students preferred qualitative methods. The perception is that this preference lay, not in opposition to their dislike of quantitative, but because they find them more attractive, more interesting, more 'juicy'. There was recognition amongst some of my teachers that this preference in the students may be a something of a reflection of their own preferences. Although many taught their students that the dichotomy set up in the course between quantitative and qualitative may be a false one, that in reality practising sociologists take a mixed approach, there was a (sometimes) underlying message throughout many of the interviews that qualitative methods are 'better for sociology'.

It is within the detail of research methods, the oft debunked and again renewed debate between quantitative and qualitative approaches, where the teachers really diverged. Whilst many expressed the opinion that sociology should remain predominantly qualitative and that this should be something to be proud of, this was by no means a consensus. The minority who would welcome an increase in quantitative methods in the syllabus spoke to a number of reasons, including skills for employment, the status of the subject, and the nature of the discipline itself. Starting with the latter, some teachers referred to some of the core sociological theorists when talking about the quantitative foundations of sociology and argued that for the study of society, quantitative methods are more appropriate than qualitative. Rather than get into the nuance of these debates here, it is the issue of status to which I'd like to draw our attention. There was indication by some that more quantitative methods might improve the status of Sociology by aligning it more closely with the natural sciences. It was posited that to pursue it for this reason





might be a misadventure, questioning whether 'we want to compromise what we're trying to achieve with research to meet the standards of other disciplines'. It was seen by some to be somewhat of a trade-off; that parents, careers advisors and others might consider subjects with a scientific label to be 'more rigorous' but to reject that kind of pressure and have pride in the use of alternative approaches makes the discipline distinct and

nature, as well as the volume of content. Whilst giving students a good grounding in some of the key issues of sociology, there was some frustration in the 'old fashioned' specifications. Although expressed differently by others, this was captured by one teacher who stated: 'sometimes it feels like I'm not teaching my students about sociology, I'm teaching them about the history of sociology... rather than teaching them about society, we're telling them 'this is how sociologists have thought about society over various points in

in any case, may not directly address this criticism). Speaking as an examiner, one of my participants commented that they do like to see recent studies used in exam scripts. When recent means the last 15-20 years, this may do nothing to assuage another who worried that she was arming her students with research that was too new for examiners to recognise.

I hope that this has given you some insight into a small aspect of the research I have conducted. I appreciate that none of this may be news to you, that these may be opinions and views that you recognise



Value

DATA

Knowledge

Qualitative Analysis

worthy.

Whilst these methodological debates are interesting to those of us within the discipline, there was a sense throughout that as Sociology teachers your business is to teach the Sociology A level and 'just embrace whatever's in the spec'. At the same time, within the interviews some of the teachers I spoke to expressed frustration with their specifications. Outside of the research methods discussions, this involved the

is much that the teachers in my study reported doing to address this, in terms of using up-to-date resources and research, this is hampered by time constraints (and,

time'.  
Whilst  
there

in yourselves or colleagues, but I hope that it has been of interest. What struck me throughout my discussions with Sociology teachers was the enthusiasm and perseverance that they had, in spite of obvious pressures on them. Although there was some frustration expressed, there seemed to be a sense that Sociology is a rewarding subject to teach. You play an important role, as you encourage students to think critically about the world around them and 'are inviting people into the discipline of sociology'.

# What are the causes of social consensus and conflict in society today?

Gabrielle Stapleton (INTRO need to find out which school.....?)

**Social** consensus is when social order and stability is maintained in society through the emphasis of shared values. Conflict, according to the Cambridge English dictionary, is an active disagreement between people with opposing opinions or principles. There are various causes which can cause social consensus and cause conflict in society today. The causes could include education, family, religion and many more. As society has undergone countless changes throughout the past the cause of social consensus and conflict may be viewed differently to different people. Personally, I believe that social consensus and conflict are caused significantly by religion. The mass noun of religion, according to the English Oxford dictionary, is the belief in and worship of a superhuman controlling power, especially a personal God or gods. To many people, religion is considered to be a vital element of any society's structure as it can influence or legitimise the established order of society. Religion can also potentially affect the whole of society depending on beliefs.

Emile Durkheim had a positive view on religion as he argued that religion promotes social solidarity and that religion is needed in order for society to function accordingly. This shows that religion can cause social consensus in society today.

Functionalists, such as Durkheim, argue that religion plays an essential role in creating value consensus in society. This is due to the belief that functionalists hold that if everyone believes the same thing in society then consensus will be created. The functionalist view is present in society today as religious

institutions all over the world hold many charity activities, calling for union from believers to help those in need. Events like these reinforce the social solidarity as they remind people that there should be unity. Value consensus is created from this and reduces the likelihood of society collapsing through individuals pursuing their own selfish interest at the expense of others.

Robert Bellah was interested in how religion unifies society and came to the conclusion that civil religion integrates society. Civil religion is a belief system that attaches sacred qualities to society itself. This creates social consensus as social order and shared values are produced. For example, civil religion in America involves loyalty to the nation state and a belief in God and, therefore, binds together Americans from many different ethnic and religious backgrounds.

Another way in which religion causes social consensus is through the promotion of social order and support given to important statutory laws on theft and murder, as well as others. Talcott Parsons argued that there is a clear link between religion, morality, norms and statute laws. For example Jesus gospel teachings and the 10 Commandments demonstrate this link. One of the 10 Commandments state that, "Thou shall not commit adultery", this demands that families should stay together. This shows social consensus as many people may follow these shared values on laws irrespective of prior religious belief.

However, although religion causes social consensus in society



The causes could include education, family, religion and many more. As society has undergone countless changes throughout the past the cause of social consensus and conflict may be viewed differently to different people.

today, many of the world's conflicts have been caused by religion. This indicates that religion can cause conflict in society today, but also, in addition to this, religion may actually cause more conflict than consensus.

This can be caused through fundamentalism, which is a form of a religion that upholds belief in the strict, literal interpretation of religious scriptures. For example, Islamic fundamentalists would favour strict observance of the teachings of the Qur'an and Islamic law as the texts are inerrant and not open to questioning. For my primary research I decided to do a questionnaire and from this I found that 24 out of 40 agreed with the statement, "Religion causes more conflict in society than consensus".

This indicates that many people believe that religion causes conflict in society today. In addition to this, the results imply that religion may be more associated with conflict rather than consensus. In terms of conflict in society today, fundamentalist theories and attitudes can have a direct and negative effect on the development of conflict for various reasons. One reason being that fundamentalists tend to separate themselves from the rest of the world to possibly avoid influence. In addition to this some fundamentalists, such as some branches of Protestantism, follow the Doctrine of Separation, which is a belief that the members of a church should be separate from "the world" and not have association with those who are "of the world". There

are various scriptures which influence this doctrine among fundamentalists, for example, Amos 3:3 states "Can two walk together except they be agreed?"

Davie, in 2013, stated that fundamentalists seek to establish islands of certainty against what they see as social and cultural chaos. This may cause conflict as their differing views may result in an aggressive reaction if they feel that their beliefs and values are under threat. Another way in which fundamentalists can cause conflict could be through their aims. Fundamentalists may have aims to draw attention and protect their beliefs but during this attempt some fundamentalists may cause harm, intimidate and shock others. Fundamentalism can also cause conflict in society today if there are changes that go against their beliefs. For example, the New Christian Right in America was developed in opposition to family diversity with aims to reassert true religion and restore it to a public role. This can cause conflict as arguably these fundamentalists may not take into account people's personal views towards issues such as abortion, divorce and sexuality as they have strong beliefs about the traditional family and gender roles.

In recent years, religion has been at the centre of significant global conflicts. This includes the 9/11 terrorist attacks, which was due to Islamic fundamentalists. The attacks killed nearly



3,000 people from 93 nations. Al-Qaeda hoped that, by attacking these symbols of American power, they would promote widespread fear throughout the country and ultimately result in the US supporting their political and religious goals in the Middle East and Muslim World. From my research in the questionnaire participants were asked to list examples of events where religion has caused conflict, if they were aware of any. Most participants were aware as 33 out of 40 listed examples and in some cases participants listed some of the same events. For example some participants listed events such as Boko Haram in Nigeria, Isis, Northern Ireland, Charlie Hebdo in France and others which they felt the conflict was caused by religion.

Richard Dawkins argued that religion has been the main cause of violence and war throughout history. In 2013, the British atheist wrote in his autobiography that, "religion is the principal label, and the most dangerous one, by which they, as opposed to we can be identified." Dawkins furthered his argument by stating that if religion were somehow abolished there would be, "a much better chance of no more war".

Due to there being various religions and religious beliefs in modern society, religious differences can cause conflict. For example in July 1983 there was a civil war in Sri Lanka as conflict arose from the tensions between the mainly Buddhist

participants listed Catholic versus Protestant in response to question four which was "Are you aware of any events where religion has been the cause of conflict?".

In the past and the present, there have been multiple individuals who have created conflict due to their beliefs in God. Alice Lakwena is one of many who has used religious beliefs as a means of creating conflict in society. She created a Holy Spirit Movement and claimed that God had commanded her to seize the Ugandan capital. Her cousin, Joseph Kony, has also in today's society used religion as a means of conflict, as he has stated that he wanted to rule according to the "Biblical Ten Commandments", and create a "new generation" of Acholis.

Some religious believers may quote religious texts to allow them to cause conflict in society today. For example, a follower of Islam may refer to Qur'an 4:76 which states that, "Those who believe fight in the way of Allah, and those who disbelieve fight in the way of the Shaitan". For other religions there are various religious texts that can be referred to which justifies conflict. For example Hinduism's Rig Veda 1:39:2 and 10th Sikh guru, Guru Gobind Singh. Another example can be found

in the Old Testament of the Bible where the book of Deuteronomy, according to the New International Version, states that, "When the Lord your God brings you into the land you are

entering to possess and drives out before you many nations-the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, seven nations larger and stronger than you and when the Lord your God has delivered them over to you and you have defeated them, then you must destroy them totally. Make no treaty with them, and show them no mercy"

Whilst this may seem outdated and specific to those living at the time, the Bible is open to interpretation and therefore scriptures may be made relevant to society today. For example, a Christian may interpret this scripture as divine law and view it as an implication that they should not associate themselves with those who do not have the same belief, which could potentially cause conflict.

For Marxists, religion operates as an ideological weapon used by the upper strata of society to justify and legitimate the suffering of those of the poor as something inevitable and God given. To an extent, this causes conflict as it allows the bourgeoisie to control and manipulate the proletariat. Karl Marx argued that religion is also a product of alienation. Marxists also argue that religion is a feature of a class divided society, implying that religion can cause conflict through legitimising division as in a classless society religion would not need to exist.

According to feminists, religion is a patriarchal institution that reflects and perpetrates inequality. Due to patriarchy and inequality within religion conflict can be caused in society today as the male domination and female marginalisation could lead to disputes. For example, Jean Holm in 2001 stated that some practices carried out in religious institutions is the "devaluation of women in religion", as, in Islam, menstruating women are not allowed to touch the Qur'an. Religion may also cause conflict through the influences it may have on social normalities. Many religions tend to legitimate and regulate women's traditional



domestic and reproductive role. For example, the belief that man should be the head of the family was embedded in the traditional marriage ceremony of the Church of England.

Many sociologists, such as Friedrich Engels and Ernest Bloch, believe that religion can have a dual character, meaning that it is capable of fulfilling positive functions, such as social consensus, as well as negative functions like conflict. As a Marxist, Bloch



Sinhalese majority and the mainly Hindu Tamil minority. This shows religion as causing conflict in modern society as the civil war lasted for 26 years and resulted in around 80,000 to 100,000 deaths of citizens. My results show that some participants were aware of events in society today where there has been conflict as a result of differences between religions. For example five

argued that religion can inspire "protest and rebellion", which are forms of conflicts. He also argued that religious beliefs can create visions of a better world and potentially make them a reality through social change in favour of consensus. My primary research included the question, "Do you think that religion causes social consensus in society today?" The questionnaire only provided the answers "yes" and "no" for this question, however two participants answered "both" indicating that they feel that religion can cause consensus as well as conflict. From this response, I came to the conclusion that if the answers provided included the answer "both", potentially more

participants may have chosen this answer as well.

Ultimately, religion is a cause of social consensus and conflict in society today as it is capable of creating both. There is evidence to indicate that religion can cause both whether through religious organisations, sacred texts or religious laws or teachings. Religion has caused social order, solidarity and shared values which are considered to be elements of social consensus. Religion has also caused wars, alienation and disputes which can be seen as elements of conflict. Nevertheless, after analysing the results from research and questionnaires, it

is evident that religion is not the only cause as figure two from my results show that 40 participants out of 40 answered yes to the question "Do you think that there are any other causes of conflict and consensus in society today?" Despite this I have concluded that religion is a cause of conflict in society today and is more significant than other causes due to religion being a vital element in society. Figure one is evidence of this view as it shows that 33 out of 40 participants listed recent events where religion has been the cause of conflict.

This table and results indicate that all of the participants believe that there are other



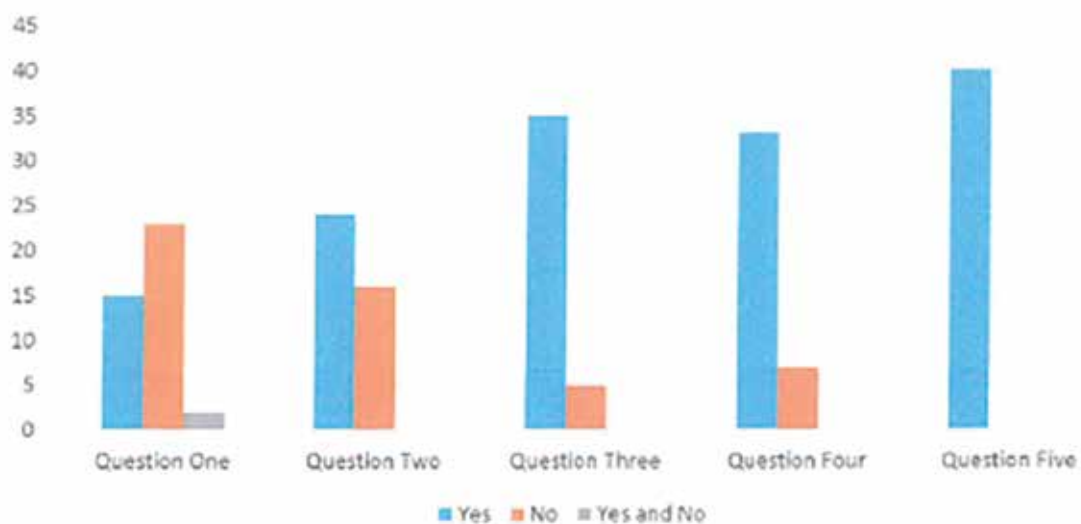


Figure One: Table to show how many participants answered yes or no to the five questions on the questionnaire.

	Number of participants who answered yes to the questions.	Number of participants who answered no to the questions.	Number of participants who answered both yes and no to the questions.
Question One: Do you think religion causes social consensus in society today?	15	23	2
Question Two: Do you agree with the following statement? 'Religion causes more conflict in society than consensus'	24	16	0
Question Three: Can fundamentalism create conflict?	35	5	0
Question Four: Are you aware of any events where religion has been the cause of conflict?	33	7	0
Question Five: Do you think there are any other causes of conflict and consensus in society today?	40	0	0

Figure Two

Bar chart to show how many participants answered yes or no in response to the questions





causes of conflict and consensus in society today other than just religion. Nevertheless most participant's responses indicate that religion causes conflict as for question two 24 out of 40 participants agreed with the statement that, 'Religion causes more conflict in society than consensus'. As for question one slightly more participants stated that religion does not cause social consensus in society today, it seems that many people have a negative view of religion as they associate it with conflict more than with consensus. Question one only had answers for 'yes' or 'no' but two participants put the answer 'both' in response to the question, 'Do you think religion causes social consensus in society today?' This implies that if given the option of 'both', some participants may have answered 'both' rather than just yes or no. It also implies that religion can cause both conflict and consensus in society today. From question four, it is clear that the majority of participants are aware of events where religion has been the cause of conflict as 33 out of 40 participants listed examples such as 9/11.

For question four, the participants were asked to write examples of events where religion has caused conflict. The responses show that there have been recent events where religion has been the cause of conflict. The examples varied but a few participants listed some of the same, for example, eight people listed 9/11, three listed 7/7, five listed ISIS and some listed the Northern Ireland conflicts. Other examples listed include Human regime of Stalin and Lennon, Catholic versus Protestant, Crusades, Hindus and Sikhs in India and terrorism.

The bar chart clearly indicates that most responses to the five questions was 'yes'. The results show that all of the participants believe that there are other causes of conflict and consensus in society today other than just religion as 40 out of 40 responded yes to the question, 'Do you think that there are any other causes of conflict and consensus in society today?' I chose to present my findings in a bar chart as I felt this shows the answers clearly but also allowed me to make comparisons between the amount of people who answered yes to the amount of people who answered no. For example the bar chart shows that for question three 35 participants' answered yes and 5 participants answered no.

For my study I chose to use a questionnaire as it allowed me to easily distribute the questions to participants from different locations. I wanted to collect data that could be easily quantified to see whether there were any patterns within the responses to the questions. For this research method I

chose to use close ended questions so that participants could choose from a selected range of answers. I chose this over open ended questions as having open ended questions would produce a variety of answers, which would have been difficult to analyse. Despite this, by using close ended questions on the questionnaire meant that the data was limited and some participants would have preferred to have a larger range of pre-selected answers or open questions so that they could answer more freely. Overall, as argued by positivists, questionnaires are reliable, objective and detached research method which I feel allowed me to gather suitable data for my essay.

For my sample size, participants consisted of people ranged from the ages of 16 to 55. This age range allowed me to get various views for the answers. The sample was volunteer meaning that people had the option to participate or not. The sample consisted of participants from Lincolnshire, Bedfordshire and Nottinghamshire as I wanted my results to be more generalizable but I also wanted to make comparisons to see whether different locations affected the views on religion, consensus and conflict. In total 40 participants were used for this study as I did not want to have a very large sample size that would be difficult to find and analyse. Throughout the study no participants withdrew their results. Anonymity, privacy and confidentiality was also kept throughout the study in order to follow the ethical guidelines.

The materials used for this study consist of the following:

- Informed consent form
- Instruction for participants
- Questionnaire consisting of five questions
- List of key terms

The study was conducted and carried out over a period of five days to allow me to gather participants from Lincolnshire, Bedfordshire and Nottinghamshire. A volunteer sample was used to gather 40 participants between the ages of 16-55. These participants were given an informed briefing of what the study consisted of. They were given a consent form which had to be signed in order for them to participate in this



study. Once the consent forms were signed, instructions were given if they chose to continue partaking in the study. The participants were then given the list of key terms so that they could use it if required to answer the questions. The participants were then given the questionnaire. Once all of the questionnaires had been completed the results were analysed and put into a table and graphs. The results were then used to throughout the essay.

### Standardised Procedures

If at any time you feel uncomfortable and wish to leave the study you are free to do so. If at the end of the study you wish for your results to be removed, they can be. If you have any questions, you are free to ask at any time.

Please read the following procedure carefully to ensure that you understand and carry out the experiment completely and correctly.

#### Procedure

**Step 1:** You will be presented with a consent form, giving you the option to participate or not.

**Step 2:** If you have chosen to participate in this study please sign the consent form.

**Step 3:** Attached to the consent form is list of key terms which you can refer to during the questionnaire.

**Step 4:** Once you are aware of the key terms please answer the questionnaire.

**Step 5:** The questionnaire consists of five questions which you can tick yes or no in the box in response to the questions.

**Step 6:** Please tick one box per question.

**Step 7:** Once you have completed all the questions please hand the questionnaire back and do not discuss the study with anyone else.

Thank you for participating in this study and completing the questionnaire.

### Consent Form

Please read the following information and feel free to ask questions concerning anything you do not understand or information you would like to know before you decide to participate or not.

You are being invited to participate in a

research study concerning the causes of social consensus and conflict in society today.

As a participant, you will be given a questionnaire and definitions of key words mentioned in the questions. You will have to tick a yes or no box in response to the

questions given. If at any time you decide you would like to withdraw from the study, you are welcome to do so.

To ensure confidentiality, your answers will be kept anonymous. Please remember that your participation is voluntary and that you are free to withdraw at any time.

**Question One:** Please tick the appropriate box for this question  
Do you think that religion causes social consensus in society today?

YES ☐ NO ☐

**Question Two:** Please tick the appropriate box for this question  
Do you agree with the following statement?  
'Religion causes more conflict in society than consensus'

YES ☐ NO ☐

**Question Three:** Please tick the appropriate box for this question  
Can fundamentalism create conflict?

YES ☐ NO ☐

**Question Four:** Please tick the appropriate box for this question  
Are you aware of any events where religion has been the cause of conflict?

YES ☐ NO ☐

If you have ticked yes, please specify the event below

**Question Five:** Please tick the appropriate box for this question  
Do you think that there are any other causes of conflict and consensus in society today?

YES ☐ NO ☐

### CONSENT

Yes, I have read this consent form and the study has been explained to me. I agree to participate in this questionnaire and know that I can withdraw at any time.

SIGNED .....DATE .....

## KEY TERMS

### Social Consensus:

Social consensus is when social order and stability is maintained in society through the emphasis of shared values.

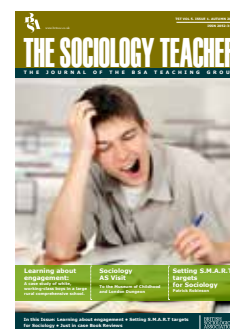
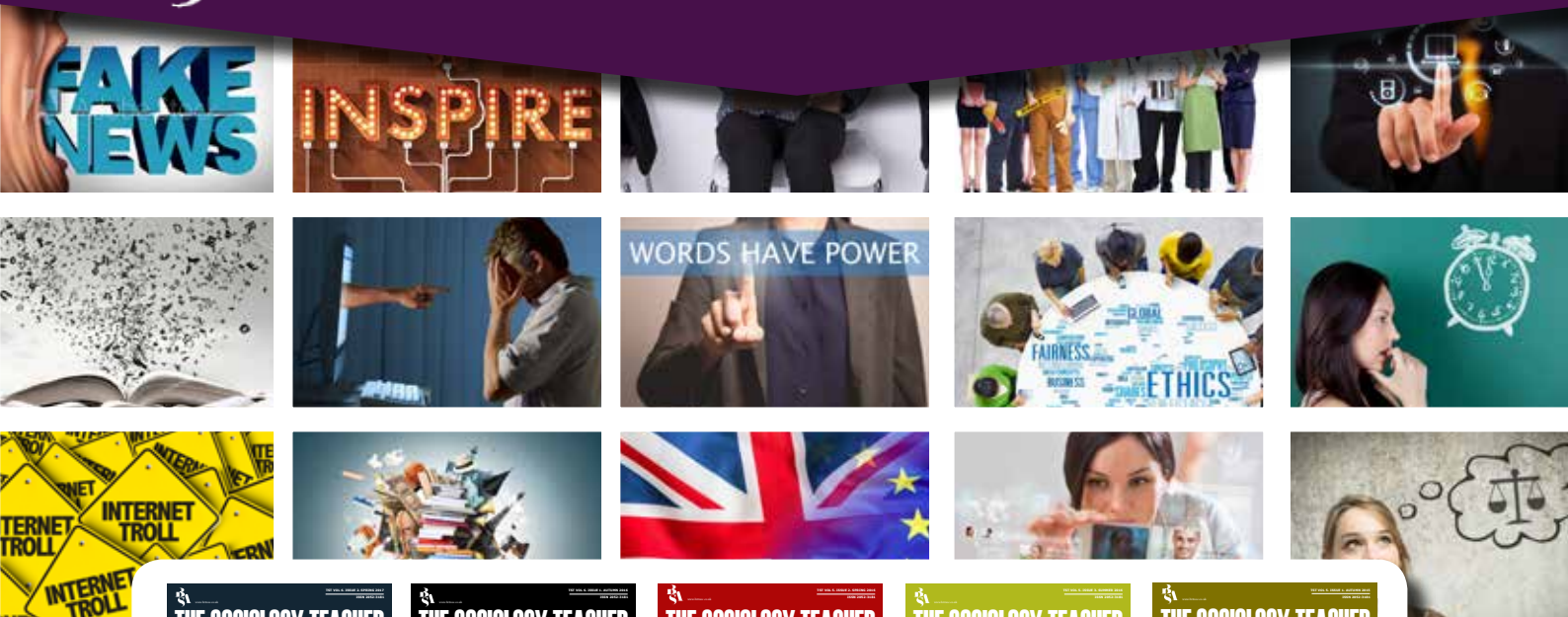
### Conflict:

Conflict is an active disagreement between people with opposing opinions or principles.

### Fundamentalism:

Fundamentalism is a form of religion that upholds belief in the strict, literal interpretation of scripture. E.g. the Bible.





- A magazine to help sociology teachers get through the year
- Produced by the UK's national subject association for sociology
- Subject content updates, teaching resources, lesson ideas and reviews of new materials for use in the classroom
- Three issues - Spring, Summer and Winter

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- Producing two magazines
- Maintaining two websites



Supporting and promoting  
sociology by design



# Methods and Digital Social Media

Article by Patrick Robinson, Sociology Teacher at Cadbury Sixth Form College in Birmingham.

In the last issue of the BSA Sociology Teacher journal, I shared a mini research methods project I carried out with my A Level students. We carried out a questionnaire measuring the attitudes of students towards their use of on-line digital

social media (please see previous issue for a copy of the questionnaire and a summary of most of the quantitative data we obtained).

#### Quantitative data update:

There were two questions I ran out of space to include the analysis of in the last

issue, so here are the results from Q16 and Q17:

Q16: Have you ever been bullied by others via on-line social networks? (eg: insulted, harassed, intimidated, regularly ridiculed?).

	MALES	FEMALES
YES	9%	28%
NO	82%	62%
Don't know/prefer not to say	9%	10%



Like:

- connected with friends
- names
- believes freedom
- sharing internet
- easy

Dislike:

- bullying
- Carfishing
- Arguments
- Time wasting
- Stalkers
- Self esteem
- Inappropriate use
- Dangerous

MALES

- More Friends can be made online.
- Keep in contact with family for away and in different countries.
- Memes
- Being able to talk to mates
- Sense of community
- Gaming information
- Explore new things

- Catfishes
- Hackers
- Judgemental people
- Too addictive
- Videos used for cheap humour
- Late replies
- Can be too distracting
- People base their lives around social media.

This shows that females are more likely than males to say they feel they have been bullied on-line: about a third of females compared to a tenth of males. However, there may be a problem of defining the key

term used in this question: is it possible that females and males define "bullying" differently? This could be an interesting discussion in class time debate, linked to the operationalisation problem in measuring

sociological ideas and concepts.

Q17: Who would you seek advice/help from if you were feeling bullied by others via on-line social networks? **Who would that be?**

#### Most frequent answers from males

Family/parents (51% of respondents)  
 Friends (44% of respondents)  
 College staff/teachers (33% of respondents)  
 Police (16% of respondents)  
 On-Line forums/report to social app provider (4% of respondents)  
 Childline (2 % of respondents)  
 Sort myself (2% of respondents)

#### Most frequent answers from females

Family/parents (56% of respondents)  
 Friends (46% of respondents)  
 College staff/teachers (18% of respondents)  
 On-Line forums/report to social app provider (14% of respondents)  
 No-One (6% of respondents)  
 Police (6% of respondents)  
 Counsellor (2% of respondents)



Gender results seem overall similar to this question, but interesting that 33% of males felt they would seek help from their college staff/teachers, almost twice the % result of the female sample.

#### Qualitative results

Here is a summary of the responses we obtained from the last question we asked in the questionnaire:

Q18: What do you like and dislike the most about on-line social networks?

We analysed responses in terms of gender patterns: did our male respondents say different things to our female respondents?

I asked my classes to attempt to code the qualitative data into categories of answers so that we could analyse the main

findings. For example, should respondents referring to “hate on-line” be categorised in the same category as “bullying on-line”? This can be when students realise that processing qualitative data can lead to subjective decisions by the researcher regarding what the sample actually means in their answers.

#### The Findings

These tables show the results of the coding process, listing the most frequently expressed opinions by our sample. The number of respondents is low as many of our student sample left this open-ended question blank. You can see the process of “tallying up” the data in the images of the work the students did on A3 sheets of paper. Note: I must admit I hadn’t

relationship by adopting a fictional online persona, eg: ‘he was being catfished by a cruel prankster’ (source: <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/catfish> ) Male respondents (total sample size: 43 respondents).

#### Female respondents (total sample size: 50 respondents).

#### Analysis of qualitative data

Contacting others was one of the most common “likes” for males and females. Both males and females expressed a dislike of bullying/hate on-line. But females were more likely than males to express a dislike for “False sense of reality” and “Insecurities”, as shown the some of the

Liked most about on-line social networks?	Disliked most about on-line social networks?
Keeping contact with people Content Being able to talk to mates	Addictive Bullying/hate Privacy invasion
Quotations for illustration	Quotations for illustration
“Easy to stay in contact with people”. “Easy to communicate”. “Freedom to find a range of interests”. “Collection of memories”. “Talking to people you wouldn’t do otherwise – make new connections”.	“Can create pressure to keep up appearances e.g fear of posting something that might be ridiculed”. “Takes time away from learning”. “The anonymity when it comes to bullying/harassment etc”. “Competition between friends and followers to have the best feed and best life”. “Can cause arguments/fights easily”.

trends. The students found this activity useful in understanding how sociologists often turn qualitative data into quantitative

heard of the term “catfishing” before (see the female findings table) but it’s defined on line as: “Lure (someone) into a

quotes to illustrate. If this project were to carry out follow-up interviews, to add more depth to the project, I feel a discussion





around the following quotes from the female sample would be of great interest:

*"Sometimes I feel sad if I may not get a number of likes on a post. More recently however, this is very rare."*

And

#### **Conclusion**

Allowing students to carry out their own questionnaire survey for which they designed the questions we would ask can make research methods come to life a bit better. It is efficient for the

other topic: education, crime, politics and so on.

If you carry out your own research projects with your own students, please let the Sociology Teacher journal have a copy of your research method and any analysis

<u>Liked</u> most about on-line social networks?	<u>Disliked</u> most about on-line social networks?
Source of Entertainment Contacts made with others Opportunity for socialising	Hate on-line/bullying False sense of reality Insecurities Catfishing
Quotations for illustration	Quotations for illustration
<p>"Connecting with people all over the world and keeping in contact with past and present friends".</p> <p>"That I can speak to my friends straight away."</p> <p>"Allows me to blog and promote my work well."</p> <p>"Makes it easy to make friends. I made more college friends by following in Instagram, easy way to approach".</p>	<p>"People pretend their life is perfect when it's not".</p> <p>"When I see my friends are doing something and I'm not invited".</p> <p>"The ability for people to be offensive without being confronted".</p> <p>"Not much censorship or regulation of on-line abuse".</p> <p>"Higher expectations of yourself are created by seeing people you see as better than yourself".</p> <p>"Sometimes I feel sad if I may not get a number of likes on a post. More recently however, this is very rare."</p> <p>"Increases objectification and unrealistic standards".</p>

*"Higher expectations of yourself are created by seeing people you see as better than yourself".*

Whether or not these quotations link to labelling theory concepts such as the looking glass self, may require a more qualitatively strong method such as unstructured interviews.

class to measure attitudes to a topic that comes up in other parts of the course: it allows for revision of a topic they have previously covered when they design the specific questions and make the analysis afterwards. If you didn't want to focus on the use of digital social media, the questionnaire style can be used well for any

you may have carried out so we can share examples of how to do this.

Patrick Robinson.  
June 2017.

# Developing students' English and Maths skills through Sociology



**English** and Maths skills are very important for successful outcomes for students on their courses. They are also essential life skills which will determine progression to Higher Education and employment.

Students that enrol onto A Level Sociology most frequently have a grade C or above in English and Maths GCSE but for students have already attained this level, there is still much potential to raise standards in these core subject areas and there is considerable need to do so. For example, research by the Higher Education Academy investigated the requirements for mathematical skills at

undergraduate level across a wide range of disciplines and found that

“too many students arrive in Higher Education without a realistic understanding either of the relevance of Mathematics to their discipline or of the demands that will be put upon them”.

(The Higher Education Academy STEM project, 2014 <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/> ).

Ofsted inspections focus on how students develop their English and mathematical skills. An effective cross college policy is therefore needed to address this.

## English skills developed through Sociology

All subject teachers are responsible for contributing to the development of English and Maths skills in our students and wherever possible, within the context of our subject areas. The starting points for our students vary enormously and that the support therefore needs personalising.

It is good practice for Sociology teachers to identify the literacy skills which are of particular importance for their subject, and record these within schemes of work.

### Examples of subject-specific literacy skills:

Paragraphing, spelling of commonly-used words, spelling of subject-specific terminology, use of appropriate academic register, use of linking and signposting words, embedding quotations, handwrite legibly, using evidence to support points, use Standard English to explain, explore and justify ideas, adapt spoken language for different purposes, identify key points of an argument...

Article by Sociology Teacher,  
Emily Painter who manages  
English and Mathematic  
skills across the curriculum at  
Cadbury Sixth Form College,  
Birmingham.



It can be useful for teachers to carry out a short *free writing exercise* during the first week of the Sociology course (See Appendix A). This could be based on a simple question for which students do not require advanced level knowledge, the aim is to let the students write as much as they can in exam conditions for about 10 minutes. For example, a question could be: "What have I learnt in my Sociology lessons so far?" The results of the free writing exercise should be assessed against all subject-specific literacy skills listed on schemes of work. Level of achievement against the key literacy skills should be recorded in mark books to acts as a measure of where the students start from at the beginning of the course. Class teachers will need to make clear to students what the literacy skills are for their subject, and give them feedback

about current achievement and ways to improve.

It is good practice to set at least one piece of work per half term should then be assessed against all subject-specific skills. Feedback will be given by class teachers to students. The subject-specific skills could be listed on assignment header sheets to provide feedback quickly and easily. (For an alternative see Appendix B). Teachers could then record literacy progress changes in their markbooks when the student has shown evidence of achieving the skill.

It is good practice to make literacy a regularly feature on the agenda at subject meetings with good practice shared and monitored. In addition, all classrooms should have evidence of literacy focus e.g. posters, students' work, key terms/ glossaries presented on walls/displays.

Departments should work with library staff to encourage reading around all subjects, with subject-specific book lists which include fiction and non-fiction. We should clearly identify ourselves as a College with a pro- active approach to encouraging students to read both for pleasure and around the subject (not mutually exclusive).

### Maths skills developed through Sociology

While some subject areas do not require a wide range of mathematical skills for successful outcomes, all students need opportunities to develop these skills for their future life chances.

It's good practice for teachers to complete a Maths audit to identify the skills needed in their





subject areas. (See appendices C and D).

Teachers will then identify the greatest areas of difficulty faced by students in their subject; this will form the basis of a Maths skills target for the subject area. The Maths audit should be included in the Class File and references will be made on schemes of work.

Marking / feedback of work needs to show an error but more importantly how to put it right. Students notoriously “ignore” valuable feedback so it is recommended to find class time to ask students to work in groups on “their corrections” and then ask a few students to come out and explain some particularly pertinent issue to the rest of the class.

Clear signposting to access support is needed – e.g. academic facilitators, A2 student mentors, posters in classrooms, resources in the LRC, recommended websites and apps.

We should attempt to engage students’ interest in maths by celebrating national/ international maths days and to make

students aware of how important mathematical skills are for Higher Education and future employment. Some students have adopted a ‘can’t do’ attitude which needs to be challenged.

#### **Appendix A FREE-WRITING TASK - INSTRUCTIONS FOR TEACHERS**

Undertake a timed written task with your students for a minimum of 10 minutes (topic relevant to your subject). The purpose is to screen all incoming students to determine if they will need exam concessions and/or learning support to improve their written communication. Please ask the students to leave a gap of one line in their writing every five minutes. The aim is to ensure better targeting and earlier identification of support so that the students who need additional learning support get it from the start of the year. This should also reduce the need for teachers to refer students for learning support during the year.

**For each class you teach, examine the students’ responses, please refer:-**

1. All students whose writing is
  - difficult to read
  - has a mixture of upper case and lower case letters e.g. baDger
  - has reversed letters
2. All students who have written less than 13.5 wpm
3. Finally refer students in the bottom 10% of your class for:
  - poor punctuation, grammar, spelling or limited vocabulary
  - difficulty structuring ideas logically

#### **IF IN ANY DOUBT REFER THE STUDENT AND LEARNING SUPPORT WILL MAKE THE FINAL DECISION**

File the remaining free writing in a folder, so that Learning Support may request copies at a later date if require

#### **At the end ask students to calculate their word count. Directions for Counting**

Record the total number of words in each line, at the end of that line. Put the total number of words at the bottom. Initials acting as a name e.g. PC or GCSE count as 1 word, but if there are full stops between the letters count letters as separate words.

A series of numbers without punctuation count as one word; with punctuation count the numbers separately.

A dash joining two words makes them count as one word.

Abbreviated forms of ‘and’ all count as one word.

Two words written as one, count as one word e.g. a lot

## Appendix B

Sociology Literacy Check	Skill shown	Improvement needed
Spelling of commonly used words e.g.: "their", "there" or "they're".		
Spelling of subject specific terminology e.g.: "reconstituted families", "Bourgeoisie"		
Using appropriate register (meaning the "tone/style of your writing")		
Paragraph use: general rule new point = new paragraph.		

## Appendix C Mathematics Audit

### Subject area: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete the audit below so that we can identify the necessary skills in different subject areas and any support needed. Once completed, pass one copy to the Curriculum Manager for English and Mathematics and place one copy in your class file. The chosen mathematics target(s) should be displayed in your classrooms. Only one form needs to be completed per subject.

1. Make a list of the Mathematics skills needed for success in your subject. Also include any skills that could be developed as a natural by-product of the specifications.
2. What do you consider to be the greatest area of difficulty with mathematics for students in your subject?
3. Choose one target that will be the focus for this academic year. (this could be based on question 2)



## Appendix D Mathematics audit Subject area: Sociology

Please complete the audit below so that we can identify the necessary skills in different subject areas and any support needed. Once completed, pass one copy to the Curriculum Manager for English and Mathematics and place one copy in your class file. The chosen mathematics target(s) should be displayed in your classrooms. Only one form needs to be completed per subject. Mathematics and Science courses need not complete this audit.

1. Make a list here of the Mathematics skills needed for success in your subject
  - Understand simple fractions and recognise when two simple fractions are equivalent
  - Recognise and use simple percentages and ratios
  - Identify overall patterns and trends in graphs and tables (examples include differences in GCSE results by Socio-economic background, changes in unemployment rates and divorce rates)
  - To be able to identify percentage changes without reliance on a calculator.
  - Round numbers into a more simplified form for use in essays. (e.g. to write "just over three quarters of Chinese students achieved the GCSE pass rate" instead of "75.9% for British Chinese")
  - To determine the likely generalizability of research data based on the sample size compared to the size of the target population
  - To understand the differences between the mean, median and mode
  - Calculate how much time should be spent on exam questions based on time allocated and available marks
2. What do you consider to be the greatest area of difficulty with mathematics for students in your subject?

### To simplify statistics for use in essays

3. Choose one (or more) targets that will be the focus for this academic year. (this could be based on question 2)

**Sociology target: To identify changes in sociological trends**



# Linear learning: a teacher's reflection.

By Patrick Robinson, Sociology Teacher at  
Cadbury Sixth Form College in Birmingham

**As** more and more A Level courses now become linear (i.e assessed at the end of two years, rather than modular assessment throughout the year), Patrick Robinson, Sociology teacher at Cadbury Sixth Form College presents his thoughts on the strengths and weaknesses of the linear approach to learning.

## Context

My upper sixth Sociology students are the first generation of the new A Level, linear assessments that are now in place.

Many other subjects will have their first run through of linear assessments in summer 2018 (I believe the last main exception to this are Maths courses that remain modular for another year). This article represents a summary of how the first year of linear has gone for me and my colleagues and students.

For exams in summer 2017, my college decided to pay for external exams in May for year 1 students. It was a bit of a push to get the content taught in time. Looking ahead, a change to this plan is that my

college has decided to **NOT** enter for external exams set by the exam board at the end of the next academic year. This is partly a financial decision as the cost of external exams will rise significantly with more subjects becoming linear in summer 2018. But it is also a move towards a more valid attempt at delivering a course with a linear philosophy than a modular/re-take one. Instead, we will have internally marked end of year exams for our lower sixth students at the end of summer 2018. So, what do I feel are the strengths and weaknesses of





linear learning after the first run through of an A Level Sociology course that is now completing in summer 2017? How might we plan to manage weaknesses/problems in the linear style? The ideas below summarise my personal thoughts but is by no means a perfect outline of how to do things: see it as a starting point for your own thoughts and ideas as teachers.

#### **Strengths/opportunities of linear courses**

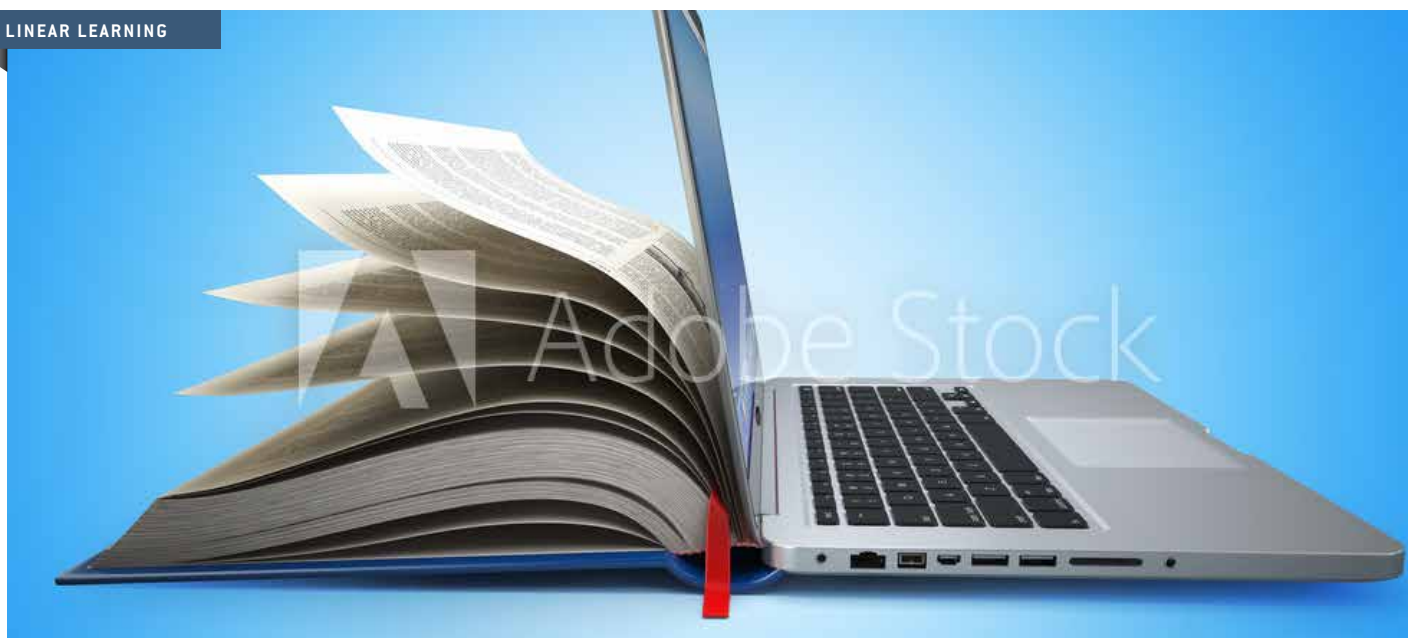
**Move away from the modular mindset.**

Linear courses focus on how a student can connect different topics together. This can encourage synoptic or holistic mindset: can students connect different topics together? In the modular era of A Level Sociology, some students developed a modular-mindset where work for each separate module was quickly forgotten if a good mark was achieved. During revision classes with my students over the last month, it has been useful to show students that knowledge gained in one module area can be used in other module areas too (as long as it has

relevance to the question set!). If students ask "Do I need to know this for the exam?", the answer is more likely to be "Yes, and maybe more than just the one exam".

#### **More time to deliver the course, particularly in year 1.**

With no external exams in the month of May of year 1, there should be more time to develop student skills as well as the knowledge they need. More time might mean more opportunities to develop student's active learning skills and habits.



Students may have more study time for group work projects, primary research that the students design and carry out themselves and wider reading activities/homework.

More discretion for the teacher on **the order and timing of topics**: more room for teacher preferences when the deadline of an external May module exam is removed. Lessons might have the space to breathe, rather

than constant exam preparation. (Let that discussion go on longer, explore a tangent that came up from something a student said etc....).

### Weaknesses/threats of linear courses....and can they be managed?

If you have read this brief reflection and feel you can add to ideas as to how to

manage some of the problems that linear assessment can bring forward, please contact the Sociology Teacher (see how to on page 2), for how your thoughts can be added to the discussion in the next issue (Autumn 2017).

Many thanks, Patrick Robinson,  
June 2017.

Weaknesses/threats	How to manage this?
Exam results in year one do not count for final marks by end of year two. Some students may therefore see them as lower importance and not revise/work hard for them. Some students who do very well in year one feel unrewarded for their progress made in year 1.	Remind students of the need to pass their first year in order to progress to year two (a "stick"). During year one, remind students that their year one grade will shape the estimated grade you can reward them with as they apply for University/Apprenticeships/employment after College (a "carrot"). Contact parents/make use of the pastoral support at your school/college if student is not making enough progress to pass.
Students feeling overwhelmed at level of content, especially in revision time in year two.	Spend time on teaching students effective study skills for revision: memory techniques, summarising techniques, revision resources used throughout the year. Supply students with concise revision checklists when needed. Consider sharing schemes of work with students so that they can always see the "big picture" for the content of the year.
Internally marked end of year 1 assessments: adds to marking load for teachers.	Stagger marking through the year: perhaps a Unit 1 paper in full in Jan/Feb, then a Unit 2 paper in full in the summer? Do you have to set an entire paper to measure progress? This would be something to discuss in your teacher teams.
Some students lack the skill or sometimes the habit to revise work as the course progresses.	Teach revision techniques/study skills as described earlier. Have a series of regular folder inspections so that year one work is not lost etc. Provide students with exercise books for revision notes as the year develops. Schemes of work: plan to finish all new material/knowledge by February/March of year 2. This would give April, May and June to become dedicated to revision in class time/synoptic understanding to be improved.



# National Extension College, Sociology course

Review by Patrick Robinson

The National Extension College (NEC) is a provider of distance learning courses, founded in 1963 by sociologist, Michael Young and Brian Jackson as a pilot for the Open University. This is a review of their Sociology course and is based on a reading of the examples of resources for the Sociology course available at <https://www.nec.ac.uk/courses/sociology-a-level-new>

The course follows the AQA Specification, using the AQA linked textbook published by Polity, written

by Ken Browne. This is a detailed and accessible book, updated for the fifth edition in 2015 and contains exam support with practice questions and a thorough glossary for key terms.

The on-line resources made by the NEC are very well written and act as an accessible yet thorough guide for the learner. Descriptions of key terms, studies and theories are both concise and in a suitable depth for A level study. I thought the learning checks made with a series of questions at the end of

each new topic would be very helpful to the learner to reflect on their progress. Wider reading is easily found from the NEC materials: often linking to the set textbook but also using a wide range of high standard on-line material that varies the type of stimulus material a learner can use.

The NEC website is very well set up, with clear headings/menus and provides pages that are easy to navigate. There are options for learners to fast track their courses, so an A Level could be covered in one year if the student has the time to boost their hours every week.

The NEC course supports learner progress via the marking of 11 assignments that are set across the two year A Level course. Subject trained tutors from the NEC mark these assignments and offer feedback on progress made.

I was very impressed when I read about the successful campaign carried out by the NEC to ensure that learners following on-line courses had options to pick a range of centres to sit their external, end of year exams. More information available from their blog at <https://www.nec.ac.uk/blog/2017/01/13/a-crisis-averted-distance-learning-students>

The course fee for the whole course including the e textbooks is currently £595 but will increase to £625 in the autumn. This pays for access to the NEC course resources, support from a subject trained tutor in marking 11 assignments over the two years and an electronic copy of the AQA set textbook. Overall, I would recommend the NEC Sociology course as a high standard learning facility that is set at a fair price. It is a quality service that fulfills the original aim of the NEC to support lifelong learning.

(In addition to the NEC's Sociology course, Sociology Teacher readers might be interested in some study skills resources the NEC has developed for UCAS that are free to download. I read through the help sheet on how to write academic essays and thought it was fantastic set of tips and ideas, well explained with accessible examples that could be a great help in preparing students for undergraduate level essay work. Available from:

<https://www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/finance-and-support/preparing-your-studies/study-skills-guides>



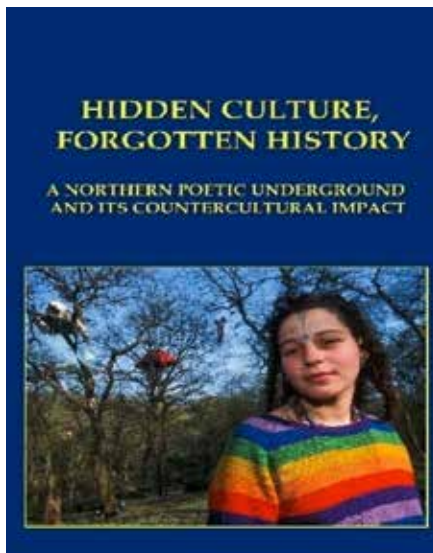
# Just in case

If you are looking for ideas or inspiration to liven up your sociology teaching, in each issue we review ICT related activities, guides, websites, book and film reviews for you to explore.

## Book Review:

## Hidden Culture, Forgotten History.

A NORTHERN POETIC UNDERGROUND AND ITS COUNTERCULTURAL IMPACT" BY BRUCE WILKINSON.



This book is a very well researched and detailed study that makes for a very engaging read. Bruce Wilkinson studied this topic as a Masters, focusing on the poetry magazines of Jim Burns, Dave Cunliffe and Tina Morris. There are 10 chapters in this book, that starts with background history of Lancashire, covering a description of the culture, employment and economy of the area. This chapter be praised as very clearly written, conveying a wide range of historical eras in a concise and engaging manner. (I was inspired to look up details of the Pindle Witch trials from this source eg:

<http://www.visitlancashire.com/inspire-me/pendle-witches/the-story-of-the-lancashire-witches> and BBC Four documentary: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_HaBPQti\\_Mk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_HaBPQti_Mk).

Other chapters describe the rise of the counter culture poetry scene in Blackburn via 1960s media such as magazines, fanzines, letters, live events and community facilities (interesting reading for current day

**Bruce Wilkinson has written a fascinating analysis of how the creativity and activism of Blackburn poets and publishers in the 1960s can be connected to the counter culture of the same area in the 1990s. The counterculture examples of the 1990s focuses on environmental protests and the music and rave scene of that era.**

students to see how a "scene" established itself in a pre-internet era). The book uses extensive secondary sources, supported by a thorough bibliography and offers quotations from some original interviews. I particularly enjoyed the examples of poems published by the U.K and U.S poets in the book: they made a refreshing change of reading and are well paced throughout the book.

A very memorable moment of the book was when reading Bruce Wilkinson's description of his inspiration for the work in the Forward. This was Bruce Wilkinson describing how, when walking through the woods in Stanworth Valley in 2013, he came across some blue climbing rope that had been left by protesters opposing the construction of the M65 motorway in the mid-1990s (wider reading: <http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/in-the-treetops-awaiting-chainsaws-1573330.html>). It was very evocative to help understand the author's motivation to write the book. The epilogue chapter reflects on the overall themes and legacy of the counterculture described in the book. Bruce Wilkinson applies ideas from Bourdieu regarding how the higher social classes are able to dominate the ability define which artistic forms are defined as worthy of merit or of study, or of which events in history are logged as "significant" or of "impact". This book is extremely useful wider reading for teachers widening their own knowledge and for students towards the top end of A

level ability. I felt the focus on the rise of a counterculture in a specific, regional area, made for a very vivid description that encourages the reader to consider for themselves their own local history and how it connects to broader changes in society. This book has many connections to the A Level syllabus in terms of the concepts of subculture, social control, social protest and identity. Students may find it interesting to read how protest movements organised themselves in the pre-internet days. Were the protests of the past based on higher levels of activism than just hashtag activism? Bruce Wilkinson's book acts as a great resource/stimulus material from which to answer this question and many others like it. Sociology teachers may recommend it to teachers of English/English Literature courses in their schools and colleges: it offers a great resource in showing how literature stems from the social context it was written in.











# A2 Sociology: SUMMER READING TASK

Article by Patrick Robinson, Sociology Teacher  
at Cadbury Sixth Form College in Birmingham.

**One** way to improve your chance of obtaining higher grades in year 2 Sociology is to read more widely, around the topics we study in class and for homework. Reading a whole book is in-depth study, helps you to improve your own writing style and is fun: when you pick a book you have a particular interest or passion for! This task is to share a useful reading list for books that you can find relevant to

keep that would link to exams next year? What are they? Which exams are they useful for?

3. How would you **evaluate the book/source**? (200 words maximum). Consider the research methods concepts of validity, reliability, representativeness, ethics? How might these apply to the book

One way to improve your chance of obtaining higher  
grades in year 2 Sociology is to read more widely

the A2 year and to get you to pick at least one book to read through over the summer break.

**TASK** After you've read the book/source of your choice, answer these questions and hand in to your teacher for A2 after the holidays:

1. **Summarise** the main arguments/evidence of the book/source. (200 words maximum). To help with this question, you can focus on the books' blurb (the description on the back cover of the book) and what is said in the first and last chapter of the book.
2. Which **sections of the book/source were the most interesting or useful** for you? (200 words maximum). Any particular statistics? A particular line/quotation? Why? Are there any notes you should

you've read? Was the author a writer that was bias free? Or did they have a particular point to make from their own personal beliefs or political opinions? Did you think the writer was "steering" you as the reader to agree with them? How would you challenge the conclusions of the book, perhaps from an alternative theory/alternative point of view?

**Possible reading sources:** homework is to pick ONE but do as many as you'd like to over the summer holidays! You will have to find a copy of the book you want for yourself, but there are descriptions in the grid below on how to find them easily and cheaply (some sources are free!). Use the college library and your local library services to help borrow books. If you'd like to buy your own copy, ebay and Amazon



Reading a whole book  
is in-depth study, helps  
you to improve your  
own writing style and  
is fun:

Title of Book/text	Author	Topic and Brief description	Source/where you can find a copy
Living Dolls: The Return of Sexism	Natasha Walter	Gender: An up to date description of gender inequality in society. Very clearly written.	£2/£3 from ebay
1984	George Orwell	Marxism/state control Fiction: a story set in an imagined future where the Government has absolute control over the population. Where the idea of Big Brother came from! Fans of the Hunger Games stories? Orwell was there first!	Some copies available in College library £1/£2 from ebay Free from download website: see link below
The Making of a Moonie	Eileen Barker	Religion: Barker investigates why people join the Unification Church, a group accused of being a brainwashing cult in the 1980s.	1 copy available in College library Expensive to buy on-line (£25 second hand).
Gang Leader for a Day	Sudhir Venkatesh	Crime: A participant observation into the life of a Chicago gang.	3 books available in college library £6 on ebay
Unjust Rewards	Polly Toynbee and David Walker-	Class inequality: Detailed analysis of the growth in the "super rich"	£2/£3 on ebay
Chavs	Owen Jones	Class inequality: A description of class inequality in the UK, focusing on the disadvantages experienced by the lower social classes	£3/£4 on ebay
The Establishment	Owen Jones	Class inequality: A description of class inequality in the UK, focusing on the advantages experienced by the higher social classes	£3/£4 on ebay



The Communist Manifesto	Marx and Engels	Class inequality: Marx's most famous text analysing the class inequality between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Some Victorian era terms of language (harder to read than other sources, but short: around 100 pages).	FREE: see web address at bottom of sheet or search Google for "Communist manifesto pdf"
Education and Institutional Racism	David Gillborn	Ethnicity: Evidence of racism in the education system. Short: 30 pages. A summary of a lecture.	£5 from ebay
Subculture: the meaning of style	Dick Hebdige	Youth subculture: An analysis of youth subcultures that existed in the 1970s and 1980s: dated but classic, great if you're a music fan.	1 copy in college library £5/£6 from ebay
Goth	Paul Hodkinson	Youth Subculture: An analysis of what it means to be a "Goth"	£10 from Amazon bookstore (second hand, very expensive first hand).
The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry	Lord MacPherson	Ethnicity: Government investigation into alleged racism in the London police force, following the murder of Stephen Lawrence. This is a massive document (389 pages long, focus on the pages from page 359 onwards for your reading).	FREE: see web address at bottom of sheet or search Google for "MacPherson report 1999 pdf"
The Beauty Myth:	Naomi Wolf	Gender: How Images of Beauty are Used Against Women. Media portrayal of women.	£1-£3 on Amazon bookstore

1984 by Orwell: <https://www.planetebook.com/ebooks/1984.pdf>

Communist Manifesto link: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Manifesto.pdf>

MacPherson report link: [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/277111/4262.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/277111/4262.pdf)



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