

Methodology

Methodology involves methods of investigation and sampling techniques. Sociologists use two types of research to obtain their data; Primary- this is where sociologists collect data for themselves, it is first hand information and there are many different methods, these include participant observation, experiments, content analysis, and questionnaires. Secondary data is where sociologists use data that already exists, e.g. other sociologists' research, the Internet, television documentaries, statistics and books. I will be using primary based data as it is my own and is a lot more recent and will be directly relevant to my research.

'Participant Observation' is when the sociologist actually joins the group that he/she is studying. There are two different types, overt and covert. Covert is where the researchers identity is hidden and the group being studied are not aware of this. Overt is where the group is aware that the sociologist is studying them. William Foote used covert observation during his study, 'Street corner gang'. In order to observe the gangs behaviour he joined them. The advantage of participant observation is that the researcher shares the same experiences with the sample; therefore his/her results are more valid and accurate. A disadvantage of this type research is that it is time consuming and expensive. I did not have the time or the resources to conduct this type of research and therefore ruled this out.

'Content Analysis' is another method of collecting data using the media as a source. This method is extremely useful for finding out about bias or prejudice images in the media, this would have related well to my study, as I have used many Newspaper articles to help me in research. The method is usually carried out by using a tally chart; from the chart conclusions can be made. Although the media is an aspect of my coursework it is not an easy method to do effectively and has been found to be very time consuming.

'Questionnaires', these are simply lists of questions that used in a survey to collect data from a relevant sample. Many questionnaires are 'postal questionnaires' where the sociologist sends the questionnaire to the respondent who then fills it in and sends it back, this is if the study is macro like the census, my study however is micro and this method is also very expensive, I do not have the type of money needed to do this. Questionnaires are also used in 'structured interviews' where the sociologist is face to face with the respondent and asks questions directly from the questionnaire. This can lead to interview bias and is also quite time consuming. There are different types of questions used:

~~ Pre-coded/closed questions, these are quantitative and are where the respondent chooses an answer from a set of options, these are the type of questions that I have included in my questionnaire as they are generally better for the transformation into statistical answers I can make generalisations based on these, and this is helpful towards my research.

~~ Open ended questions, these are qualitative, the respondent is free to write an answer in their own words, this gives much more detailed information, but is a lot more difficult to measure. I have not used any open-ended questions.

After exploring all the options I believe this form of research will be most beneficial to my investigation.

The main reasons I decided to use questionnaires was because they give data that is easily quantified and can be put into numerical form, they are quite cheap and extremely efficient. I believe I will reach the sample that I have chosen using questionnaires. I believe quantified information is a lot easier to analyse, which is why I have chosen this. I have randomly chosen 15 males and 15 females in year thirteen. Thirty was a round number for my study and this also gave me an adequate amount of time. The number was quite small however it gave me a chance to analyse the results in detail. However if it were a bigger number it would have been a lot more representative of students in year thirteen.

I will be using a questionnaire and will ask them if they think they believe they have been labelled and if so, what do they believe was the cause of this label, If they have been labelled I believe it will have an affect on their educational attainment; for males the affect will be negative and for females positive.

When carrying out my research I may come across a few problems concerning the questionnaires, this could lead to incorrect data and invalid conclusions. There is a possibility that this could occur if the questions are not answered honestly, or are not understood-this is also why I carried out a pilot study. If I do not receive all my surveys back the sample I have chosen will not be representative. To do this research correctly I will have to focus on certain points due to the fact that I am restricted by factors such as money, time etc.

I have focused my study on students currently in year 13 as they have a lot more experience of the education system than any other year group, due to the longevity of their school life. They will remember passed experiences and also have a deeper understanding of the concept due to the fact most of the pupils are 17 +.