

CUET · SOCIOLOGY · CLASS XII · CODE 326

Suggestions for Project Work

CUET unit: Indian Society — Doing Sociology / Research Methods (applied)

By UniDrill · NCERT-grounded study material

WWW.UNIDRILL.IN

UniDrill

Snapshot

- This is a practical, applied chapter that turns research methods from theory into hands-on small projects.
- It explicitly asks students to revisit Chapter 5 ("Doing Sociology: Research Methods") of the Class XI textbook **Introducing Sociology**.
- It revises four methods — Survey, Interview, Observation, and Archival — and stresses combining methods.
- It then suggests six themes (Public Transport, Communication Media, Household Appliances, Public Space, Changing Aspirations, Biography of a Commodity) and gives a method-mapping table.
- CUET typically tests recall of method definitions, suitability of method for a question, and matching the suggested topic to the right technique.

Detailed Notes

2.1 Core concepts

A key methodological insight students often forget: "There is a big difference between reading about research and actually doing it. Practical experience of trying to answer a question and collecting evidence systematically is a very valuable experience" (NCERT Intro, p. 118). A "real" research project would be more elaborate and involve much more time and effort than is possible in the school setting; the projects offered here are designed only "to give you a feel for research" (NCERT Intro, p. 118). Before starting any project, refer once again to **Chapter 5 ("Doing Sociology: Research Methods") in the Class XI textbook Introducing Sociology**. The four standard sociological methods are assumed already known, so this is a practical revisit.

The central methodological proposition is stated in one sentence: "Every research question needs an appropriate or suitable research method" (NCERT Intro, p. 118). A given research question may be answered by more than one method, but a given research method is not suitable for every question. After "carefully specifying the research question", the researcher's first task is to select a suitable method. This selection "must be done not only according to **technical criteria** (i.e., the degree of compatibility between question and method), but also **practical considerations**". The practical considerations include the amount of time available, the resources available in terms of both people and materials, and the circumstances or situations in which the

research has to be done (NCERT Intro, p. 118). Students must remember this two-fold filter: question-method fit **and** feasibility.

A worked example. Suppose the broad topic is "comparing co-educational schools with 'boys only' or 'girls only' schools". This is too broad to be a research question. The student must first formulate a **specific** question — "Do students in co-educational schools do better in studies than students in boys/girls only schools?", or "Are boys only schools always better than co-educational schools in sports?", or "Are children in single sex schools happier than children in co-educational schools?" Having decided on a specific question, the next step is to choose the appropriate method. For the happiness question, one option is **interview** (direct questions to students of different kinds of schools), another is **observation** (spending time in different schools and judging behaviour against pre-decided criteria of "happiness"), and a third is **survey** (distributing a questionnaire designed to elicit information on how students felt about their schools) (NCERT Intro, pp. 118–119). The example illustrates the rule "question first, method second".

A reality-check paragraph follows. Practical difficulties named include: making enough copies of a questionnaire (involving time, effort and money); obtaining permission from teachers to distribute the questionnaire in their classrooms (which may be refused or postponed); non-return of questionnaires; incomplete answers (NCERT Intro, p. 119). The student must be prepared to decide how to handle these — go back to respondents, ignore incomplete questionnaires and consider only the complete ones, or work with the partial data available.

§ 7.1 Variety of Methods is the heart. It revisits four methods:

- **Survey Method:** a survey "usually involves asking a relatively large number of people (30, 100, 2000 etc.) the same fixed set of questions" — either read aloud by an investigator who fills in the responses, or self-filled by respondents (NCERT §7.1, p. 119). The advantages are coverage (a large number of people can be reached) and representativeness (the results can speak for the relevant group). The disadvantages are that the questions are fixed in advance, so no on-the-spot adjustments are possible; misunderstood questions yield misleading results; interesting leads that emerge cannot be followed up; and "a survey questionnaire is like a snapshot taken at one particular moment", meaning that the situation may change later or may have been different before, but the survey cannot capture this temporal dimension.
- **Interview:** interviews are "always conducted in person", usually with "much fewer persons (5, 20, 40 — not many more)". They can be **structured** (where the interviewer follows a pre-determined pattern of questions) or **unstructured** (where only a set of topics is pre-decided and the actual questions emerge as part of a conversation). They can also be more or less **intensive** — long sittings of 2–3 hours, or repeated visits to the same respondents (NCERT §7.1, p. 120). The advantages of interviews are flexibility (promising topics can be pursued, questions refined on the

spot, clarifications sought). The disadvantages are obvious — they cannot cover large numbers, and the results are limited to the views of a select group.

- **Observation:** the researcher "must systematically watch and record what is happening in the chosen context" (NCERT §7.1, p. 120). It sounds simple but it is not always easy. The observer must attend to what is happening "without pre-judging" what is relevant. Sometimes "what is not happening" is as important as what does happen — if a certain class of people never enters a particular open space, that absence is itself significant data.
- **Combinations of more than one method:** "You can also try to combine methods to approach the same research question from different angles. This is often highly recommended" (NCERT §7.1, p. 120). For example, to study the changing place of mass media in social life, you could combine a **survey** (what is happening today) with **archival methods** (what magazines, newspapers, or television programmes were like in the past). **Archival method** appears here not as a stand-alone method but as an example of methodological combination.

§ 7.2 Possible themes and subjects for small research projects sets out six themes: (1) **Public Transport** — modes used by different groups, frequency, problems; (2) **Role of Communication Media in Social Life** — how television, newspapers, mobile phones affect family interaction and leisure; (3) **Household Appliances and Domestic Work** — who uses what appliances and how they reshape domestic labour; (4) **The Use of Public Space** — parks, markets, religious places — and who uses them when; (5) **Changing Aspirations of Different Age Groups** — what young, middle-aged and old people hope for, comparison across generations; (6) **The 'Biography' of a Commodity** — tracing the life-history of a single consumption item from production to consumption (NCERT §7.2, pp. 121–125).

A **method-mapping table** on pp. 126–127 shows, for each of five sample topics, what Observation, Survey, Archival and Interview techniques would yield, plus a Comments/Suggestions column. The mapping itself is heavily tested in CUET. Among the notable cells: for "**Changing Aspirations of School Children at different ages**", **Observation is marked "Not suitable"**; for "Household Appliances", the comment is that "boys should be encouraged to do this; should not become a 'girl's topic'"; for "Public Transport", the comment notes the topic is "Suitable only for biggish cities?"; for "Communication Media", the comment warns "Try not to pre-judge the issue ... ask, don't tell"; for "Use of Public Space", the suggestion is "Best to take familiar, specific places that people know about and relate to"; and for "Changing Aspirations", interviewees "should not be from own school" (to avoid familiarity bias).

2.2 Definitions to memorise

Term	Definition	Page
Survey		119

Term	Definition	Page
	Asking a relatively large number of people (30, 100, 2000, etc.) the same fixed set of questions — either read by an investigator or self-filled	
Interview	Method always conducted in person, with much fewer persons (5–40 typically); may be structured or unstructured, more or less intensive	120
Structured interview	Interview that follows a pre-determined pattern of questions	120
Unstructured interview	Interview where only a set of topics is pre-decided; actual questions emerge as part of a conversation	120
Intensive interview	Long sittings (2–3 hours) or repeated visits to the same respondents	120
Observation	Method where the researcher systematically watches and records what is happening in the chosen context, without pre-judging what is relevant	120
"What is not happening"	A principle of observation — the absence of certain people or behaviours is itself significant data	120
Archival method	Using past materials (newspapers, magazines, old TV programmes, school essays etc.) to study how things were earlier — recommended in combination with survey to study change	120
Combination of methods	Using more than one method to approach the same research question from different angles — explicitly "often highly recommended"	120
Biography of a commodity	Writing the life-history / 'autobiography' of a consumption item, tracing its circuits of exchange and social relations	125
Technical criteria	Degree of compatibility between question and method	118
Practical considerations	Time, resources, circumstances/situations governing feasibility	118
Specific research question	A narrowly focused question derived from a broad topic — pre-condition for method choice	118
Representativeness	Survey property — large-enough sample lets results stand for the relevant group	119
Snapshot quality	Survey's temporal limitation — captures only one moment in time	119
Self-filled questionnaire	Survey variant where respondents fill in answers themselves	119
Investigator-read questionnaire	Survey variant where the investigator reads the question and records the answer	119
Mass media	Subject of the textbook's combination-of-methods example	120

Term	Definition	Page
Public space	One of the six suggested themes — parks, markets, religious sites	124
Aspirations	Subject of the "changing aspirations" theme — hopes/goals across age groups	124
Public transport	First of the six themes — modes, frequency, problems	121
Household appliances	Theme on domestic-labour transformation by technology	122
Communication media	Theme on TV/newspaper/mobile influence on social life	121

2.3 Diagrams / processes to remember

- **Method-mapping table (pp. 126–127):** five research topics (Modes of Public Transport; Domestic Appliances; Use of Public Spaces; Changing Aspirations of School Children; Place of the means of communication in social life) mapped against four techniques (Observation, Survey, Archival, Interviews) with a Comments / Suggestions column. Remember which cell is marked "Not suitable" — Observation × Changing Aspirations of School Children (p. 126).
- **Worked example (pp. 118–119):** broad topic (co-ed vs single-sex schools) → specific question (e.g., "Are children in single-sex schools happier?") → choice of method (interview / observation / survey) — illustrates the rule "question first, method second."
- **Two-filter method selection diagram:** technical criteria (question-method fit) + practical considerations (time, resources, situation) = chosen method (p. 118).
- **The combination-of-methods diagram:** Survey (today) + Archival (past) = study of change in mass media (p. 120). Memorise this exact pairing as the textbook example.
- **Six-theme menu (§ 7.2):** Public Transport → Communication Media → Household Appliances → Public Space → Changing Aspirations → Biography of a Commodity (pp. 121–125).

2.4 Common confusions / NTA trap points

- **Survey vs Interview** — both ask people questions, but survey uses a **fixed** questionnaire on a **large** number, interview is **in person** with **few** people and can be flexible. Don't mix them up.
- **Structured vs Unstructured interview** — structured = fixed pattern of questions; unstructured = only **topics** are pre-decided, questions emerge in conversation. NTA loves swapping these.
- **"Not suitable" cell in the table** — Observation is explicitly marked **Not suitable** for studying changing aspirations of school children at different ages; students often forget this and pick Observation as a distractor.

- **Disadvantage of survey** — it is "like a snapshot taken at one particular moment"; this exact phrase is a favourite quote-trap. Don't confuse it with an advantage.
- **Combining methods** — combining is "often highly recommended," not a last resort. The example pairs **survey + archival** (not survey + interview) for studying the changing place of mass media.
- **Practical vs technical criteria** for choosing a method — "technical" = question-method fit; "practical" = time, resources, situation. Don't equate the two.
- **Self-filled questionnaire** is still a survey — it does not become a "self-interview" or an "observation".
- **Archival method** as presented here is not introduced as a stand-alone but in the combination-of-methods section. NTA may ask which method is presented in combination with survey — answer: archival.
- **"What is not happening" is data** in observation — students often pick "only what is actually happening" as the answer.

2.5 Thinkers / theories table

Name	Concept	Key Idea	NCERT page
Auguste Comte (cross-chapter)	Founding of sociology as positive science	Background — sociology aspires to be systematic and evidence-based	Class XI Ch. 5 cross-ref
Emile Durkheim (cross-chapter)	Empirical method for social facts; Suicide as data-driven sociology	Background — sociology must be empirical (Class XI Ch. 4 lineage)	Class XI Ch. 5 cross-ref
Max Weber (cross-chapter)	Interpretive sociology; verstehen	Background — qualitative interview methods derive from interpretive tradition	Class XI Ch. 5 cross-ref
Karl Marx (cross-chapter)	Historical materialism	Background — archival method links to historical-materialist examination of past	Class XI Ch. 5 cross-ref
Bronislaw Malinowski (cross-chapter)	Participant observation	Background — observation method's anthropological lineage	Class XI Ch. 5 cross-ref
M.N. Srinivas (cross-chapter)	Village ethnography	Background — Indian use of observation in village studies	Class XI Ch. 5 cross-ref
G.S. Ghurye (cross-chapter)	Combination of historical and field methods	Background — Indian sociology's methodological lineage	Class XI Ch. 5 cross-ref
	Six suggested themes	Public Transport; Communication Media; Household Appliances; Public	121–125

Name	Concept	Key Idea	NCERT page
Authors of NCERT Ch. 7		Space; Changing Aspirations; Biography of a Commodity	
Authors of NCERT Ch. 7	Method-mapping table	Five topics × four methods grid with comments; Observation × Changing Aspirations = "Not suitable"	126–127
Authors of NCERT Ch. 7	Two-filter rule	Method selection = technical criteria + practical considerations	118
Authors of NCERT Ch. 7	Combination rule	Survey + archival for studying change in mass media	120
Authors of NCERT Ch. 7	"Snapshot" critique of survey	Surveys cannot capture change over time	119

Practice MCQs

PYQ Alignment

This is one of the lighter chapters in CUET Sociology, but the four method definitions (Survey, Interview, Observation, Archival) and the method-mapping table reliably yield 1–2 direct factual or match-the-following MCQs each year. Expect distinctions between structured vs unstructured interview, advantages vs disadvantages of survey, and the "Not suitable" cell for observation × changing aspirations as common stems.