

DOING SOCIOLOGY

Also by Lee Harvey

**Critical Social Research
Myths of the Chicago School**

DOING SOCIOLOGY

A practical introduction

**Lee Harvey and
Morag MacDonald**

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PREFACE

This book is a practical introduction to sociology. It provides an introduction to the discipline through a student-oriented activity approach. It relates sociological theorising to research practice and draws out the interrelationship between method, theory and social philosophy. It is designed to draw the user into the complexities of sociology through an approach which locates sociological theorising in everyday activities.

Doing Sociology is also unique among introductory sociology books in taking a clear 'race', class and gender perspective. It also identifies *three* alternative philosophical perspectives: positivist, phenomenological and critical.

Doing Sociology is a resource for sociology students who intend to undertake practical project work or small scale social research. Practical work serves two broad purposes on sociology courses. First, it is used to consolidate theoretical aspects of a course and as a vehicle for teaching and learning methodology. In this case the project tends to come near the end of the course. This is currently the main approach in most A level courses and most traditional undergraduate degrees. Second, practical work is integral to courses that adopt a student-centred approach. In such courses, from the outset, learning is by doing. Methodology is thus the pivot around which students develop an understanding of sociology. This approach is more popular on Access courses and introductory undergraduate courses. It is also being slowly adopted at A level in the wake of similar innovations in GCSE.

Doing Sociology is principally aimed at A level and Access students. However, each chapter takes the subject matter and level of analysis just a little further than current A level. This is done for three reasons. First, the shift towards projects and a more central role for methodology means, inevitably, that A level students will need to become more informed about methodological issues to an extent greater than required by current A level syllabuses. Second, A levels are likely to change in emphasis soon. In the light of the proposed shift to a mixture of A and AS level study, A levels will focus more on understanding than content. Third, courses for Access students have traditionally had more emphasis on project work and tend to be more methodologically sophisticated than standard A level sociology.

Pushing the limits, then, makes this book also suitable for introductory year degree students especially where old 'chalk and talk' methods courses are being replaced by student-centred project-based methodology courses. The high level of student activity in the book and the suggestions for project work make this book applicable to a wide variety of students because the suggested activities can be developed to a level that reflects the student's abilities and meets the criteria of whatever course they are on. Indeed, the material in the book has also been used successfully with second and final year degree students and students on taught post-graduate courses. Clearly, the way that the material is adapted, the degree of theoretical sophistication and the exhaustiveness of the analysis will vary considerably depending on the level at which the student is operating. It is, for example, just as reasonable, in principle, to ask an A level student to explore changes in inequalities in health as it is a postgraduate student.

Finally, because of its emphasis on doing small-scale research, *Doing Sociology* will also be of use for the growing number of people whose work in areas such as health, social services, local authorities, education, community work and business is increasingly involving them in social research.

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