

SCLG1002 Introduction to Sociology Notes

Researching Social Life

What is social research?

- Data and theory
- Best theories are supported by data/evidence

How do we research?

- The process by which we gather empirical facts and test the theories

What do we research?

Linear model: (not accurate- too simplistic)

- Develop topic
- Develop questions
- Gather data
- Analyse data
- Write up

Problem types:

- Exploratory: thinking about a completely new area
- Descriptive: need background knowledge
- Explanatory: seeks to explain what's going on - causes and relationships between variables, usually quantitative

Stages of research: Establishment of a research problem

- Research area: broad e.g. gender relations between students
 - Research topic (narrower) - to particular region/society
 - General research questions
 - Specific research questions
 - Data collection questions
- Literature review
- Data collection
- Data analysis
- Write up

Research is a process

Good research is characterised by flexibility and rigour

E.g.

Charity giving: 5 aspects for investigation

1. Income of people who donate
2. What they are giving i.e. time, money, items
3. Going into own/other countries - local vs international
4. Personal affiliations with the cause that they are giving to
5. Proportions of people who plan to give vs. spontaneously asked to give
6. The people employed by charities

Constraints on research

- Time, resources, access to data
- Research must be planned and realistic
- Access issues, response of respondents, general problems, life gets in the way

Paradigms:

- Set of propositions that explain how the world is perceived, worldview, breaking down complexity of real world
- What is important/legitimate/reasonable
- Fact can vary through paradigms

[Moran, J. \(2005\) "Queuing up in Post-War Britain" Twentieth Century British History 16\(3\): 283 - 305.](#)

- The changing nature of the queue reveals much about the relationship between quotidian routine, politics, and the market in the post-war era
- Self-regulated
- Resented, frustrating
- Shifting view throughout time and events
- Qualitative methods e.g. 'times readers said' and quantitative stats
- Way of showing political problems through shared daily routines that everyone has to do

[Van Krieken, R., Habibis, D., Smith, P., Hutchins, B., Martin, G. & Maton, K. \(2016\) Sociology 6th edition, Sydney: Pearson Australia. Ch. 14 "Methods of Social Research"](#)

Methodology:

- Methods of data collection
- Epistemology (theory of knowledge) around data
- Use of empirical evidence about social interactions, structures, relations and behaviour

Approaches to methodology:

- Quantitative methods
- Qualitative methods
- Both

Quantitative

- Data, statistics
- Marx, Weber, Durkheim all used comparative method with cross-societal and cross-cultural analysis

Positivism

- Quantitative
- Durkheim social facts - use of stats