

# **SOSS1001: Social Research and Society**

High Distinction (89) Notes, UNSW Term 3 2025

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# Week 1: What is Social Research & Why do it?

## What is Social Research?

- **Why research?**
  - To document, discover and interpret by using the scientific method to produce 'evidence and results' (Sage 2017, paras. 2)
    - Empirical evidence limits the impact of researcher bias
  - To investigate, solve, reaffirm and support → reinforce, expand and develop theories (Collis & Hussey 2003)
- ★ **Data:** the raw material collected from research
  - Data becomes **information** after it is analysed and interpreted
  - **There is no such thing as unbiased data!**

**Social Research:** Highly organised...

<b>Way of seeing</b>	'The power to ask your own social questions, explore social phenomena from your own perspective, and seek the social answers for yourself rather than always relying on the work of 'expert' others cannot be underestimated.' (Walter, 2019: xxv in Sage 2017)
<b>Way of thinking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Way of organisation:</b> Organises information from diverse disciplines in academia! E.g. sociology, anthropology, education, politics, criminology (Clark et al. 2021)</li> <li>● <b>Worldview</b></li> </ul>
<b>Way of doing</b>	Involves a research process
<b>Way of practicing</b>	

## Theories in Social Science Research

- ★ **Theory:** 'set of concepts and the relationships between them' (Sage 2017, para. 1). Has levels: grand/meta, middle-range, micro/partial/situational
- 1. **Grand theories / Metatheories:** Broad, abstract, conceptual frameworks/models

- + Organising frameworks
- + Knowledge development
- Difficult to categorise into variables → untestable

## 2. Middle-range theories

- + Testable
- Require repeated testing for 'specific concepts and relationships in the theory individually' (Sage 2017, para. 3)

## 3. Micro theories: 'restricted to a particular phenomenon or situation' (Sage 2017, para. 3)

- + High testability
- Narrow scope

### ● Theory, methodology and discipline influence chosen methods!

- Influences stem from theoretical foundations, specific research programs/topics and preferred research methods
- E.g. psychology, sociology, anthropology, political science
  - Psychology: experimental work → quantitative data
  - Anthropology: fieldwork (based on ethnography)
  - Political Science/Politics: survey research

★ **Mixed methods research:** Uses multiple research methods in one piece of research (Sage 2017, para. 8)

**More available in full notes!**

## References

- Clark, T. 2021, *Bryman's social research methods* (6th edn.). L Foster, L Sloan, & A Bryman (eds.), Oxford University Press: Oxford.
- Collis, J., & Hussey (2003). *Business research: A practical guide for undergraduate and postgraduate students*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cordeiro, P., Ortuño, V. E. C., Paixão, M. P. & Marôco, J. 2015, 'Reading a Scientific Paper for Psychology and the Social Sciences: A Critical Guide', *Psychology, community & health*, vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 114–122.

Sage. 2017. 'Philosophy of Research', Project Planner [online]., [Accessed 15 May 2026], doi: 10.4135/9781526408495.

## Week 3: Quantitative Data

### Evaluating & Interpreting Research Literature

- Approach “proof,” “facts,” and “truth” with uncertainty → arrive at a conclusion with ‘what seems most likely to be true *based on the whole body of research on a topic*’ (Pan 2008: 25)
- Distinguish between quantitative and qualitative research
  - **Quantitative:** emphasises generalizability with ‘large, representative samples’ (Pan 2008: 25)
  - **Qualitative:** emphasise collecting in-depth information with ‘small samples without regard to generalizability to a population’ (Pan 2008:25)
- ‘Qualitative researchers prefer purposive samples’ (Pan 2008:26)
  - **Purposive sample:** Individuals selected from criteria are chosen because ‘they are likely to be especially good sources of information’ (Pan 2008:26)
  - NOTE: Both quantitative and qualitative researches ‘study samples of convenience’ (Pan 2008:26) → sampled results shouldn’t be taken as the end-all
- Be careful when a body of literature has a common sampling or measuring flaw (Pan 2005:26)
- Measures are diverse and there is no perfect method to measure most traits
  - Can be highly structured → highly unstructured
  - Multiple measures used for key variables? → more confidence! → evaluate it highly!
  - Consider the measures’ reliability + validity
- Are the interview protocols developed + described in detail? → Yes? Good!
- Be careful when referring to causality!

## **CRAAP Test**

<b>Currency</b>	Timeliness of information
<b>Relevance</b>	Importance of information to your needs
<b>Accuracy</b>	Identifying and verifying sources of information
<b>Authority</b>	Reliability and accuracy of information
<b>Purpose</b>	Why the information exists

**More available in full notes!**