

1. Learning objectives This week you will be able to:

- a. Describe what is meant by positivistic and quantitative methods of social research.
- b. Compare and contrast quantitative and qualitative approaches to the sociological study of suicide.
- c. Describe what is meant by interpretive and qualitative methods of social research.
- d. Distinguish different approaches to the study of street corner society.

2. Video lectures

Located in the Week 2 content folder.

3. Reading:

Ch.14 'Methods of Social Research'

4. Online Quiz

Located in Week 2 content folder on Blackboard. Must be completed by **10:00am on Monday 3 August**.

5. Define and take notes on these key concepts/terms

Methodology	Systems of methods followed in a particular discipline to collect data for social research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quantitative Method (believe in natural science) - Qualitative Method (more humanistic belief) - Quantitative + Qualitative (combination for best understanding)
Epistemology	Theories of knowledge
Paradigm	A standard/a typical example; a set of beliefs shared by a group of scientists about what counts as true and valid knowledge, a framework that guides scientists how to collect, analyse and explain evidence
Positivism	An approach of studying sociology by observing social facts empirically Aim: to establish social laws about society and human behaviour
Quantitative methods (+ examples)	Using the method of natural sciences, adducing data, e.g. Positivist Sociology, using statistics
Inductive vs. deductive approach	<p>(methodologies used to establish laws)</p> <p>Inductive Approach: establish laws by observing the social world empirically and by gathering enough evidence to support general propositions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - direct observation & collection of data → analysis & test → establish <p>Deductive Approach: (opposite to inductive approach) establish laws by slowly generating theories that are capable of being tested and scrutinised against the evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - statement/hypothesis(doesn't have to be from observation) → deduce a sequence of the hypothesis → observation & experimentation → consequence occurs – hypothesis verified, deduce further consequence; consequence not occur – false hypothesis, new hypothesis needed
Comparative methods	<p>(used when involving cross-social/cross-cultural analysis)</p> <p>Performing comparisons between observations and evidences to determine a most reliable and accurate outcome</p>
Typology (or 'ideal type')	Classification according to general type/symbolism
Ethnocentrism	Belief in the superiority of one's own ethnic group
Cultural relativism	A principle that states that an individual's beliefs and activities should be understood by others in terms of that individual's own culture
Interpretivism	An approach of using qualitative data to discover the motives and meanings that lie behind a social action, focusing on subjectivity
Qualitative methods (+	(social world cannot be measures objectively)

examples)	Understanding the society by studying the way that individuals act and react to the world around them without objective observation and measurement, e.g. phenomenology, studying facts
Grounded theory	A general research method of the systematic generation of theory through the analysis of data
Phenomenology	The study of human experience in which considerations of objective reality are not taken into account
Realism	An approach of studying sociology by accepting the facts of life and favouring practicality and literal truth; to delve beneath the surface of things to discover the underlying nature of social science
Methodological pluralism	Using mixed methods or different ways of studying and knowing things to obtain a full description or understanding
Ethnographic methods (+ examples)	Understanding diverse cultures and studying the human life of a society by putting yourself in a strange position to a foreign country/culture without preconceptions, e.g. living with Kabre people in order to know their beliefs

6. Reflection questions

- a) How is sociology different from writing the script for TV programs like *The Wire*? How are they related? Why would you do one rather than the other?

They are different because sociology is the study of human life and society by doing actual and practical social research, while writing the script for TV programs is writing stories based on convincing facts or evidence, which is less accurate than the actual study of sociology. They are related as they are both related to our society and can be factual. I would prefer to write the script as it allows more hypothesis and imagination as much less experience or research is to be carried out.

- b) What is 'positivism' and what kind of approach might a sociologist adopt if subscribing to this view?

Positivism is an approach of studying sociology by observing social facts empirically. A positivist sociologist will adopt quantitative approach because they are largely rely on data and observations.

- c) What is 'interpretivism' and what kind of approach might a sociologist adopt if subscribing to this view?

Interpretivism is an approach of using qualitative data to discover the motives and meanings that lie behind a social action, focusing more on subjectivity than objectivity. An interpretivist sociologist will adopt qualitative approach if subscribing to this view.

- d) In what ways does 'realism' represent a critique of both positivism and interpretivism? What implications does this have for the methodology of a realist sociology?

Realism is completely based on literal truth, whilst both positivism and interpretivism can include hypothesis, there is a total oppose between them. This implicates that a realist sociology will not make any statement until there is an evidence allowing him to do so.

7. Questions for clarification/interesting examples

- List any questions or suggestions for interesting examples/sources you have here.

8. Suggested further reading:

Penfold-Mounce, R., Beer, D. and Burrows, R. (2011) '*The Wire* as Social Science-Fiction?' *Sociology* 45(1): 152-167.

Savage, M. and Burrows, R. (2007) 'The Coming Crisis of Empirical Sociology' *Sociology* 41(5): 885-899.