Chapter 2
Sociological Research Methods

Chapter Outline

- Why Sociological Research is Necessary
- The Sociological Research Process
- Research Methods
- Ethnical Issues in Sociological Research
Why Sociological Research is Necessary

Social research is a key part of sociology.

Social research moves beyond common sense.

Sociology involves debunking – the unmasking of fallacies in the everyday and official interpretations of society.
• The **normative approach**

• The **empirical approach**

• Basic Scientific Standards
  1. scientific beliefs should be supported by good evidence or information
  2. beliefs should be open to public debate and critiques

• The **deductive approach**

• The **inductive approach**
The Sociological Research Process

• The goal of **Quantitative research** is scientific objectivity. Quantitative data can be measured numerically. Answers the questions, “who, what, where, when and how often.” Uses numbers and statistics to analysis data. Examples: Census or number of people who commit crimes. Looks at race, sex, age, etc.

• **Qualitative research** uses interpretive description rather than statistics to analyze meaning and patterns of social relationships. Answers the questions, “why and how”. Looks at how people experience the social world and examines the meaning people give to behaviors. Why do people commit crimes?
Steps in Sociological Research

Figure 2.2
The Quantitative Research Model

1. Select and define the research problem
2. Review previous research
3. Formulate the **hypothesis** –
   
   An independent variable is presumed to cause or determine a dependent variable.

4. Develop the research design
5. Collect and analyze the data
   - Population:
     - Random sampling:
     - Probability sampling:
The Qualitative Research Model

1. The researcher begins with a general approach rather than a highly detailed plan.
2. The researcher has to decide when the literature review and theory application should take place.
3. The study presents a detailed view of the topic.
4. Access to people or other resources that can provide the necessary data is crucial.
5. Appropriate research method(s) are important for acquiring useful qualitative data.
Research Methods

• Research methods

Survey Research

• A survey

• Respondents

• Questionnaires

• Interviews
Secondary Analysis of Existing Data

• Secondary analysis is when researchers use existing material and analyze data.
  
  • analyzing existing statistics
  
  • analyzing content

Field Research

• Field research is the study of

  Participant observations: collecting systematic observations while being part of the activities of the group that the researcher is studying.
  Case studies: an in-depth investigation of a single event, person, or social grouping.
  Ethnography: a detailed study of the life and activities of a group of people.
  Unstructured interviews: an extended, open-ended interaction between an interviewer and an interviewee.
• Experiments

• Experimental group:

• Control group:

In order to show that one variable causes another,
1. You must show that a correlation exists between the two variables
   • Correlation: when two variables are associated more frequently than could be expected by chance.
2. You must ensure that the independent variable preceded the dependent variable in time
3. You must make sure that any change in the dependent variable was not because of an extraneous variable
   • Spurious correlation: the association of two variables that is actually caused by a third variable.
Ethnical Issues in Sociological Research

The American Sociological Association **Code of Ethics**

1. Researchers must endeavor to maintain objectivity and integrity in their research by disclosing their research findings in full and including all possible interpretations of the data.

2. Researchers must safeguard the participants’ right to privacy and dignity while protecting them from harm.

3. Researchers must provide confidential information provided by participants.

4. Researchers must acknowledge research collaboration and assistance they receive from others and disclose all sources of financial support.