Sociology Understanding and Changing the Social World Comprehensive Edition Version 2 0 2nd edition Barkan Solutions Manual

SKU: 9781453378984-SOLUTIONS

Sociology Understanding and Changing the Social World Comprehensive Edition Version 2 0 2nd edition Barkan Solutions Ma

COPYRIGHT PAGE

Published by:
FlatWorld, Inc.

© 2016 by FlatWorld, Inc. All rights reserved. Your use of this work is subject to the License Agreement available here http://www.flatworldknowledge.com/legal. No part of this work may be used, modified or reproduced in any form or by any means except as expressly permitted under the License Agreement.

Sociology Understanding and Changing the Social World Comprehensive Edition Version 2 0 2nd edition Barkan Solutions Ma

Chapter 2
Eye on Society: Doing Sociological Research

1. SOCIOLOGY AS A SOCIAL SCIENCE

- Explain what is meant by saying that sociology is a social science.
- Describe the difference between a generalization and a law in scientific research.
- List the sources of knowledge on which people rely for their understanding of social reality and explain why the knowledge gained from these sources may sometimes be faulty.
- List the basic steps of the scientific method.

Section Outline

- A **generalization** is a general statement of a trend between various dimensions of our lives: gender and suicide rate, race and voting choice, and so forth. A generalization is just a statement of a tendency, rather than a hard-and-fast law.
- Sociology as a social science relies heavily on systematic research that follows the standard rules of the **scientific method**. Careful research is essential for a sociological understanding of people, social institutions, and society.
- Our usual knowledge and understanding of social reality come from at least five sources: personal experience, common sense, the media, expert authorities such as teachers, parents, and government officials, and tradition
- People are shaped but not totally determined by their social environment and thus, many people will not fit the pattern of all generalizations made. That is both the fascination and the frustration of sociology.
- Although sociology sometimes does confirm the obvious, often it also confirms the non-obvious and even challenges conventional understandings of how society works and of controversial social issues.
- Personal experience, common sense, and the mass media often yield inaccurate or incomplete understandings of social reality.
- The scientific method involves these basic steps: (1) formulating a hypothesis; (2) measuring and gathering data to test the hypothesis; (3) analyzing these data; (4) and drawing appropriate conclusions.

Key Takeaways

- As a social science, sociology presents generalizations, or general statements regarding trends among various dimensions of social life. There are always many exceptions to any generalization, because people are not totally determined by their social environment.
- Our knowledge and understanding of social reality usually comes from five sources: (a) personal experience; (b) common sense; (c) the media; (d) expert

© 2016 FlatWorld

Sociology Understanding and Changing the Social World Comprehensive Edition Version 2 0 2nd edition Barkan Solutions Ma

authorities; and (e) tradition. Sometimes and perhaps often, the knowledge gained from these sources is faulty.

- Like research in other social sciences, sociological research follows the scientific method to ensure the most accurate and reliable results possible. The basic steps of the scientific method include: (a) formulating a hypothesis; (b) measuring and gathering data to test the hypothesis; (c) analyzing these data; and (d) and drawing appropriate conclusions.

Exercises

1. Think of a personal experience you have had that might have some sociological relevance. Write a short essay in which you explain how this experience helped you understand some aspect of society. Your essay should also consider whether the understanding gained from your personal experience is generalizable to other people and situations.
   Answer: Student's answers would vary depending upon the experiences they have had. Answers may range from their upbringing in a particular environment, religious practices, family relations, school environment, etc. The students should be encouraged to perform a comparative study in order to evaluate the extent of generalization applicable to other people for that kind of an experience.

2. If the media sometimes provide a false picture of social reality, why do you think they do this? Does this problem result from honest mistakes, or is the media's desire for high ratings and (for print media) readership to blame?
   Answer: The answer can be both. The media can oversimplify complex topics or even distort what the best evidence from systematic research seems to be telling us. At times some degree of ignorance can also creep in. According to 'Conspiracy Theories and Media Ignorance' by J.R. Dunn, "The problem with the media doesn't end with bias. You can also throw in pure ignorance. Unless they specialize in a particular topic, journalists tend to be completely uninformed on technical issues, to the point where they often miss how those issues tie in with the stories they're working on." (American Thinker, September 15, 2006.)

Additional Exercises

1. Why is sociology considered a social science? How are generalizations linked to sociology?
   Answer: Sociology is the study of society. Like anthropology, economics, political science, and psychology, sociology is a social science. All these disciplines use research to try to understand various aspects of human thought and behavior. When we say that sociology is a social science, we mean that it uses the scientific method to try to understand the many aspects of society that sociologists study. An important goal is to yield generalizations: general statements regarding trends among various dimensions of social life.

© 2016 FlatWorld

Sociology Understanding and Changing the Social World Comprehensive Edition Version 2 0 2nd edition Barkan Solutions Ma

2. STAGES IN THE SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH PROCESS

- List the major stages of the sociological research process.
- Describe the different types of units of analysis in sociology.
- Explain the difference between an independent variable and a dependent variable.

Section Outline

- The first step in the research process is choosing a topic. Many sociologists choose a topic based on a theoretical interest they may have.
- The roots of sociology in the United States lie in the use of sociological knowledge to achieve social reform, and many sociologists today continue to engage in many research projects because of their social policy interests.
- Personal experience is a good source of inspiration for research topics.
- The second stage in the research process is a review of the literature.
- A literature review has several goals. First, the researcher needs to determine that the study she or he has in mind has not already been done. Second, the researcher needs to determine how the proposed study will add to what is known about the topic of the study. How will the study add to theoretical knowledge of the topic? How will the study improve upon the methodology of earlier studies? How will the study aid social policy related to the topic? A third goal of a literature review is to see how prior studies were conducted. What research design did they use? From where did their data come? How did they measure key concepts and variables?
- The third stage in the research process is the formulation of hypothesis. A **hypothesis** is a statement of the relationship between two variables.
- A **variable** is any characteristic that varies. Key variables in sociology include gender, race and ethnicity, social class, and age.
- An **independent variable** is a variable we think can affect another variable. A **dependent variable** is the variable we think is affected by the independent variable. When sociological research tests relationships between variables, it normally is testing whether an independent variable affects a dependent variable.
- The **unit of analysis** is the major entity that is being in the study. It is the 'what' or 'whom' that is being studied. In sociology research, the most typical unit of analysis is the individual person. Other important units of analysis are organization and geographical region.
- The next step after the formulation of hypothesis is gathering the data and measuring the variables. The gathered data can either be quantitative (numerical) or qualitative (non-numerical) and can be collected using questionnaires, observation, intensive interviewing and some other techniques.
- A **sample** is a subset of the population in whom the researcher is interested.
- A **random sample** is a sample in which every element in the population has an equal chance of being selected. **Nonrandom samples** are samples in which members of the population do not have the same chance of being included in the study. A specific type of nonrandom sample is the **convenience sample**, which

© 2016 FlatWorld

Sociology Understanding and Changing the Social World Comprehensive Edition Version 2 0 2nd edition Barkan Solutions Ma

refers to a nonrandom sample that is used because it is relatively quick and inexpensive to obtain it. Another specific type of nonrandom sample is the **quota sample**. In this type of sample, a researcher tries to ensure that the makeup of the sample resembles one or more characteristics of the population as closely as possible.

- After the data has been collected, the next step in the research process is to analyze the data. The analysis may depend upon the nature of the data collected. If the data are quantitative, the analysis will use statistical techniques and software packages and qualitative data analysis may involve tools such as qualitative analysis software.
- Testing of a hypothesis requires that an independent variable should affect a dependent variable. Four criteria must be satisfied before we can conclude this. First, the independent variable and the dependent variable must be statistically related. The second criterion is called the causal order which reflects the familiar saying that "correlation does not mean causation." Just because an independent and dependent variable are related does not automatically mean that the independent variable affects the dependent variable. The third criterion involves **spurious relationships**. A relationship between an independent variable and dependent variable is spurious if a third variable accounts for the relationship because it affects both the independent and dependent variables. The final criterion of causality is that our explanation for the relationship between the independent and dependent variables is the best explanation.
- The final step in the research process is to draw the conclusion where the researcher determines if the data analysis supports the hypothesis or not and what conclusions can be drawn out of the study.

Key Takeaways

- Several stages comprise the sociological research process. These stages include: (a) choosing a research topic; (b) conducting a literature review; (c) measuring variables and gathering data; (d) analyzing data; and (e) drawing a conclusion.
- Sociologists commonly base their choice of a research topic on one or more of the following: (a) a theoretical interest; (b) a social policy interest; and (c) one or more personal experiences.
- Accurate measurement of variables is essential for sound sociological research. As a minimum, measures should be as clear and unambiguous as possible.

Exercises

1. Consider the following question from a survey: "Generally speaking, are you very happy, somewhat happy, or not too happy?" Write a brief essay in which you evaluate how well this question measures happiness.
   Answer: The data gathered from this analysis is quantitative. Data gathered through a questionnaire are usually quantitative. The answers a respondent gives to a questionnaire are coded for computer analysis. For example, in the above question, an answer of 'happy' would fetch a '1' for computer analysis; those who

© 2016 FlatWorld

Sociology Understanding and Changing the Social World Comprehensive Edition Version 2 0 2nd edition Barkan Solutions Ma

choose "somewhat happy" might receive a '2'; and those who say "not too happy" might receive a '3.'

2. Think of a personal experience you have had that lends itself to a possible research project. Write a brief essay in which you describe the experience and discuss the hypothesis that the research project based on the experience would address.
   Answer: Students answers may vary with their personal experiences. According to the text, personal experience is an important source of inspiration to take up a research topic. Typically the experience chosen should have had a lasting impression on the student. Many sociologists have had various experiences during childhood, adolescence, or young adulthood that led them to study a topic from a sociological standpoint. Incidents such as parents divorce, police arrests, special extra curricular interests, special achievements, etc could be a part of the research project.

Additional Exercises

1. What are the various steps involved in conducting a sociology research? Explain each step in brief.
   Answer: The various steps involved in the reserch process are: a) Choosing the research topic, b) Reviewing the literature, c) Formulation of the hypothesis, d) Gathering data and measuring the variables, e) Data analysis, f) Drawing a conclusion. The students should give a brief description of each step.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN IN SOCIOLOGY

- List the major advantages and disadvantages of surveys, experiments, and observational studies.

Section Outline

- The advantages and disadvantages of the major methods that sociologists use to gather the information they analyze in their research is given below.
  - Survey:
    - Advantage: Many people can be included. If given to a random sample of the population, a survey's results can be generalized to the population.
    - Disadvantage: Large surveys are expensive and time-consuming. Although much information is gathered, this information is relatively superficial.
  - Experiments:
    - Advantage: If random assignment is used, experiments provide fairly convincing data on cause and effect.

Sociology Understanding and Changing the Social World Comprehensive Edition Version 2 0 2nd edition Barkan Solutions Ma

        - Disadvantage: Because experiments do not involve random samples of the population and most often involve college students, their results cannot readily be generalized to the population.
    - Observational (Field Research):
        - Advantage: Observational studies may provide rich, detailed information about the people who are observed.
        - Disadvantage: Because observation studies do not involve random samples of the population, their results cannot readily be generalized to the population.
    - Existing data:
        - Advantage: Because existing data have already been gathered, the researcher does not have to spend the time and money to gather the data.
        - Disadvantage: The data set that is being analyzed may not contain data on all the variables in which a sociologist may be interested, or may contain data on variables that are not measured in ways the sociologist might prefer.
- The survey is the most common method by which sociologists gather their data.
- **Response rate** can be defined as the percentage of all people in the sample who agree to be interviewed. A high response rate is important to be able to generalize the survey's results to the entire population.
- **Control group**: Control groups are not manipulated. They are the foundational point for which to compare the experimental group against.
- **Experimental group**: The group being treated or otherwise manipulated for the sake of the experiment. This group is identical to the control group EXCEPT that it is manipulated.
- In **participant observation**, the researcher is part of the group that she or he is studying. The researcher thus spends time with the group and might even live with them. **Non-participant**, or direct, observation is where data are collected by observing behavior without interacting with the participants.
- Intensive interviewing is a type of research design where the researcher need not observe a group of people in their natural setting, but rather can sit down with them individually and interview them at length.
- Sometimes sociologists do not gather their own data but instead analyze existing data that someone else has gathered. Analysis of existing data is called **secondary data analysis**.

Key Takeaways

- The major types of sociological research include surveys, experiments, observational studies, and the use of existing data.
- Surveys are very common and allow for the gathering of much information on respondents that is relatively superficial. The results of surveys that use random samples can be generalized to the population that the sample represents.

Sociology Understanding and Changing the Social World Comprehensive Edition Version 2 0 2nd edition Barkan Solutions Ma

- Observational studies are also very common and enable in-depth knowledge of a small group of people. Because their samples are not random, these studies' results cannot necessarily be generalized to a population.
- Experiments are much less common in sociology than on psychology. When field experiments' are conducted in sociology, they can yield valuable information because of their experimental design.

Exercises

1. Write a brief essay in which you outline the various kinds of surveys and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each type.
   Answer: Surveys can be of various types such as a poll involving a questionnaire, face-to-face surveys, telephone surveys, mailed surveys, Web/Internet surveys, etc. The student should find out the difference between each of them and their unique advantages and disadvantages.

2. Suppose you wanted to study whether gender affects happiness. Write a brief essay that describes how you would do this with either a survey or with an observational study.
   Answer: The students can use either of the two methods depending on their preference. When using the survey method, a questionnaire has to be developed and handed out to the respondents. The data collected should be then analyzed to draw out a conclusion. In the observational study, the student can either be a part of the participant observation or the non-participant observation technique. The students should have a clear understanding on these techniques and how they are conducted.

Additional Exercises

1. Briefly describe the method you would use to gather information for a research study on the prevalence and impact of binge-drinking among college-going students within the age group of 18-20?
   Answer: The major methods that sociologists use to gather the information are surveys, experiments, observation (field research) and existing data. The students should have a clear understanding of these methods and the advantages and disadvantages unique to each of them. The students may choose any of these methods and must justify their choice.

4. ETHICAL ISSUES IN SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

- Describe two kinds of ethical issues and/or guidelines that characterize sociological research.

Section Outline

Sociology Understanding and Changing the Social World Comprehensive Edition Version 2 0 2nd edition Barkan Solutions Ma

- Research involving human subjects must follow certain ethical standards to make sure the subjects are not harmed.
- One of the most important ethical guidelines involving humans as research subjects is that the researcher should protect the privacy and confidentiality of their subjects.
- The second most important ethical issue is that of consent. The subjects of the research should sign an informed consent form before participating in the research.
- The informed consent form should summarize the aims of the study and the possible risks of being subjects.
- There should not be any undue pressure or influence on anyone to participate in the research or even continue participating in the research.

Key Takeaways

- Potential ethical issues in sociological research are normally not as serious as those in medical research, but sociologists must still take care to proceed in an ethical manner in their research.
- The guideline that informed consent must be obtained from potential research subjects is a special issue in vulnerable populations such as prisoners.

Exercises

1. Do you think it is appropriate to ask prisoners to take part in a research study? Why or why not?
   Answer: Students answers may vary but they must justify their answers. Using prisoners for a research study has many ethical issues. Prisoners may find it difficult to exercise their free will as they are under a lot of scrutiny and pressure inside a prison. On the other hand if the prisoners are altogether barred from taking part in research studies, studies involving various social issues related to crime, imprisonment, etc. will not have the relevant data.

2. If you were a researcher and police demanded to see notes you had taken as part of your research, would you turn the notes over to the police, or would you refuse to do so at the risk of being arrested? Explain your answer.
   Answer: Students answers may vary. The students may hand over their records as helping the police may be viewed as morally right and a service to the society. However students can come up with a negative answer as well and put a defense involving the ethical issues related to research. Protection of privacy and confidentiality of the subjects is an integral issue for researchers and to violate that can be viewed as a violation of ethics and moral responsibility.

Additional Exercises

1. A subject willing to participate in a sociological research study signed an informed consent form and willfully participated in the study. However, halfway

Sociology Understanding and Changing the Social World Comprehensive Edition Version 2 0 2nd edition Barkan Solutions Ma

through the study, the subject decided to withdraw his participation citing personal reasons. The researcher was not ready to let go of the subject as the study would be hampered by the subject's absence. According to the researcher, the subject had willingly signed the informed consent form and was not under any pressure to participate in the study. Is the researcher acting in an ethical manner in the above scenario?
Answer: The subject has the right to withdraw from the study any time during the course of the study or prior to it. The researcher cannot forcefully retain any of his subjects even though they have signed the informed consent form. This is an ethical issue concerning modern day research and can be debated at length citing moral and social responsibility as well as ethical codes of conduct.

5. SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN THE SERVICE OF SOCIETY

- Should the primary aim of sociological research be to help improve society, or should its primary aim be to discover social knowledge for its own sake? There is no right or wrong answer to this question.
- Although sociological research findings may be relevant for many social issues, this certainly does not guarantee that these findings will actually be marshaled to address these issues.

Sociology Understanding and Changing the Social World Comprehensive Edition Version 2 0 2nd edition Barkan Solutions Ma