

***Sociology in Modules 6th edition Schaefer Solutions
Manual***

SKU: 9781260726770-SOLUTIONS

Chapter 2: Sociological Research

Chapter Outline

Module 5: What Is the Scientific Method?

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 Reviewing the Literature
 Formulating the Hypothesis
 Collecting and Analyzing Data
 Developing the Conclusion
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Research Today: Visual Sociology

Taking Sociology to Work: Dave Eberbach, Associate Director, Iowa Institute for Community Alliances

Social Policy and Sociological Research: Studying Human Sexuality

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Learning Objectives

- Outline and describe the steps in the scientific method.
- Give an example of an operational definition.

What's New in Chapter 2

- Chapter-opening photo illustrating research among the homeless population of New York City.
- Chapter-opening vignette drawn from

- Explain the relationship between hypotheses and variables.
 - Distinguish correlation from cause.
 - Summarize the characteristics, advantages, and limitations of the major research designs.
 - List the basic principles of the American Sociological Association's code of ethics.
 - Apply ethical principles to the challenge's researchers encounter in conducting research.
 - Describe the impact of feminist theory on sociological research practices.
 - Summarize the benefits and challenges of conducting research online.
 - Analyze through a sociological lens the challenges in conducting research on human sexual behavior and the potential impact of such research on social policy.
- a sociological study of why teenagers use vaping products.
- Photo and text example to illustrate how sociologists control for various biases in study subjects.
 - Figure 5-2, "Educational Level and Household Income in the United States," extensively updated.
 - "Thinking Critically" question about the relationship between dependent and independent variables.
 - Explanation of new census relationship questions and how they relate to sociological research.
 - Coverage of research on parental involvement in children's education during the coronavirus pandemic.
 - Extensive example of how content analysis reveals how men are portrayed in country music.
 - Example of use of photographic evidence in applied sociological research.
 - Discussion of how the study of effects of education on income can be broadened to include race and gender factors.
 - Discussion and photo illustrating the use of content analysis to demonstrate lack of racial diversity in media.
 - Discussion of how being gay influences racial attitudes.

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Chapter Summary

Sociologists have a commitment to the use of the **scientific method** in their research, which is comprised of a systematic series of steps that ensures maximum objectivity and consistency in researching a problem. The basic steps in the scientific method are defining the problem, reviewing the literature, formulating the hypothesis, selecting the research design, and collecting and analyzing the data. Finally, the researcher develops a conclusion based on the

findings of the research. A **hypothesis** is a speculative statement about the relationship between two or more variables.

An **operational definition** is an explanation of an abstract concept that allows a researcher to assess or measure the concept. For example, a sociologist interested in status might use membership in exclusive social clubs as an operational definition of status.

A review of the relevant literature helps to refine the problem, consider previous attempts to investigate it, and reduce avoidable mistakes.

Variables are measurable traits or characteristics that are subject to change under certain conditions. An **independent** variable is the one in a causal relationship that causes or influences a change in another variable. The variable that is changed or dependent on the independent variable is called the **dependent variable**. **Causal logic** involves the relationship between a condition or variable and a particular consequence, with one leading to the other. A **correlation** exists when a change in one variable coincides with a change in the other; however, a correlational relationship does not necessarily indicate a causal relationship. **Control variables** are those factors that are held constant to test the strength of a relationship between the independent and dependent variables. **Cross-tabulation** is a table or matrix that shows the relationship between two or more variables.

In most studies, social scientists carefully select a sample. A **sample** is a selection from a larger population that is, statistically representative of the population. In a **random sample**, every member of the population being studied has the same chance of being selected for the study.

The scientific method requires both validity and reliability. **Validity** refers to the degree to which a measure or scale truly reflects the phenomenon under study. **Reliability** refers to the extent to which a measure produces consistent results.

In formulating a conclusion, sociological studies sometime fail to support the original hypothesis, and researchers must reformulate their conclusions.

A **research design** is a detailed plan or method for obtaining or collecting data. **Surveys** are a common method of **quantitative research** used by researchers to collect data. A quantitative method is one in which data are represented as numbers or statistics. Surveys may consist of oral **interviews** or written **questionnaires**. **Ethnography** is a **qualitative research** method that allows researchers to collect data through everyday interaction with a group or community under study. **Observation** is the basic technique of ethnography and, as a research technique, is simply collecting information through direct participation, by closely watching a group or community. Qualitative research involves smaller samples and different research methodologies because it is research that relies on what is seen in field or naturalistic settings, more than on statistical data. **Experiments** are artificially created situations in which researchers can manipulate variables. Typically, an **experimental group** is exposed to the independent variable (or “stimulus”), and the **control group** is not. Sometimes experiments

can suffer from the **Hawthorne effect**, a term sociologists have used to refer to the unintended influence that observers of experiments can have on their subjects.

Analyzing existing data that have been previously collected is called **secondary analysis**.

Content analysis involves the systematic coding and objective recording of data, such as using newspapers, periodicals, and other common documents or venues to interpret and test the significance of data.

Mean is the number calculated by adding a series of values and then dividing by the number of values. **Median** is the midpoint or number that divides a series of values into two groups of equal numbers of values. The **mode** is the single most common value in a series of scores. A **percentage** is a portion of 100.

All researchers must abide by a **code of ethics** to ensure that researchers are not causing harm or violating a person's privacy. The American Sociological Association (ASA) is responsible for publishing a code of ethics for researchers in the field of sociology. Most researchers strive for **value neutrality**, Max Weber's term for objectivity in the interpretation of data; however, some have suggested neutrality may be impossible to attain.

As the feminist perspective gains influence among sociological researchers, feminist methodology is changing both how issues are defined and how data are collected. Queer theory is also exposing some of the inherent sexuality bias in sociology that can lead to underreporting of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, and non-binary groups in a research process. Finally, computers and the massive increases in available data in today's world have allowed sociologists to take on research that was nearly impossible a decade ago.

Although the term **visual sociology**, which involves the use of photographs, film, and video to study society, is relatively new, the roots of visual research methods go deep. As sociologist Howard Becker reminds us "[p]hotography and sociology have approximately the same birth date," in the 1830s. Early sociological works made use of photographs and other visuals, such as maps, not merely as illustrations but as the basis of research.

Applied sociology involves the use of the discipline with the specific intent of yielding practical applications for human behavior and organizations.

Lecture Outline

Introduction

- Vignette drawn from sociological study of why teenagers use vaping products (Keane et al. 2017).

I. Module 5: What Is the Scientific Method?

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- A systematic, organized series of steps that ensures maximum objectivity and consistency in researching a problem.
- It is important to be able to distinguish between scientific and popular sources, as we are constantly bombarded with information and so-called “facts.”

A. Defining the Problem

- An operational definition is necessary to assess or measure a concept.
Example: A sociologist may use membership in exclusive social clubs as an operational definition of “status.”

B. Reviewing the Literature

- This process serves to refine the problem under study, clarify data collection techniques, and reduce avoidable mistakes.

C. Formulating the Hypothesis

- *Hypothesis*: a speculative statement about the relationship between two or more variables (a *variable* being a measurable trait or characteristic).
- *Independent variables* cause or influence change in dependent variables.
- *Dependent variables* are changed by the independent variables or are dependent on them.
- *Causal logic* refers to the relationship between a condition or variable and a particular consequence, with one event leading to the other. **Example:** Time spent studying may result in a higher grade on an exam.
- *Correlation* is only an indication that causality *may* be present. Other factors are necessary to determine causation.

D. Collecting and Analyzing Data

- Research designs guide researchers in collecting data.

1. Selecting the Sample

- *Sample*: a statistically representative selection from a larger population.
- Researchers collect samples because the population is too large to be studied.
- A *random sample* occurs when every member of an entire population has the same chance of being selected for the study.

2. Ensuring Validity and Reliability

- *Validity* refers to the degree to which a measure or scale accurately reflects the phenomenon under study.
- *Reliability* refers to the extent to which a measure produces consistent results.

E. Developing the Conclusion

- The conclusion represents both an end and a beginning in research.
- 1. Supporting Hypotheses**
 - Some studies refute a hypothesis, which leads to reformulations about a conclusion and adjustments in research designs.
 - 2. Controlling for Other Factors**
 - A *control variable* is a factor held constant to test the relative impact of an

independent variable. **Example:** If researchers wanted to know how adults in the United States feel about restrictions on smoking in public places, they would probably attempt to use a respondent's smoking behavior as a control variable.

F. In Summary: The Scientific Method

II. Module 6: Major Research Designs

- A *research design* is a detailed plan or method for obtaining data scientifically.

A. Surveys

- Surveys are generally in the form of an interview or questionnaire, providing researchers with information about how people think or act.
- The survey is an example of *quantitative research*, which collects and reports data primarily in numerical form. For a survey to be accurate, the researcher must develop a representative sample.
- With an *interview*, a researcher obtains information through face-to-face, telephone, or online questioning. With a *questionnaire*, the researcher uses a printed or written form to obtain information from a respondent.
- Survey questionnaires have the advantage over most other methods of being cheaper to administer. This is particularly true of web-based surveys, which can be quite valid. [TBEXAM.COM](https://www.tbexam.com)

B. Ethnography

- *Qualitative research* offers more depth and detail than quantitative analysis. This type of research relies on what is seen in field and naturalistic settings and often focuses on small groups and communities. *Ethnography* is the most common form.
- *Observation*, or direct participation in closely watching a group or organization, is the basic technique of ethnography. **Example:** A researcher might observe gang life or homeless persons through close study that may include personal interviews and research into the history of these groups.
- William F. Whyte's 1930s study, in which he moved into a low-income Italian neighborhood in Boston, is a classic example of participant-observation research.

C. Experiments

- An *experiment* is an artificially created situation that allows a researcher to manipulate variables. In the classic method of conducting an experiment, an *experimental group* is exposed to an independent variable, and a *control group* is not.
- The *Hawthorne effect* refers to the tendency for subjects of research to deviate from typical behavior because they are under observation.

D. Use of Existing Sources

- *Secondary analysis* refers to making use of previously collected or publicly accessible information and data. **Example:** census data.
- Secondary analysis is nonreactive since it does not influence people's behavior; thus, researchers can avoid the Hawthorne effect by using secondary analysis. **Example:** Durkheim's research on suicide.
- *Content analysis* is the systematic coding and objective recording of data. **Example:** To assess children's awareness of the environment, sociologists conducted a content analysis of award-winning picture books over the past 70 years. Content analysis can also document what we suspect is happening as well as reveal surprising trends. **Example:** Despite the tremendous increase in women's participation in sports over the last quarter century, content analysis revealed that only 3.2 percent of airtime was devoted to women's sports; further, this represented a decline from the levels back in 1989. ESPN's heavily watched SportsCenter consistently devotes 2 percent of airtime to women; of this, 82 percent represents coverage of basketball (Cooky et al., 2015; Schedler & Wagstaff, 2018).

III. Module 7: Ethics of Research

- The American Sociological Association's *Code of Ethics* for sociologists was first published in 1971. It was most recently reviewed in 1997. Its principles include objectivity and integrity, privacy, protection from harm for subjects, confidentiality, informed consent, acknowledgment of collaboration and assistance, and disclosure of sources of financial support.

A. Confidentiality

- Rik Scarce was jailed for refusing to divulge what he knew about a 1991 raid on a university lab by animal rights activists.
- The Supreme Court has failed to clarify the rights of scholars preserving the confidentiality of research subjects. Scarce (2005) eventually argued that federal legislation is needed to clarify the rights of scholars and members of the press to preserve the confidentiality of those they interview.

B. Conflict of Interest

- When accepting funding for their research, sociologists must be careful that the funding source does not taint the objectivity of the research. **Example:** Exxon funded research on jury deliberations after the *Valdez* disaster.

C. Value Neutrality

- Weber argued that *value neutrality* must be employed in research—that under no conditions could researchers allow their personal feelings to influence the interpretation of data. Some sociologists argue that true value neutrality in research may be impossible, but it should not be ignored. **Example:** Peter Rossi's

commitment to rigorous research methods and data interpretation led to conflict between him and the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless since his measure of the extent of homelessness fell far below theirs and hampered their social reform efforts. Rossi concluded that “in the short term, good social research will often be greeted as a betrayal of one or another side to a particular controversy.”

IV. Module 8: Developments of Methodology

A. Feminist Methodology

- The feminist perspective has had an impact on sociological research, both in terms of methodology and substantive content. **Example:** Research is now being conducted on the integration of work and family, rather than viewing the two topics as unrelated.
- Recent feminist scholars have shown substantive interest in female self-injury and in drawing links between the role of women in developed and developing nations.
- Feminist theorists have called for more research into the issues surrounding women and immigration, domestic workers in less developed and industrial nations, and global sex trafficking.
- Feminist scholarship often employs a multidisciplinary approach to the research itself and its application.

B. Queer Theory and Methodology

- Queer theorists draw attention to the underreporting of gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgender, queer, and nonbinary individuals, in the collection of research, often due to the nature in which the questions are asked (“veiled reporting”).
- Because it is a sensitive topic, researchers who want to generalize about *both* cisgender and gay and lesbian individuals should be extremely careful in wording questions about respondents’ sexual orientation.

C. The Data-Rich Future

- Impact of computers and the massive increases in available data in today’s world.
- United States’ prison population offers many avenues for research. **Example:** Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) mentoring program and the Fractured Family (FF) national survey.

V. (Box) Social Policy and Sociological Research: Studying Human Sexuality

A. Looking at the Issue

- Human sexuality is a difficult topic to research due to privacy concerns as well as the myths, beliefs, and preconceptions people attach to the subject. The mass media continually bombard us with sexual ideas and social policy and Sociological Research Studying Human Sexuality images. However, as a study

released in 2018 reveals, it is women rather than men who are disproportionately sexualized, particularly in motion pictures. **Example:** A content analysis of the characters in top box office films of 2017 showed that women are much more likely than men to be shown in sexy attire, with some degree of nudity, or specifically referred to as “attractive.”

B. Applying Sociology

- There have been few reliable studies of patterns of sexual behavior in the United States. The sensitive nature of the subject makes it difficult to obtain accurate information, and until the AIDS crisis, there was little scientific demand for data on sexual behavior.
- Government funding for studies of sexual behavior is controversial.

C. Initiating Policy

- In 1987, the federal government’s National Institute of Child Health and Human Development sought research proposals for a national survey of sexual behavior. In 1991, however, the U.S. Senate voted to forbid funding any survey on adult sexual practices.
- Researchers secured private funding for the research to go forth with the National Health and Social Life Survey (NHSLs).
- Authors of the study contend their data will allow sociologists and policy makers to better address such issues as AIDS, sexual harassment, welfare reform, sex discrimination, abortion, teenage pregnancy, and family planning.
- The research findings countered conventional notions about abortion and birth control. **Example:** Researchers found that women do not regularly use abortion for birth control and that affluent women are more likely to have abortions than poor teens. Both of these findings challenge conventional wisdom and commonsense about abortion.

VI. Appendix I: Using Statistics and Graphs

A. Using Statistics

- The most common summary measures used by sociologists are percentages, means, modes, and medians. A *percentage* is a portion of 100. Use of percentages allows us to compare groups of different sizes.
- The *mean*, or average, is a number calculated by adding a series of values and then dividing by the number of values. For example, to find the mean of the numbers 5, 19, and 27, we would add them together (for a total of 51), divide by the number of values (3), and discover that the mean is 17.
- The *mode* is the single most common value in a series of scores. Suppose we were looking at the following scores on a 10-point quiz: 10 10 9 9 8 8 7 7 7 6 5. The mode—the most frequent score on the quiz—is 7. While the mode is easier to identify than other summary measures, it tells sociologists little about all the other values.
- The *median* is the midpoint or number that divides a series of values into two groups of equal numbers of values. For the quiz just discussed, the median, or

central value, is 8. The mean, or average, would be 86 (the sum of all scores) divided by 11 (the total number of scores), or 7.8.

B. Reading Graphs

One type of summary sociologists use, a cross-tabulation, shows the relationship between two or more variables. Through the cross-tabulations presented graphically in Figure A-3, we can quickly see that older people are less likely to favor the legalization of marijuana than younger people and that Republicans are less supportive of legalization than Democrats.

Key Terms

Applied sociology The use of the discipline of sociology to yield practical applications for human behavior and organizations.

Causal logic The relationship between a condition or variable and a particular consequence, with one leading to the other.

Code of ethics The standards of acceptable behavior developed by and for members of a profession.

Content analysis The systematic coding and objective recording of data, guided by some rationale.

Control group The subjects in an experiment who are not introduced to the independent variable by the researcher.

Control variable A factor that is held constant to test the relative impact of an independent variable.

Correlation A relationship between two variables in which a change in one coincides with a change in the other.

Cross-tabulation A table or matrix that shows the relationship between two or more variables.

Dependent variable The variable in a causal relationship that is subject to the influence of another variable.

Ethnography The study of an entire social setting through extended systematic observation.

Experiment An artificially created situation that allows a researcher to manipulate variables.

Experimental group The subjects in an experiment who are exposed to an independent variable introduced by a researcher.

Hawthorne effect The unintended influence that observers or experiments can have on their subjects.

Hypothesis A speculative statement about the relationship between two or more variables.

Independent variable The variable in a causal relationship that causes or influences a change in a second variable.

Interview A face-to-face, phone, or online questioning of a respondent to obtain desired information.

Mean A number calculated by adding a series of values and then dividing by the number of

values.

Median The midpoint or number that divides a series of values into two groups of equal numbers of values.

Mode The single most common value in a series of scores.

Observation A research technique in which an investigator collects information through direct participation, by closely watching a group or community.

Operational definition An explanation of an abstract concept that is specific enough to allow a researcher to assess the concept.

Percentage A portion of 100.

Qualitative research Research that relies on what is seen in field or naturalistic settings more than on statistical data.

Quantitative research Research that collects and reports data primarily in numerical form.

Questionnaire A printed or written form used to obtain information from a respondent.

Random sample A sample for which every member of an entire population has the same chance of being selected.

Reliability The extent to which a measure produces consistent results.

Research design A detailed plan or method for obtaining data scientifically.

Sample A selection from a larger population that is, statistically representative of that population.

Scientific method A systematic, organized series of steps that ensures maximum objectivity and consistency in researching a problem.

Secondary analysis A variety of research techniques that make use of previously collected and publicly accessible information and data.

Survey A study, generally in the form of an interview or questionnaire, that provides researchers with information about how people think and act.

Validity The degree to which a measure or scale truly reflects the phenomenon under study.

Value neutrality Max Weber's term for objectivity of sociologists in the interpretation of data.

Variable A measurable trait or characteristic that is, subject to change under different conditions.

Visual sociology The use of photographs, film, and video to study society.

Essay Questions

1. Identify and briefly explain the five basic steps in the scientific method.
2. Discuss the differences in qualitative and quantitative research processes.
3. Describe what is meant by the need to ensure that research results are both valid and

reliable.

4. Provide the students with a research question and ask them to identify which research method would be best suited to studying it and to discuss why.
5. How is a sociological analysis of whether it pays to go to college different from a study of the same question conducted by a television station or magazine?
6. Distinguish among independent variables, dependent variables, causal logic, and correlations.
7. Explain why it is important to develop a representative sample when doing survey research and why some survey methods will not produce this kind of sample.
8. Why are control variables important in testing hypotheses?
9. Explain how sociological research methods would be useful in conducting a poll in Pakistan.
10. Identify and briefly describe the four different types of research designs for collecting data presented in the text.
11. Why is the wording of survey questions an important issue?
12. What are the advantages of interviews and questionnaires as forms of survey research?
13. What are the strengths and difficulties of the ethnographic method of research?
14. Which type of sociological research is considered to be more effective—qualitative or quantitative?
15. What conclusions can be drawn from William F. Whyte's participant-observation research in a low-income neighborhood?
16. Explain the origin of the Hawthorne effect and its significance for researchers.
17. In what types of situations do researchers find secondary analysis useful?
18. What are the principles put forth by the American Sociological Association in its *Code of Ethics*?
19. How does the case of Rik Scarce show the importance of maintaining the confidentiality of sources in observation research?
20. Describe the ideal of *value neutrality* as developed by Max Weber.
21. Summarize the views of Joyce Ladner and Peter Rossi with respect to value neutrality.
22. What impact has the feminist perspective had on global sociological research?
23. How has queer theory attempted to address the generalizations that may be inherent in research?
24. What are the ethical concerns of receiving funding from corporate sources?
25. What has been the impact of technology on sociological research?
26. Why is it important for sociologists to do studies of human sexuality?

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Discuss why it is so difficult for sociologists to achieve true value neutrality in their research. Consider what kinds of research and experiments might impact researchers' capacity for value neutrality more than others.
2. Consider various ways in which you might try to disguise your identity in performing a participant-observation study of street gangs, and whether or not it would be ethical to do so. Discuss the value of obtaining qualitative data compared to obtaining quantitative data.
3. Provide examples of any societal dangers that might occur when the results of poor research are publicized. Can you recall any recent instances of this?
4. Discuss how social research could provide assistance in fighting the war on terrorism. What type of research design would one employ to research terrorism?
5. Describe how social research could aid in the passage of laws or potentially prevent the enactment of poor laws.

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