

Unit 2 Sociological Investigation

Text A

Preparatory Work

(1)

Experiment: variable, hypothesis, stimulus, control group

Survey Research: sampling, questionnaire, interview, close-ended questions, open-ended questions, code sheet, telephone survey

Field Research: observation, participant

Analysis of Existing Data: content analysis, statistics

(2)

Hawthorne effect: The Hawthorne effect (also referred to as the observer effect) is a type of reactivity in which individuals modify or improve an aspect of their behavior in response to their awareness of being observed. The original research at the Hawthorne Works in Cicero, Illinois, on lighting changes and work structure changes such as working hours and break times were originally interpreted by Elton Mayo and others to mean that paying attention to overall worker needs would improve productivity. This interpretation was dubbed “the Hawthorne effect”.

(3) (open)

Teaching Suggestion

You can use the data banks of the two international organizations to check out the world or any particular country's information in terms of GDP, population, territory area, human development index etc.

The United Nations (<http://www.un.org/en/>) : data page: <http://data.un.org/>

The World Bank (<http://www.worldbank.org/>) : <http://data.worldbank.org/>

You can also use the website of the Statistical Bureau of China to check out any statistical information about China:

<http://www.stats.gov.cn/>

Critical Reading

I. Understanding the text

1.

Thesis: How Sociology Is Done (Research methods/techniques employed in sociology)

Part	Para(s).	Main idea
I Introduction	1	Sociology as a science and its main research methods
II How do you know what you know?	2-9	Authority, tradition, religion, personal experience, and mysticism V.S.

		scientific methods
III The experiment	10-14	It is a research technique in which the researcher manipulates a stimulus to test theories of cause and effect.
IV Survey research	15-22	It is used and designed to study samples in order to measure attitudes, beliefs, values, personality traits, and behavior of participants.
V Field research	23-29	It is mostly resembles our daily casual observations of and participation in social behavior, as well as our attempt to understand such behavior.
VI Analysis of existing data	30-36	It's a method in which sociologists analyze data originally collected by others
VII Conclusion	37	Thesis repeated: Sociology is a science because it uses scientific research methods

2.

- (1) "common sense": Common sense is a basic ability to perceive, understand, and judge things, which is shared by ("common to") nearly all people and can reasonably be expected of nearly all people without any need for debate. However, many of the common sense beliefs are actually lacking in support from scientific evidences and therefore biased and prejudiced.
- (2) Ordinary people often define their reality and what they know through authoritative opinions, traditional beliefs, personal experience, and mysticism (superstition). The major differences between this kind of "common sense" view knowledge and the results/facts identified through scientific methods are: the former are not based on logical reasoning and hard evidences and therefore tend to be subjective and biased while the latter are just opposite.
- (3) The three major components of the scientific method are theory, operationalization, and observation. Theory provides the foundation for concepts so that statements about the relationship among variables can be created. Operationalization allows for the measurement of the variables so that they may be empirically examined. And observation involves the actual collection of data to test the hypothesis.
- (4)

Types of Social Phenomena	Content
1. Meanings and symbols	Aspects of culture such as norms, worldviews, and language
2. Practice	Various kinds of behavior such as voting behaviors or morning rituals (for example, washing one's face and reading the daily newspaper)
3. Episodes	A variety of events, including divorce, crime, illness, and how people may react during time of disasters, such as earthquakes, floods, or the banning of music television video (MTV)
4. Encounters	Two or more people meeting and interacting in immediate proximity with one another. A good example of this is people riding in an elevator
5. Roles	The positions people occupy and the behavior associated with those positions: occupations, family roles, ethnic groups
6. Relationships	The kinds of behavior shown in pairs or sets of roles: mother-daughter relationships, friendships, and so on.
7. Groups	Small groups, such as gangs, athletic teams, and work groups.
8. Organizations	Formal organizations, such as corporations or universities
9. Settlements	Smaller-scale "societies" such as villages, ghettos, and neighborhoods

(5)

Method & brief description	Advantages	Disadvantages
The experiment is a research technique in which the researcher manipulates a stimulus—the independent variable—to test theories of cause and effect	Excellent devices for testing hypotheses about cause and effect (can be repeated and can be quick in identifying results)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Could expose subjects to the possibility of harm ● Subjects often behave differently under scientific observation ● Laboratory experiments are often highly artificial

<p>Survey research is used and designed to study samples in order to measure attitudes, beliefs, values, personality traits, and behavior of participants.</p>	<p>Can study samples, limited numbers of people representing an entire group of people who share similar characteristics</p> <p>Can be designed to measure attitudes, beliefs, values, personality traits, and behavior of participants</p>	<p>It is not the best strategy for studying deviant or undesirable behaviors or for getting at ideas and feelings that cannot easily be reduced to questionnaire form.</p> <p>It is designed to study individuals rather than social contexts.</p>
<p>Field research is mostly resembles our daily casual observations of and participation in social behavior, as well as our attempt to understand such behavior.</p>	<p>May investigate various types of social phenomena</p> <p>Can reveal things that would not otherwise be apparent</p> <p>The presence of an observing, thinking researcher on the scene of the action (acute observation)</p>	<p>Cannot be repeated and applied to similar situations</p> <p>The researchers as participants rely on personal perception and judgement, thus might be biased</p> <p>Might suffer from the Hawthorne effect</p>
<p>Analysis of existing data is a method in which sociologists analyze data originally collected by others. It includes content analysis, the analysis of existing statistics, and historical-comparative analysis.</p>	<p>Wide range of all kinds of data</p> <p>Saving time</p> <p>Saving money</p>	<p>The accuracy of much existing data may be difficult to assess.</p> <p>The potential for error and distortion means that “what you see may not be what you get.”</p>

II. Evaluation and exploration

(1) An **authority** is a specialist in certain field of knowledge therefore an authority, specialized knowledge from an authority is closer to “truth”, but he is not a knowing-all figure, and he might also be biased in his attitude toward some issues. A **tradition** is a belief or

behavior passed down within a group or society with symbolic meaning or special significance with origins in the past. They are followed by and considered right by certain group of people, but cannot applied to other groups who have their own tradition; and since they are formed and passed down from the past, they might not be applicable to the present world. **Religions** may contain symbolic stories, which are sometimes said by followers to be true, that have the side purpose of explaining the origin of life, the Universe, and other things. Traditionally, faith, in addition to reason, has been considered a source of religious beliefs. However, religious beliefs mostly lack in empirical or scientific proof. **Personal experience** is based on one's real life and reality and therefore closer to "reality", but it is based on an individual's encounter and perspective on reality, and cannot totally represent the common experience shared by a group of people. **Mysticism** is popularly known as becoming one with God or the Absolute, but may refer to any kind of ecstasy or altered state of consciousness which is given a religious or spiritual meaning. It may also refer to the attainment of insight in ultimate or hidden truths, and to human transformation supported by various practices and experiences. But it is based on religion or superstition, even farther away from being objective and scientific.

- (2) Since sociologists base their research and conclusion on empirical study with scientific method, it is similar to the disciplines of natural science, but there are two factors that differentiate it from natural sciences. The object of study is human being who can be very complicated and change with time. Also the sociologists are also human beings who can be subjective or even biased in their study. In this sense, sociology is still not equal to natural science in objectivity.
- (3) The **hypothesis** of the Stanford prison experiment is that change of roles or environment **causes** change of human behavior (**effect**). The **independent variable** is the two roles (prisoner and prison guard) assigned to the 24 students who are all randomly selected (**sampling**) from among the university students, and the dependent variable is their (change of) behavior.
- (4) First, experiments are often not possible because they would expose subjects to the possibility of harm. For example, what if a researcher wanted to know whether people who were abused as children are more likely to abuse their children? Second, the subjects often behave differently when they are under scientific observation from the way they would in their normal environment.

Third, laboratory experiments are often highly artificial. When researchers try to set up social situations in laboratories, they often must omit many of the factors that would influence the same behavior in a real-life situation, thus affecting the validity of the experiment result.

- (5) The merits of survey through the Internet are that it's very quick (in terms of time)—and efficient (in terms of cost), but the drawbacks are also obvious: not all citizens use the Internet (and therefore excluded from the sampling), and also not all netizens participate in the survey and therefore further affect the survey result.
- (6) The term often refers simply to the use of predictive analytics, user behavior analytics, or certain other advanced data analytics methods that extract value from data, and seldom to a particular size of data set. Accuracy in big data may lead to more confident decision making, and better decisions can result in greater operational efficiency, cost reduction and reduced risk. Relational database management systems and desktop statistics and visualization packages often have difficulty handling big data. The work instead requires “massively parallel software running on tens, hundreds, or even thousands of servers”. Also, those who do not use the Internet are excluded from the analysis therefore affect the analysis and conclusion.
- (7) (This question is open for discussion and there's no definite answer) The Internet companies are caught between the two sides: the government side who emphasize gathering monitoring information for public security or national security reason, and the netizens who defend their right of “privacy”. Laws should be made regarding the right and responsibility of each side.
- (8) (This question is open for discussion) How one feels about these statistical figures might be affected by the class, occupation, gender, region and age group (and other factors) an individual belongs to. And also, the official statistics might not be very accurate.
- (9) (This question is open for discussion) Obviously, mass media (newspapers, radio, TV, the Internet) are the major channel people get most of their information which is supposed to be true and real. But there are some factors that influence the so-called truth: ownership (private or public), editors' stance, class background of the participants (in the Internet) can all influence the information we get from the mass media.

Language Enhancement

I. Words and phrases

1.

(1) C&D (2) A&C (3) C&E (4) B&C (5) B&D
(6) D&F (7) B&D (8) C&E (9) A&C (10) C&E

2.

(1) in; as; of (2) beyond; in (3) by; to (4) into; in; of (5) to; on; of;
for
(6) of; for; on (7) In; between; with; of (8) to; of; upon (9) In; with
(10) like; in; of

3.

(1) from scratch (2) appealed to (3) applied (4) apply (5) relies on
(6) suffering from (7) guard against (8) died off (9) ran out of (10)
contribute to

4.

(1) provide...for (2) appeals for (3) applies...to (4) draw from (5)
employed in
(6) participate in (7) refers...to(8) received...from (9) passes...from
(10) exposes...to

II. Sentences and discourse**1.**

(1) The scientific method bases knowledge on direct and systematic observation through logical systems.
(2) Operationalization provides conditions to measure the variables which may be checked empirically.
(3) Since religion is a system of beliefs and practices based on worshipping the holy, people easily tend to equate faith to facts or facts to faith.
(4) The obvious advantage of using available data, be it government statistics or the result of other research studies – is the savings in time and money. Otherwise, you would need a lot of time and money spent on collecting the information from the very start.
(5) The savings are tempting, but the potential error and distortion from the second-hand data mean that you might not get the “truth”.

2.

(1) Basing on his overall investigation of China’s current employment situation, this specialist refuted the view that the population profit has been used up.
(2) Thanks to the application of valid and objective survey methods, sociology became an independent branch of social sciences in the 19th century, transcending philosophy and ordinary social theories.
(3) The head of the Academy of Social Sciences asserted that the cut in research funding would have a great impact on its long-term stable development.

- (4) Due to its limited survey range and invalid unscientific sampling, the poll result of this organization has seriously distorted the reality.
- (5) The cause of the phenomenon that officials abuse their power is lack of check and balance.
- (6) He suspects that his rival is bluffing in the negotiation.
- (7) In conducting social investigation, the researcher may easily use indication to manipulate the respondents to get the desired answer.
- (8) Through the major internet media, this company has clarified its stance to stay and develop its business in China.
- (9) Faced with continual questions from the reporters at the press conference, the spokesman had to refer to the documents in his hand for answers.
- (10) It is believed by some people that the lazy and irresponsible post 80s and 90s generation was largely associated with the fact that they were mostly the only kid in the family.

3.

内容分析法可以应用于任何形式的通信交流，是对社会物件的系统分析，其内容包括书籍、杂志、诗歌、报纸、歌曲、绘画、讲演、信函、法律以及与此有关的任何成分或收集物。例如，研究者如果想了解欧洲国家的历史教科书比美国的历史教科书是否含有更多的性别歧视内容，他就会对欧洲国家和美国的历史教科书进行抽样。下一步则是构建编码表，用来测量教科书内容用语的性别歧视程度。根据编码进行列表和分析之后，研究者就能得到结论了。

4.

(3) (1) (2) (4)