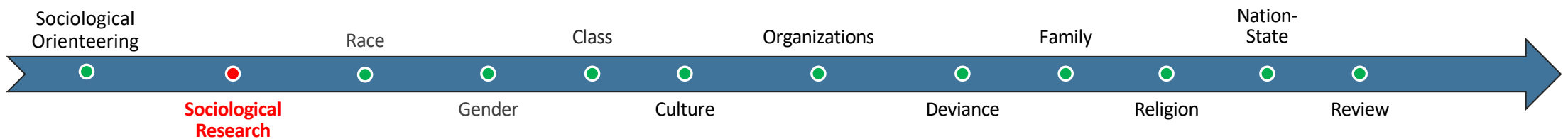


WEEK 2

Sociological Research

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SC1101E Making Sense of Society



Theories and Methodologies

Research Question (Problem): *“Karl moves to study in Singapore, has gone on five dates, but none of the women like him. Why?”*

- ❑ **Theory** – explains how and why certain elements of our world are related.
- ❑ **Hypothesis** (assumption, assertion) – a provisional and testable explanation.
 - FUNCTIONALIST THEORY (order, equilibrium): “He is from abroad... the girls are from Singapore. It is not a good fit.”
 - ❖ manifest and latent FUNCTIONS – labor needs (manifest), cultural diversity (latent)
 - ❖ manifest and latent DYSFUNCTIONS – difficulty assimilating (manifest), social division (latent)
 - CONFLICT THEORY (inequality, repression): “Some women might view him as an upper-class foreigner. Many are particular about class status.”
 - INTERACTIONIST (self-awareness, shared symbols, negotiated order): “Karl is just not smooth. He does not possess the verbal skills to flatter and impress women.”
 - REORIENTATIONIST (imperialism, traditionalism): “Karl is just too liberal. Many women still have conservative views of courtship and romantic relationship.”

Ways to Do Sociology

After you have decided upon a theoretical approach, you must decide how are you going to gather the necessary evidence to prove your theory. In other words, what research methodologies do you want to use?

□ There are four general methodologies...

1. **Positivist methodology**
2. **Critical Methodology**
3. **Interpretive Methodology**
4. **Comparative Historical Methodology**



Research Methodology

1) Positivist Methodology (Functionalist Approach) – This is the most common research orientation. Grounded on sociology's classical link to science, it emphasizes on systematic data gathering, empirical measurement, and statistical presentation. With this way of doing sociology, the researcher is a **neutral observer**.

❑ *To understand Karl's tough luck, a positivist sociologist would give surveys to Karl and all his dates, look at census data for the ratio of men and women (e.g., more men, less women) ...etc.*

Researcher Dilemmas

- ❑ Is it possible to be completely objective?
 - validity (accurate measurement) and reliability (consistent results)
 - Whose side are we on? (Becker 1967)
- ❑ Should we put a clear boundary between the research and personal lives of scholars?
 - “Choosing a career in sexuality studies often elicits curiosity and judgment; and leads others to make assumptions about one’s sexual proclivities” (Irvine 2014, 40).
 - Two Kinsey biographies: 1) Jones – suspicious sexual motivations undermined the validity of his studies. 2) Gathorne-Hardy – scientific aspirations prompted Kinsey and his team to abandon certain notions of sexual conformity.
- ❑ Works of science are fraught with dilemmas about how to frame stories.



Research Methodology

2) Critical Methodology (Conflict Theory) – focuses on exposing structures of inequality and the **need for social change**. In this way, the sociologist is a **critic** (or even an activist).

□ *The sociologist may discuss with Karl his blunders, which some women find unlikeable. Alternatively, the sociologist may want to start cultural awareness classes so that women will not be prejudiced towards Karl and other foreign students.*

Research Methodology

3) Interpretive Methodology (Interactionist Approach) – this methodology focuses on the meanings people place in their actions. The researcher presents the respondent's point of view. For this approach, the researcher is a **participant**.

□ *To understand Karl's plight, the interpretive sociologist may immerse himself into the dating scene by working in a café or staying in a student dormitory.*

Dating Apps



<https://youtu.be/3qPlglxzt5c>

Research Methodology

3) Comparative Historical Methodology (Reorientationist Approach) – this methodology takes a long-term and comparative view of social change. It employs archival research and the analysis of secondary data (old censuses, policies, etc.). For this approach, the researcher is a **reviewer**.

❑ *To understand Karl's plight, a sociologist using this methodology may look into how resistance to Western influence might have resulted to a relatively conservative dating practices.*



Answer through
[PollEv.com/sociolou](https://pollev.com/sociolou)

Engaging Society: Researching Dating Apps

- ☐ Which research orientation is the best approach to get a better understanding of the impact of dating apps?
 - a) Positivist Methodology
 - b) Critical Methodology
 - c) Interpretive Methodology
 - d) Comparative Historical Methodology

Methodologies and Methods

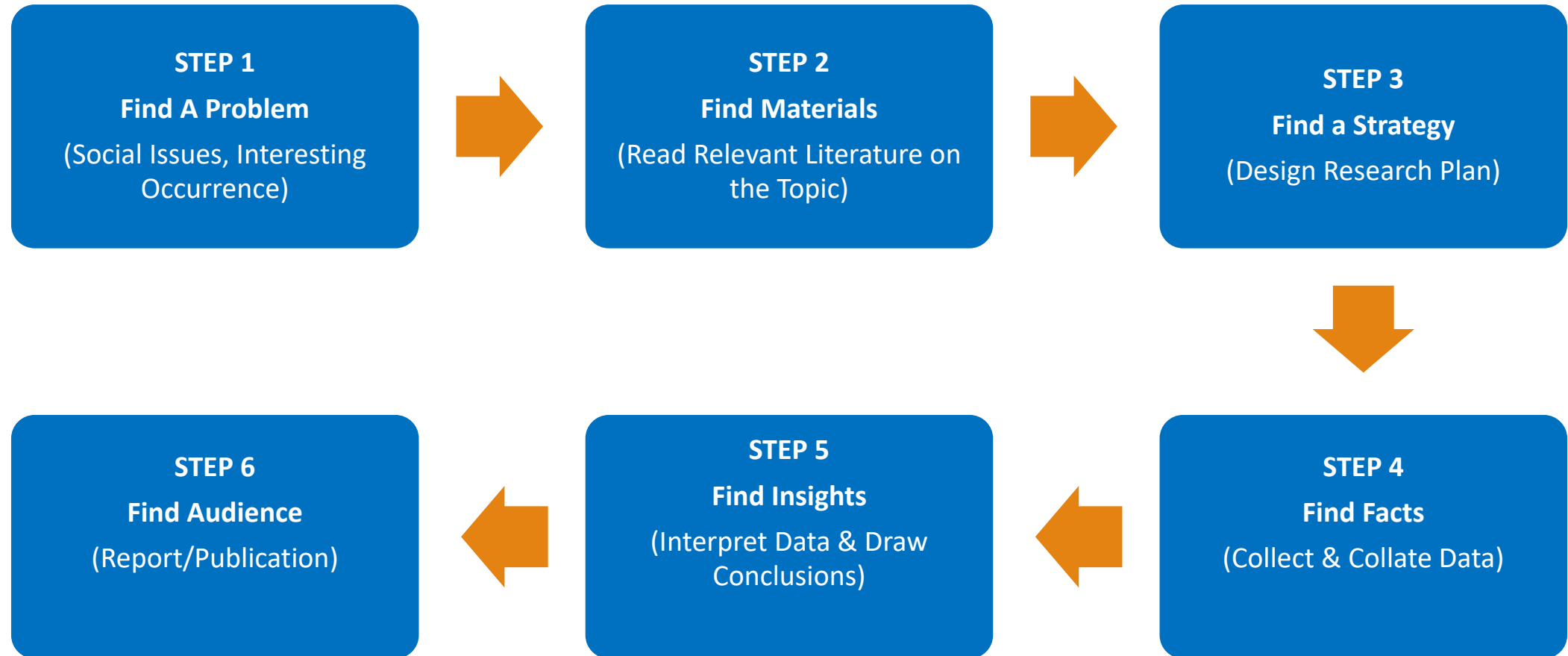
Methodology	Methods	Strengths	Weaknesses
Positivist	experiment survey census	control over variables <small>also can use software to quickly process and analyse</small> covers large population	artificial setting, Hawthorne Effect , difficult to probe deeper or examine nuances
Critical	action research participatory research	directly benefits the subjects, empowering	objectivity questions , might enmeshed in issues
Interpretive	participant-observation, ethnography	gain an “insider’s” view subjects in natural setting	difficult to generalize results, need to adjust to local way of life
Comparative Historical	archival Research secondary Analysis	long-term view of change, insight from comparison, inter-disciplinary	large volume of data to process, need effort to filter bias

Methods of Data Collection

Once you have decided on a theory, and the way you want to approach the situation, then you can finally conduct your research. How do you do this?

- **Experiment** – used to investigate cause and effect.
- **Survey** – subjects respond to a series of statements or questions on a questionnaire or interview.
- **Participant Observation** – (ethnography) sociologists involve themselves in the day to day activities of people.
- **Existing Sources/Archival Research** – Sometimes sociologists use information (data) that has been gathered by others.
- **NEW METHODS:** data gathering evolves and new techniques are regularly formulated (e.g. **netnography**, photo-analysis).

The Research Process



Conclusion



Theories provide us with lenses to examine the world and focus our analysis on specific social issues.



Research methods help us to collect data efficiently and effectively.



Studying the social world is challenging and scholars are fraught with dilemmas about how to frame their analysis.