

## Online Classroom<sup>tv</sup> 1. Introduction to Social Research

### The Aim of Sociological Research

To move from subjective to more objective knowledge of something:

**Subjective knowledge** → **Objective knowledge**

An individual's everyday understanding that comes from their values, experiences and beliefs.

Knowledge that is independent of opinion, prejudice and bias.

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### Three key research criteria:

**Reliability.**

**Validity.**

**Representativeness.**

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### **Reliability** concerns:

- Consistency of the data collected.
- The precision with which it is collected.
- The repeatability of the data collection method.

**A method** is more reliable if it can be easily repeated.

**Data** is reliable if the same results can be gained by different researchers asking the same questions to the same (or similar) people.

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**Validity:** the extent to which the collected research data represents what it claims to represent.

**Valid data** involves:

- **Depth.**
- **Detail.**
- A **well-rounded** picture of whatever is being researched.

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**Representativeness:** whether the results of research can be generalised to wider populations.

- **Sampling** is representative if the characteristics of the sample group reflect the characteristics of the target population.
- **Demographic data** is representative if the information collected is comprehensive.
- **Case studies** can be representative if they are a typical of the group or institution being researched.

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**Sample:** a segment of the target population being studied.

| <b>Probability</b><br>[reflects the population] | <b>Non-Probability</b><br>[does not reflect the population] |
|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| ➤ <b>Simple Random</b>                          | ➤ <b>Opportunity</b>                                        |
| ➤ <b>Systematic</b>                             | ➤ <b>Snowball</b>                                           |
| ➤ <b>Stratified</b>                             | ➤ <b>Cluster / Multistage</b>                               |

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**Objective understanding** involves a search for:

**Reliability**

- May have to make do with less validity

**Validity**

- May have to sacrifice reliability

**Representativeness**

- Can't always construct a representative sample

**These  
are  
Ideals**

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