

Online Classroom™

SOCIOLOGY SHORT CUTS 1

DOING SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Activities And Web Links



Introduction to Social Research

1. Introduction to Social Research

Activity 1: Key Criteria

Ask students to try to answer the following questions:

- What do you understand by the word research?
- Can you give an example of any research you have done as part of your everyday life? What 'methods' did you use?
- Imagine a sociologist is coming to our school to study us. Can you think of two ways their account might differ from that of the teachers or students?
- How can sociologists check out, or test, whether they are doing 'good research'?
- Write down three qualities you would look for in someone you might consider dating or having a relationship with.

[If, for various reasons this isn't a suitable example, the same point can be made with three things they would look for in, for example, a good friend or a teacher.]

Asking students to read out their answers to the final question can be quite amusing and lead to a lot of not strictly syllabus specific observations! However in our experience, the idea that if they value, for example, good looks, a sense of humour or kindness above all else, they're going to be attracted to people exhibiting those qualities - and it helps them to understand the concept of criteria.

This is then a good point to reinforce the key research criteria that were illustrated in the video: reliability, validity and representativeness, maybe using the power points we have provided.

The final point to make here is that these criteria are ideals, or goals, for researchers. Refer students back to the end of the video where students talk about having to compromise their ideals about an ideal partner. Ask them why it may be much the same for researchers.

Supplementary Material:

[Introduction to Research.ppt](#)

Activity 2: Reliability and Validity

Jess, the sociologist in the video, was researching social interaction in a secondary school. She used two different methods:

- Questionnaire surveys
- Participant observation

Divide students into teams and ask them the following questions based on the video.

[If you want to turn this activity into a short game, award 1 mark for each correct answer].

1. Data from Jess' survey is likely to be highly reliable. True or false?
2. For an extra mark can you say why?
3. Data from Jess' survey is likely to be highly valid? True or false?
4. For an extra mark can you say why?
5. What is participant observation?
6. Data from Jess' observational study is likely to be highly reliable. True or false?
7. For an extra mark can you say why?
8. Data from Jess' observational study is likely to be highly valid? True or false?
9. For an extra mark can you say why?
10. What is the term used to describe a sociologist using two or more methods to study the same problem?

Supplementary Material:[Reliability pdf](#)[Validity pdf](#)

Activity 3: Representativeness and Sampling

Buy (or make if you fancy yourself as a celebrity chef) either a large pizza or a cake. Alternatively, a bag of pick-and-mix sweets would do just as well.

Explain the concept of population using the cake or pizza as the population of interest.

Pull off a bit of the crust and eat it. Then ask students if this is a representative sample, and if not, why not? Repeat by pulling off and eating a bit of the topping from the middle. Ask the students how you need to cut the cake / pizza up to ensure a representative sample that includes all elements.

Then cut it up and share around the whole class. Discuss sample size by asking whether their portion was enough/not enough to be a representative sample of the cake / pizza.

This activity can easily be integrated into a lesson and students remember it because eating the food made the lesson different, so it stands out in their minds. Many are really chuffed that you have gone to the effort of buying or making (or buying) them food.

Supplementary Material[Representativeness pdf](#)

Web Links

1. Introduction to Social Research

<http://www.sociology.org.uk/rprocess.pdf>

Notes and exercises covering various aspects of the general research process.

Sampling:

www.s-cool.co.uk

Revision notes (with some illustrations) on range of sampling techniques

http://www.wadsworth.com/psychology_d/templates/student_resources/workshops/resch_wrk.html

Notes and online student activities giving a comprehensive overview of a variety of sampling techniques, concepts and issues.

http://www.wadsworth.com/psychology_d/templates/student_resources/workshops/res_methd/surveys/surveys_01.html

The first part of these Notes (with online activities) deals with survey design (using questionnaires) while the second part deals with sampling techniques.

Reliability and Validity:

http://www.wadsworth.com/psychology_d/templates/student_resources/workshops/resch_wrk.html

Notes and online student activities giving a comprehensive overview of reliability and validity (quite advanced in places...).

