

# Chapter 2

## Sociological Investigation

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### I. The Basics of Sociological Investigation.

A. Sociological investigation begins with two key requirements:

1. Apply the sociological perspective.
2. Be curious and ask questions.

B. Sociology is a type of **science**, *a logical system that bases knowledge on direct, systematic observation*. Science is one form of *truth*. Scientific knowledge is based on **empirical evidence**, or *information we can verify with our senses*.

C. Scientific evidence sometimes contradicts common sense explanations of social behaviour.

### II. Three Ways to Do Sociology.

There are three ways to do research in sociology: *positivist sociology*, *interpretive sociology*, and *critical sociology*.

A. Positivist Sociology.

1. **Scientific sociology** is *the study of society based on systematic observation of social behaviour*. The scientific orientation to knowing, called *positivism*, assumes that an objective reality exists.
2. **Concepts** are *mental constructs that represent some part of the world, inevitably in a simplified form*.
3. **Variables** are *concepts whose value changes from case to case*.
4. **Measurement** is *the procedure for determining the value of a variable in a specific case*.
  - a. Statistical measures are frequently used to describe populations as a whole.
  - b. This requires that researchers **operationalize variables**, which means *specifying exactly what is to be measured before assigning a value to a variable*.
5. For a measurement to be useful, it must be reliable and valid.
  - a. **Reliability** refers to *consistency in measurement*.
  - b. **Validity** means *precision in measuring exactly what one intends to measure*.
6. Relationships among variables.

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- a. **Cause and effect** is a relationship in which change in one variable causes change in another.
    - i. The **independent variable** is the variable that causes the change.
    - ii. The **dependent variable** is the variable that changes.
  - b. Cause-and-effect relationships allow us to predict how one pattern of behaviour will produce another.
  - c. **Correlation** exists when two (or more) variables change together.
    - i. **Spurious correlation** means an apparent, although false, association between two (or more) variables caused by some other variable.
    - ii. Spurious correlations can be discovered through scientific **control**, the ability to neutralize the effect of one variable in order to assess relationships among other variables.

FIGURE 2-1 CORRELATION AND CAUSE: AN EXAMPLE (p.34)

- 8. Sociologists strive for **objectivity**, personal neutrality in conducting research, whenever possible, following Max Weber's model of value-free research.
  - a. One way to limit distortion caused by personal values is through **replication**, or repetition of research by others in order to assess its accuracy.
- 9. Some limitations of scientific sociology.
  - a. Human behaviour is too complex to allow sociologists to predict precisely any individual's actions.
  - b. Because humans respond to their surroundings, the mere presence of a researcher may affect the behaviour being studied.
  - c. Social patterns change; what is true in one time or place may not hold true in another.
  - d. Because sociologists are part of the social world they study, being value-free when conducting social research is difficult.

B. Interpretive Sociology.

- 1. Max Weber, who pioneered this framework, argued that the focus of sociology is interpretation. **Interpretive sociology** is the study of society that focuses on the meanings people attach to their social world.
- 2. The interpretive sociologist's job is not just to observe what people do but to share in their world of meaning and come to appreciate why they act as they do.

C. Critical Sociology.

- 1. Karl Marx, who founded critical sociology, rejected the idea that society exists as a "natural" system with a fixed order. **Critical sociology** is the study of society that focuses on the need for social change.
- 2. The point is not merely to study the world as it is, but to change it.

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- D. Research is affected by **gender**, *the personal traits and social positions that members of a society attach to being female and male*, in five ways:
1. Androcentricity, or approaching an issue from the male perspective only.
  2. Overgeneralizing, or using data drawn from studying only one sex to support conclusions about human behaviour in general.
  3. Gender blindness, or not considering the variable of gender at all.
  4. Double standards.
  5. Interference because a subject reacts to the sex of the researcher.
- E. Feminist researchers focus on the condition of women in society and believe their research should be grounded in the assumption that women generally experience subordination.

SEEING SOCIOLOGY IN EVERYDAY LIFE – Feminist Research: Critical and Interpretive Examples (p.39)

### III. Research Ethics

- A. Like all researchers, sociologists must be aware that research can harm as well as help subjects or communities. For this reason, the American Sociological Association (ASA) and Canada's Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) — the major professional associations of sociologists in North America—have established formal guidelines for conducting research (1997).

### IV. Methods of Sociological Research.

A **research method** is *a systematic plan for doing research*. Four commonly used research methods are:

- A. An **experiment** is *a research method for investigating cause and effect under highly controlled conditions*. Experimental research is explanatory, meaning that it asks not just what happens but why. Typically, researchers conduct experiments to test **hypotheses**, *a statement of a possible relationship between two (or more) variables*. Most experiments are conducted in laboratories and employ experimental and control groups.

THINKING ABOUT DIVERSITY: RACE, CLASS, AND GENDER BOX (p. 41)—  
Conducting Research with Aboriginal Peoples offers some tips about how outsiders can effectively and sensitively study Aboriginal communities.

1. The **Hawthorne effect** is *a change in a subject's behaviour caused by the awareness of being studied*.
  2. The Stanford County Prison study was an experiment conducted by Philip Zimbardo (1972) that supported the notion that the character of prison itself, and not the personalities of prisoners and guards, causes prison violence.
- B. A **survey** is *a research method in which subjects respond to a series of statements or questions in a questionnaire or an interview*. Survey research is usually descriptive rather than explanatory.

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1. Surveys are directed at **populations**, *the people who are the focus of research*. Usually we study a **sample**, *a part of a population that represents the whole*. Random sampling is commonly used to be sure that the sample is actually representative of the entire population.
  2. Surveys may involve **questionnaires**, *a series of written questions a researcher presents to subjects*. Questionnaires may be closed-ended or open-ended. Most surveys are self-administered and must be carefully pretested.
  3. Surveys may also take the form of **interviews**, *a series of questions administered in person by a researcher to respondents*.
  4. Sniderman used the data from an existing survey to study Anti-Semitism in Quebec. Sniderman's study provides an example of the use of random sampling, and the telephone administration of questionnaires.

**C. Participant observation** is a method by which researchers systematically observe people while joining in their routine activities. Participant observation research is descriptive and often exploratory. It is normally qualitative research, inquiry based on subjective impressions.

1. William Whyte (1943) utilized this approach to study social life in a poor neighborhood in Boston. His research, published in the book *Street Corner Society*, illustrates the value of using a key informant in field research.

THINKING CRITICALLY – Reading Tables: Aboriginal Employment and Income in Canada (Census 2001) (p.47)

**D. Using available data: Existing sources.**

1. Sometimes, sociologists analyze existing sources, data collection by others.

**E. Content Analysis:**

1. A type of secondary analysis that entails the counting or coding of the content of written, aural, or visual materials such as television and radio programming, novels, magazines, and advertisements.
2. The classic study by Znaniecki used content analysis in a study entitled "The Polish Peasant in Europe and North America. The study used diaries and letters by Polish immigrants to describe the adjustment process of new immigrants to America.
3. Anglophone grade 1 readers in Montreal schools were used in a content analysis study aimed at identifying gender roles and gender stereotypes.

**E. The interplay of theory and method.**

1. **Inductive logical thought** is reasoning that builds specific observations into general theory.
2. **Deductive logical thought** is reasoning that transforms general ideas into specific hypotheses suitable for scientific testing.
3. Most sociological research uses both types of logical thought.

**F. Technology and Research** – new information technology has changed the practice of research

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SOCIOLOGY AND THE MEDIA – From Card Punching to Cyberspace: Evolution in the Media of Research (p.49)

THINKING CRITICALLY—Can People Lie with Statistics? (p.50) The best way not to fall prey to statistical manipulation is to understand how people can mislead with statistics:

1. People select their data.
2. People interpret their data.
3. People use graphs to “spin” the truth.

**IV. Putting it all together: Ten steps in sociological investigation:**

- A. What is your topic?
- B. What have others already learned?
- C. What, exactly, are your questions?
- D. What will you need to carry out research?
- E. Are there ethical concerns?
- F. What method will you use?
- G. How will you record the data?
- H. What do the data tell you?
- I. What are your conclusions?
- J. How can you share what you've learned?

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**Chapter Objectives**

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| 1) Name the two requirements of sociological investigation.  | 7) Understand the three conditions that must be satisfied in order to prove causality.  |
| 2) Discuss the advantages of the scientific approach to knowing and examine how scientific evidence challenges our common sense. | 8) Examine the ideal of objectivity in sociological research and discuss ways that researchers can be as objective as possible. |
| 3) Define concepts, variables, and measurement.  | 9) Identify limitations of scientific sociology.  |
| 4) Distinguish between the concepts of reliability and validity.   | 10) Summarize the three methodical approaches in sociology: scientific, interpretive, and critical.                             |
| 5) Distinguish between independent and dependent variables.  | 11) Identify five ways in which gender-based issues may distort sociological research.  |
| 6) Understand the distinction between a cause-and-effect relationship and a correlational relationship.                          | 12) List ethical guidelines to follow in sociological research.   |
|  | 13) Understand the difference between deductive and inductive logic.  |

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14) Summarize the four major methods by which sociologists conduct research and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each method.

15) Understand the basic logic of experimental research.

16) Outline 10 steps in the process of carrying out sociological investigation.

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### **Essay Topics**

1) What are the advantages of choosing a scientific approach to understanding social reality? What are the disadvantages, if any?

2) The text discusses how sociologists operationalize the concept of social class. How would you operationalize such important concepts as intelligence, aggressiveness, masculinity or level of commitment to religion?

3) In what ways does interpretive sociology differ from scientific sociology?

4) What is the link between the three methodological approaches to sociology and the three theoretical approaches?

5) Suppose you are a sociologist studying alleged police brutality. Construct two arguments, one proposing that you ought to be as objective as possible in your work and the other suggesting that, while striving for accuracy, you should take a stand against any injustices that your research may uncover. Which position do you find more convincing? Why?

6) What are ways that gender can shape sociological research?

7) How are women's lives affected by a capitalist and patriarchal social order?

8) Explain the problems that may arise when a non-indigenous researcher studies Aboriginal communities.

9) What steps can researchers take to reduce the bias that results from the Hawthorne effect?

10) Do you think Zimbardo's Stanford County Prison experiment was ethical, or should he have been prevented from conducting this study? Defend your position.

11) Explain how you would develop a representative sample of students on your campus in order to conduct some survey research.

12) What are the advantages and disadvantages of both open-ended and closed-ended questions in survey research?

13) What are three steps in the ideal experiment?

14) Overall, which of the major sociological methods strikes you as being the most scientific? Why? Which is the least? Why?

15) Given the limitations associated with scientific sociology, "Is it possible to develop scientific sociological explanations of the social world?"

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### **Using the ASA Journal *Teaching Sociology* in Your Classroom**

Realistically, a small proportion of students who enroll in the introductory course will major in sociology. At the same time, one of the goals of any introductory sociology

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class is to help students to become “critical thinkers.” Norma J. Shepelak, Anita Curry-Jackson, and Vernon L. Moore have engineered an interesting format for teaching critical thinking skills in the college classroom (“Critical Thinking in Introductory Sociology Classes: A Program of Implementation and Evaluation,” *Teaching Sociology*, 20, January 1992: 18-27). The authors believe that the introductory sociology course should encourage students to “...respect divergent viewpoints, to review relevant evidence, and to value intellectual honesty. Because the student is a partner in the entire learning enterprise, he or she must have a ‘spirit’ and a willingness for acquiring, developing, and using critical reasoning skills.” Shepelak and her coauthors discuss how they conceptualize critical thinking for the sociology curriculum and also offer a strategy for assessing students’ developing abilities as “critical thinkers.”

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### Student Exercises

1. Here is an interesting site for you to check out. Go to the Web Center for Social Research Methods at <http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/> and click on “Selecting Statistics.” Click on the concept on each page that corresponds to the type of variable or statistics you are interested in for your research. We hope you find this site useful.
2. An even more intriguing website is found at [http://www.mcli.dist.maricopa.edu/proj/res\\_meth/](http://www.mcli.dist.maricopa.edu/proj/res_meth/). Click through the site to enter the “Lab” and have some fun learning about five different research methods used in the social and behavioural science.
3. Locate a copy of the book *More Damned Lies and Statistics* by Joel Best. The author of this book argues that all statistics are “social product” and that one cannot

understand a statistic unless something is known about the process through which it was constructed. Pick one of the book’s chapters —“Magic Numbers,” “Confusing Numbers,” “Scary Numbers” etc. and write a two page summary of the examples and insights found therein.

4. Learn about SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) at <http://www.ats.ucla.edu/STAT/spss/>.
5. Find a recent issue of *MacLean’s* magazine and locate a graph or figure in one of the articles that you can analyze using the information presented in the “Controversy and Debate” box entitled “Can People Lie with Statistics?” Make a copy of the figure or graph and bring it to class to discuss in a small group of students who have also brought in a graph or figure. Have a group member summarize for the class what you discovered.
6. Do a statistical analysis of your friends on Facebook. Take a sample of your friends and determine the mean and median for two of the following variables: number of albums, number of pictures, number of groups, number of wall posts on a given day, and number of friends whose Facebook profile picture is not of her or himself. How different are the mean and median from each other? Another idea is to do “content analysis” of the lists of favorite movies, books, and quotes for your friends on Facebook. Compare the patterns you find for male friends and for female friends. Or, compare friends who are freshmen to those who are seniors, or friends who have graduated from college and those who are still attending college.
7. The war in Iraq is obviously a very important social issue. In a group of three-to-five people, construct a five-question questionnaire using Likert-type response options (strongly-agree to strongly-disagree). Compare your group’s questionnaire to that of other groups in the

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class and discuss the relative strengths and weaknesses of each group's questionnaire.

8. What are the guidelines for doing research with human subjects at your college or university? Find a copy (perhaps on your college or university's website) of the formal Institutional Review Board's guidelines. Write a two-page paper summarizing the basic process involved in doing research with human subjects.
9. In his book *The Culture of Fear*, Barry Glasner raises some intriguing points, and provides very compelling statistics, that suggest Americans are afraid of the wrong things. Select a chapter in this book, perhaps the one on fear of flying or the one concerning the fear of black men, and write a two-page summary of the data and conclusions drawn by the author. Can you find other "existing sources" of information in support of the author's claims? Can you find evidence that contradicts his claims?
10. Go to the website of the *American Sociological Association* at <http://www.asanet.org> and click on the "Ethics" button in the left-hand column on the screen. Select one of the "General Principles" (A-E) and write a reflection on how you interpret what that principle means. In class, get together with other students who selected the same principle and compare your reflections. Report to the class what your group discovered.
11. Develop a ten-question survey questionnaire concerning some specific topic regarding family life (discipline practices used by parents, amount and type of contact with extended family members, gender roles in the home, etc.) Next, get together with three other students in the class and select one of the questionnaires to work on further. Spend one hour as a group refining the questionnaire. Submit this questionnaire along with the first questionnaire each of you did to your professor.

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### **Supplemental Lecture Material**

#### **The Gap Between the Rich and Poor**

It is often said that the gap between the rich and poor is widening – or "the poor get poorer and the rich get richer." Nonetheless, if income distribution is measured in terms of the proportion of income going to the lowest and highest quintiles, one detects minimal change over the period from 1951 to 1996. As shown in Table 11-1 of your text (p. 271), throughout that 45-year period, about 6 percent of *the total family income in Canada* went to those in the lowest quintile (i.e. the lowest 20 per cent of family income earners), while about 40 percent of income went to the top quintile of family income earners. In other words, despite the proliferation of social welfare programs in the interim, the basic distribution appears to have remained essentially unchanged.

If, on the other hand, one looks at *average* family income of the bottom 10 percent compared to that of the top 10 percent, it appears that the gap between rich and poor is indeed increasing. Note that the *measure* is different (average income instead of percent of income) and that we are looking at more *extreme ends* of the income distribution (top and bottom 10 percent instead of 20 percent). In addition, the Statistics Canada data considered here refer only to families with children under 18 years of age and the historical period is shorter (1973 to 1996, or 23 years). Nonetheless, one can see that average family income for the bottom tenth went from \$12,913 in 1973, up to \$15,819 in 1993, and down to \$13,522 in 1996 (in constant 1996 dollars). In other words, income at the lower end increased for 20 years and then slipped again. Among the top 10 percent, average family income (in constant 1996 dollars) rose from \$109,260 in 1973 to a high of \$145,356 in 1989 – before dipping to \$132,107 in 1992 and climbing back up to \$138,157 in 1996.



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In 1973, the richest tenth of families earned 8.5 times the income of the poorest: in 1996, it was 10.2 times. Despite increases and decreases in incomes at both ends of the scale over the 23-year period, it is clear that – when measured as outlined here – the gap between rich and poor was greater in 1996 than in 1973 (Philp, 1998).

### Source

Philp, Margaret, 1998. “Gap between Canada’s rich and poor increasing, report says.” *The Globe and Mail*, Oct. 22: A11.

### Discussion Questions

- 1) What is your impression of the fate of the poor relative to the rich?
- 2) On what grounds do you base your opinion?
- 3) What factors might contribute to the increasing gap between rich and poor?

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### Supplemental Lecture Material

#### The False God of Numbers

Many articles have been written about how statistics can be misused in order to accomplish various political goals. In other words, numbers may be employed to support oversimplified conclusions. For example, consider this statement:

“New air quality standards must be enacted because they will prevent precisely 15,000 deaths a year from respiration ailments.” Sounds simple, doesn’t it? Yet the problem is a thorny one. One might ask whether all those respiratory deaths are due only to air pollution. And what about the cost of new standards to industry? How will these affect the economy in the long run?

Here are a few other examples begging alternate explanations or further exploration:

U.S. quality of life is diminishing since, according to a 1996 study, the average one-way commute now takes 40 seconds longer than it did in 1986.

High divorce rates attribute to the breakdown of the family and poorer conditions for children.

Because corporations seek to save money by laying off full-time employees, the number of people working part-time or on a contract basis has increased.

All in all, these questions are complex and multidimensional. It is not likely that one answer alone is sufficient. Yet politicians and the media often make it sound simple and straightforward.

### Source

"Keeping Score: Big Social Changes Revive the False God of Numbers." *The New York Times* (August 17, 1997):1 and 4.

### Discussion Questions

- 1) What various elements of science are these statements violating?
- 2) Why would politicians be tempted to simplify statistics? How should social scientists handle statistics differently? In what way does their responsibility to society differ from that of politicians?
- 3) Name several alternative conclusions that might be drawn from the numbers quoted above.

**Activity:** Look through several newspapers for the statistics quoted there. Analyze them using scientific standards. Keep in mind such issues as the difference between cause and effect and correlation, sample size and

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population, and the way the study was conducted. Also consider interpretations of the data.

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### ***Supplemental Lecture Material*** **The Day America Told the Truth**

Public opinion polls have become increasingly common in recent decades. A 1991 best-selling book entitled *The Day America Told the Truth* is packed with examples of the tantalizing bits of information that can be uncovered using this research procedure. The authors, James Patterson and Peter Kim, both executives at the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency, found, among other things:

- “New Englanders lead the country in cheating on their spouses, spying on their neighbors, and giving to charity.”
- “Ninety-five percent of Americans believe in capital punishment; one in three would volunteer to pull the switch for the electric chair.”
- “Twenty-two percent of males and seven percent of females say they had lost their virginity by the age of thirteen.”
- “The profession Americans trust most is that of firefighter.”
- “Fifteen percent of adult Americans would rather watch television than have sex.”
- “One-third of surveyed married men and women confess to having had at least one affair.”
- “One in seven people reports being sexually abused in childhood.”

- “Sixty percent, six hundred percent more than official estimates, say they have been victims of a major crime.”
- “Twenty percent of the women in the survey report having been raped by their dates.”
- “More than seventy percent say they did not have even one hero.”

The survey was given to “....a random sample of 2,000 people, quizzed in 50 different locations over the period of a week. A shorter, mail-in version was sent to 3,500 people.” Respondents were guaranteed total anonymity and repeatedly urged to be completely honest.

The findings reported in *The Day America Told the Truth* are fascinating and could provide the impetus for more theoretically based research efforts by academic sociologists. These findings also suggest that the common suspicion that people answering questionnaires often fail to report unconventional attitudes and odd behaviour may not be true — one of Patterson and Kim’s respondents even admitted that he “...made out with two girls and a dog while immersed in hot wax and Jell-O.”

#### **Source**

Gelman, David. “The Moral Minority.” *Newsweek* (May 6, 1991): 63.

#### **Discussion Questions**

- 1) Are you always completely honest when you answer questionnaires?
- 2) How can researchers increase the chances that their respondents will not withhold or distort information?

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### ***Supplemental Lecture Material***

#### **Separating the Wheat and the Chaff: Spurious Correlations**

Researchers commonly encounter behaviours that seem to be related to one another in some way. In the case of the number of miles a car is driven and its gas consumption, there is an obvious and genuine connection. But simply because two behaviours share a significant statistical correlation does not always prove that there is a real relationship between the two variables.

With complex systems, it may be difficult to determine if a statistical correlation is genuine or completely coincidental and spurious. While the continental drift of the West Coast of North America may be highly correlated with the growth of the federal deficit in recent decades, it is unlikely that there is a meaningful connection between the two. Apparently, there is also a strong negative correlation between the number of PhDs and the number of mules in a state. As one commentator remarked, “Are the PhDs created when mules die?” Similarly, a positive correlation exists between ice cream sales and deaths by drowning. The same researcher humorously asked if “people buy more ice cream when they hear of a drowning?” Even when a connection exists, it may be trivial or misleading. In the end, correlation is worthless without interpretation, and that interpretation should be as well-grounded as possible. Consider the following examples:

- My favorite spurious correlation is between shoe size and the ability to solve mathematical equations (or any other task requiring schooling). The students usually express a lot of puzzlement over that one, until you point

out that children’s feet tend to grow as they go through school. (Wuensch, p. 3)

- One . . . [example of a spurious connection] is the strong positive correlation between places of worship in a locale and the number of bars in the same vicinity. The explanation is obvious: Religion drives people to drink. (Beins, p. 3)

In most research problems, however, the spurious nature of the correlation may not be immediately clear, requiring additional information and careful interpretation to establish the real nature of the connection between the variables. Indeed, important issues may be riding on correctly evaluating and understanding the correlation.

[A] story I sometimes use is based on a *Nova* television show from a few years back. Chinese medical researchers had found a correlation between incidence of human esophageal cancer and the incidence of tumors in chickens. Were the chickens the source of the human cancers? Were the humans giving the chickens their tumors? What they eventually found was that regional preferences for a fermented cabbage dish and minerals in the soil in which the cabbage was grown gave both the humans, who ate the cabbage, and the chickens, who ate the scraps, their tumors. (Street, p. 3)

#### **Source**

Staff. 1993. “Examples of Spuriousness,” in *Teaching Methods*. Fall (2).

#### **Discussion Questions**

- 1) What steps can individual researchers adopt to prevent spurious correlations? What can the community of researchers do?
- 2) What spurious correlations have you come across in your own thinking?
- 3) Can you think of spurious correlations that have had important effects upon history?

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**Supplemental Lecture Material:**  
**Rank, Age and Salary in Anthropology and Sociology**

Neil Guppy of the University of British Columbia analyzed basic data on rank, age, salary and sex of Canadian anthropologists and sociologists (for the academic year of 1985-86). The data come from the annual census of universities administered by Statistics Canada. There are a number of interesting patterns:

First: sociologists outnumber anthropologists 2.5 to 1 in universities.

Second: anthropologists hold proportionately more senior ranks (35 percent as compared to 28 percent at the full professor rank) than sociologists.

Third: whether this is due to the greater productivity, greater age, or greater “acceptance” of anthropology in the university (or some other explanation) is debatable and requires further research.

Fourth: the majority of both male and female sociologists and anthropologists are at or above the associate level.

Fifth: whereas women comprised 17 percent of all faculty in 1985-86, they comprised 24.1 percent and 21 percent of the positions in anthropology and sociology respectively.

Sixth: women are over-represented at the lower ranks, in both disciplines.

Seventh: women anthropologists and sociologists at the two most senior ranks (associate and full professor) tend to be younger than women in other disciplines. Thus, there is greater upward mobility for women in sociology and anthropology.

Eighth: relative to colleagues in other parts of the university, both anthropologists and sociologists are paid less in all comparisons across rank and sex (with one exception).

Ninth: the salaries of male professors are higher than those of female professors in the university at large and in sociology and anthropology in general. In 1985-86, women’s salaries in anthropology were 87 percent of the salaries of men. Women in sociology earned 85 percent of the salaries of men.

**Source**

Neil Guppy. “Rank, Age, and Salary in Anthropology and Sociology.” *Society*, vol. 13, no. 2, 1989, pp. 14-7.

**Discussion Questions**

- 1) Do the lower average salaries of sociology and anthropology faculty reflect the low stature of these disciplines in Canadian universities? What else might they reflect?
- 2) There is a preponderance of senior faculty in both disciplines. This implies less renewal in sociology and anthropology compared to other disciplines. Why is there less renewal amongst faculty in sociology and anthropology than in other disciplines?
- 3) What is the status of sociology in your university? Why?
- 4) What is the status of anthropology in your university? Why?

## **Title: Bevel Up (DVD 1)**

**{Major Topic/Theme}**

**Community Nursing, Outreach, Social Determinants of Health, S.T.D.n, Harm Reduction, Disease Prevention**

**{Corresponding Learning Objective/Sub Topic}**

### **EXPLORING SOCIOLOGY, Ravelli & Webber:**

- 1- (Chapter 9 – Sexualities) Outline sexual health issues - sexually transmitted infections, safe sex practices, sex education - as socially shaped and having social implications.
- 2- (chapter 15 – Aging, Disability, and Health Policy) Outline the defining features of Canada's health care system and review some of the challenges it faces today.

### **SOCIETY: THE BASICS, Macionis:**

- 1- (Chapter 2 – Culture) Why is it important to understand people's cultural differences?
- 2- (Chapter 14 – Education, Health, and Medicine) How are schooling and health linked to social inequality in Canada?

### **SOCIOLOGY, Macionis & Gerber:**

- 1- (Chapter 21 – Health and Medicine) Understand how and why health is a social issue and not just a matter of biology.
- 2- (Chapter 21 – Health and Medicine) Evaluate the importance of race, social class, and gender to patterns of health.

**Rating:** NA

**Scene Location:** Excerpts from the original 45 minute version directed by Nettie Wild for the National Film Board of Canada, 2007.

**Web Link(s):** [www.streethealth.ca](http://www.streethealth.ca) (Street Health)

[www.bccdc.ca/SexualHealth/Programs/StreetOutreachNurseProgram/SNHHistory.htm](http://www.bccdc.ca/SexualHealth/Programs/StreetOutreachNurseProgram/SNHHistory.htm) (BC Center for Disease Control)

**Running Time:** 8:38

**Synopsis of the Film:** This film follows a group of innovative health care providers as they walk the viewer through a day in the life of a Vancouver Street Nurse. The film provides many examples of the work done by these nurses, the environment that they work in, the people they work with, and the roles that they play in the community of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. The nurses profiled discuss their mandate to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS and the harm reduction strategies used in providing nursing to marginalized urban populations. Filmmaker Nettie Wild uses this innovative team to give the viewer a window into the health problems experienced by the street population as well as the changing nature of providing universal health care in Canada.

**Synopsis of the Clip:** In this clip, we see two nursing interventions taking place on the streets of downtown Vancouver. The clip provides an introduction to some of the Street Nurses team and also the patients and environments that they interact with on a daily basis. In this clip, we see the nursing team discuss the many struggles and rewards of working within this innovative health care approach. In both

interventions highlighted in this clip, the Street Nurses successfully administer blood tests, establish a trusting rapport with their patients and provide pertinent medical information while attempting to establish a means of future contact with the patient. The nurses profiled in this clip discuss the trials and tribulation of their job and the health advantages of giving nurses direct access to a highly marginalized population.

**Teaching Notes:** This clip is a great tool for demonstrating innovation in health care provision and social services. It could easily provide a backdrop for a debate about the merits of outreach and harm reduction programs, such as the Street Nurses, versus the costs. It can also be used to introduce students to outreach services in general and the functions that they serve in the wider community. It might be interesting to have students research and profile an outreach service that is operating in their community.

This clip can also serve as an excellent introduction to the social determinants of health, getting students to consider, and maybe even provide a list of, the many social and environmental factors that influence individual health. This clip also examines the role of nursing, preventative medicine and the importance of health care access to the underclass, especially those “at risk” and marginalized populations, such survival sex workers and the homeless.

This clip also provides information on the protocol and legal requirements for patients who are discovered to be HIV positive. This very sensitive but important feature of the job is demonstrated in a very engaging conversation between a Street Nurse and a long-term drug user in a Vancouver alley. In this sequence, we see the true merit and importance of reaching out to people who have slipped through the cracks of the urban social structure.

**Discussion Questions** (*short answer/essay questions*):

- 1- What are the primary objectives of Vancouver’s Street Nurses? Are these Street Nurses an important feature of the public health system in an urban setting? Explain and justify your answer.
- 2- What is the key to a successful encounter between a nurse and a patient on the street?
- 3- What are the major challenges of being a health care provider in an environment such as this? How do the Vancouver Street Nurses deal with these challenges?
- 4- What is a social stigma? How does a social stigma affect an individual’s self-concept? How does a person’s self-concept affect their health status?
- 5- What are the social determinants of health? List 5 social factors that affect a person’s health. What are the major hurdles to staying healthy while living on the streets?
- 6- What is Harm Reduction and why is it a type preventative medicine? How are these nurses involved in a Harm Reduction initiative?

## **Title: Marx Reloaded 1: Class Struggle and Exploitation (DVD 2)**

### **{Major Topic/Theme}**

**Classical Theory, Capitalism, Class System, Class Conflict, Class Struggle, Communism**

### **{Corresponding Learning Objective}**

#### **EXPLORING SOCIOLOGY, Ravelli & Webber:**

- 1- (Chapter 1 – Understand the Sociological Imagination) Understand the historical development of Sociology.
- 2- (Chapter 2 – Classical Social Theories) Describe the early contributions of social philosophers and their relevance to classical sociological theory.
- 3- (Chapter 2 – Classical Social Theories) Review and critique conflict theory and the contributions of its founding theorists.

#### **SOCIETY: THE BASICS, Macionis:**

- 1- (Chapter 8 – Social Stratification) What is social stratification?
- 2- (Chapter 8 – Social Stratification) Why does social inequality exist?

#### **SOCIOLOGY, Macionis & Gerber:**

- 1- (Chapter 10 – Social Stratification) Evaluate ideology that is used to support social inequality.
- 2- (Chapter 16 – Economy and Work) Evaluate both capitalism and socialism in terms of productivity, equality, and individual freedom.
- 3- (Chapter 16 – Economy and Work) Understand the three economic revolutions that have reshaped human societies.

**Rating:** NA

**Scene Location:** Excerpt from the original 52 minute version directed by Jason Barker for Film Noir, 2011.

**Web Link(s):** [www.marxreloaded.com](http://www.marxreloaded.com) (Marx Reloaded)

**Running Time:** 12:49

**Synopsis of the Film:** Can the ideas and philosophy of Karl Marx's be used to offer new solutions to the mounting social problems caused by capitalism. Director Jason Barker states, "The film isn't about Marxism; it's about exploring whether Marx's ideas can have any sort of relevance to the world we live in today. There is a difference." With that being said, Marx Reloaded is a thoughtful and inspiring reexamination of capitalist ideology and the spirit of communist thinking that is reestablishing itself as a born again movement, ready to stand watch over the exploits of capitalism. The film uses the American Banking crisis and the global recession as a point of departure for a new discussion on the ideas of Marx and merits of communist thinking. The film asks can Marx's ideas offer new solutions to modern problems of class exploitation, wealth and power. Using an array of provocative thinkers on both sides who add detail and banter to this discussion. Marx Reloaded brings into question the structure of capitalism, and examines the claim that capitalism requires crisis in order to evolve and function. What you have is a very engaging discussion of the merits of Marx in a postmodern economy; do the old ideas still tread water?

**Synopsis of the Clip:** The work of Karl Marx has long been studied and valued in sociology, but this clip looks into the practical value of these teaching for a postmodern society? In this clip, we meet a number of scholars who elaborate on how the work of Karl Marx might be applied to help remedy the problems of modern capitalism such as poverty, exploitation and environmental destruction. This clip examines the classic Marxist dichotomy of worker vs. owner, bourgeois vs. proletariat, or what Marx's called class struggle. The clip takes a look at modern forms class struggle and how the classic categories of class are no longer relevant, but none the less, we see that class struggle continues to exist in capitalism economies. It looks at the profit motive; a concept suggests is Marx written into the very design of capitalism, fuelling a never ending series of class struggles and class conflict.

**Teaching Notes** (*how does the clip relate/explain/reinforce the learning objective?*): Combining interesting animated segments and a host of passionate intellectuals, the film is an interesting way of teaching classic social theory. In particular, this film clip focuses on class struggle and exploitation and the basic philosophy of Karl Marx.

One way to approach this is to have students consider TV families. In fact they might be asked to create a list of TV families they recall. A staple of American mainstream television programming throughout history, the TV family has come to both, reflect and define family values and popular culture in the West. We have seen them presented in all shapes and sizes, race and ethnicities, and has represented a social class position and accompanying class values. The subsequent development of characters, plotlines and themes will have writ these characters to embody the core values, norms and rituals of their respective social class position. With all this in mind, ask students to select a TV family, past of present and place them in the social class hierarchy. Ask them to justify their categorization of this family by was of a few class based social criteria such as occupation of parents to the type of neighborhood they live in. Have them deconstruct the content of one episode and write a short paper demonstrating whether or not their TV families embodies the values of the class position that the students has placed them in? Given television's reputation with representation, it might also be interesting to have them elaborate on the concept of stereotypical representation and how these might be used to perpetuate class based stereotypes.

You could have students play Star Power the social simulation game, where in the course of an hour, through an engaging and enjoyable process of trading and accumulation, the students are divided into a three class system where upward mobility grows increasingly more very difficult as the game progresses. The game is an excellent way to introduce the students to ideas such as class consciousness and class struggle, as students participate in this first hand. Finally, have student reflect on the game and the role that they played within the game. You could have them discuss concepts such as class consciousness, class values, class conflict, wealth, income, private property, status, prestige, and social power.

Have students research labor struggles in the media. What are the issues at hand and how are they being covered by the media? Ask students to identify if they see these examples as fitting into Marx's concept of class conflict? In a more specific way, you could have students examine the modern labor disputes of professional athletes. Ask students to use Marxist ideas of class struggle and class conflict to explain these labor disputes. Ask them to highlight the main factors in dispute and relate these specifics to Marxist analysis of class and class conflict. Expanding on this idea, you could have students do some research on labor unions of the present. Have them identify examples of powerful labor unions and the



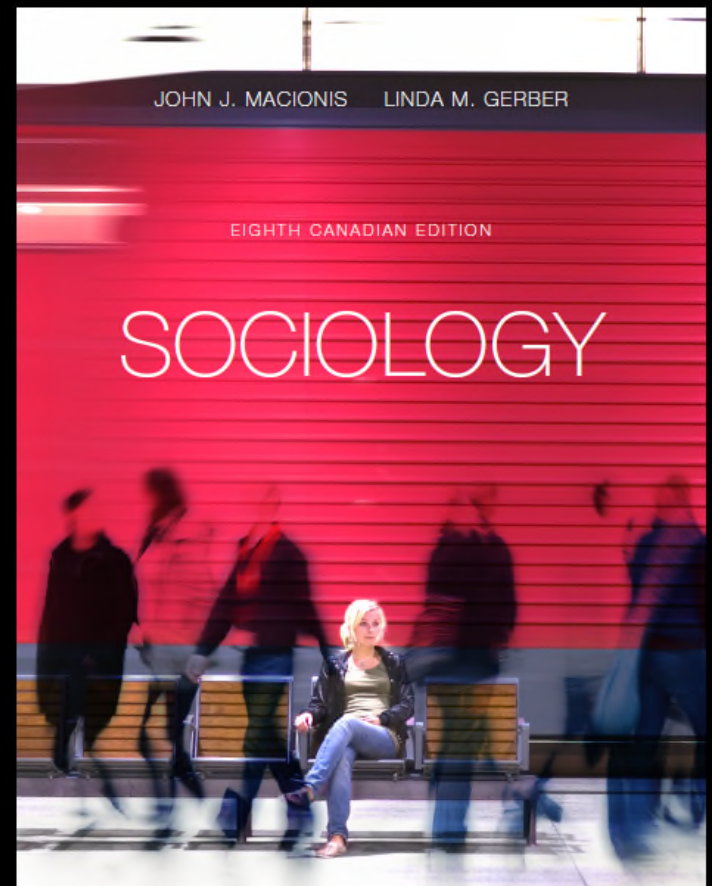
role they play in class struggle. Building on this, the clip from the film ***Coca Cola Case*** (also included in this video series), examines the diminishing role and strategic extermination of labor unions in Columbia. More specifically, this clip examines accusations that multinational corporations such as Coca Cola are indirectly involved in the ousting of labor unions in Columbia. The combination of these two clips can create a macro view of the details of Marx's concept of class struggle and the realities of the capitalist system.

**Discussion Questions** (*short answer/essay questions*):

1. Who was Karl Marx and what kind of ideas did he have about the world he was living in?
2. What is capitalism and how does it function as an economic system?
3. What were Marx's thoughts on capitalism, and how did he describe class structure in capitalist's societies?
4. In your own words, explain the profit motive that Marx's suggests is built into the very design of capitalism. Explain how the profit motive is linked to exploitation of both workers and nature?
5. How does exploitation lead to class conflict? Can we find present day examples of this notion of class conflict?
6. According to Marx, who are the bourgeoisie and what role do they play in perpetuating this notion of class struggle? Is there a "new" bourgeoisie that has emerged in modern society? How does this group maintain their power in society?
7. Who is Michael Hart and what are his ideas about the changing form of capitalism in modern society? How has exploitation become a global affair?
8. What is meant by the classic logic of worker exploitation? How is a call center described as a contemporary example of a classical form of capitalist exploitation of the worker?
9. What is ideology? Why are people re-examining the merits of communist ideology?
10. What was the Communist Manifesto and what kind of influence has it had on society? What influence might it still have as a critique of capitalism?
11. What are some of the key critiques of Marxist thinking in modern society? Why is it important to have a critical perspective?
12. What can we still learn from the work of Karl Marx?

# Sociological Investigation

## Chapter 2



# Basics of Sociological Investigation

1. Apply the sociological perspective
2. Be curious and ask questions

In order to answer our questions, there are many forms of “truth”:

- Belief or faith
- Expert testimony
- Simple agreement
- Science

# Science as One Form of Truth

- Logical system that bases knowledge on direct systematic observation
  - Stands apart from faith, belief, or conventional wisdom
- Rests on empirical evidence: information we can verify with our senses

# Common Sense vs. Scientific Evidence

- “Poor people are far more likely than rich people to break the law”
- “Canada is a middle-class society in which people are more or less equal”
- “Poor people don’t want to work”
- “Differences in the behavior of females and males are just ‘human nature’ ”
- “People change as they grow old, losing many interests as they focus on their health”
- “Most people marry because they are in love”

# Three Ways to Do Sociology

1. Scientific sociology:  
Based on systematic observation of social behaviour on the basis of empirical evidence

Also:

2. Interpretive sociology
3. Critical sociology

# Scientific Sociology

- **Concept:** a mental construct that represents some part of the world in a simplified form
- **Variable:** a concept whose values change from case to case
- **Measurement:** a procedure for determining the value of a variable in a specific case

# Scientific Sociology

- **Defining Concepts,** Operationalizing a variable: Specifying what one intends to measure in assigning a value to a variable
- **Reliability:** consistency in measurement
- **Validity:** actually measuring exactly what one intends to measure



# Relationships Among Variables

- **Cause and effect**
  - A relationship in which change in one variable causes change in another
- **Types of variables**
  - ***Independent***: the variable that causes the change
  - ***Dependent***: the variable that changes (its value *depends* upon the independent variable)

# Relationships Among Variables

- **Correlation**

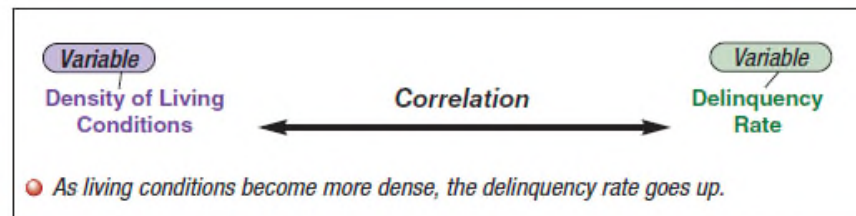
- A relationship in which two or more variables change together

- **Spurious Correlation**

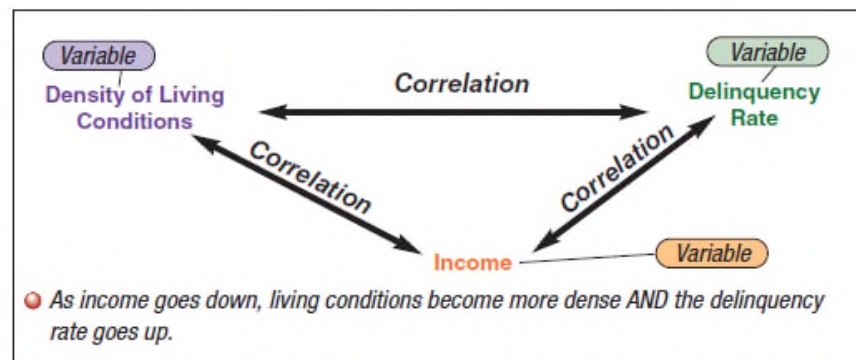
- An apparent but false relationship between two (or more) variables caused by some other variable
- To expose it use **control**, holding constant all variables except one in order to see clearly the effect of that variable

# Correlation Does Not Mean Causation

- Conditions for cause and effect to be considered
  - Existence of a correlation
  - The independent variable precedes the dependent variable in time
  - No evidence suggests that a third variable is responsible for a spurious correlation between the two original variables



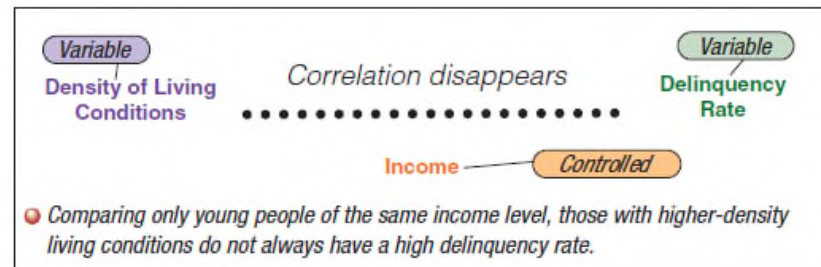
(a) If two variables increase and decrease together, they display correlation.



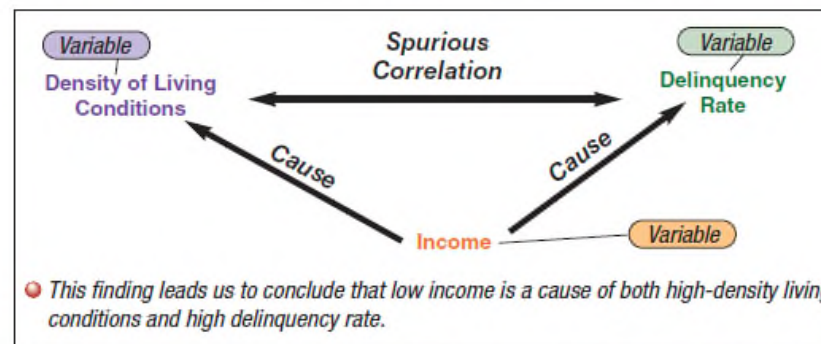
(b) Here we consider the effect of a third variable: income. Low income may cause *both* high-density living conditions *and* a high delinquency rate.

### FIGURE 2-1 Correlation and Cause: An Example

Correlation is not the same as cause. Here's why.



- (c) When we control for income—that is, examine only young people of the same income level—we find that density of living conditions and delinquency rate no longer increase and decrease together.



- (d) Density of living conditions and delinquency rate are correlated, but their correlation is *spurious* because neither one causes the other.

FIGURE 2-1 Correlation and Cause: An Example

Correlation is not the same as cause. Here's why.

# The Ideal of Objectivity

- Personal neutrality in conducting research
- Max Weber said sociologists select topics that are *value-relevant*
  - But cautioned them to be *value-free* in their investigations
  - **Replication**, repetition by other researchers, can help science be self-correcting

# Some Limitations of Scientific Sociology

- Human behavior is too complex to predict precisely any individual's actions
- The mere presence of the researcher might affect the behavior being studied
- Social patterns change
- Sociologists are part of the world they study, making value-free research difficult

# Interpretive Sociology

- The study of society that focuses on the meanings people attach to their social world:
  - Sees reality as being constructed by people themselves in the course of their everyday lives
  - Relies on qualitative data



# Critical Sociology

- The study of society that focuses on inequality and the need for change:
  - Researchers should be social activists in pursuit of desirable change
  - Works for equality
  - Sociology as Politics:
    - Critical sociologists say that all research is political or biased—either it calls for change or it does not

## Summing Up

### Three Research Orientations in Sociology

	Scientific	Interpretive	Critical
What is reality?	Society is an orderly system. There is an objective reality "out there."	Society is ongoing interaction. People construct reality as they attach meanings to their behaviour.	Society is patterns of inequality. Reality is that some categories of people dominate others.
How do we conduct research?	Researcher gathers empirical, ideally quantitative, data. Researcher tries to be a neutral observer.	Researcher develops a qualitative account of the subjective sense people make of their world. Researcher is a participant.	Research is a strategy to bring about desired social change. Researcher is an activist.
What is the corresponding theoretical approach?	Structural-functional approach	Symbolic-interaction approach	Social-conflict approach

# Methods and Theory

- **Scientific sociology** corresponds to the **structural-functional** approach
- **Interpretive sociology** is related to the **symbolic-interaction** approach
- **Critical sociology** is linked to the **social-conflict** approach

# Gender and Research

- **Androcentricity and Gynocentricity:** Approaching the topic from a male-only or female-only perspective
- **Overgeneralizing:** Using data collected from one sex and applying the findings to both sexes

# Gender and Research

- **Gender blindness:** The failure to consider the impact of gender at all
- **Double standards:** Using different standards to judge males and females
- **Interference:** a subject under study reacts to the sex of the researcher

# Women as Methodologists

Feminist researchers claim:

- Research should focus on women
- Research should be grounded in women's experience of subordination

Among women founders of social science:

- Harriet Martineau
- Florence Nightingale

# Research Ethics

- Must strive to be technically competent & fair-minded
- Must disclose findings in full without omitting significant data & be willing to share their data
- Must protect the safety, rights, and privacy of subjects

# Research Ethics

- Must obtain *informed consent*; subjects are aware of risks and responsibilities and agree
- Must disclose all sources of funding & avoid conflicts of interest
- Must demonstrate cultural sensitivity



# Methods of Sociological Research

- A research method is a systematic plan for doing research:
  - Experiments
  - Surveys
  - Participant observation
  - Use of existing data
- None is better or worse than any other; methods are chosen according to who we wish to study and what we wish to learn

# Testing a Hypothesis: The Experiment

Investigating cause and effect under highly controlled conditions, using an **hypothesis**, an unverified statement of a relationship between variables

Steps:

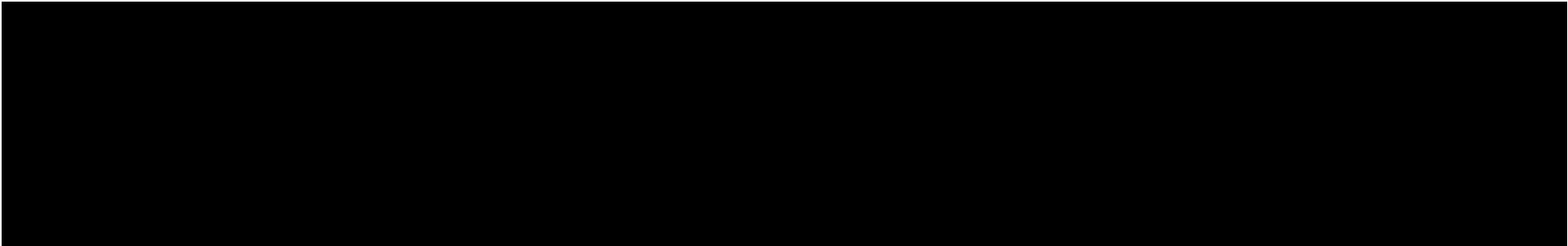
1. Specify independent and dependent variables
2. Measure dependent variable
3. Expose dependent variable to independent
4. Measure dependent variable to determine if predicted change occurred

# Control

- To be certain that the change in the dependent variable was due to the exposure to the independent variable, the researcher must keep constant other factors that might intrude
- One method is to break group into experimental and control groups
  - Experimental group is exposed to independent variable
  - Control group is exposed to a placebo
- **Hawthorne effect:** a change in behaviour caused by awareness of being studied

# Asking Questions: Survey Research

- Subjects respond to a series of statements in a questionnaire or interview to collect data
- **Population:** the focus of the research
- **Sample:** a part of the population that represents the whole
- **Random sampling:** every person has an equal chance of being in the sample
- **Questionnaire:** a series of written/read (**interview**) questions:
  - closed-ended (fixed response) or
  - open-ended (allowing free response)



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**survey** a research method in which subjects respond to a series of statements or questions in a questionnaire or an interview

**questionnaire** a series of written questions a researcher presents to subjects

**interview** a series of questions a researcher asks respondents in person

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# In the Field: Participant Observation

- A research method in which investigators systematically observe people while joining them in their routine activities
- Most of this research is exploratory and descriptive
- Strives to get an insider's view
- Is flexible, and this allows investigators to explore the unfamiliar and adapt to the unexpected

# Using Available Data: Secondary and Content Analysis

- **Secondary and Historical Analysis:** reanalyzing data collected by others
  - e.g., census data
- **Content Analysis:** counting content of materials
  - e.g., letters and textbooks

## Summing Up

### Four Research Methods

	Experiment	Survey	Participant Observation	Secondary Analysis
<b>Application</b>	For explanatory research that specifies relationships between variables Generates quantitative data	For gathering information about issues that cannot be directly observed, such as attitudes and values Useful for descriptive and explanatory research Generates quantitative or qualitative data	For exploratory and descriptive study of people in a "natural" setting Generates qualitative data	For exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory research whenever suitable data are available
<b>Advantages</b>	Provides the greatest opportunity to specify cause-and-effect relationships Replication of research is relatively easy	Sampling, using questionnaires, allows surveys of large populations Interviews provide detailed responses	Allows study of "natural" behaviour Usually inexpensive	Saves time and expense of data collection Makes historical research possible
<b>Limitations</b>	Laboratory settings have an artificial quality Unless the research environment is carefully controlled, results may be biased	Questionnaires must be carefully prepared and may yield a low return rate Interviews are expensive and time-consuming	Time-consuming Replication of research is difficult Researcher must balance roles of participant and observer	Researcher has no control over possible biases in data Data may only partially fit current research needs



# Technology and Research

- **Computers:** give sociologists remarkable technical ability
- **Internet:** allows unprecedented levels of communication
- These advances facilitate research and will transform sociological investigation throughout the current century

# The Interplay of Theory and Method

- Inductive logical thought
  - Reasoning that transforms specific observations into general theory
  - Induction “increases” from specific to general
- Deductive logical thought
  - Reasoning that transforms general theory into specific hypotheses suitable for testing
  - Deduction “decreases” from general to specific

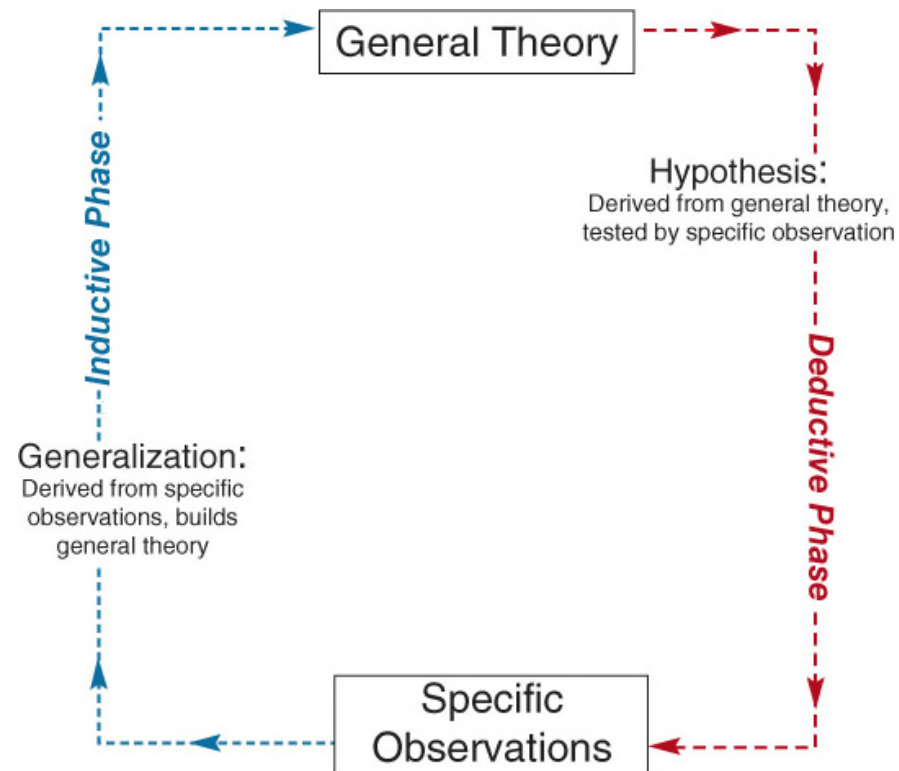


FIGURE 2-2 **Deductive and Inductive Logical Thought**

Sociologists link theory and method through both inductive and deductive logic.

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# Putting It All Together: Ten Steps in Sociological Investigation

1. Select and define topic
2. Review the literature
3. Develop key questions to ask
4. Assess requirements for study
5. Consider ethical issues

# Putting It All Together: Ten Steps in Sociological Investigation

6. Select a research methodology
7. Collect the data
8. Interpret the findings
9. State conclusions
10. Publish the findings

# Can People Lie With Statistics?

- People select their data
  - Data may not be the whole truth
- People interpret their data
  - As if numbers can only mean one thing
- People use graphs to “spin” the truth
  - Manipulating timeframes on graphs
  - Using scale to inflate or deflate a trend