

Title**What's Your Methodology?****Time**

No time limit to complete questionnaire. 30+ minutes to debrief and explain different categories of answers.

Preparation

None

Materials

One copy of questionnaire for each student

Prior Knowledge

Students will need to have a basic idea about different **ideal type** sociological methodologies. If applicable, you could also note that each of the four sections corresponds to different "questions of existence":

1. **Ontology** (Society is like:)
2. **Epistemology** (How can society best be studied?)
3. **Methodology** (How can you collect valid data to support your beliefs about what society is like?)
4. **Methods** (What research methods are best able to produce the valid data you need to support your beliefs?)

Objective

This is a simple questionnaire designed to **introduce** the idea of sociological methodologies. It will also help students doing project work to clarify their ideas about the basic type of methodology they are using in their research. In each section of the questionnaire:

Question A corresponds to **positivism**

Question B corresponds to **realism**

Question C corresponds to **interpretivism**

Question B corresponds to **feminism**.

It is unlikely (but possible - especially in the case of feminism) that student answers will correspond exactly to each basic type. This, however, could lead into a discussion about "**real world**" **research methodologies**, **methodological pluralism** and so forth.

Sociological Methodologies

- The following questionnaire is designed to test how you, as an individual social researcher, see the nature of the social world.
- There are four questions to consider. For each question, please put a tick next to the description (a, b, c or d) that is the closest to your beliefs.

1. Society is like:

a. A force that tries to control the way we behave. This is similar to forces that control our behaviour in the natural (physical) world (such as gravity, for example). This force is created by the behaviour of people in large social groups (institutions such as the family, government, work and so forth) and it operates on our behaviour whether we like it or not. We are powerless to change the forces that act on us in the social world (just as, for example, we cannot escape the force of gravity).

b. A force that tries to control the way we behave by creating rules of behaviour that people are expected to follow. This is similar to forces that control our behaviour in the natural (physical) world (such as gravity, for example). This force is created by the actions (intended and unintended) of very powerful social groups (such as social classes). The forces that act on us can be changed by people working consciously together to change society.

c. A force that tries to control the way we behave. This force is created by people pretending to themselves and others that rules of social behaviour are real and that we have no choice but to obey them. In this sense, people behave “as if” society is a force.

d. A force that tries to control the way we behave by creating rules of behaviour we are expected to follow. This force is created by the actions (intended and unintended) of men, to the detriment of women.

2. How can society best be studied?

a. By establishing facts, (based on objective testing and measuring of social behaviour) about people's behaviour. The objective is to discover the reasons for behaviour based on an understanding of the social forces that shape such behaviour. At any one time there can only be one version of social reality.

b. By establishing facts, (based on objective testing and measuring of social behaviour) about how powerful groups create and shape society to reflect their interests. There are many possible versions of social reality at any given time, but only one version is dominant (widely-believed).

c. By personally experiencing the way individuals and groups construct the social world on a day-to-day basis. The facts we can establish about people's behaviour (based on our subjective experiences) simply reflect what people, at any given moment, believe them to be. There are many possible versions of reality, since reality is simply whatever people choose to believe it to be.

d. By studying how men create and shape society. This can be done by collecting both factual data (through testing and measurement) and by describing the way people (especially women) see and experience the social world.

3. How can you collect valid data to support your beliefs about what society is like?

a. By quantifying human behaviour to show how our membership of large social groups determines the way we behave.

b. By using both quantitative and qualitative methods of research to show how the powerful in society construct reality in their interests.

c. By describing how people see and construct the reality of everyday life. Qualitative data is favoured because the researcher must try to experience personally the social world from the viewpoint of the participants in that world.

d. By describing how men and women construct the reality of their everyday lives. You can quantify people's views and experiences (to produce factual evidence about their lives) but it is probably more important to collect qualitative data that illustrates the quality of people's experiences in the social world.

4. What research methods are best able to produce the valid data you need to support your beliefs?

a. Any method that collects reliable, objective (factual) data about the social world. In the main, any method that allows the collection of quantitative data can be used and any method that relies on the subjective feelings of researcher and researched should be avoided. The emphasis is on the collection of factual data to test hypotheses.

b. Any method that can be used to collect reliable data. The emphasis is on the collection of factual data to test hypotheses. This data can be quantitative or qualitative, although the former tends to be favoured over the latter.

c. Any method that allows the researcher to both see and understand the social world from the viewpoint of the respondent. In the main, this will involve the use of methods that produce qualitative data.

d. Any method that allows the researcher to understand the various ways that men oppress women in society. Factual (qualitative) data can be used as well as more subjective, qualitative, data.