

Sociology can and should be seen as a science

[Sociology](#)



Now sociology is known as a social science, along with subjects like politics and economics. The subjects which are known as sciences are, subjects like chemistry and biology, which involves explanations and reason. Positivists use quantitative data and methods such as questionnaires in order to gain trends, patterns and correlation. Science is about getting the right answers every time the experiment is done. In science if you get the wrong answer then you have done the experiment wrong, or you have the right answer but it will be dismissed as scientists have proven the correct answer is different to yours.

In sociology it is difficult to get a wrong or right answer, as the experiment cannot often be redone as the variables can not be controlled, whereas laboratory experiments can be redone as many times as it's needed.

Durkheim argued that social facts, customs, beliefs systems and social institutions should be considered things. Durkheim also claimed to have discovered cause and effect relationships between social facts. Durkheim also found correlations between suicide rates and social facts.

Comte, who invented the term sociology, argued that sociology should be based on the methodology of the natural sciences. This would result in a positive science of society, which would reveal the invariable laws. Popper believes in the inductive approach where he believes that theories should come from evidence and data. The deductive approach is the opposite where the theory is made up first and then data is used to test that theory. Falsification is the process where scientists do their best to disprove theories.

But he also says that in some cases they might try to disprove them rather than prove them. Realists argue that events in both the social and natural worlds are produced by underlying structures and mechanisms. Sayer (1992) found out open and closed systems, were in open systems like society all variables cannot be controlled and in closed systems the variables can be controlled. Sayer also says that human behaviour operates within structures. Realists say there are many similarities between sociology and other sciences.

They say this because they both involve underlying structures and processes. These theories made by positivists cannot be tested as they are not in a positivistic sense testable. Feminists claim that sociology should be about interpretive understandings using in-depth methods. Although some feminists claim that research should use all available methods to try and avoid sexist attitudes and assumptions. Interpretivists use quantitative data and methods such as observation and interviews. Using these types of methods you are never going to get the same results as you would in a lab experiments.

The interpretive approach is that in natural science experiments can be carried out to test ideas. Using observation can mean that the people being studied could act differently if they know they are being observed. Human behaviour cannot be predicted like the behaviour of chemicals. EG Everybody faced with the same circumstances are going to do the same thing. Giddens (1974) mainly agrees with this but mainly the fact that humans have their own thoughts and feelings unlike chemicals which will always do the same thing.

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He says sociology is not a science as people are reflexive human beings. The Postmodernist approach refers to a belief that we have moved into a period in which the dominance of rational, scientific thought and the significance of experts is being challenged. Lyotard (1984) say that all knowledge is relative and that absolute truth is not attainable. Also that science and sociology are simply metanarratives and the only basis on which to choose between them is a personal preference.