

Principles and concepts in psychology essay

[Technology](#), [Development](#)



Introduction

Social sciences, just like the rest of the sciences have developed its own techniques and mode of conducting research and investigation. Common of these social sciences field is sociology and cultural anthropology. The techniques developed for these sciences seem to exhibit so much similarity in the manner in which they are carried out but it has been found out that they differ as per the intent for which they are used . These differences in intent have always been associated with the philosophical reasons behind any such an investigation depends on the degree or depth to which such a research is done. This paper looks to analyze the research methods developed in these two diverse fields and the philosophical reasons behind such techniques.

Sociology

Sociology is the scientific study of the society based on methodical examination of social behavior, that is, the study of behavior and the relation between humans in their natural social setting . Since this is the study of humans and their social setting, sociology has been further subdivided into many constituent fields such as political, economic, economic and religious sociology. it is upon sociologist to try and determine, explain and predict human behavior and there is no way of doing so without thorough investigation. Several techniques have been developed by sociologist to do so.

One of the techniques developed for study under sociology is Participant Observation. According to Bulmer (1985), this is a research method in which

the researcher analytically observes the aspects and routine activities of the society while at the same time actively taking part in them. Sociologists refer to this process as case-study and it is used when performing an exploratory research. It has been hailed as a process that works well in a situation where the society or social patterns of a particular group are not well defined.

Marvasti (2004), assert that Participant observation is particularly good in doing maiden studies since the observer and the participant is the same.

While this double role may prove to be a source of conflict during the analysis, sociologists have argued that keeping a daily log of the experiences of the participant will provide an accurate detail and information required leading to a better conclusion. Thus it will be like getting the information from the subjects directly .

The second research method used in sociology is testing a Hypothesis, commonly referred to as The Experiment. This method seeks to understand the underlying principle between cause-and-effect. The sociologists who developed this technique assert that to get the correct result, then these experiments should be done under extremely controlled conditions . Marvasti (2004), agrees with Bulmer and proceeds to explain that experiments can be conducted in four main steps. The first step is to determine the independent and the dependent variables of the experiment. Once the dependent variable has been determined, it is measured or evaluated in a comparable manner. Then the dependent variable is exposed to the independent variable so that any changes on the dependent variable will be attributed to the independent variable. Finally, the resulting dependent variable is compared to the initial and the difference determined.

The philosophical reason behind undertaking an experiment is normally to prove a premise or a theory. For example, an experiment was done in a Stanford Prison to test the theory that it was the prison environment itself and not the individual inmates or guards who are to blame for the violence in the prison system . This experiment featured in the film ' The Experiment'.

Cultural Anthropology

On the other hand, Cultural Anthropology is a branch of anthropology that deals with the study of the origin, practices and variations in the diverse cultures of human beings and its impacts on the political and economic aspects on the people . The term culture has been used describe the beliefs, art, customs, laws and morals shared by a community or a nation. It was ' civilization' that later tried to do away cultural values of many societies.

Cultural anthropology emerged as a form of study that looks to explain the cultures that did not accept civilization and appeared primitive.

Several research techniques have emerged in understanding and exploring cultural anthropology. One of the main techniques that have emerged is Participant Observation, just as the one in sociology. This method involves gaining a close relation with the community, group, religion or occupation under study so as to understand their practices . Participant Observation requires that the subjects of the study live in their natural environment and that the observer takes a considerable amount of time to undertake the study. Cultural anthropologists refer to this kind of study as fieldwork.

The other technique used by Cultural Anthropologists is Survey Research. A survey is a study in which subject are to respond to a series of questions or statements in a questionnaire or interview. They are used to answer

descriptive question or explains cultural models that not easy to decipher
There are two broad ways of performing a survey. The first method is the questionnaire which consists of a series of questions. The questions could provide possible answers also referred to as the closed ended questionnaire, or the respondent would be at liberty to respond as they wish in what is called the open-ended interview . .

The philosophical reasons behind performing these researches are very different from those in sociology. The reason for performing the participant observation is to determine what is referred to as ethnography. Ethnography is term used to describe the understanding and phenomena behind the beliefs and systems behind cultural practices. Through this research method, the origins and purpose of cultures of a group of people is now understandable.

Comparison

Both sociology and cultural anthropology share similar techniques and methods to perform research. Both methods use participant observation to gain a better understanding of their subjects. It also relies on the first hand experiences and recordings of the researcher to come to conclusion.

The difference in the research techniques between these two fields of social sciences is quite evident. While sociology allows hypothesis testing and experimentation to prove a theory, cultural anthropology does not have this method. It is argued that you cannot put the culture of a people or group to an experiment since it is what it is. The culture of society is a result of many generations and practices and thus one experiment cannot conclusively determine the true state.

In conclusion, while the research methods in these two fields may be similar even in practice, the intentions are very much varied. It is therefore necessary to understand each methods vis-à-vis the philosophical intention behind such a study.

References

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