

Case Study Sociology

Using the case study provided critically evaluate and discuss the influence of theories and concepts drawn from psychology, sociology and social policy on social work practice with a specific service user group.

This essay will examine theories and topics within Sociology, Psychology, and Social Policy relevant to the case study. The service user discussed in relevance to this essay is Julie, a forty-six-year-old unemployed female with a learning disability and clinical obesity that impedes her ability to uphold her personal care. This essay will critically evaluate and discuss the Sociology of social inequality and poverty, the Psychology of Julie's learning disability, and the Social Policy appropriate to Julie's current situation. A conclusion will be reached as to how a holistic approach to social work, alongside relevant theories, can be applied in practice concerning Julie.

Sociology

Social inequality refers to the difference in people's share of resources (Payne, 2013). This concept delves into the idea that it is an individual's social division that structures and impacts their life chances. This is due to socially constructed categories such as age, gender, ethnicity, disability, class, and health (Payne, 2013).

To simplify, being born into a higher-class family enables an individual to have more opportunities throughout life than those born into working-class or poor families.

Marx et al. (1998) categorise two main classes as the ruling class and the subject class, arguing that the ruling class derives from ownership and control of production. They believe it has created a society within which the subject class is continuously exposed to oppression and offered fewer opportunities due to the hierarchy within a capitalist society. Marx et al's (1998) conflict theory explains the battles between the two classes as a result of the system's oppressive nature, as it acknowledges the inability for social inequality in families to change. Once you are born into poverty, individuals have a tendency to accept this status and pass it on to their children.

On the other hand, a functionalist perspective suggests that our society is like a living organism, needing differing roles and hierarchies to exist in equilibrium (Durkheim, 1972). The Functionalist perspective argues that children should be socialised into the norms and values of society to maintain necessary roles (Durkheim, 1972), such as women becoming mothering figures and men working within their class role. If you live outside these roles you are considered deviant. However, deviance in society poses a vital function as it sets an example to others of unacceptable behaviour, and therefore provides guidelines to maintain social order (Durkheim, 1972). Both Marxist and Functionalist perspectives acknowledge that social inequality leads to an inability to cross class boundaries and gain better socio-economic opportunities. However, they differ in their interpretation of whether this is unjust and oppressive, or whether it creates a balance in society to fill necessary roles.

Julie was born into poverty, has a learning disability, is obese, and is female. She has inherited a role within the subject class and therefore lacks socioeconomic prestige, meaning it is difficult to further her opportunities naturally. Julie was brought up in a single-mother household and has needed help from the state with her learning disability and to find housing. Therefore, Julie is part of the 'sick role' in society. She cannot fulfil her social duties, leading her to be part of a 'dependency culture' (Spicker, 2014). Spicker (2014) believes there is a problematic growth in dependency culture as individuals can use state intervention rather than forming their own economic independence. Julie utilised state-funded mechanisms to go to a special school and work menial jobs for low pay, however, it has now closed and she has been unable to find employment since. Marxists would disagree that Julie is

Case Study Sociology: Unveiling the Power of In-Depth Social Research

Introduction:

Sociology, the scientific study of society and social interactions, relies heavily on rigorous research methods to understand complex social phenomena. Among these methods, the case study stands out

as a powerful tool for in-depth analysis and rich qualitative data gathering. This blog post delves into the world of case study sociology, exploring its methodologies, applications, advantages, limitations, and crucial considerations for conducting effective research. We'll dissect the process, examine successful examples, and equip you with the knowledge to understand and even conduct your own sociological case studies. Prepare to unlock the secrets behind this invaluable research approach.

What is a Case Study in Sociology?

A case study in sociology is an in-depth investigation of a single social unit – be it an individual, a group, an organization, an event, or a community. Unlike large-scale quantitative studies that focus on broad trends, case studies prioritize rich, detailed data about a specific instance. This allows sociologists to explore intricate social processes, uncover nuanced relationships, and develop insightful interpretations that broader surveys might miss. The goal is not necessarily to generalize findings to the entire population but to gain a deep understanding of the specific case under scrutiny.

The Importance of Context in Case Study Sociology

One key strength of the case study approach is its emphasis on context. Sociologists recognize that social phenomena are rarely isolated events. They are embedded within specific historical, cultural, and structural circumstances that profoundly shape their development and outcome. A case study allows researchers to examine these contextual factors in detail, building a comprehensive picture of the social reality under investigation.

Types of Case Study Designs in Sociology

There are several different types of case studies employed in sociological research:

1. Intrinsic Case Studies:

These focus on a particular case because it is inherently interesting or unique. The researcher isn't seeking to generalize findings, but rather to deeply understand the specific characteristics of that one case. For example, a study focusing on a specific community's response to a natural disaster.

2. Instrumental Case Studies:

These use a specific case to illuminate a broader theoretical issue or to illustrate a particular social process. The chosen case serves as a vehicle to understand a larger phenomenon. For instance, studying a single company's implementation of a new diversity program to understand broader organizational change.

3. Collective Case Studies:

These involve examining multiple cases to compare and contrast their characteristics and identify patterns. This approach can lead to more generalizable findings compared to single case studies, while still retaining the in-depth qualitative analysis.

Conducting a Case Study in Sociology: A Step-by-Step Guide

Conducting a successful case study requires careful planning and execution. The process typically involves these stages:

1. Defining the Research Question:

Clearly articulate the central research question guiding the study. This question should be focused and manageable within the scope of a single case study.

2. Selecting the Case:

Choosing the right case is crucial. Consider the accessibility of data, the relevance to the research question, and the potential for rich insights.

3. Data Collection:

Utilize a range of methods, including interviews, observations, document analysis, and archival research. Triangulation (using multiple data sources) is recommended to ensure the validity and

reliability of findings.

4. Data Analysis:

Analyze the collected data systematically, identifying patterns, themes, and relationships. Qualitative data analysis software can be helpful in managing large datasets.

5. Reporting the Findings:

Present the findings in a clear, concise, and well-organized manner, ensuring that the contextual factors are adequately described.

Advantages and Limitations of Case Study Sociology

Advantages:

In-depth understanding: Provides detailed insights into complex social phenomena.

Contextual richness: Captures the nuances of specific social settings.

Generates hypotheses: Can inform the development of future research.

Flexibility: Adaptable to various research questions and settings.

Limitations:

Generalizability: Findings may not be easily generalizable to other populations.

Researcher bias: Potential for subjective interpretations.

Time-consuming: Requires significant time and resources.

Data management: Can be challenging to manage and analyze large datasets.

Conclusion:

Case study sociology offers a valuable approach for gaining deep, contextualized understanding of social phenomena. While limitations exist regarding generalizability, its strength lies in its ability to uncover rich detail and nuanced insights often missed by broader quantitative studies. By carefully planning and executing the research process, sociologists can leverage the power of case studies to contribute significantly to our understanding of the social world.

FAQs:

1. What are some examples of successful sociological case studies? Studies on the impact of social media on political mobilization, the effects of gentrification on specific communities, or analyses of organizational cultures within specific companies are all examples.
2. How do I ensure the objectivity of my case study research? Employing rigorous data collection methods, using triangulation, reflexivity (acknowledging your own biases), and peer review can help enhance objectivity.
3. What ethical considerations should I address when conducting a case study? Informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and minimizing potential harm to participants are crucial ethical considerations.
4. Can quantitative data be incorporated into a case study? Absolutely. Quantitative data can complement qualitative data, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the case.
5. What software can assist in case study data analysis? NVivo, Atlas.ti, and MAXQDA are popular qualitative data analysis software packages that can aid in coding, organizing, and analyzing qualitative data from interviews, observations, and documents.

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end of the year had unexpectedly dissolved. He then spent the next decade studying how the working class survived the catastrophic collapse of the Soviet economy. These essays, presented with a perspective that has benefited from time and rich experience, offer ethnographers a theory and a method for developing novel understandings of epochal change.

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`This clearly written and user-friendly book is ideal for students or researchers who wish to get a basic, but solid grasp of a topic and see how it fits with other topics. By following the links a student can easily and efficiently build up a clear conceptual map of social research' - Malcolm Williams, Reader in Sociology, Cardiff University
`This is a really useful book, written in an accessible manner for students beginning their study of social research methods. It is helpful both as an introductory text and as a reference guide for more advanced students. Most of the key topics in methods and methodology are covered and it will be suitable as a recommended text on a wide variety of courses' - Clive Seale, Brunel University
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collaborative research. The book details a broad range of sociology projects. The 33 case studies are divided into 8 sections. Each section also includes sidebars of include non-sociologists writing about the impact of selected research projects. In some cases these are interdisciplinary projects since solutions to social problems are often multifaceted and do not fit into the disciplines as defined by universities. Further, it emphasizes actions and connections. This is not armchair sociology where self-proclaimed public sociologists just write articles suggesting what government, corporations, communities, or others ought to do. The authors are interested in the active connections to publics and users of the research, not the passive research process.

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follows the life-cycle of the research project: it begins with a discussion of ethical and philosophical issues; presents guides to both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis; provides help on using computers in research; and includes advice on how to write up and present a research project. Based on the UK Economic and Social Research Council advice on the training which students should undertake in preparation for postgraduate research, this book will be invaluable for all beginning researchers.

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