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| **METHOD - DEFINITION** | **ADVANTAGES/****SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH METHODS – SUMMARY TABLE****USES** | **DISADVANTAGES/****LIMITATIONS** | **EXAMPLES****EDUCATION** | **MiC** **ISSUES** |
| **OBSERVATION (P. 206-217)** | **PARTICIPANT****OBSERVATION**Unstructured. Natural situation, observer participates – usually covert – enter ‘meaning world’ | * Favoured by interpretivists –rich qualitative ’real world’ data – based on subjective insights, ‘verstehen’ (empathy).
* **Covert** – natural behaviour – valid esp sensitive issues
* **Overt** – reduced moral & ethical issues, easier to record, can question openly
* Flexible - New insights
* Access to ‘hidden’ worlds e.g. delinquent groups.
 | * Rejected by positivists – unreliable (can’t replicate) & unrepresentative. Also ignores structural context.
* **Overt** – Observer effects
* **Covert** – note taking & going native
* Getting in, staying in, getting out esp covert
* Time, money, involvement, stress
* Highly trained / skilled observer with appropriate characteristics
* Objectivity - observer bias – over-involvement, selective reporting
* Changing behaviour – researcher effects
* Small-sample. Can’t generalise
* Ethical issues – deception, consent, privacy, confidentiality, welfare – legal & moral duties.
 | * **Willis** (1977) Anti-school subculture.
* **Ball** (1981) – Overt participant observation of a comprehensive school
* **Wright**(1992) – Ethnic stereotypes in four primary schools
* **Hargreaves** ((1967) As a teacher observed effects of streaming and labelling.
* **Fielding** – Students acted as researchers
 | * Only a limited number of roles – resticted e.g. teachers pupils, caretaker – many have restrictions – physical – age, gender, ethnicity and educational qualifications educational
* Difficult to get time / privacy for recording
* Ethics – special issues – related to age group and context – potential harm if info sensitive info revealed. Also need to protect school in marketised economy.
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| **NON-PARTICPANT OBSERVATION*** May be **covert/overt**
* May be **structured / unstructured**
 | * **Overt/covert** – as above
* **Structured** – preferred by positivists –Quick, cheap, less training, generate quantitative data – easier to replicate, analyse, compare
* **Unstructured** – Preferred by interpretivists – More valid, qualitative data, giving access to meanings.
 | * **Overt/covert** – as above
* **Structured** – Rejected by interpretivists – lacks validity, categories controlled, ignoring meanings,
* **Unstructured** –Rejected by positivists More time consuming, more training required, harder to analyse & compare data. Difficult to replicate
 | * **Flanders** (1970) - US classroom analysis using Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories FIAC
* **Keddie** (1991) – Observed staff meetings and classes.
 | * Schools are structured environments – easier to develop effective behavioural categories e.g. FIAC
* Teachers are practised performers – e.g. Ofsted
* Children may be particularly vulnerable to observer effects
* Gatekeepers – e.g. teachers, heads may control who is observed.
* Schools unique
 |
| **SECONDARY** **SOURCES** | **QUANTITATIVE**1.Statistics – Official - Data gathered Gov & official bodies and non-official.2. Existing sociological research | * Preferred by positivistis – ‘social facts’
* Free
* **Official** - Large amounts of data – representative, allow comparisons over time, standardised collection & measures
 | * Rejected by interpretivists – socially constructed – lack validity.
* Marxists – Official statistics represent the interests of Capitalism
* Not specific to aims – collected for different purpose
* No control over collection
 | * **Gilborn** (1995) – school policies, LEA guidelines, minutes of staff meetings
* **Gerwirtz et al** (1995) – school brochures & prospectuses
* **Hey** (1997) Used notes passed in class to understand friendship patterns
* **Lobban** (1974) – Content analysis of gender roles in reading schemes.
 | * Accountability means official data accessible e.g. league tables.
* Issues of equality & achievement shared by Gov & Sociologists
* Official definitions e.g. league tables – vary over time
* Errors & Bias – e.g. present schools, gov, individual in a good light ref. marketisiation
* Access
 |
| **QUALITATIVE**1. Documents – public, personal & historical2. Existing sociological research | * Preferred by interpretivists – more authentic, rich qualitative data esp personal.
* Positivists can analyse using content analysis
* Historical can allow study of patterns over time
 | * Rejected by positivists –esp personal can’t generalise, unrepresentative, open to interpretation.
* Problems of assessing authenticity esp historical
* Validity – may be written for a specific purpose
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